

Our FoRCE Vision



What is a vision and what's in this document?

A vision document is more than just a plan—it's an evolving blueprint for the future. At FoRCE, our Vision brings together the incredible ideas and aspirations of our community, translating them into actionable goals. It's where we capture insights, prioritise improvements, and outline how we can work together to protect and enhance Rochester's cherished green spaces and river walks.

This document reflects our ambitions in practical terms, breaking down our vision into sections that focus on specific aspects of the community and environment, such as:

- Enhancing biodiversity and green spaces
- Improving accessibility and recreational facilities
- Preserving the heritage and identity of Rochester
- Promoting wellbeing through education, recreation, and cultural initiatives

By organising these ideas into actionable steps, the Vision Document serves as a guide for achieving lasting impact. It's a collaborative effort that invites ongoing input, ensuring that our future plans align with the needs and desires of the community.

We hope this document inspires you to share your ideas and join us in shaping a brighter future for Rochester's green spaces.



Building a Vision

To build this vision, we have identified a number of layers of insights that form the foundation of our approach:

1. Brand Rochester: Highlighting the town's unique identity and heritage
2. Vistas: Preserving and enhancing views and sightlines
3. Clean: Maintaining litter-free, well-kept spaces
4. Landscape and Fixtures: Creating cohesive, functional, and visually appealing infrastructure
5. Green: Expanding and protecting natural greenery and planting
6. Wildlife: Enhancing habitats and supporting biodiversity
7. Wellbeing, Recreation, and Play: Designing spaces that promote physical and mental health through leisure activities
8. Information and Education: Providing engaging, accessible content about Rochester's natural and cultural heritage
9. Road Safety: Improving pathways, crossings, and signage for all users
10. Services, Events, and Activities: Offering programs that bring the community together and celebrate shared spaces
11. Purpose and Personality: Defining the character and use of each green space to align with community needs and aspirations



Brand Rochester

Make the site look and feel like part of Rochester by incorporating features synonymous with the City:

- History — Roman, Norman, military, maritime, aeronautical, industrial
- Materials — Stone walls and cobbles, wood panelling
- Colours — Black signage, lamps, railings and bollards
- Crest





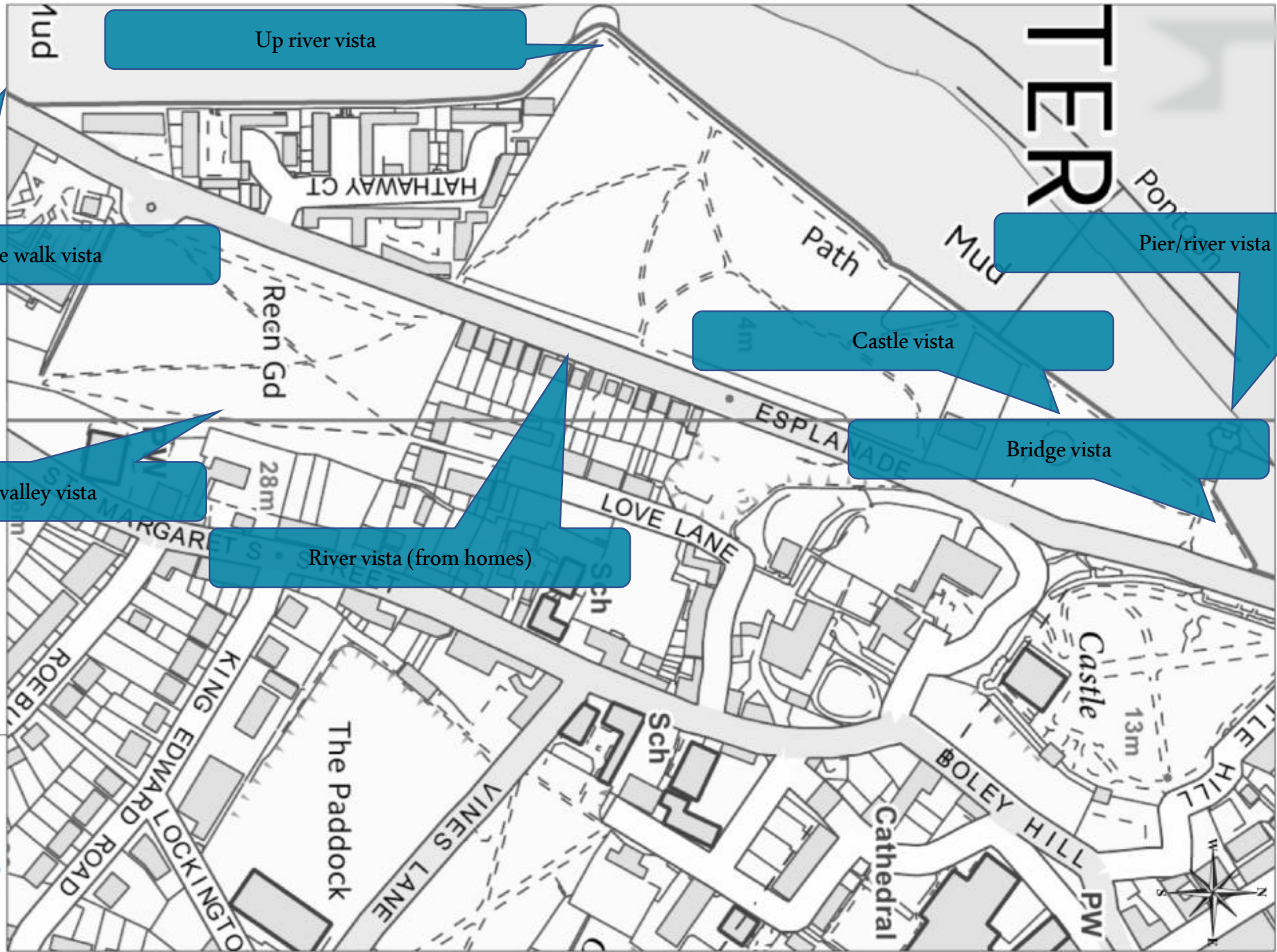
Frame and maximise the vistas

Churchfields and Esplanade parks are well positioned to take advantage of excellent vistas:

- Over the water: The river, bridge and pier
- Historic buildings: The castle, St Margaret's Church
- Landscape: The hills and river valley

Use seating to allow people to sit and enjoy them





Up river vista

Esplanade walk vista

Pier/river vista

Castle vista

Bridge vista

High point valley vista

River vista (from homes)

