

# APPENDIX 11 – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



## REPORT



# CATSHILL & NORTH MARLBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

## 1. Green Infrastructure

1.1 By considering Green Infrastructure GI Networks in an integrated manner, benefits can be delivered that are far greater than when the individual components are considered separately as the following definition of GI describes;

***Green infrastructure (GI) is defined as “the planned and managed network of green spaces and natural elements that intersperse and connect cities, towns and villages. GI comprises many different elements including biodiversity, the landscape, the historic environment, the water environment (also known as blue infrastructure) publicly accessible green spaces. and informal recreation sites”.***

1.2 There are many community advantages to be gained from securing a continuing high environmental quality in terms of both health and social-economic status and this is often supported by a critical mass of green infrastructure in a locality through the creation of a wide range of benefits which meet individual site priorities. The main opportunities to deliver green infrastructure within the neighbourhood will come from developments that aim to integrate existing green spaces into their designs and prioritise these within their plans, proposals and decision-making processes at a very early stage.

1.3 At the Neighbourhood Level, Green or Blue-Green Infrastructure is considered to be small-scale blue-green enhancements which could typically be included within a development site such as off-road walking and cycling routes which could also incorporate assets such as sustainable drainage provision and wildlife corridors. Such plans may present opportunities to protect, enhance and integrate locally valued landscapes and distinctiveness by linking together green spaces that are acknowledged to be of local importance to the neighbourhood.

1.4 The approach proposed is based upon the key elements of multi-functional GI adopted by Worcestershire County Council in their Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy described as follows;

" GI is a holistic approach to viewing and managing the natural environment; acknowledging the multiple benefits and vital services it provides and making tangible links to economic, health and social welfare agendas and aspirations. The components of GI include biodiversity, landscape, historic environment, access and recreation and water."

1.6 Therefore the neighbourhood GI network will comprise stream/ brook courses, local green spaces, formal open spaces,, public footpaths and cycle ways.

## 2 Blue Infrastructure

2.1 The Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish is characterised by the two small, but important stream/brook courses that meet in Lower Catshill near to Church Road just to the north of

The Meadow. These brooks are known as ‘the Battlefield Brook’ and ‘the Marl Brook’ and are tributaries to the River Salwarpe. There is also a very small unnamed brook [sometimes referred to as the Lydiate Ash Brook] course which has its origins in the former Marlbrook Quarry, which flows westwards under the A38 and parallel with Woodrow Lane when it turns westwards along the rear gardens of houses in Cobnall Lane. This is open in places and culverted in others and it finally joins a surface water drain in Wildmoor Lane near to the M5 motorway bridge.

2.2 There are a small number of ponds around the parish most notably the recently constructed Green Lane Balancing Pond which attenuates storm flows coming from the Lickey Hills along the Marl Brook. This has recently started to develop as a wetland habitat and attracts a wide range of insects and fauna. A similar set of ponds exist along the Battlefield Brook between the M5 motorway and the rear of Mayfield Close, Marsh Way as part of the newly built development off Church Road in Lower Catshill.

2.3 These streams/brook courses, together with the ponds, constitute the Blue Infrastructure of the village and are a vital part of the eco system and the green corridors available for wild life.

### 3 Local Green Spaces and Formal Open Spaces

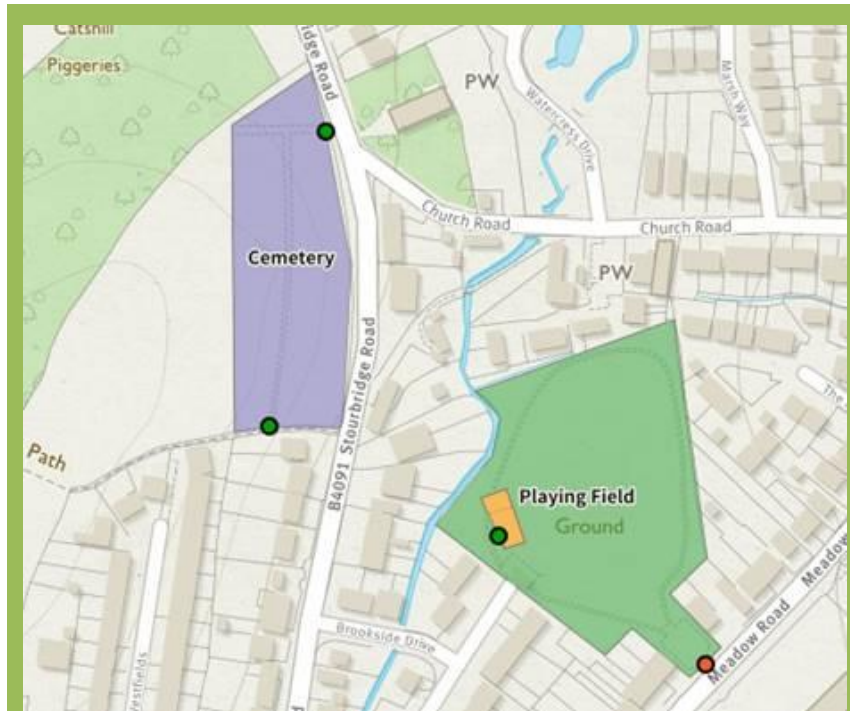
3.1 Approximately half of the area of the Parish lies within the current Green Belt which extends on all sides of the Parish other than for the boundary at Braces Lane and the Old Birmingham Road [B4096] to the south where it abuts the Lickey End Parish and the A38.

