

Remaking The River TFG Report Appendices

Contents

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 2-12 | Background and Context |
| 13 | Appendix 1: DRF Plan of river within phase 7. |
| 14-15 | Appendix 2: Extract from Economic Assessment on Stakeholder opinions & letter from The High Wycombe Society. |
| 16-17 | Appendix 3: Summary of Environmental, Social and Health & Wellbeing benefits of remaking the river. |
| 18-20 | Appendix 4: Local Authority Cash-flow and Wider Economic Assessment of Remaking the River Wye. (Executive summary is contained here, the full report can be provided on request, a redacted version without commercially sensitive data can be made available to the public) |
| 19-24 | Appendix 5: Investigation of potential funding sources for remaking the river. |

Background and Context

High Wycombe is located at the confluence of the River Wye and the Hughenden stream and at the crossing point of a key route through the Chilterns and another which crossed at right angles to it from London to the Aylesbury Vale.

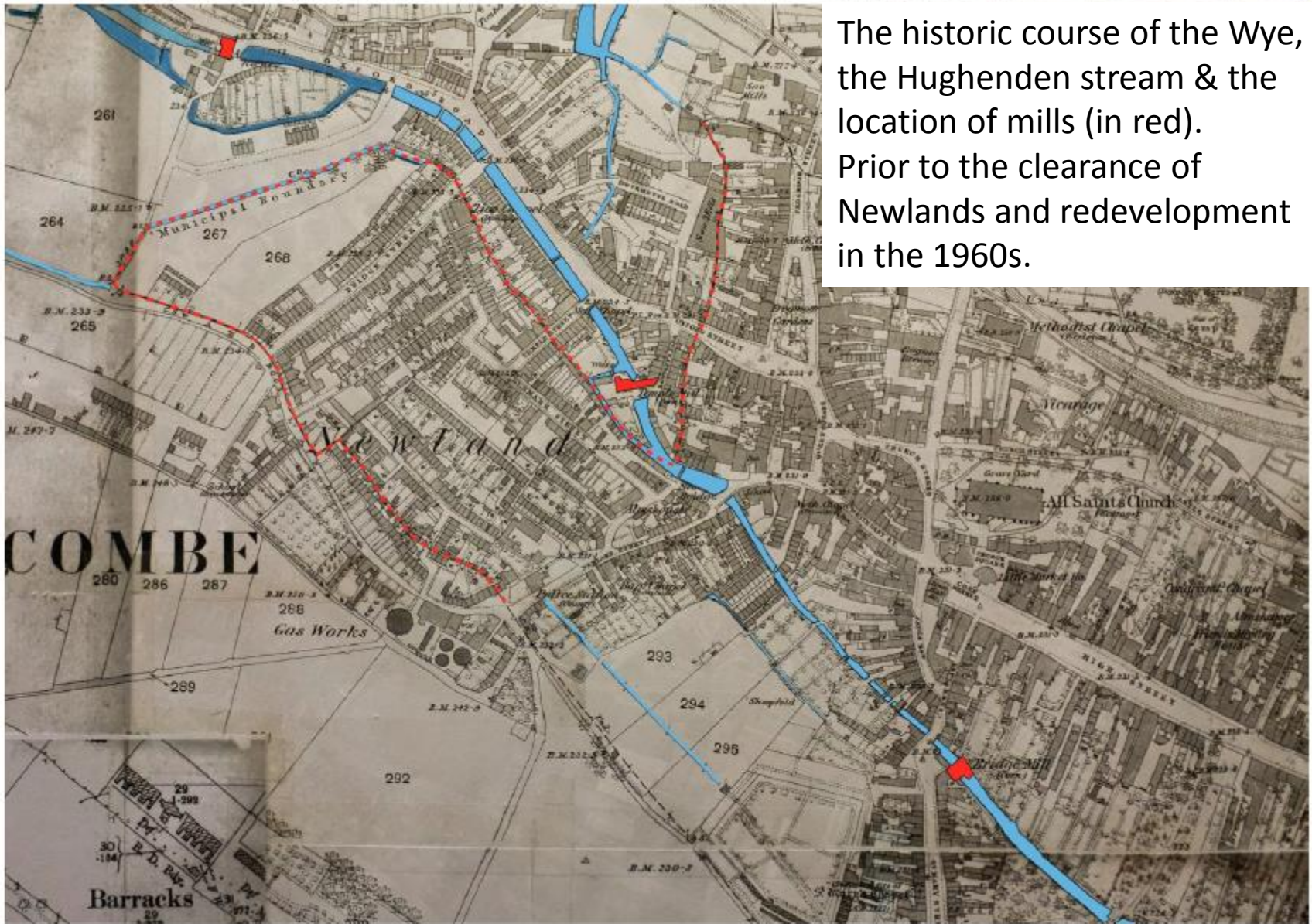
The Wye Valley has been occupied since Neolithic times and the Romans had a villa here in the 2nd century. At the time of the Domesday book in the late 11th century there were already 6 mills and by medieval times this grew to 32 between West Wycombe and Bourne End.

The plan on the following page shows the historical route of the river before it was covered over. Much of its route was a series of leats rather than the 'original' route of the river.

The photo below was taken c1910. It is looking east along Oxford Road from close to Brook Street. None of the buildings in the view survive and the river is no longer visible.



Many more historic photos of the river and the town centre can be found on the 'Sharing Wycombe's Old Photos (SWOP) website here: <https://swop.org.uk/>



The historic course of the Wye, the Hughenden stream & the location of mills (in red). Prior to the clearance of Newlands and redevelopment in the 1960s.

Background and Context

In the 1960's the area known as Newlands was cleared, the river was put into 840m of twin culverts from the location of Ash Mill to Bridge Mill, the A40 was turned into a dual carriageway along this length, the fly over was built and the Octagon shopping centre was constructed.



