

Summary

The proposal is to plan and publish up to 6 walks of varying lengths in and around Earley. The walks would be for the enjoyment of Earley residents and hopefully enhance their physical and mental health.

It should be noted that Shinfield Parish Council published a series of 6 local walks in leaflet form in 2013 (Appendix 1) and some walks were planned for Woodley Town Council in spring 2019 (Appendix 2).

Background

The 'lockdown' earlier this year, and more recently the focus on the need to 'combat obesity', have highlighted the importance of outdoor exercise for mental and physical wellbeing. The 'lockdown' also emphasised the need for public greenspace for those residents who do not have an outdoor space of their own.

There are a number of open spaces and footpaths within Earley, and Earley is within easy reach of The Thames Path and more open country side in Berkshire and South Oxfordshire.

This is the right time, therefore, to provide residents of Earley with information regarding accessible local walks.

Proposal

The proposal is to:

1. **Plan**, map and write instructions for a series of local walks of varying lengths. It is suggested that the initial series run to no more than 6 walks, and that the lengths vary from 3 to 6 miles. The walks would start from a location in Earley or just outside Earley. The start point would be on a bus route or next to a safe parking place – ideally both. Details of places of interest and amenities would be included.
2. **Test** the walks. 'Pre-walking' by a third party would ensure that the instructions are accurate.
3. **Publish** the walks on the Earley Town Council website, and, if possible, in leaflet form.
4. **Inform** Earley residents, ensuring that as many as possible know where to find the details of the walks.

How Earley Town Council can help

Members of Loddon Valley Ramblers living locally would be willing to plan the walks. However, ETC could help with:

1. **Mapping** – ideally the walks should be mapped on Ordnance Survey maps. Although the individual walk planners may have access to OS Maps for planning routes this does not provide them with a licence to publish their planned walks. Hopefully ETC could work with WBC to obtain a licence so that the walks can appear on OS maps rather than OpenStreetMap which had to be used for the Woodley Walks.
2. **Publishing on the website** – the walk planners are able to map the walk and write instructions but are not experts in formatting text and maps for publication on a website. It is hoped that ETC could provide some expert help in this area.
3. **Publishing in a leaflet** – ETC may be able to help the walk planners find funding for the printing of a leaflet if this was thought desirable.

Mary Bather

Loddon Valley Ramblers

Appendices:

1. **Photograph of Shinfield Walks leaflet**
2. **Bulmershe and Southlake walk**

Appendix 1
Shinfield leaflet



Walks in and around Woodley

Bulmershe, High Wood and Southlake

This circular walk takes you through an area of green space which was originally park of Bulmershe Park and Bulmershe Heath.