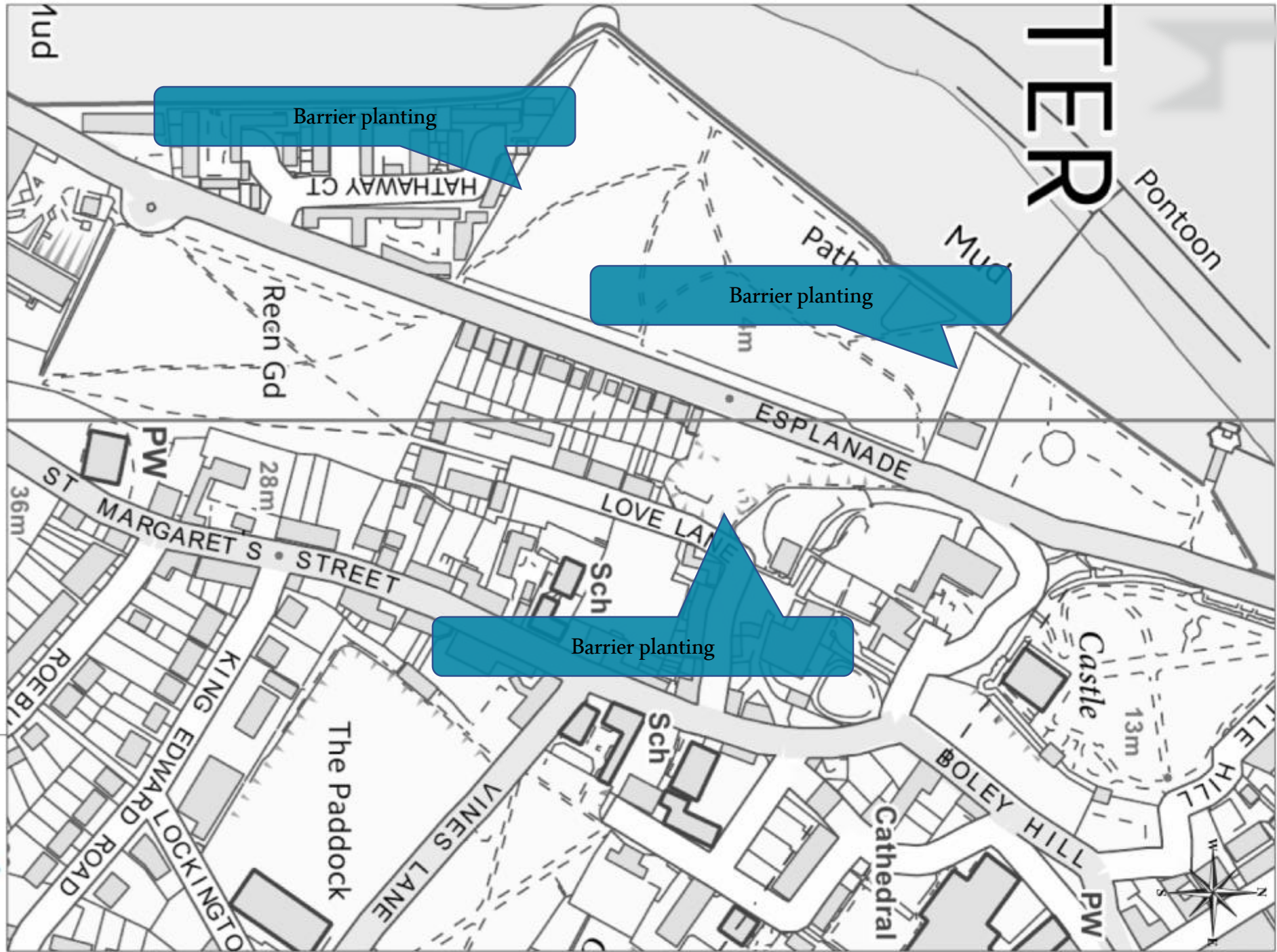


Clean

Learn from the issues we've had and use design that encourages positive behaviours and discourages antisocial behaviour:

- Sufficient and well-placed cigarette/litter/waste bins (including near benches and picnic tables)
- Discouraging graffiti — avoiding blank inviting surfaces, creating barriers with planting
- Toilet signage