3.2 There are a number of small-medium sized formal and informal open spaces that provide for play areas, sports and various community events these being:

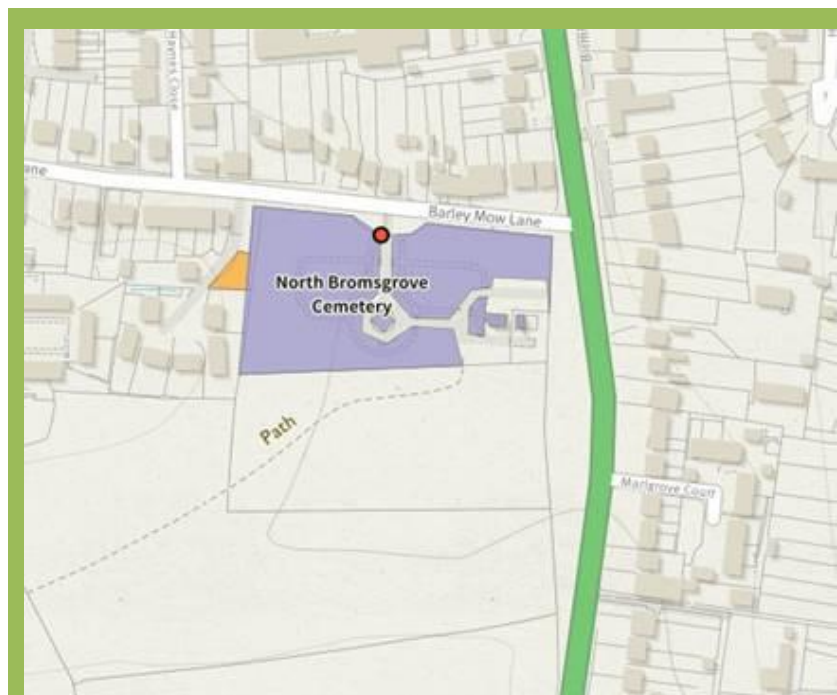
CATSHILL & NORTH MARLBROOK GREEN SPACES – FORMAL OPEN SPACES					
	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	QUALITY OF FACILITY	DESIGNATION	COMMUNITY VALUE
1	Lower Marlbrook Play Area and Recreation Ground, Braces Lane	Open, flat area of formal grasses area for football and similar use. There is a children's play area to the north of the ground which is bordered by the Lydiate Brook and Braces Lane to the south. This has on-site parking facilities.	Generally well maintained open managed grass area.	Recreation Ground Bromsgrove District Council	M
2	Lingfield Walk Recreation Ground	Recreation ground and play area. Used for a variety of community sports events, play and leisure activities.	Well managed general sports field and children's playground with relatively new equipment.	Recreation Ground Bromsgrove District Council	M
3	The Meadow recreation ground, Meadow Road [George Wagstaff Memorial Meadow].	Approximately 1.5 ha of recreational sports field, children's play are, changing facilities and pathways for recreational walking, etc. the Meadow as an area of recreation and leisure by providing a more diverse selection of activities for all residents of Catshill. Bounded by houses to all side and is delineated to the west by the Battlefield Brook	Well managed and maintained grassland with some planting areas. Has small area of surfaced parking to the front and sports changing facilities. Good security.	The Meadow is entrusted to the North West Ward Association (NWWA), a charity that brought the land in 1951 and who represent the residents of Catshill.	H
4	School Sports Fields to rear of Catshill First and Middle Schools	Private, managed open grassland areas to the rears of Catshill Middle School and Catshill First School and Nursey. Used for school sports and a local football team.	Well maintained school sports field and recreation area.	School sports fields – Worcestershire County Council	H
5	Play Area/Recreation Ground to rear of Shelly Close on Milton Road cycle path.	Recreation ground and children's play area. Open managed grass area. Leads on to open countryside and goo surfaces cycle route to Stourbridge Road.	Generally well maintained play area and informal football/sports field.	Recreation Ground. Bromsgrove District Council	M