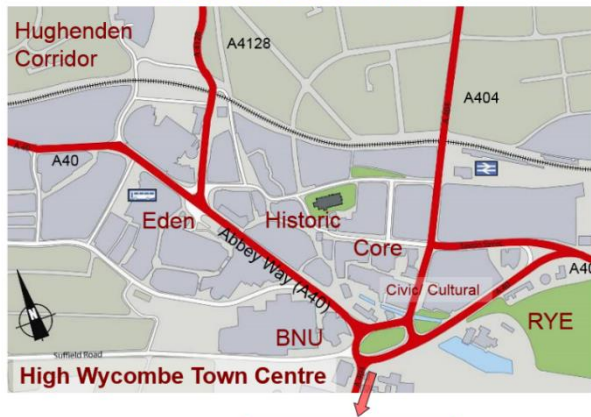
Much of what was Newlands remained as a surface car park until the construction of the Eden shopping centre circa 2006, at the same time the old bus station was replaced. Although many had hoped that the river would be remade at the same time as this redevelopment, it wasn't to be. A few years later much of the frontage on the roadside facing Eden was replaced with a new Sainsbury's.

Background and Context

High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan (HWTCMP)

The High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan was developed in the early 2000s with a vision of a different kind of town centre, less divided by a duel carriage way running through the middle and perhaps creating an opportunity to remake the river wye, facilitated by an 'alternative route' to reconsider how traffic moves through the town.

A divided town



Handy Cross Hub/ M40

Bringing the town together



And the return of the river



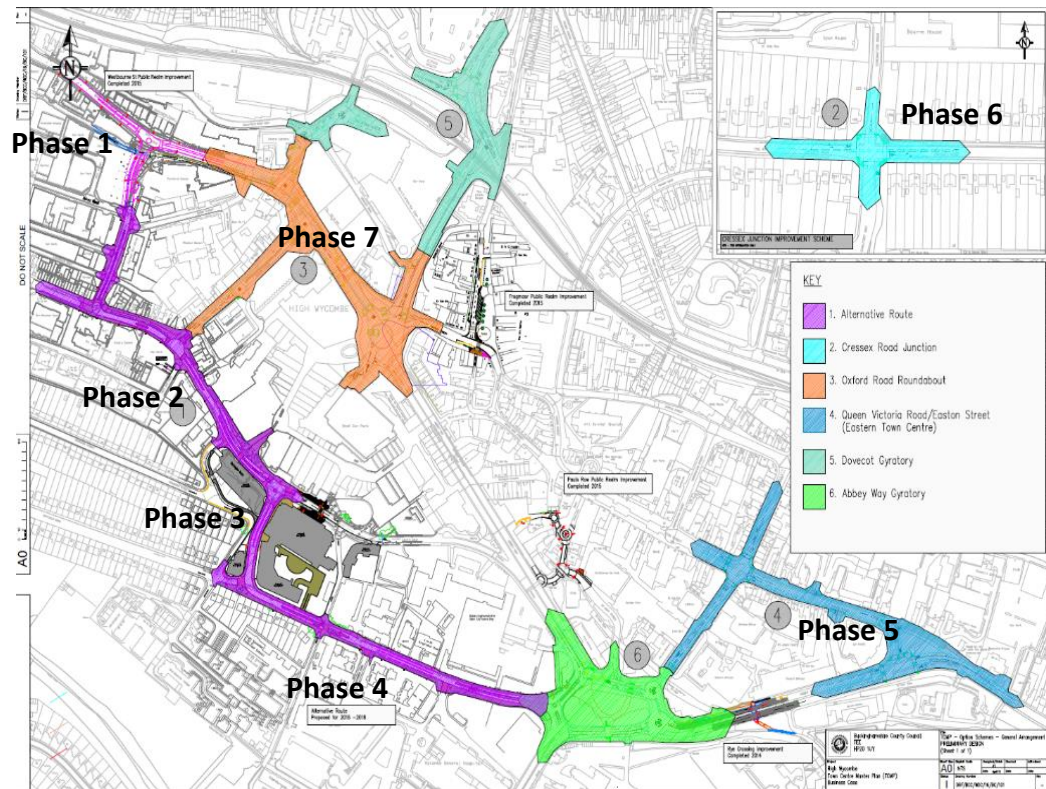
The 'alternative route', which is absolutely key to being able to remake the river is in the process of construction.

The new link has been constructed at Westbourne Street (phase 1) and futureproofing has been undertaken for the future remaking of the river by constructing a new culvert under the new road which could take the river close to surface level (rather than dropping down to the level of the old twin culverts).

Background and Context

The section of the masterplan along Desborough Road (phase 2) has also been completed the works on Suffield Road (phase 4) are nearly complete and the old gas works (phase 3) site is currently being redeveloped with the new link road across it being built at the same time.

The only other parts of the HWTCMP which is currently funded is the section around Queen Victoria Road and Easton Street (phase 5) where works started in July 2018 and Cressex Road Junction (phase 6) where works are yet to start. The opportunity for the river to be reopened is within phase 7 (Oxford Road) of the HWTCMP would is in the most part covered by the orange area on the plan.



Background and Context

Policy

Wycombe District Council's planning policy has for a long time had policies which have sought to conserve and enhance watercourses and which seek deculverting, this is mentioned in policy L5 of the still extant 2004 [Local Plan](#).

Policy CS3 in WDC's [Core Strategy](#) sets out principles relating to the Town Centre and seeks to ensure opportunities are taken in relation to the River Wye and the Hughenden Stream.

Policy CS3 is mentioned in the May 2012 High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan Background Paper, this paper goes on to set out a numbered objectives for the town.

MPS - To utilise the River Wye for “place-making” throughout the town centre by taking advantage of opportunities to reopen and improve the river corridor, including by increasing access to it and maintaining and enhancing its bio-diversity value. Ensure that no development prejudices future opportunities for the reopening of the River Wye.

xi) The town centre has many historic and natural assets, such as the setting of the historic High Street and the River Wye and Hughenden Stream, which make it a special place. However, in the past these assets have not been realised fully and there has been, over time, a deterioration of the quality of public spaces around the town centre. Studies have shown a direct link between the quality of a town centre environment and its economic performance – the more pleasant the place, the more people enjoy visiting and the more likely they are to return. Therefore a key element of the masterplan is to continue the programme of investing in improvements to the public spaces around the town centre to make it a more attractive and visitor friendly place.