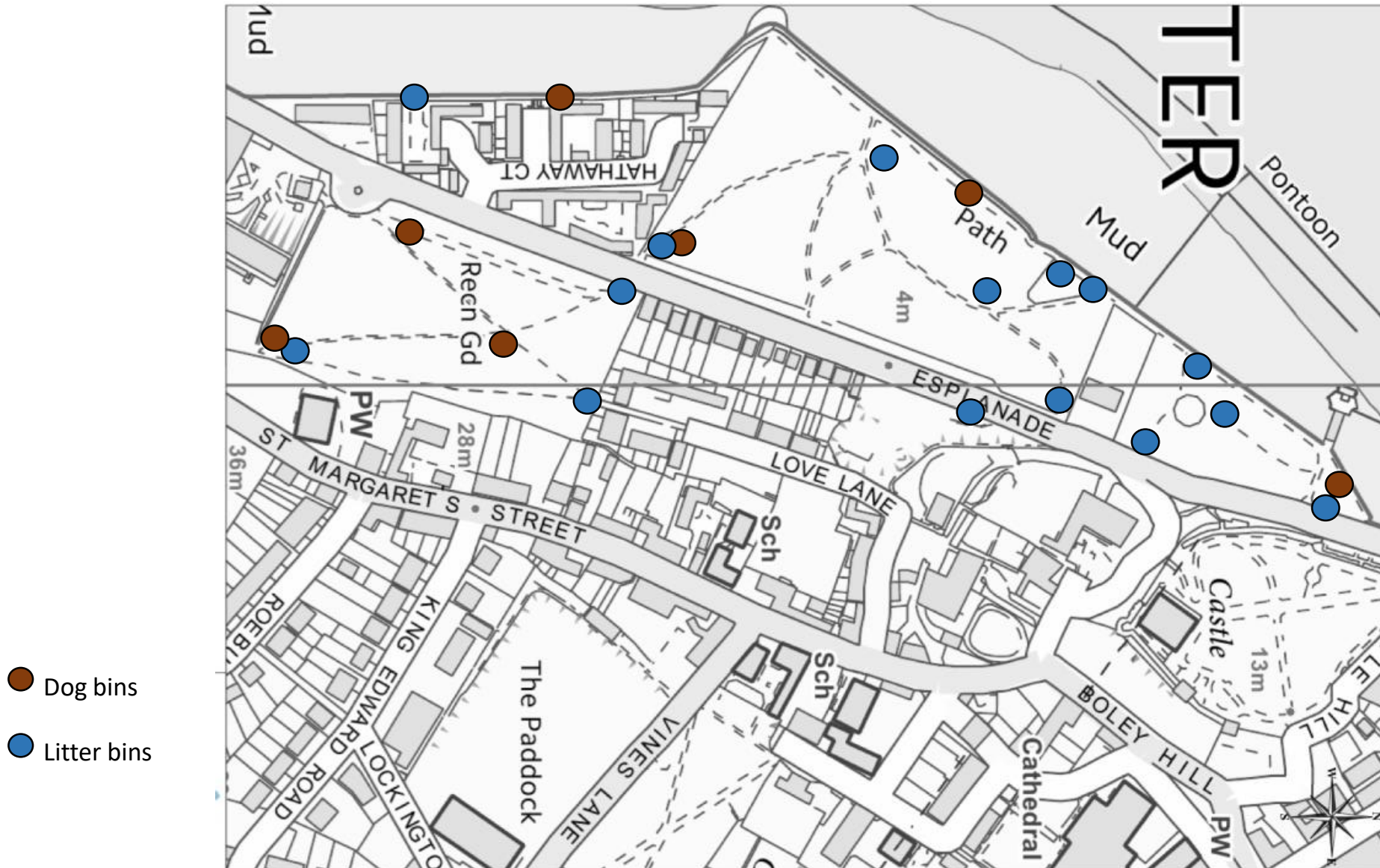


Barrier planting

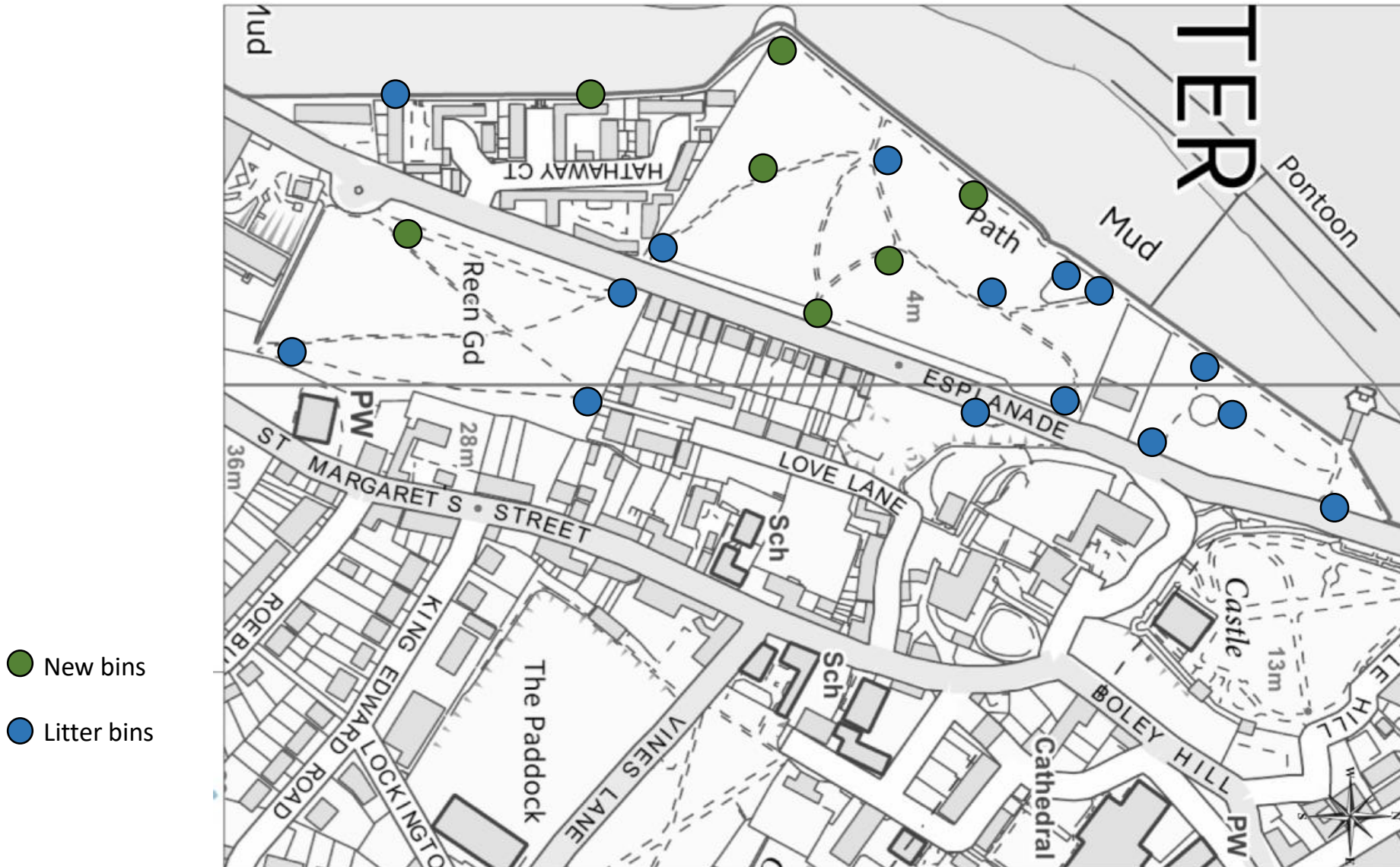
Barrier planting

Barrier planting

Bins – Current State



Bins – Proposed State





Landscape and fixtures

Much of the current provision is old, eroded and dilapidated. Improve and add to with:

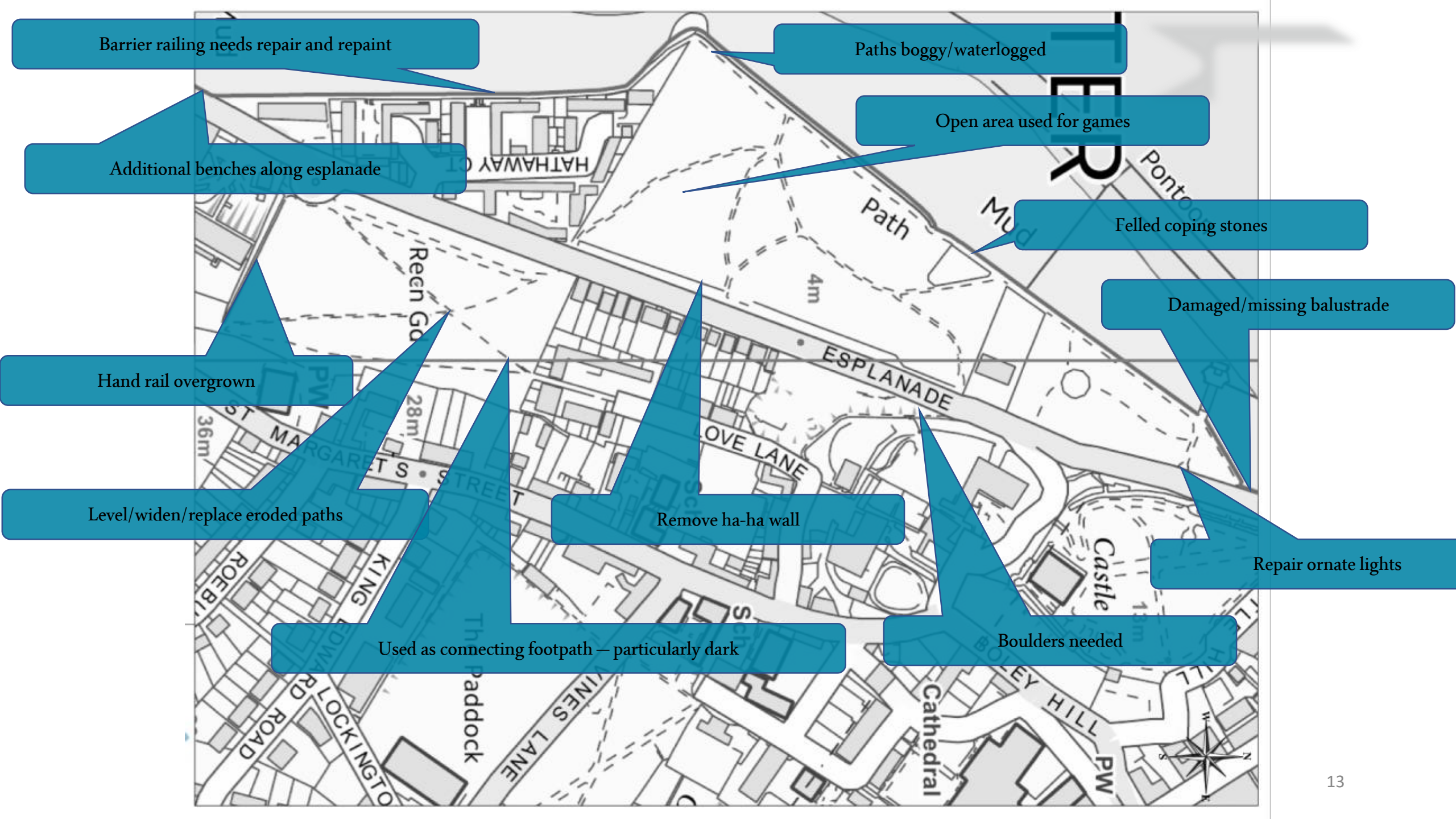
- Safe, sturdy, restored, fit-for-purpose paths, steps, bench wells, barriers and hand rails
- Even lawns on the flat, preserving some open space for games
- Reattach felled wall coping stones and repair/remove ha-ha wall
- Boulders to prevent rogue parking on green banks in the dell
- Repair/replace damaged or missing stone balustrade
- Lighting— improve and repair
- CCTV— Support installation



Benches & Picnic Tables – Current State



- Stats**
- Churchfields:
 - 8 benches (2 poor, 6 good)
 - Esplanade Gardens (play park):
 - 8 benches (7 poor, 1 good)
 - 5 picnic tables (3 poor, 2 good)
 - Esplanade Gardens (Sensory garden):
 - 7 benches (1 poor, 6 good)
- Total poor condition: 13
 Total good condition: 15
- Total benches: 23
 Total picnic tables: 5
- Bench: Good condition
 - Bench: Poor condition
 - Picnic table: Good condition
 - Picnic table: Poor condition



Barrier railing needs repair and repaint

Paths boggy/waterlogged

Additional benches along esplanade

Open area used for games

Felled coping stones

Hand rail overgrown

Damaged/missing balustrade

Level/widen/replace eroded paths

Remove ha-ha wall

Repair ornate lights

Used as connecting footpath - particularly dark

Boulders needed

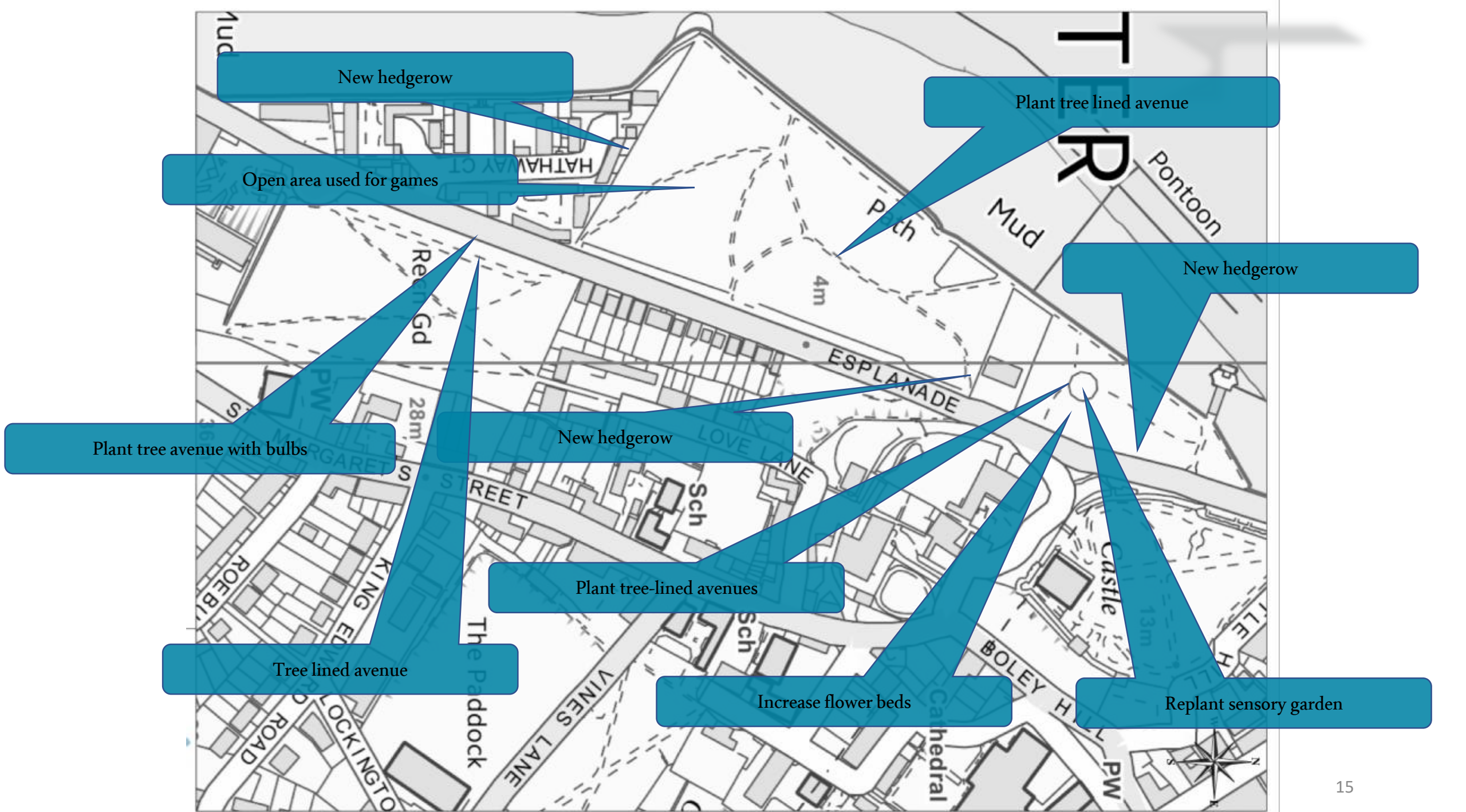


Green

A mixture of spaces to meet a variety of uses and users:

- Open green space
- Flowers — Wildflowers, formal flowerbeds and bulbs
- Trees — Specimen, native and local e.g. Kentish apples
- Food growing
- Hedgerows — particularly along roadside perimeter to reduce pollution and noise and create habitats
- Sensory and botanic gardens





New hedgerow

Open area used for games

Plant tree lined avenue

New hedgerow

Plant tree avenue with bulbs

New hedgerow

Tree lined avenue

Plant tree-lined avenues

Increase flower beds

Replant sensory garden

Trees – Current State – Autumn 2023



Stats

Churchfields:

24 trees (17 good, 3 poor, 2 dead, 2 felled, 0 TBC)

Esplanade Gardens (play park):

88 trees (54 good, 9 poor, 2 dead, 6 felled, 17 TBC)

Esplanade Gardens (Sensory garden):

9 trees (8 good, 0 poor, 0 dead, 0 felled, 1 TBC)

Total good: 79

Total poor: 12

Total dead: 4

Total felled: 8

Total trees: 121

 Good condition

 Poor condition

 Dead

 Felled

 TBC

Tree Selection

Best practice on tree selection: [Tree species selection for green infrastructure guide](#)

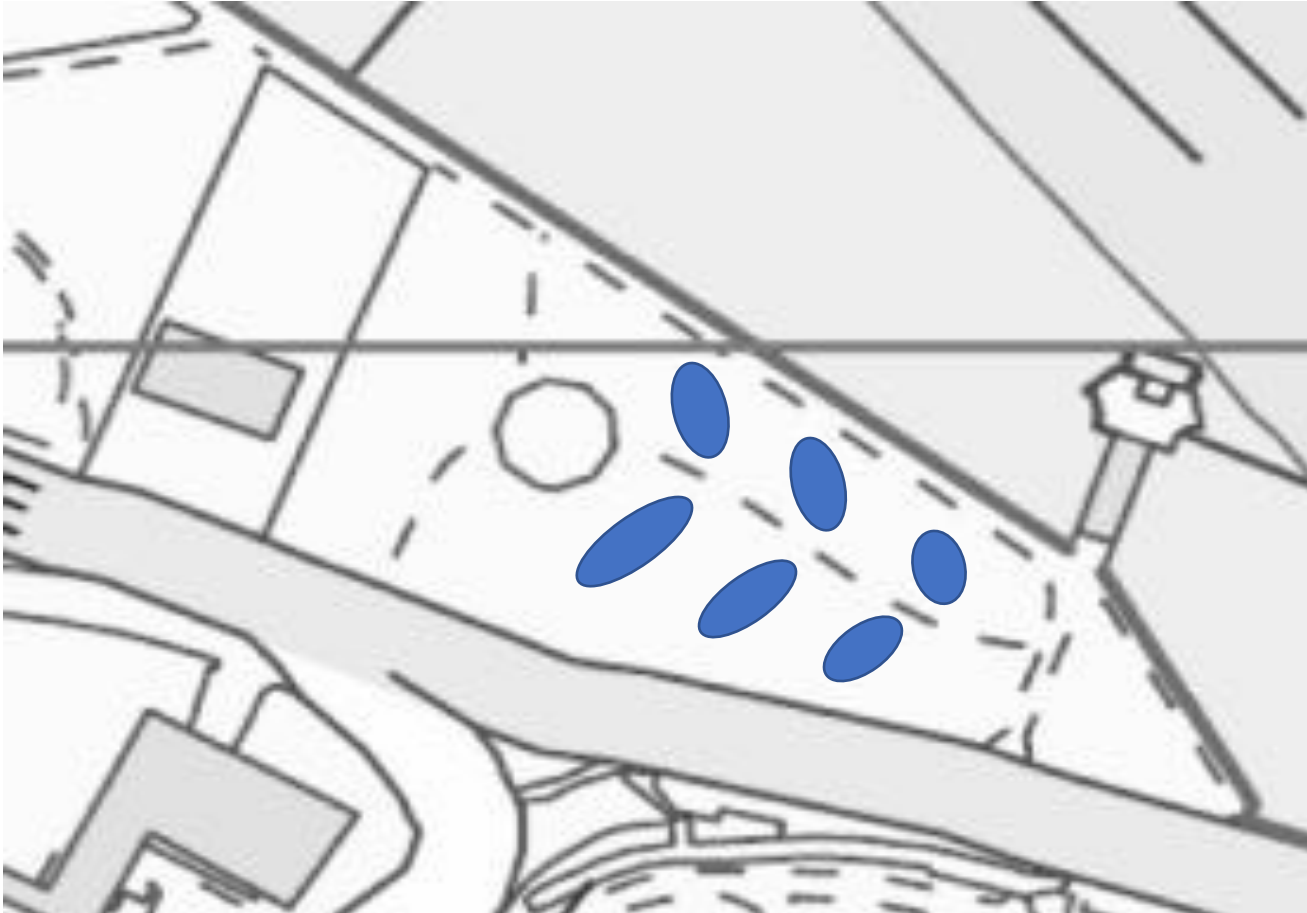
Salt is always an issue whether it is in the form of spray blown off the river or if the area floods. The most useful collection of trees for the esplanade site would most likely come from the species selected for coastal sites — see extract below.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1. <i>Acer monspessulanum</i> (Montpellier maple) | 15. <i>Crataegus x media</i> (Red thorn) | 28. <i>Ilex 'Nellie R. Stevens'</i> (Hybrid holly) | 44. <i>Pyrus salicifolia</i> (Willow-leaved pear) |
| 2. <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> (Sycamore) | 16. <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> (Common hawthorn) | 29. <i>Juniperus virginiana</i> (Eastern red cedar) | 45. <i>Quercus cerris</i> (Turkey oak) |
| 3. <i>Acer tataricum</i> (Tatarian maple) | 17. <i>Crataegus persimilis</i> (Broad-leaved cocksur thorn) | 30. <i>Maytenus boaria</i> (Chilean mayten) | 46. <i>Quercus ilex</i> (Holm oak) |
| 4. <i>Acer tataricum</i> subsp. <i>ginnala</i> (Amur maple) | 18. <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i> (Monterey cypress) | 31. <i>Olea europaea</i> (Olive) | 47. <i>Quercus petraea</i> (Sessile oak) |
| 5. <i>Ailanthus altissima</i> (Tree of heaven) | 19. <i>Cuprocyparis leylandii</i> (Leyland cypress) | 32. <i>Ostrya carpinifolia</i> (Hop hornbeam) | 48. <i>Sequoia sempervirens</i> (Coastal redwood) |
| 6. <i>Alnus cordata</i> (Italian alder) | 20. <i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i> (Russian olive) | 33. <i>Picea sitchensis</i> (Sitka spruce) | 49. <i>Sorbus intermedia</i> (Swedish whitebeam) |
| 7. <i>Alnus incana</i> (Grey alder) | 21. <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> (Common spindle tree) | 34. <i>Pinus nigra</i> (Black pine) | 50. <i>Sorbus latifolia</i> (Broad-leaved whitebeam) |
| 8. <i>Alnus x spaethii</i> (Spaeth alder) | 22. <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> (Honey locust) | 35. <i>Pinus pinaster</i> (Maritime pine) | 51. <i>Sorbus terminalis</i> (Wild service tree) |
| 9. <i>Amelanchier canadensis</i> (Canadian serviceberry) | 23. <i>Hippophaë salicifolia</i> (Willow-leaved sea buckthorn) | 36. <i>Pinus pinea</i> (Stone pine) | 52. <i>Tamarix gallica</i> (French tamarisk) |
| 10. <i>Araucaria araucana</i> (Monkey puzzle) | 24. <i>Ilex x altaclerensis</i> group (Hybrid holly) | 37. <i>Pinus radiata</i> (Monterey pine) | 53. <i>Tamarix ramosissima</i> (Salt cedar) |
| 11. <i>Cercis siliquastrum</i> (Judas tree) | 25. <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> (European holly) | 38. <i>Populus x canadensis</i> (Hybrid poplar) | 54. <i>Tamarix tetrandra</i> (Four-stamen tamarisk) |
| 12. <i>Crataegus x grignonensis</i> (Grignon hawthorn) | 26. <i>Ilex x aquipernyi 'Dragon Lady'</i> (Hybrid holly) | 39. <i>Populus nigra</i> (Black poplar) | 55. <i>Tilia cordata</i> (Small-leaved lime) |
| 13. <i>Crataegus laevigata</i> (Woodland hawthorn) | 27. <i>Ilex x koehneana 'Chestnut Leaf'</i> (Chestnut leaved holly) | 40. <i>Populus tremula</i> (Eurasian aspen) | 56. <i>Tilia x euchlora</i> (Caucasian lime) |
| 14. <i>Crataegus x lavalleei</i> (Lavallee hawthorn) | | 41. <i>Prunus lusitanica</i> (Portugal laurel) | 57. <i>Tilia tomentosa</i> (Silver lime) |
| | | 42. <i>Pyrus calleryana</i> (Callery pear) | 58. <i>Ulmus</i> - resistant cultivars (Elms) |
| | | 43. <i>Pyrus communis</i> (Common pear) | |