3.3 In addition there are a few other more formal open spaces associated with burial grounds and graveyards: These are:

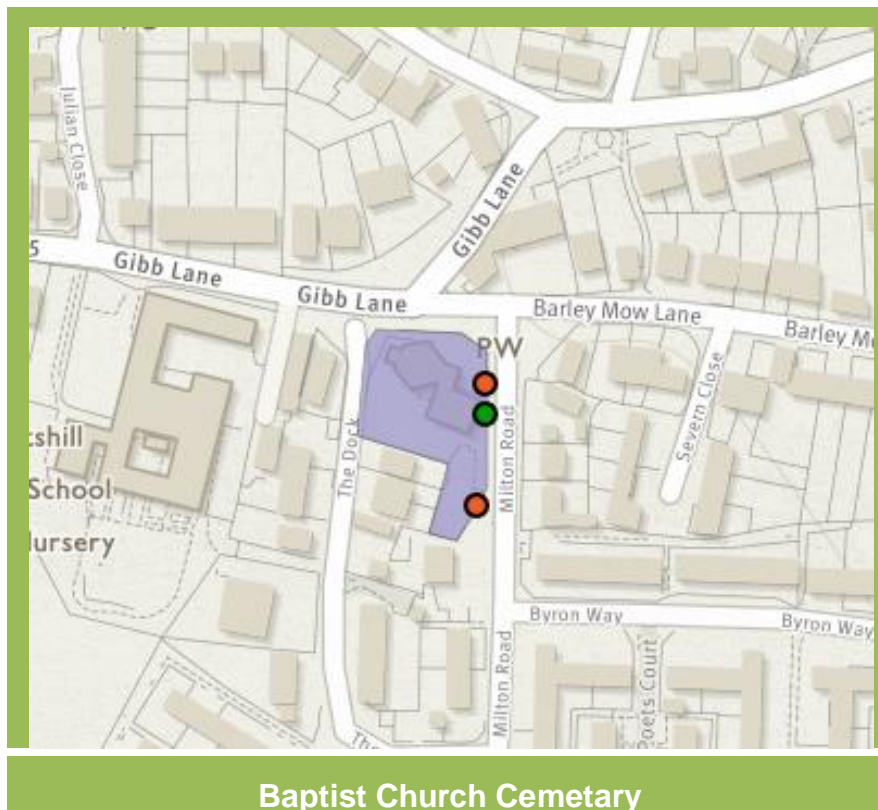
- Christ Church, church yard and cemetery – Stourbridge Road/Church Road.
- Municipality burial ground, Barley Mow Lane – A38.
- Catshill Baptist Church yard and cemetery.



Christ Church Cemetery



Barley Mow Lane, Municipal Burial Ground



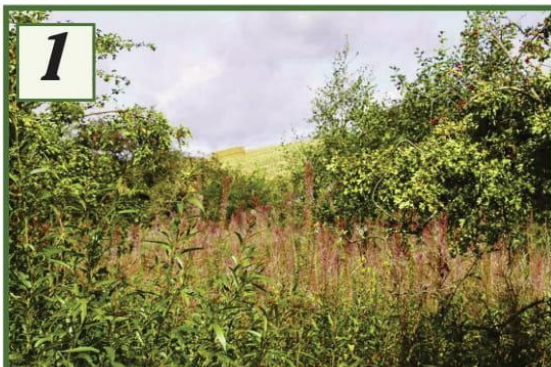
3.4 There are also several open areas (local green spaces) that are not either used for agriculture or form part of the built-up areas. These areas are either lightly wooded or natural scrub and in many places form part of the flood plain to the local brook courses. These are seen to furnish habitats that should be protected and enhanced to provide and connect natural green corridors/stepping stones for green infrastructure assets, leisure and wildlife. The descriptions of the green spaces are:

- Natural area near Cottage Lane, North Marlbrook at the side of the Marlbrook (area 1)
- A small area of unkempt ground to the north of Braces Lane recreation ground associated with the Marl Brook water course flood plain. (area 2)
- Land to the north of Lingfield Walk recreation grounds adjacent to Sedgfield Walk. (area 3)
- Small triangle of woodland adjacent to the M5 to the west of Woodrow Lane – Highways Agency controlled. (area 4)
- Land adjacent to the M5 motorway to the north of the Church Road [Cowslip Close] and west of Mayfield Close and associated with the Battlefield Brook stream course. (area 5)
- Wooded area to the south east of M5 near 'the Piggeries' to the rear of Christ Church's cemetery (area 6).

These identified local green spaces are shown in the following illustration and on the Green Infrastructure map at the end of this report;



## *Local Green Spaces*

**1**

*Natural area near Cottage Lane, North Marlbrook at the side of the Marl Brook.*

**2**

*Natural ground to the north of Braces Lane sports ground.*

**3**

*Open area to the north of Lingfield Walk sports ground and balancing pond.*

**4**

*Small area of woodland adjacent to the M5 near Woodrow Lane.*

**5**

*Wooded area to the rear of Cowslip Close off Church Road near M5.*

**6**

*Wooded area to the south east of M5, near 'The Piggeries' to the rear of the cemetery.*

3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) revised Feb. 2019 allows for the designation of Local Green Spaces (paras. 99-101). The Local Green Space (LGS) designation is a way to protect green areas or open spaces against development where they are of particular importance to local communities. Local Green Space designations are made for use in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. These plans can identify on a map ('designate') green areas for special protection. Once designated, Local Green Spaces will be managed in the same way as Green Belt areas..

3.6 A survey questionnaire was designed to gauge the support for both the formal open spaces and the proposed local green spaces and included as a supplementary in the parish magazine distributed in November 2019. .