Background and Context

POLICY HWTC1 DELIVERING THE TOWN CENTRE VISION

1. All development within the town centre should contribute towards delivering the vision for High Wycombe town centre as set out in Box 1 and illustrated in Figure 2. Planning permission will not be granted for any development which prejudices the implementation of this vision.

2. All development within the town centre should contribute towards meeting the following objectives for the town centre:

- a. To transform people's perceptions of High Wycombe, focusing new economic growth and development in the town centre and creating a diversity and richness of uses that satisfies community needs, enhances the natural and built environment and attracts visitors to the town.
- b. To reduce the physical impact of the highway network on the environmental quality of the town centre and re-establish High Wycombe as a People Place, where people on foot and cyclists take precedence, whilst maintaining accessibility to the town centre.
- c. To give High Wycombe an improved sense of place and make it a focus for the community and for civic activity, facilitating the integration of the 'old' and 'expanded' parts of the town centre, connecting key areas of activity together and protecting and enhancing where possible the historic townscape, environment, and landscape setting of the town centre.
- d. To create a high quality public space network within the town centre to act as focal points for the community and make a strong contribution to the image of the town.
- e. To utilise the River Wye for Place Making throughout the town centre by taking advantage of opportunities to reopen and improve the river corridor, including increasing access to it and maintaining and enhancing its biodiversity value. Ensure no development prejudices future opportunities for the reopening of the River Wye.

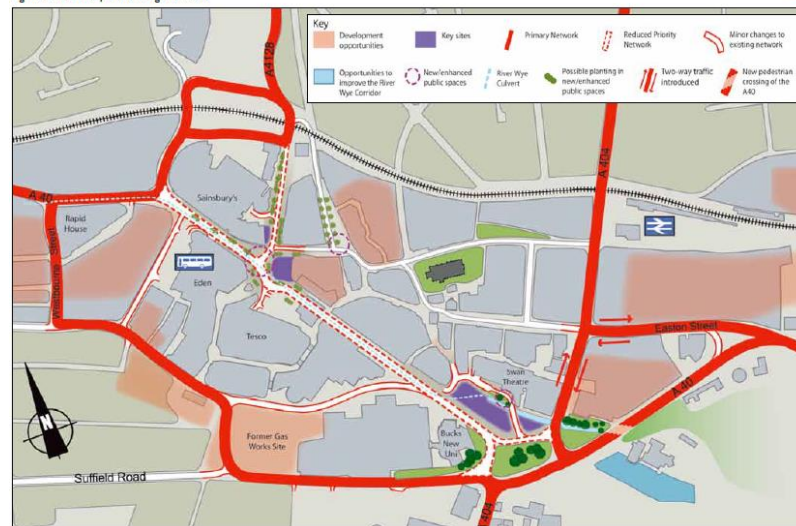
In the [Development and Site Allocations Plan of July 2013](#), the river and the context for place making is recognised in paragraph xi) Transforming Spaces: This then translates into policy in HWTC1 Delivering the Town Centre Vision:

3.9 Box 1 sets out our vision for High Wycombe Town Centre

"High Wycombe town centre will be a uniquely appealing and attractive destination with a thriving economic centre, and a high quality public realm, which emphasises the natural, historic and cultural assets of the town. The town centre will be a place where people choose to live, work and visit, with a variety of uses that include a good retail offer, high quality office and residential accommodation and cultural and educational opportunities centred around the Swan Theatre and Bucks New University campus.

The town centre will be well connected and accessible on foot, by road and by public transport. The provision of an improved street network will allow for greater integration of the historic and expanded town centre, with new high quality public spaces connecting key areas together through more direct and attractive linkages for pedestrians and cyclists and creating opportunities to enjoy the River Wye."

Figure 2. Our Plan for delivering the vision



Point 2. e. of the policy is of particular relevance to the river and para 3.17 of the supporting text which states (amongst other things):

3.1.7

The proposals set out within this document protect the opportunity for more significant changes to the town centre beyond 2026, including the full closure of Abbey Way flyover and the removal of the flyover ramps and further de-culverting of the River Wye, if the evidence at that time supports such a strategy.

Background and Context

Policy HWTC2 Town Centre Environment is also highly relevant to the ambition to remake the river:

POLICY HWTC2 TOWN CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

1. An improved public space network will be provided within the town centre, including:
 - a) Improvements to the existing public spaces at:
 - i. Frogmoor
 - ii. HWTC10 Swan Frontage
 - b) New spaces at:
 - i. HWTC16 Oxford Road Roundabout
 - c) Enhanced pedestrian and cycling links between new and improved spaces and the existing built and natural public space network, in particular between the town centre and the Rye
2. In order to achieve a high quality public realm, public spaces and streets should be designed to achieve the following:
 - a) Connectivity – public spaces should be well related to surrounding pedestrian

movement patterns and land uses

- b) Use and interaction – the use of street furniture and hard and soft landscaping should encourage pedestrians to meet and pass through the spaces
 - c) Opening up of the river – public spaces at HWTC10 Swan Frontage, and at other opportunities if they arise, should be designed to maximise the place-making potential of the River Wye
3. Development which is adjacent to new and/or existing public spaces is required to:
 - a) Provide active ground-floor frontages and interactive uses, such as retail, cafes and restaurants
 - b) Through its design, demonstrate consideration to the enclosure of, and sunlight penetration to the public space
 4. All development within the town centre should conserve or enhance the town centre townscape. Development proposals should give consideration to:
 - a) Impact on existing key views and opportunities for the opening up of new views
 - b) Relationships to adjacent buildings and important features within the townscape
 5. Development proposals which are located within the Source Protection Zone (SPZ) for the Pann Mill Public Water Abstraction (Principal Aquifer in the New Pit Chalk) should be designed to ensure no impact on the function of the Source Protection Zone

The supporting text to this policy in paragraph 3.26, is of particular significance:

3.26 Natural features can make a significant positive contribution to the character and quality of a place. The River Wye, currently culverted through much of the town centre, represents a significant underused resource. A key long-term aspiration for the town centre is to de-culvert the river, particularly in locations where it can make a significant contribution to busy public spaces in the town centre. At HWTC10 Swan Frontage there are shorter-term opportunities to enhance the existing river corridor and maximise its contribution to a high quality public realm in this area. Policy DM15 Protection & Enhancement of River and Stream Corridors protects these future opportunities.