Trees- Proposed Avenues



New Planting Beds - The Layout



This is a simple graphic representation of what we're calling 'the flower' design, which is based on the idea for leaf shaped beds that Darren Toms (NoRSE) shared during the walkabout at the guildhall consultation session. The path represents a stem, the sensory beds a flowerhead and the proposed new beds the leaves.

Practically, we think this is a good idea as it will more evenly disperse the planting in the area.

The concept also pays tribute to the memorial benches that are part of the path, laying our own 'flower' in dedication to them.

New Planting Beds - The Plants

- Facets: perennial, hardy, low water consumption (when established), wildlife friendly, sustainable, low turnover, visually appealing, variety of heights, seasonal interest/impact, colour and foliage
- This will require an upfront investment in planting, which will lead to longer term savings in cost, water and carbon
- Examples: woody herbs, lavender, grasses, grasses, bulbs, succulents, ground cover
- Mulch: interesting mulch options: pebbles, shells, crushed husks
- Signage: Information about what's in the beds, the benefits to wildlife, the more sustainable nature of the planting
- Aftercare:
 - Watering regularly post initial planting, followed by regular (but less frequent) watering
 - Weeding
 - Back-filling dead, damaged, diseased or vandalised plants
 - Mulch replenishment
 - Pruning/bed management
 - Maintenance of signage

New Planting Beds - Our Contribution

We will...