3.7 Support for the formal open spaces was gauged on the strength of agreement to the statement, *'This formal open space is highly valued and very important to the community'* on a 5 point Likert type scale (rating scale) - 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' and was applicable to each of the sites identified.

3.8 The proposed local green spaces were judged on how demonstrably special these spaces were considered to be to the local community on the criteria laid down in NPPF para. 10. The question asked was *'to what extent do you feel that the following descriptions apply to the six identified green spaces i e beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity and richness of wildlife'*. The respondents could put a tick in the box where the aforementioned descriptions applied.

3.9 Criteria for successful support of the formal open spaces would be a majority agreement that the formal open spaces were highly valued. With regards to the proposed local green spaces, those spaces would be considered demonstrably special where at least one of the descriptions was supported by a majority of the respondents in the sample.

3.10 The formal open spaces were overwhelmingly supported and valued highly by respondents to the survey. The local green spaces were also well supported and 75% of respondents identified at least one description which related to each green space. Therefore these green spaces can be designated and afforded appropriate protection.

3.11 The full study is described in a separate paper entitled " Designation of Local Green Spaces/Formal Open Spaces Study ".

***'All green spaces in Catshill must be retained to keep character of area.'***

3.12 Policy ENV 4 seeks to designate identified sites as Local Green Spaces according to the appropriate NPPF regulations. Policy ENV5 seeks to protect the identified formal open spaces from development unless equivalent or better provision is provided.

3.13 The survey questionnaire also had a section on footpaths and cycleways and the results for this section are described later in this report.

## **4 Footpaths and Cycle Ways**

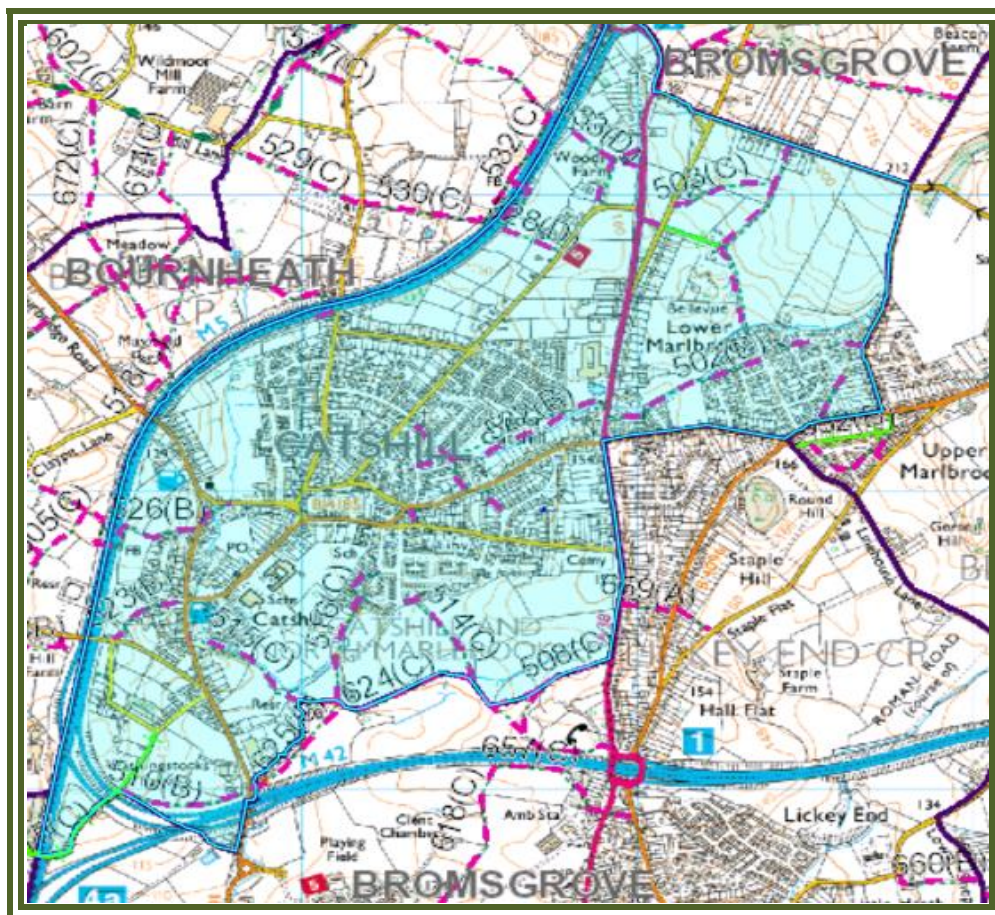
4.1 The parish is fortunate enough to have a good, viable and fairly extensive network of public rights of way and these can provide for potentially much greater access for cycling,



walk-to-school, dog walking and other such community activities. These also connect the parish to the wider, open countryside beyond the parish boundary. A number of these footpaths are either unknown, underused or unsuitable due to them being poorly maintained, unsuitably surfaced and seen to be potentially unsafe.

4.2 The best used of these important community assets is the popular Milton Road cycle path noted as FP 515(C) and 516C between the Stourbridge Road and Milton Road as this is wide, often tree lined, all-weather surfaced, illuminated and in many places affords pleasant open views to the surrounding countryside.