Background and Context

[Wycombe District Council's Draft New Local Plan](#) does not replace any of the policies contained within the DSA but it does add additional support for the remaking of the river.

In the 'Principles for the High Wycombe Area', the heading reads:

'To meet the district-wide Strategic Objectives, the Council will shape development in the High Wycombe area to:'

Under 'Strength of Place', 2. c) states:

Secure further environmental enhancements to the River Wye and Hughenden Stream corridors including opening them up;

Under 'Champion town centres', 7.c) states:

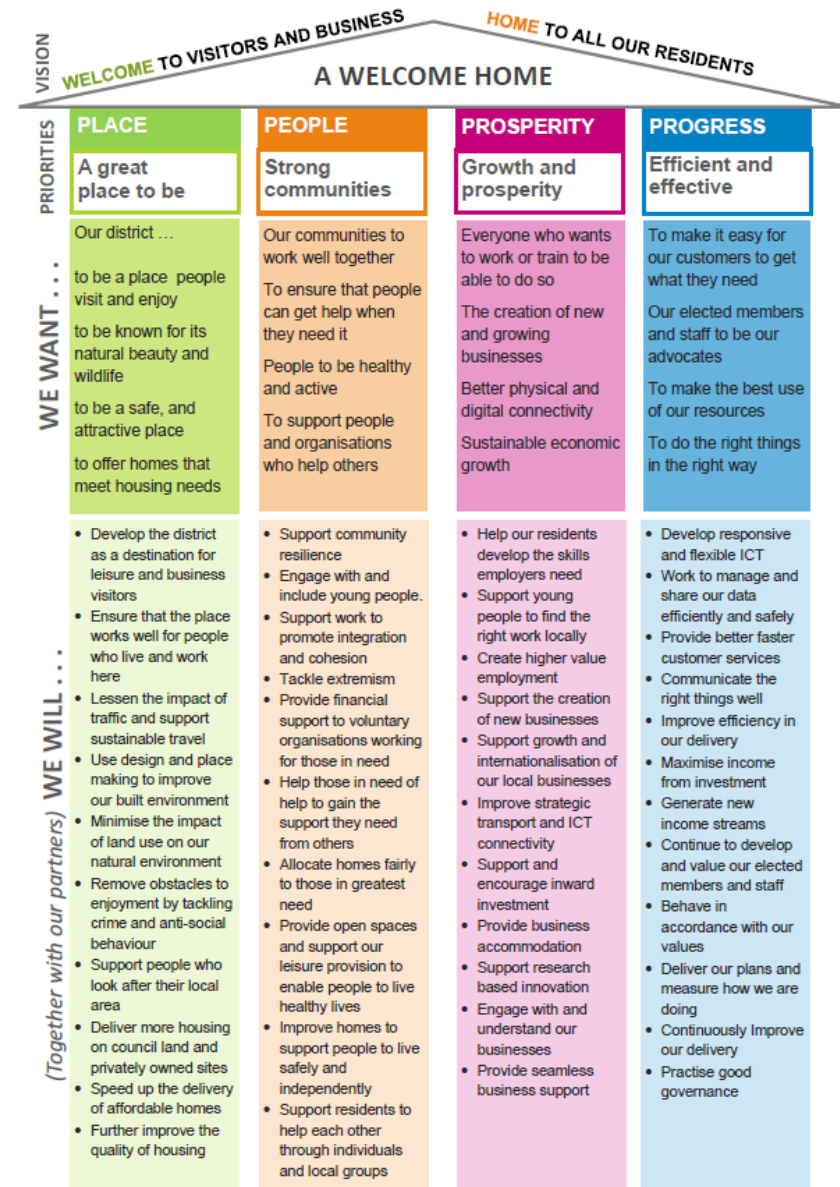
Make significant improvements to the quality of the town centre by re-routing traffic and "opening" up the River Wye;

Background and Context

WDCs Corporate Plan 2015-19 is also supportive of remaking the river:

The “People Priority” of the Council’s 2015-19 Corporate Plan includes an ambition to work on projects and schemes that benefit local communities.

The “Place Priority” identifies a key work stream as using CIL to invest in the area and improve infrastructure to reflect growing needs locally, and refers explicitly to continuing to implement the High Wycombe Town Centre Master Plan (HWTCMP) including the alternative route, public realm improvements and exploring ways to make the return of the River Wye through the town a reality.



Background and Context

The Wye is a river which has received much interest over the years, much of this has been from a positive perspective, whether it being because of the clean fresh water which would have supplied water meadows, the mills it has historically powered, the trout it supports (which have populated rivers in the southern hemisphere) or countless other significant features of interest. However the river also has had a negative side to its life, the water of the river was for a period polluted with industrial and sewerage waste (see [Silt Road, The Story of a Lost River by Charles Rangeley-Wilson](#)) and have carried stench and disease.

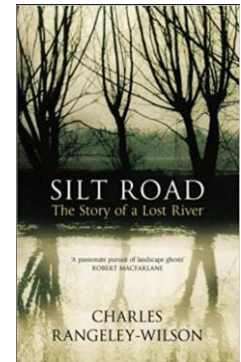
In more recent times the upper reaches ran dry due to over pumping of the aquifer that feeds it, this is well documented in the 1998 'River Wye Alleviation of Low Flows Study'.