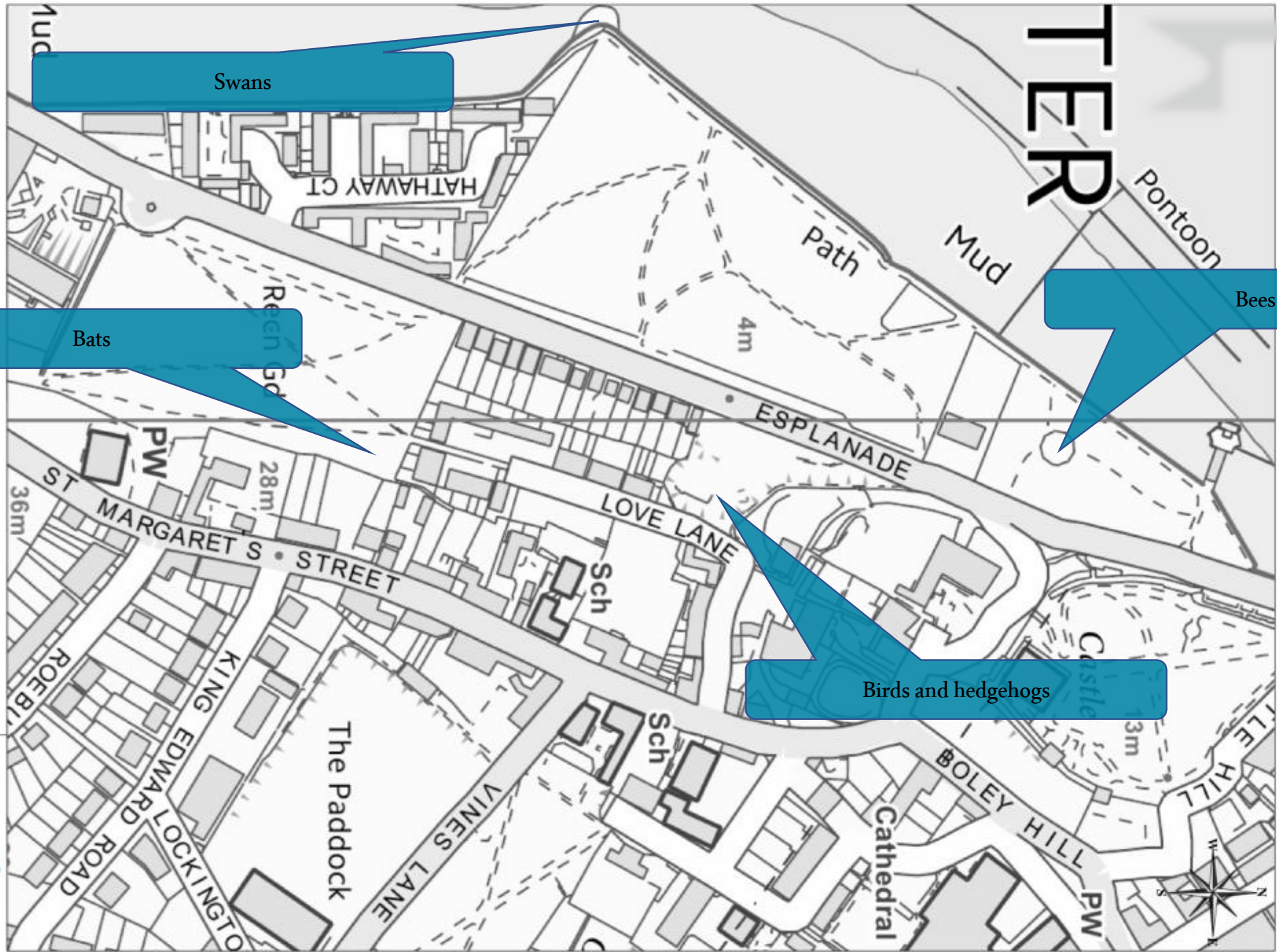
- work with the council to refine the layout and planting design
- consult our community about the design and share the insights with you to help refine it
- continue to do a monthly litter pick, including in these beds
- continue to watch over the site and provide insights about the condition of the planting and signage



Wildlife

Protect and enrich biodiversity:

- Birds
- Insects — bees in particular
- Small mammals — bats, hedgehogs
- Fish and other river animals



Swans

Bees

Bats

Birds and hedgehogs



Wellbeing, Recreation and Play

Improve facilities to aid physical and mental health:

- Walking — paths and marked routes around the site and along the esplanade
- Sports facilities/Outdoor gym — current provision well used
- Playground — cater for a wider age group
- Benches and picnic tables
- Preserving some areas free from noisy pursuits for relaxation and tranquillity
- Improved/repaired bike parking





Information and Education

Generate more awareness and encourage more use of the facilities:

- Improved entrance signage
- Site maps, including wider Rochester map (perhaps on back of noticeboard)
- Directional signage to pull people toward other local facilities
- Area/tourist map located on the high street to drive footfall

Provide educative plaques about local and site-specific:

- History
- Industry
- Flora and fauna
- River
- People e.g. Dickens, Billy Childish, Vera Conway-Gordon