4.3 Footpath 523B, which starts near the War Memorial in Lower Catshill, also links to a major WCC county network of footpaths known as the Royal Hunters Walks which are a set of three routes that start in Sanders Park, Bromsgrove. These are known as the 'Hedgelay Walk', the 'Chartists Walk' and the 'Foresters Walk' and were created many years ago in partnership with Worcestershire County Council. There are, however, many other, more localised footpaths which have the potential to provide for improved, accessible and safer pedestrian/cycle routes around the parish so as to encourage both wildlife and people to take advantage of the green corridors that they afford.



**Existing Public Footpaths**

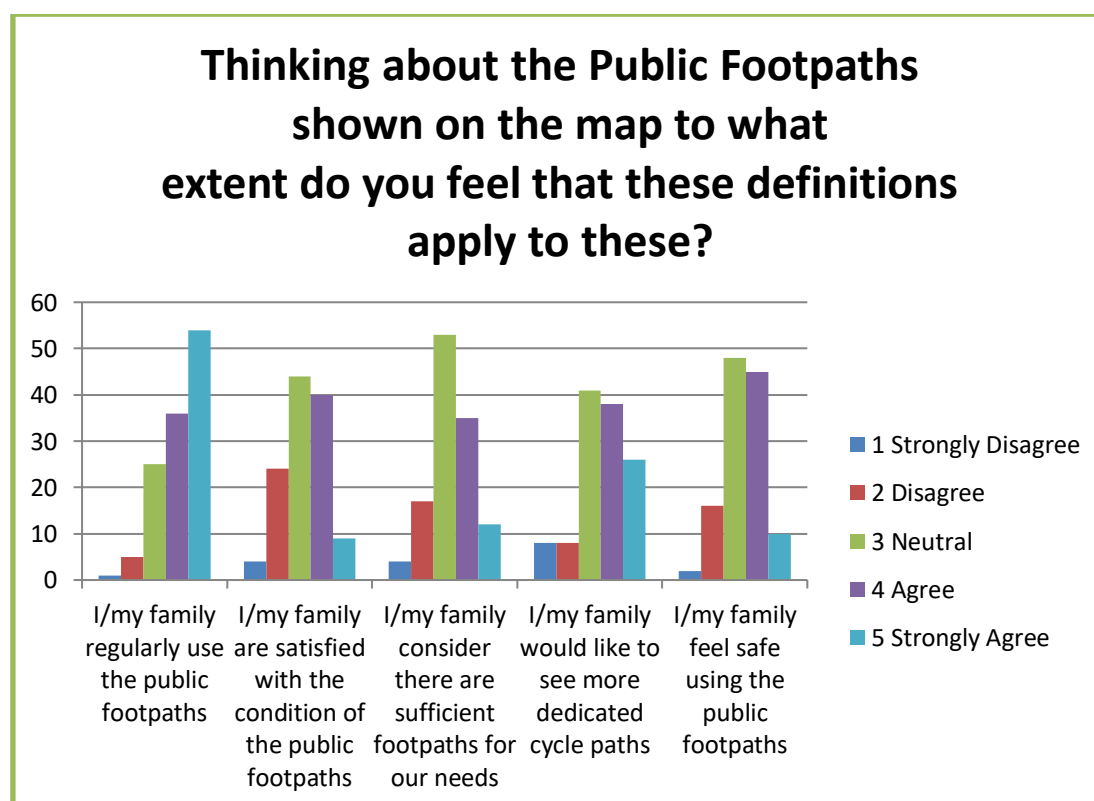
4.4 The map above shows the outline of the parish with the network of existing public footpaths which illustrates the potential to increase connectivity and provide for greater amenity and leisure access for the public and would greatly enhance the attractiveness of these often underused and neglected community assets.



## 5 Survey Questionnaire Results

5.1 As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to give their views concerning the Public Footpaths and Cycle Ways in the Parish. 121 completed questionnaires were received and analysed.

Answer Choice	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
I/my family regularly use the public footpaths	1	5	25	36	54
I/my family are satisfied with the condition of the public footpaths	4	24	44	40	9
I/my family consider there are sufficient footpaths for our needs	4	17	53	35	12
I/my family would like to see more dedicated cycle paths	8	8	41	38	26
I/my family feel safe using the public footpaths	2	16	48	45	10



5.2. From an analysis of the results, respondents and their families in the main regularly use the footpaths. Although the majority consider the footpaths are in good condition a sizeable minority disagrees or strongly disagrees (23%). Again, although a majority feel there are sufficient footpaths in the Parish a minority of 17% disagrees. With regards to cycle routes there is widespread support for more dedicated routes of this type. The overwhelming number of respondents felt safe walking along the footpaths.