It could be said that historically the value of the river has been as a resource, for agriculture, for powering mills, for taking waste away, or for supplying drinking water. However with changing times the value attributed to the river and the space it occupies has changed. Much of the building adjacent to the river has turned its back on it, realigned its course and reduced its space within a steep walled channel.

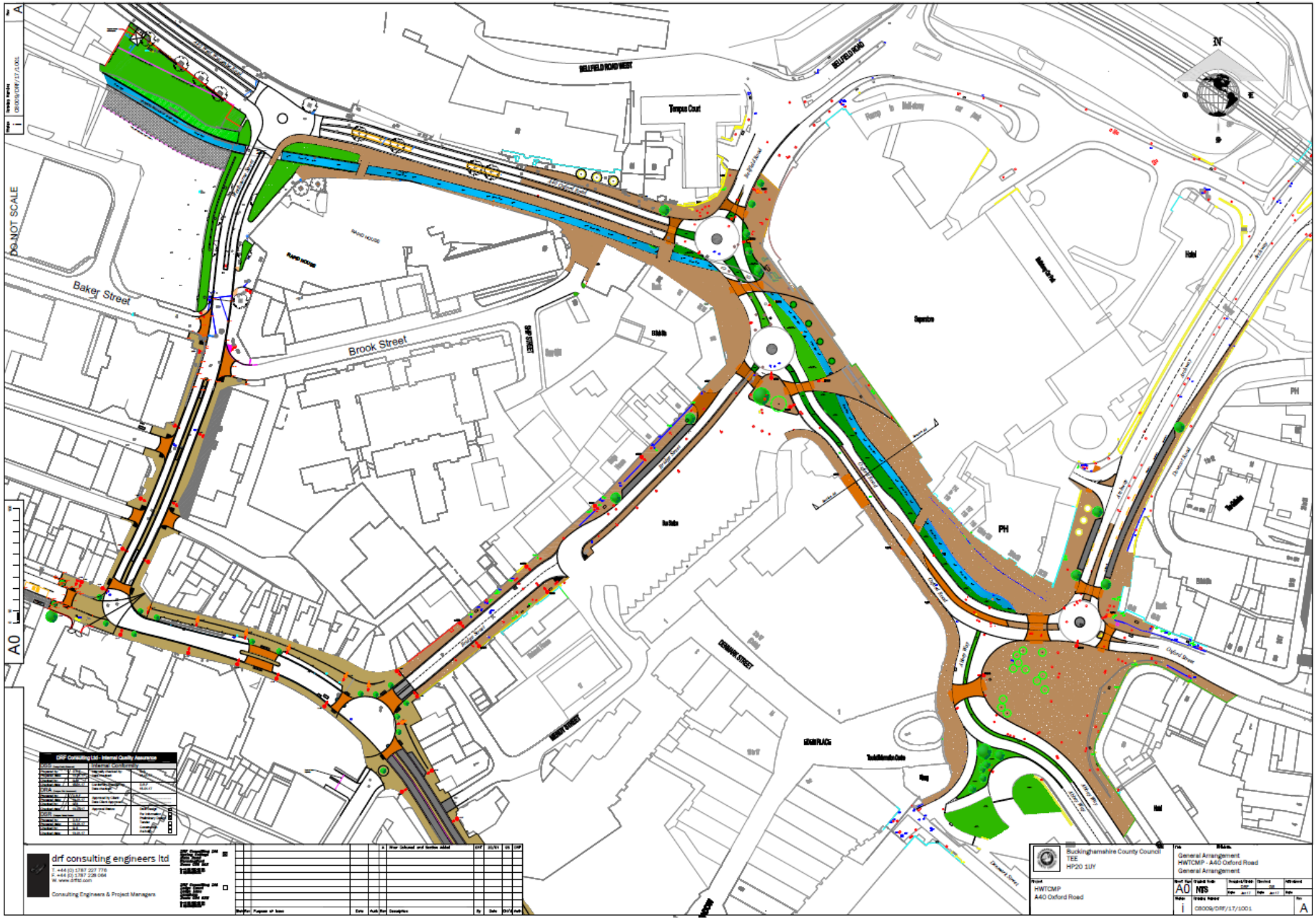
In a sense, culverting a river is an extreme example of undervaluing the benefits of a river, taking away its space, removing the contribution it makes to an area and destroying much of its wildlife value. Whilst historically this was fairly common as areas urbanised, recent decades have seen much greater recognition of the benefits and safeguarding of watercourses.

Wycombe District Council produced the [River Wye Study](#) in the 1990s which looked in depth at the issues which faced the Wye and the Hughenden stream at the time. This was updated in 2006 with a Technical Study. Several organisations have worked together to improve the river completing projects and fighting for the protection and enhancement of the river:

WDC have been involved and funded works at Desborough Recreation Ground and the section in front of the Wycombe Swan and adjacent the Liberal Club. WDC have also produced the [River Wye Advice Note](#) to be read in conjunction with planning policy. The [Revive the Wye](#) Partnership have championed the river and secured funding. The [Environment Agency](#) have worked to try and remove barriers to fish passage and improve its biodiversity and a desire to see the culvert removed in the town centre is included in the [River Basin Management Plan](#) for the area. The [Chiltern Rangers](#) have secured funding and worked with volunteers to accomplish many improvements. The [Chilterns Chalk Stream Project](#) have given expert advice and run projects. The [Wycombe Wildlife Group](#) has worked tirelessly to remove invasive species and look after the river. The [High Wycombe Society](#) has long campaigned for the environment of High Wycombe and recently voted overwhelmingly to support the remaking the river.



Appendix 1: DRF Plan of suggested course of remade river.



Appendix 2: Public support

When Eunomia carried out the economic assessment, they interviewed 9 local stakeholders, 8 were very positive about the proposed work ‘providing it was part of a wider scheme’ and ‘done properly’. They felt it would ‘provide a location within High Wycombe’s town centre’ and ‘a catalyst for regeneration’ and indicated it would enhance attractiveness and increase footfall and turnover.

