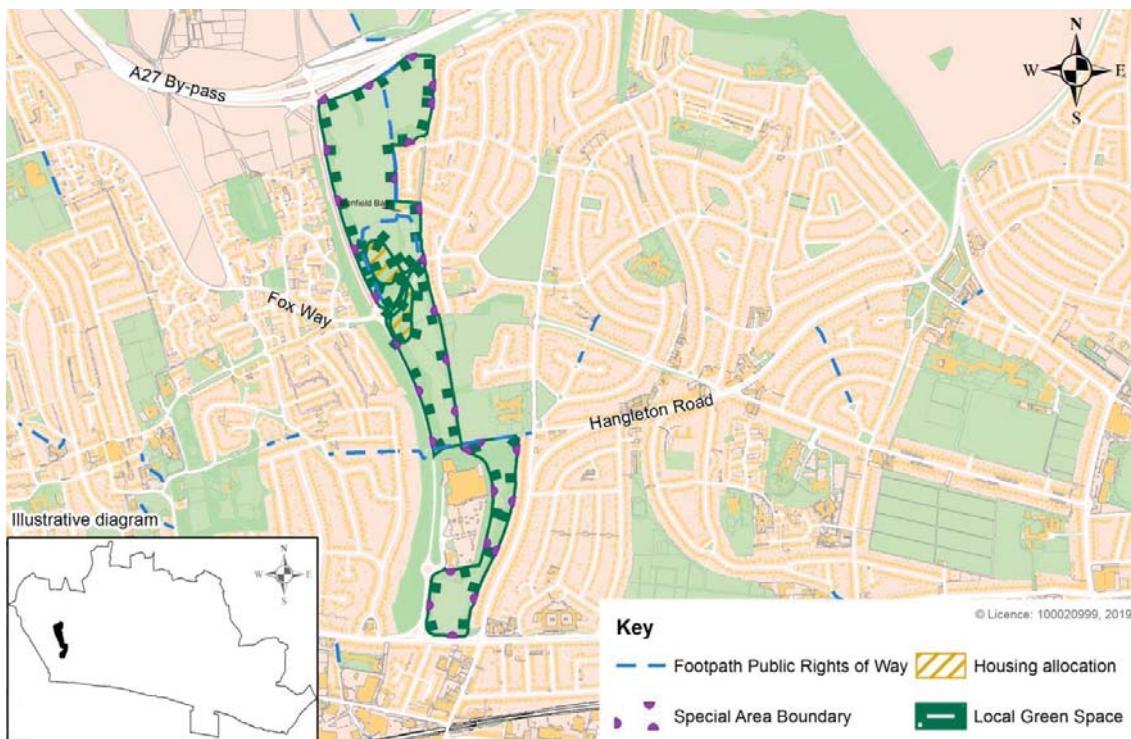


Special Area SA7 Benfield Valley

Figure 2 Illustrative Diagram



Land at Benfield Valley will be protected and enhanced as an important green wedge into the urban area, a valued Local Wildlife Site and Local Green Space. The council will promote and support the careful use and management of land and buildings at Benfield Valley to achieve the following objectives:

- The continued protection and enhancement of the wider biodiversity and landscape role and character of Benfield Valley as an important green wedge connecting the urban area to the South Downs National Park;
- Securing biodiversity conservation and enhancements; including wildlife connectivity and buffer zones, as well as the ongoing and positive management of wildlife habitats and securing a long term funded management and maintenance plan to be agreed with the council;
- The creation of ‘gateway’ facilities and interpretation facilities in connection with the South Downs National Park;
- The protection and enhancement of the open spaces at Benfield Valley to include a long term funded management and maintenance plan to be agreed with the council;

- Improved public access through the site and to the wider natural environment through the provision and improvement of safe pedestrian and cyclist access including the north/ south linear footpath/cycleway on the eastern side of Benfield Valley and existing rights of ways;
- The sympathetic repair and re-use of Benfield Barn and its associated structures and walls in a way that is compatible with and integrates with the landscape character of Benfield Valley, the wider natural environment and the Benfield Barn Conservation Area.

Residential development in accordance with the identified development areas shown to the north and south of Hangleton Lane will be permitted provided that such development addresses the key considerations set out in Policy H2 Urban Fringe Housing Sites. Inclusion of housing for older people will be encouraged (see also Policy DM4). Development proposals will be required to preserve the settings of the Benfield Barn and Hangleton Conservation Areas and contribute towards the achievement of the key objectives as listed above (see also Policy H2) and as set out in City Plan Part One Policy SA4 Urban Fringe.