5.3. The majority of comments received were about the condition of the footpaths. Typical responses were as follows;

*'Path between Lingfield and A38 is known as devil's steps - its muddy, slippery and very dark as its unlit. Very scary at night especially when youths gather there to take drugs.'*

*'Footpaths require resurfacing following utility/virgin excavating which has left them in a poor state.'*

*'Some footpaths are overgrown and difficult to walk along.'*

*'Footpaths are important to maintain to encourage people to walk to shops and amenities and not use their cars on our overused roads.'*

*'Some of the footpaths are uneven and overgrown and don't make for pleasant walking.'*

*'The footpath between Oak Road and Golden Cross Lane is often overgrown. It is also dangerous to walk down there in the dark since it is unlit. There is a need for better maintenance.'*

*'Many footpaths overgrown with brambles, nettles and overhanging branches.'*

*'The condition of many footpaths are poor, often over grown and difficult to use. Generally poor access and sign posting. Some need repair and local lighting in places.'*

*'Certain footpaths need to be lit at night.'*

*'The hedging along many footpaths is not clipped and maintained in a tidy condition for example the path way opposite the Catshill social club is overgrown and almost impossible to use.'*

*'Maintenance required on footpaths to keep paths accessible.'*

*'Certain footpaths need to be lit at night.'*

*'Alleyway from Oak Road through to Golden Cross - footpath is in poor condition.'*

*'Footpaths need to be properly maintained and access reinstated by some farmers.'*

5.4. Respondents also commented they would like to see the footpaths not only maintained but enhanced and new footpaths and cycle routes developed;



*'The public footpaths should be signposted better. There are some very attractive walks which should be better known.'*

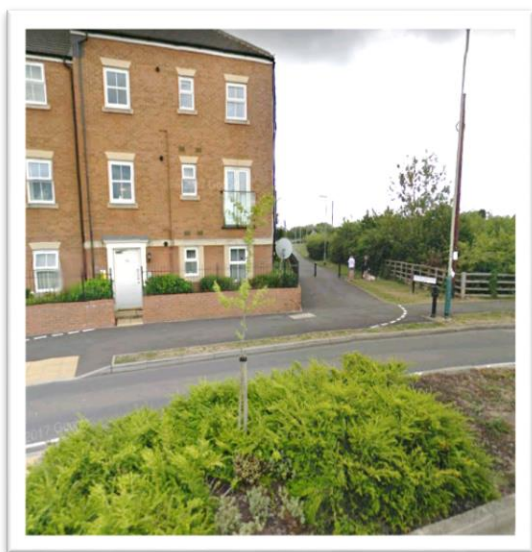
*'New development needs to link cycles/footpaths.'*

*'We would like pleasant 2 to 3 mile circular walks around Catshill and Marlbrook which are easily accessible.'*

*'Need connecting cycle path to get to Bromsgrove. Don't feel safe cycling to Bromsgrove from Marlbrook on the road.'*

## 6 Developing the GI Network

6.1 The parish suffers from heavy rush hour traffic problems which makes walking or cycling unacceptable and many times more hazardous along the main through roads.. In order to bring about improvements in the quality of life and the environment for the residents, the Neighbourhood Plan is proposing the enhancement and expansion of the existing network of footpaths and cycle ways to use these to form the framework for a strategic green infrastructure approach for the parish.



*Picture 1 – showing good integration of houses, open green spaces and cycle ways/footpaths.*



*Picture 2 – showing cycle way/footpath with good security and natural boundaries.*



***Catshill Marshes – Church Road Blue-Green Infrastructure***



***Public Footpath 532(B) between Church Road and Stourbridge Road along the Battlefield Brook***

6.2 This will be delivered through the adoption of green infrastructure corridors using footpaths, brook courses and green spaces to provide greater and a more pleasant form of connectivity around the parish.

6.3 There is an opportunity to introduce a new route incorporated in a new development to the west of Woodrow Lane to Wildmoor Lane from FP 528(D) running along the line of the Lydiate Ash Brook and joining with Wildmoor Lane at the M5 Bridge.