Some views expressed by High Wycombe stakeholders about the proposed remaking of the River Wye

| Reasons: | Provisos: |
|---|---|
| <p>“People often have a negative view of High Wycombe but become more positive when they visit and see the historic buildings”.</p> <p>“We are short of places to go in the town centre to sit down”</p> <p>“The High street is dying currently. Would like to see it closed to traffic, only for bus/taxis use to create a café culture as in Reading”.</p> <p>“The area is very drab, lots of buildings and tarmac”.</p> <p>“Oxford Road has tended to divide the town into two halves so little movement because of the volume of traffic in that area”.</p> | <p>“It needs to be managed subsequently as part of a bigger strategy.”</p> <p>“It needs to be done properly with joined up thinking as part of a wider regeneration.”</p> <p>“Physical access to the river is crucial, without it, it’s pointless”.</p> <p>“would be more of a focal point if it had the river and benches”.</p> <p>“Needs to be in conjunction with more public open space along the river further through High Wycombe”/“Should be extended through the town”.</p> |
| Positives: | Concerns: |
| <p>“The natural element of the river can be nothing but a good thing”.</p> <p>“Catalyst for change in area that is traditionally the heart of the town centre”.</p> <p>“If the area was an attraction rather than a divide it could start development”.</p> <p>“People will actually want to come into town when there are pleasant walkways and greenery, especially seeing the river”.</p> <p>“if the change could help build a café culture and was linked to development in the high street, it would be good for all”.</p> <p>“it could be the primary driver/ first step to make a transformative area”.</p> <p>“it would add to the offer of the town. If it stimulates the street scene it would be very positive”.</p> <p>“Maybe would bring people to this side of town rather than staying by the Rye and would help the Eden area too”.</p> <p>“It might form the glue to bring the two ends of the town together”.</p> <p>“Creating green space would add to what the town has to offer”.</p> <p>“Would be great to see swans and ducks on the river”.</p> | <p>“Economically not sure that it is the best use of spend for impacting the Eden, have spoken with council about increasing streetscapes etc.”</p> <p>“Really hard to see the benefits without considering the impact of the construction and works on the centre. Have experienced negative impacts from previous council work on footfall etc in the centre”.</p> <p>“Not sure how it would impact on flooding. This would need to be assessed properly to reassure businesses”.</p> <p>“This is a little distanced from the High Street so not sure it would impact there”.</p> |

Appendix 2: Public support



Please reply to:
CHRIS WOODMAN
29 Maybrook Gardens,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP13 6PJ.
Tel: (01494) 528106
chriswoodman29@gmail.com

Cllr Hugh McCarthy
Chairman, River Wye Task & Finish Group
Wycombe District Council
Queen Victoria Road
High Wycombe
HP11 1BB

23 August 2018

Dear Hugh

This letter is to notify the Task & Finish Group of the outcome of the consideration of the proposed deculverting of High Wycombe's waterways by the Society's Annual General meeting on 8 June when, as you will recall, I gave a presentation on the subject to our Society members.

In my presentation I reminded the meeting that the River Wye is steeped in history (20 mills mentioned in the Domesday Book) and originally went through our town centre. Although it was culverted in 1967 that was recognised as a mistake almost immediately. Deculverting became one of the Society's aims by 1972, and in 2004 it was adopted by the Council as an objective in the Wycombe District Local Plan. Since then, the Council has achieved a great deal and I showed photographs of the excellent work done through planning consents, on both the River Wye and the Back Stream, at the Retail Park, Glory Mill, Grafton Street and Wye Dene. I noted that it is an aim of Revive the Wye and Friends of The Wye to have a footpath along the length of the Wye, and to make it more attractive to wildlife with the possibility of attracting even otters and water voles. And in the town centre itself, there is already the garden with a plaque to Jack Scruton next to Queen Victoria Road, and the recently-improved stretch near the Fire Station.

Then in 2010 the Peter Brett study set out options for deculverting, showing how the river could be attractively laid out through the town centre, provided the water level was raised (which has since been enabled by reconfiguring the culvert under Westbourne Street).

Nevertheless, I expressed my concern that there were signs that the good work done so far might go uncompleted, with Wycombe District Council now hesitating, possibly concerned that early public reaction to the works on the alternative route around the town centre could spill over into a lack of public support for deculverting. I gave my view that, once the Gas Works link (Suffield Hill) is complete, the public would come to appreciate and to use the Alternative Route. And whereas there would be more opportunities for deculverting if the Abbey Way flyover were eventually removed, a decision to remove would be for elected Councillors to take at the time in light of their assessment of public opinion. Meanwhile many other attractive deculverting opportunities (including outside Sainsbury) amply justified the Society renewing its long-held policy in favour of deculverting.

At the end of my presentation the meeting (with 62 members present) was asked to confirm or otherwise that the Society's accepted policy is "in favour of deculverting our waterways". Approximately 50 members voted in favour, with no votes against and 6 abstentions.

We would be grateful for any indication you can give of the next steps for the TFG, and also what you would now like the High Wycombe Society to do to help achieve the deculverting objective.

A copy of my presentation (slides and text) is available if this would be of assistance.

Kind Regards

High Wycombe Society
Planning Group

Appendix 3: Summary of Environmental, Social and Health & Wellbeing benefits of remaking the river.

Environmental Benefits

Chalk streams and rivers are internationally rare habitats (there are only 210 in the world). And in the UK they are designated a Habitat of Principal Importance (also known as a [Priority Habitat](#)) which means that they are recognised as most threatened and requiring conservation action under the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' and [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services>.

They are known for their exceptionally clean water which comes to the surface as springs from the underlying chalk aquifer. Their clean water, the substrate they flow over and their shallow gradients means that they have a unique set of characteristics which give them a rare and valuable ecology.