Map/Signage to draw people through

Map/Signage to draw people through

Maritime history info

Industry history info

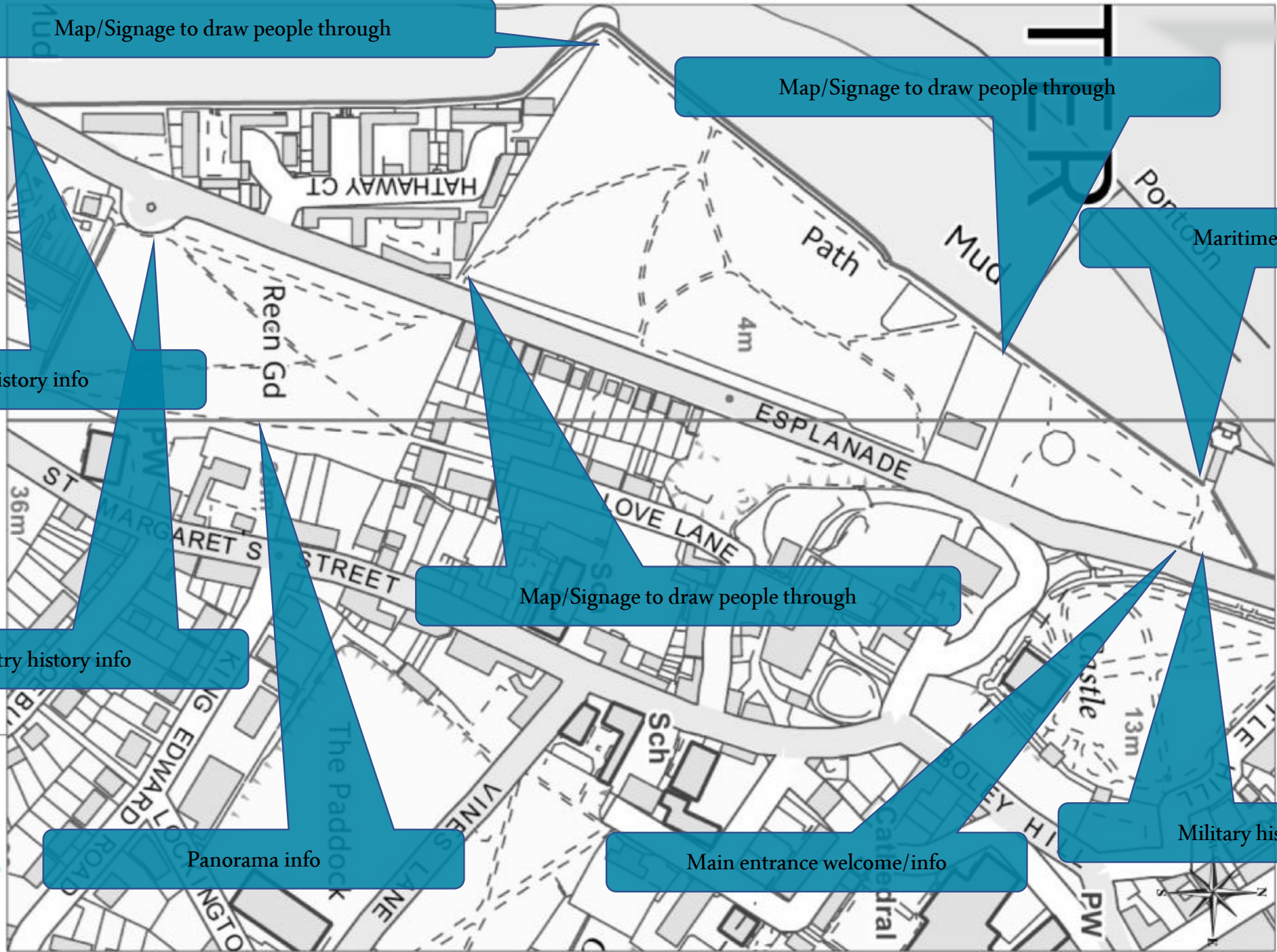
Map/Signage to draw people through

Industry history info

Panorama info

Main entrance welcome/info

Military history info

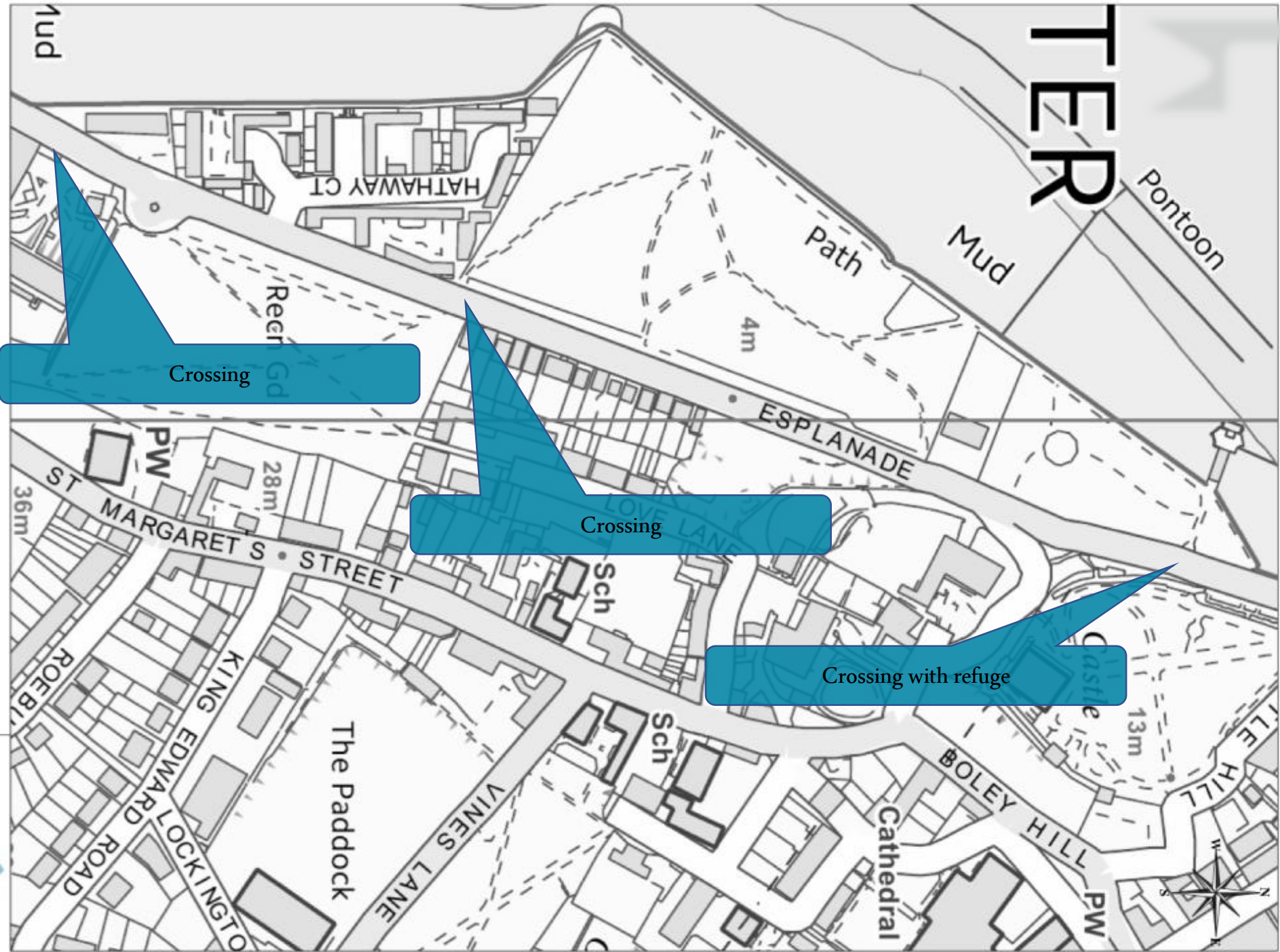




Road Safety

The Esplanade road is often heavy with traffic and parking. Measures should be taken to reduce noise and emission pollution and make the locale safer, particularly as the site is used by a lot of children:

- Road is subject to speeding - recommend traffic calming measures
- Cars often parked on both sides making crossing less safe — recommend 2-3 zebra crossings, with refuges where appropriate



Crossing

Crossing

Crossing with refuge

Arts and Culture



Permanent installations

Forth plinth style temporary installations



Services, Events and Activities

Services: Refreshments café/hut on-site, toilet signage

Events: Connecting key Rochester events, such as Sweeps, Dickens, concerts and Christmas

- Using the site to host parts of these established events
- Market stalls perhaps
- Making better use of the pier — on and to/from it





Purpose and Personality

Each part of the site should feel like it has a purpose and personality

- Esplanade Garden — A floral, formal enclosed garden with spaced out benches — a place to relax. Ideal for enticing Castle visitors to explore.
- Esplanade Park — A social, active and interactive park with picnic tables, playground, gym and space for games.
- Churchfields — A tranquil place to relax and watch the world go by in good weather. A place for people to sledge in the snow.





TER

Views, sunsets and sledging

Active and social

Floral and tranquil

Conclusions

This Vision Document reflects the collective ambition of FoRCE and our community to preserve, enhance, and celebrate the unique character of Rochester's green spaces and river walks. It outlines not just aspirations but achievable goals that align with our shared values of sustainability, accessibility, and community pride.

Through collaboration with volunteers, members, partners, and stakeholders, we have already made significant strides in many of the areas highlighted within this document. However, there is much more to do. The vision laid out here is both a roadmap and an invitation—a call to action for everyone who shares our commitment to protecting and enhancing Rochester's cherished landscapes.

We believe that by breaking this vision into achievable steps and continually listening to the community, we can make a tangible, lasting difference. This document is not the end but a starting point—a dynamic plan that will evolve as we grow and learn.

Together, we can ensure that Rochester's green spaces remain a source of beauty, inspiration, and enjoyment for all. Thank you for being a part of this journey.