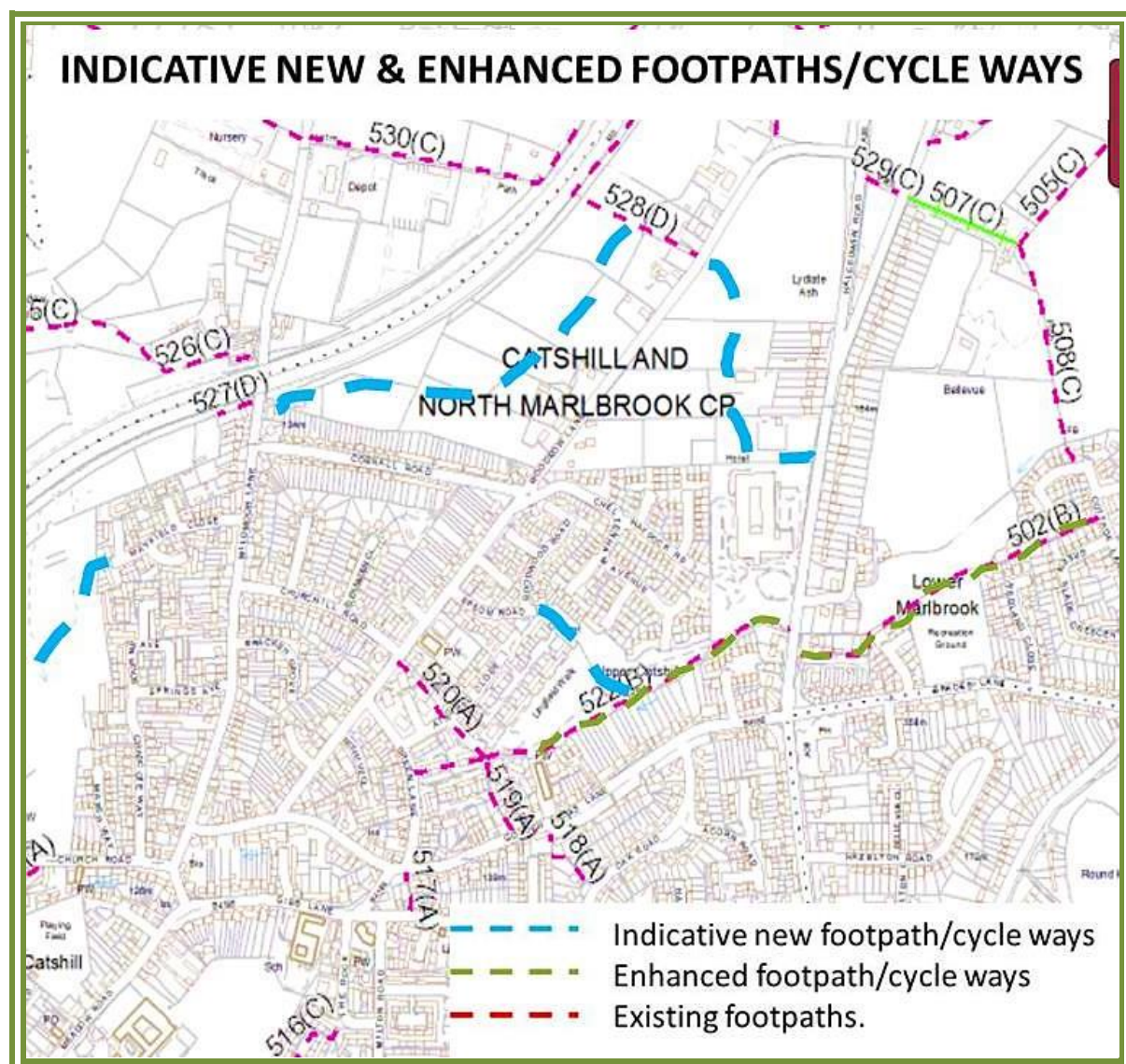
***Showing swale drainage system integrated with roads, footpaths and landscape.***



6.4 This would introduce not only a cycleway/footpath but also potential for a landscaped swale for management of surface water and also maintain an environmental corridor - see picture above.

6.5 Similarly a new footpath/cycle route could be introduced from Mayfield Close running through the local green space along the Battlefield Brook and joining in to the recent Church Road housing development in Cow Slip Close. This would provide access onto Church Road and connect with the existing footpath 525(A) from Church Road to Stourbridge Road.

6.6 Such new or enhanced routes for walking and cycling can be aligned to a wildlife corridor connecting fragmented habitats and can provide for Sustainable Drainage Systems that can also contribute to the enhancement of both biodiversity and landscape, and offer opportunities for informal recreation.