Despite the significant alterations to the Wye over the years the river still retains some of the special ecology which is associated with chalk streams. The Environment Agency have however identified that the river is failing its Water Framework Directive objectives in several ways, the upper section of the wye (from the source to the fire station) is classified as 'bad' which is the lowest category (<http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB106039023890>). An area where there is significant scope for improvement of the river is with regards to fish passage. The EA and other groups are working towards removing barriers to fish passage but the largest barrier is the culvert which due to its length (greater than 50m) means that fish won't move through it. Removing the section of culvert on Oxford Road will not remove the barrier completely - as approximately 400m will remain - it will be a significant step forward which could be further extended in the future.

The remaking of the river would bring nature into the town centre with riverside and instream vegetation and also a variety of fauna, and the moving of underground services and removal of the culverts allows for rooting space to be created in which trees can be planted which can grow to their full potential.

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/wwf_chalkstreamreport_jan15_forweb.pdf?_ga=1.44823268.1991529649.1444910634



UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat Descriptions

Rivers (Updated December 2011)

From:
UK Biodiversity Action Plan, Priority Habitat Descriptions. BRIG (ed. Ant Maddocks) 2008.

This document is available from:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/biodiv/2010>

For more information about the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) visit
<http://www.jcc.gov.uk/page-5119>

Please note: this document was updated in November 2010, and replaces an earlier version, in order to correct a broken web-link. No other changes have been made. The earlier version can be viewed and downloaded from The National Archives:
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/2013030517244/http://www.defra.gov.uk/page-5706>



UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

Published by JNCC and Defra
on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services



Appendix 3: Summary of Social, Health & Wellbeing and Environmental impact of remaking the river.

Social, Health and Wellbeing benefits.

Research has produced a large amount of evidence which demonstrates the positive impacts of green and blue space on health and wellbeing and this is accepted and promoted by many professional institutions the NHS and the UK government. The benefits come from both the way in which vegetation and water can change the physical urban environment which effects our bodies but also in the way in which the environment they create affects us mentally.

Remaking the river would not only bring the river back but it will also make green space into which trees and other vegetation can be planted. Trees planted in the ground can grow to their full potential and have far greater benefit. Leaves of plants capture particulate pollution and improve air quality, they cool the air around them through transpiration and shade, therefore reducing the heat island effect of urban areas, this is important because air pollution and excess heat puts stress on the human body and increases death rates.

The psychological effects of the remaking of the river would be likely to be wide ranging. Natural Environments tend to be visually complex, fascinating and mentally satisfying. The experience of seeing, hearing, touching and being within them reduces our stress levels, we become calmer, less tense and our blood pressure reduces, this is in stark contrast to the way we perceive many urban environments which can be hard, loud and threatening and these environments increase stress levels and blood pressure. The knock on effects of the physiological changes created by the worst urban environments has been shown through research to correlate with poor health and higher antisocial behaviour amongst other things. It has even been shown that just a view of nature can improve office workers state of mind and make them more productive, it has also been shown that people with a view of nature from a hospital window recover more quickly after operations. It is not surprising that in the 19th Century many green spaces were designated and protected with the health of the population in mind and that in many countries people are now prescribed spending time in nature to treat their physical and mental health.

What is sometimes an unconscious reaction to the environment impacts on our conscious choices of where we want to go and spend time. People will often go somewhere because they have to do their shopping or because they work there but when people have a choice they often prefer to spend time in more attractive places, often with green space. [WDC's canopy cover study](#) showed how property prices are higher where tree canopy cover is greater, that is because they are more desirable (many other correlations relating to health were also demonstrated).

Attractive places with green and blue spaces experience higher 'footfall' and 'dwell time' than places with equivalent services but without the green and blue spaces. This is because people visit them for more than just utilitarian reasons, they are destinations which people enjoy visiting. As they become destinations for their environment, they become places where people interact more and this has further positive physical and mental health

Further Reading on green and blue spaces and health:

A good article which looks at how 'blue' spaces impact upon people's health: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/impact-sea-lakes-rivers-peoples-health>

A summary of lots of research into the positive impact of trees and green spaces: <https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/>

A European project which looks at how blue spaces impact upon our health: <https://bluehealth2020.eu/>

Appendix 2: Local Authority Cash-flow and Wider Economic Assessment of Remaking the River Wye.

Wycombe District Commissioned Eunomia to carry out an economic assessment of the impact of remaking the river along Oxford Road as part of phase 7 of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan. The executive summary is included on this and the next 2 pages:



Executive Summary

Remaking the River Wye along Oxford Road will generate a more attractive area with green and blue space that creates financial benefits to Wycombe District Council (WDC) and wider environmental and social benefits to residents and visitors of High Wycombe. It is likely that such a project could repay itself from additional cash flows generated to WDC, provided its cost were mitigated by connecting delivery to any future highways work in the area. Financial returns to WDC could be made more favourable if co-funding were secured from grant-giving bodies that support recreation of heritage, improvement in urban river quality or reduction in flood risk.

In particular, a remade river would generate financial benefits to WDC from:

- increased turnover, and hence increased rents to WDC, in the Eden Centre, by generating more footfall;
- increased occupancy of business and residential premises;
- increased rateable value of business premises;
- increased resale value of residential properties developed in sight of the remade area;
- reduced long-term costs of maintaining the culverts under Oxford Road, the condition of which are degrading and could present a flood risk to the town centre.

Appendix 2: Local Authority Cash-flow and Wider Economic Assessment of Remaking the River Wye.

Figure E1 – Artist's impression of potentially remade section of the River Wye (<http://www.robertcolbourne.co.uk/>)

Looking west on a remade Oxford Road from the current roundabout location



Looking west over a remade roundabout, from the flyover



Appendix 2: Local Authority Cash-flow and Wider Economic Assessment of Remaking the River Wye.

The scale of benefits has been calculated using a mixture of literature reviews, comparable case studies and interviews with local High Wycombe businesses and WDC officials. A central model has been created that takes relatively conservative values from these findings and applies them to High Wycombe in relation to effects on properties that would be adjacent or within 500m of the proposed remaking area along Oxford Road, and its potential impact on footfall in the Eden Centre, which generates rents for WDC on the basis of its businesses' turnover.