Distance: 3.4 miles

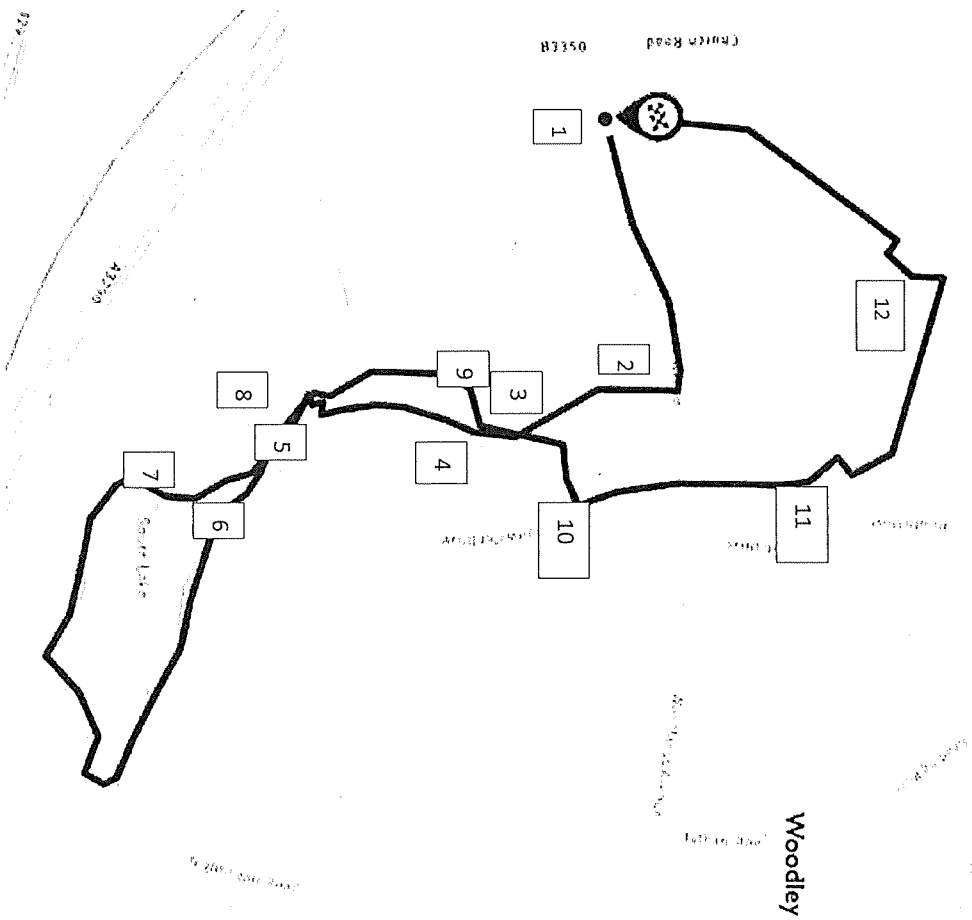
Number of stiles: 0

Type of paths: pavements and unsurfaced woodland paths some of which can be muddy in winter

Starting point: Layby on Woodlands Avenue but walkers can join the walk at any point

Public transport: Reading Buses (no. 13 and 14) stop on Woodlands Avenue.

Facilities: There is a convenience store on Woodlands Avenue, children's play parks on Woodlands Avenue and at Southlake and picnic benches at Southlake.



Directions for Bulmershe, Highwood and Southlake Walk – numbers refer to those on the map.

1. Park in the layby on the left-hand side of Woodlands Avenue when travelling towards Woodley. Cross Woodlands Ave at the pedestrian crossing opposite the children's play area.

This new housing estate (Parklands) is on the site of what was originally Woodley Lodge (home to Henry Addington before he became prime minister from 1801 to 1804), renamed Bulmershe Court by James Whelple after he moved there in 1801 and then demolished to build Bulmershe Teaching Training College in 1964. The old wall near The Orangery is the only bit of the original house left.

Turn left and follow the pavement down the hill, past the **children's play area, Co-op Convenience Store** and the University sports fields and pavilion.

2. Just before the mini roundabout, turn right on to the bridle way.

Bear left and follow the footpath passing ponds on the left and the pavilion and sports fields on the right.

The ponds were originally fish ponds on the Bulmershe Park estate

3. Join Kingsfisher Drive and bear right

4. At the sign for Highwood Nature Reserve turn right to enter the wood and turn immediately left to follow the footpath which runs along the edge of the wood.

After the footpath bends turn right, then sharp left, then right, then left.
Keep left and exit wood through the railings.

5. Cross path and follow footpath ahead towards the children's play area (**Southlake Amenity Play Area**) Walk past the play area on the left and Water Garden on the right towards the lake. There are **picnic benches** on the right.

6. Continue ahead, and follow the footpath all the way round the lake (South Lake) in a clockwise direction.

There was originally a North lake (in the region of Antrim Road) which was filled in and built on in the 1960s.

7. Once back at the picnic benches continue straight on keeping the benches to the right, past the Water Gardens on the right. When back at the play area fence turn left, join the footpath and retrace your steps to enter the wood through the railings.

8. Turn 145 degrees right, then left and then straight on through the wood. You will eventually walk past a gate to fenced heathland on the left.

9. Turn right at the sports fields and then left on to the pavement on Kingsfisher Drive. Follow the road round to the right to the end of Kingsfisher Drive and turn left into Fairwater Drive.

10. Walk past Highwood School and cross Woodlands Ave at the pedestrian crossing. Turn right and then almost immediately left into Shelligate Walk.

This is the site of Bulmershe Farm (which was the home farm of the Bulmershe Park Estate)
Continue on the footpath, keeping left all the time, past Bulmershe School until reaching the main school entrance.

11. At the entrance to the school turn right into Chequers Way and then left into Greys Crescent. Take the next left into Town Lane cycle way, round the edge of the school, passing the Bulmershe Gym on the left and carpark on the right.

Town Lane is part of a very ancient route from Culver Lane in Reading across the estate and Bulmershe Heath to the Chequers Pub and on to Sandford Mill and Hurst.

Ignore the first left turn, but about half walk up the lane turn left into Bulmershe Park.

12. Walk into the open space and then bear right, past the bench, along the edge of the trees on the right.

Just before the fence ahead, turn right into the wooded area and then left into the path that runs behind the school playing fields.

At the end of the playing fields fence head back across the field to the layby.