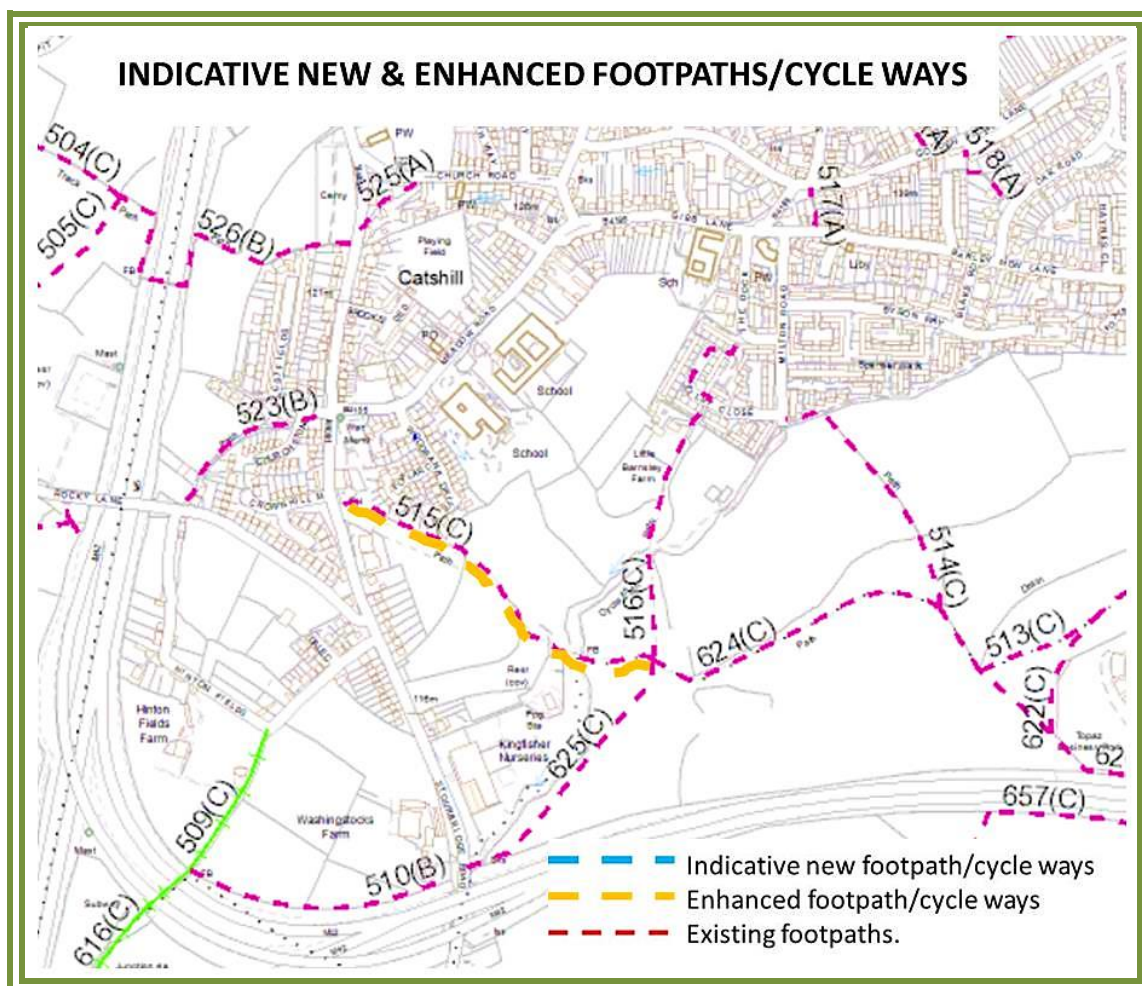


**Parish Footpaths - Northern Area**

6.7 A new footpath/cycle way is proposed between Woodrow Lane at existing footpath 528(D) running eastwards across a potential new development to the east of Woodrow Lane and joining with the Halesowen Road A38.

6.8 In addition the existing footpath 522(B) would be upgraded and surfaced to provide a path and cycle route between Lingfield Walk [Recreation Grounds] leading up to Halesowen Road A38 along the side of the Marl Brook course and balancing pond. This could also continue across the A38 eastwards along existing footpath 502(B) running along the west side of the Braces Lane Recreation Ground towards Cottage Lane in North Marlbrook

6.9 This provides greater accessibility and connectivity between the green and open spaces in the north of the parish and can help separate pedestrians and cyclist from traffic provided improved/safe crossing are included in any new highways schemes.



**Parish Footpaths - Southern Area**

6.10 In the south of the parish an existing footpath 515(C) and 516(C) could be enhanced that runs from the Crown Public House on the Stourbridge Road [near the Bluebrooke Residential Home] along the Battlefield Brook and joins with the existing surfaced and lit cycle/footpath 625(C) just to the rear of the Willowbrook Garden Centre.

6.11 This could potentially help to take both pedestrian and cyclist traffic off what are very congested roads on to dedicated separated routes. This will need to be surfaced, secure and



lighted at night in the same way that 624(C) and 625(C) are currently and could be combined with improvements to the brook course to encourage wildlife and particularly water voles.



**Picture 1 – showing good integration of houses, open green spaces and cycle ways/footpaths.**



**Picture 2 – showing cycle way/footpath with good security and natural boundaries.**

## 7 New Housing Development's contribution to GI Network

7.1 New developments will therefore be required to incorporate such blue-green infrastructure within their schemes at an early stage. These will look to provide new or enhanced footpath/cycleway linkages and to reinforce natural features to provide new or recreated habitats by:

- Providing new footpaths/cycle ways through the new development to link into existing rights of way and enhancing other existing footpaths.
- Restoring neglected hedgerow.
- Creating new ponds/wetlands as an integral part of Surface Water Management Strategy features on or off their proposed site(s).
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape and wildlife.

7.2 This would contribute positively towards achieving Strategic Objectives SO 4 to 10 inclusive of the BDC Strategic Objectives in the District Plan.

7.3 Policies ENV1 (maintain integrity of GI network), ENV2 (landscaping proposals), ENV3 (connectivity of green corridors), ENV6 (open and recreational space), ENV7 (protect significant views) and ENV9 (provision of sustainable urban drainage) all expect contributions from developers to sustain and enhance the GI Network.

## 8 Conclusions

8.1 To enable a coherent network of footpaths, cycle ways, green corridors and recreational areas be available for the benefit of the community the Parish Council will endeavour to secure funding to improve existing features and enable gaps in the network to be completed.

8.2 Community Action (CA4) tasks the Council to raise and provide funds to maintain and improve existing footpaths, develop new footpaths and cycle ways, protect and enhance green corridors for the benefit of wild life and promote better linkages between the designated green spaces.