Appropriate uses of the Benfield Barn and outbuildings within the conservation area will be non-intensive community and /or recreational facilities appropriate to the area. Proposals for the use of the buildings should include provision for a respective long term funded management and maintenance plan, to be agreed with the council.

Development proposals will also be subject to the criteria set out in City Plan Part One Policy SA4.

Supporting Text

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to facilitate the positive and ongoing management and maintenance of Benfield Valley's open spaces, wildlife habitats and heritage assets and to improve and enhance public access and connectivity with the adjoining urban areas and to the South Downs National Park, a key focus of the UNESCO Biosphere.

3.2 Benfield Valley is an important green wedge extending from the urban area in the south northwards to the National Park. It acts as an important 'green lung' with major open spaces at both the north and southern ends and is well used by the public for outdoor recreation. It also contains significant wildlife habitats and protected species and much of the area has been designated a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). It is proposed to maintain a broad linear Local Green Space to maintain the valley's green wedge landscape role and character. The designation of Benfield Valley as a Local Green Space was a recommendation of the 2014 Urban Fringe Assessment

Study and was supported through public consultation at the Scoping Stage of City Plan Part Two (see also Policy DM38 Local Green Spaces).

3.3 Benfield Barn is a listed building and together with the historic outbuildings and flint walls in the vicinity of the Barn constitutes the Benfield Barn Conservation Area. The Barn and the surrounding area is ideally located to be a 'stepping off' point for the wider South Downs National Park and the Barn itself offers an ideal opportunity to secure a community / interpretation or gateway facility to forge stronger links between the urban area and the National Park.

3.4 The northern part of Benfield Valley north of Hangleton Lane lies within an Archaeological Notification Area (ANA). Saxon burials have been found in the area. The site has a good topographic location that would have been suited to settlement in the prehistoric and Romano-British periods. It has high potential for archaeology from these periods as well as the potential for early medieval graves.

3.5 A key aim of this policy is to secure long term and enduring positive management, maintenance and enhancement of Benfield Valley and Benfield Barn and the better connection of the valley both to the surrounding urban areas and to the National Park. To help facilitate this, and in recognition of the city's wider housing needs, provision has been made for an element of residential development to correspond with the potential development areas lying identified to the north and south of Hangleton Lane. Proposals for development will need to fully address the development considerations set out in Policy H2 Urban Fringe Housing Sites and meet the specific development management criteria set out in Policy SA4 Urban Fringe in City Plan Part One.

3.6 The identified areas of development potential to the north and south of Hangleton Lane have potential for approximately 100 dwellings. Given the relatively contained nature of Benfield Valley, it is envisaged that residential densities within the areas of development potential could be higher than those of existing surrounding residential areas. It is considered that development of up to three storeys might be accommodated without harm to key views and the settings of nearby listed buildings. It is expected that any development proposals will need to incorporate appropriate buffers, landscaping and screening.

3.7 Proposals will be required to make provision for and secure long term management plans for the positive and enduring enhancement and management of the valley's open spaces and wildlife habitats.

3.8 The most northern part of the Valley is important to the wider landscape character where informal public outdoor recreation, which is sympathetic to wildlife and the enhancement of habitat mosaics, would be appropriate. The middle section of the Valley, to the west of Greenleas in the southern part of the Valley, could provide opportunities for public outdoor recreation which could include provision for more formal sports provision provided appropriate regard is given to biodiversity. Any

provision for indoor sports provision would need to demonstrate there is an identified sports need and there are no deliverable alternatives in order to justify any exception to the local green space designation.

3.9 Proposals for development will therefore be required to provide detailed assessments to include the following:

- A Landscape and Visual Character Assessment¹²⁸ which will inform landscape led masterplans for development sites and associated management/maintenance plans;
- An Ecological Assessment¹²⁹ which will inform associated management/maintenance plans;
- An Archaeological Assessment;
- A Transport Assessment
- A Heritage Statement

3.10 In terms of connectivity to the wider urban area and to the National Park, as part of the UNESCO Biosphere, there are positive opportunities to secure better linkages through the site in terms of improved pedestrian and cycle routes particularly with regard to the existing north-south cycle/footway; the existing desire lines which cross the site at various points and existing rights of way. Development proposals should protect and where possible enhance existing public rights of way and access in accordance with national policy and guidance¹³⁰ The need to enhance accessibility, maintain and improve the links to and through the site and deliver an effective and visually attractive gateway to the National Park will be important considerations in the determination of development proposals and agreed management plans.

¹²⁸ To be carried out in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute and IEAM 2013).

¹²⁹ To be carried out in accordance with BS42020:2013 and CIEEM guidance.

¹³⁰ National Planning Policy Framework and Rights of Way Circular (1/09) subject to any updated policy guidance.