To test the sensitivity of assumptions, two alternative scenarios were modelled, one using more conservative (Low) values and the other using values more in line with the findings found in research (High). Based on cost estimates of around £3.0m if co-delivered with wider highways development plans for the area, then the cash-flows to WDC are positive in most scenarios over a 30 year period, and positive in all scenarios over 60 years, see Table E-1.

Table E-1: Summary of Financial Model Results

| Indicator/ Time | Low Estimate | Central Estimate | High Estimate |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| 30-year Investment Period | | | |
| NPV (£) | -£0.7m | £0.5m | £2.6m |
| Benefit: Cost Ratio | 0.8 : 1 | 1.2:1 | 1.8:1 |
| Payback period | 47 years | 29 years | 17 years |
| 60-year Investment Period | | | |
| NPV (£) | £1.4m | £3.6m | £7.4m |
| Benefit: Cost Ratio | 1.4 : 1 | 2.0:1 | 3.1:1 |

In addition to the financial benefits to WDC, it is highly likely that a wider range of environmental and social benefits would arise from the remaking. Based on evidence from comparable case-studies, and views from local stakeholders, the scheme would provide wider benefits related to a sense of place and 'civic pride', recreation, wellbeing and health arising from opportunities to relax and connect with nature, and by ameliorating the effects of urban heat and air pollution. There is also scope for reduced flood risk which removing culverts can bring about. As a benchmark (reported in the appendices of this report) the Mayesbrook Park project, which included a remaking of a river, produced a wider benefit to cost ratio of 7:1 beyond any financial returns.

In terms of local support, of 9 local stakeholders interviewed, 8 were very positive about the proposed work 'providing it was part of a wider scheme' and 'done properly'. They felt it would 'provide a location within High Wycombe's town centre' and 'a catalyst for regeneration' and indicated it would enhance attractiveness and increase footfall and turnover.

From a longer-term strategic perspective, the proposed remaking this section of the River Wye would clearly be in line with WDC's vision for High Wycombe town centre:

"High Wycombe town centre will be a uniquely appealing and attractive destination with a thriving economic centre, and a high quality public realm, which emphasises the natural, historic and cultural assets of the town."

Taking the opportunity to make one section of the river would also enable High Wycombe to take advantage of any wider redevelopment opportunities that might arise elsewhere along the remaining culverted section of River Wye. Revealing the river in its entirety would recreate a statement of identity for High Wycombe that serves a much bigger environmental benefit and provides a focal point for the town that was lost in the 1960s.

Appendix 4: Investigation of potential funding sources for remaking the river.

Part of the remit of the Remaking the River T&FG has been to look into funding. A large number of potential sources have been investigated:

| | Name | Description | Issues |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | Thames Water - AMP6 – With EA | This money relates to water abstraction, it is essentially administered by the Environment Agency. There is only approximately £40,000 for the Wye. | EA would not want this all to be used towards one big project leaving them no funds for other smaller scale projects. |
| 2 | Thames Water Community Environment Fund | This is a fund relating to community engagement in river projects and up to £100,000 is available. | This is catered towards community involvement rather than funding of capital projects. The project would need to be delivered in a completely different way to enable this money to be relevant. Therefore this is not a viable source of funding. |
| 3 | Environment Agency – Water Environment Grant | This was a one off opportunity to seek funding for projects. It would cover capital costs and up to £2 million could be bid for. | This was aimed at projects on rural stretches of river, that were definitely going to go ahead starting in 2019. Remaking the River Wye could not be made to fit the criteria. |
| 4 | Thames Rivers Trust | This was able to fund projects up to £25,000 which would: Slow the flow, Improve water quality, Increase access/connectivity for fish. | It is likely that we could be successful in applying for this, but the mismatch in scale means that it could only be a small additional part of a much larger funding package. (it is uncertain whether this will be available in the future. |

Appendix 4: Investigation of potential funding sources for remaking the river.

| | Name | Description | Issues |
|---|---------------------------|--|---|
| 5 | Viola Environment Scheme | This fund is available for environmental and social projects | We would have to apply for this fund with a partner (we discussed this with the Groundworks trust) as it is not directly available to Local Authorities. The maximum award is £75,000 and this can only be for projects where the total cost is less than £250,000. Therefore we would have to separate part of the works to be a package which we could make appropriate for this fund, complicating project management and delivery. There is uncertainty whether we could be successful in obtaining this and we would need to do a lot more work with partners to and be sure the project was going ahead before pursuing. |
| 6 | Bucks County Council RFCC | This funding is central government grant aid which is administered by the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) which is associated with the Surface Water Management Plan for High Wycombe. The money is to help alleviate the surface water flooding problems in HW. To obtain funding a business case would need to be put forward. The funding is given out on a pro rata basis - x number of houses saved = y £ of funding. The most which could be bid for would be in the region of £250,000 | Karen Fisher (BCC) does not see the reopening of the river project as having much potential to reduce surface water flooding and therefore does not believe this funding would be granted. However we are aware that flood maps show the area in front of M&S as being at risk from flooding BCC are now looking at doing some more modelling work which will inform thinking. (https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/map?eastings=496443&northing=192151&address=100080505662) If the culvert was opened up, the impact on the surface water flood risk would depend on the design and the capacity of the new river channel and associated connections. Therefore certainty on whether funding could be available from this source is dependent upon the results of the planned modelling, the design of the remade river and being able to make a successful bid. |

Appendix 4: Investigation of potential funding sources for remaking the river.

| | Name | Description | Issues |
|----|--|--|---|
| 7 | Heritage Lottery Fund | This is the only Lottery Fund which could support the Remaking of the River Wye. It could in theory provide approximately £1.5 million for an eligible scheme. | A meeting with HLF in London revealed scepticism that the project could successfully attract this funding. Key issues included: The fund is heavily oversubscribed. There is no built heritage which would be uncovered as part of the project. There is not the urgency as is associated with other projects (e.g. building falling down). From a natural heritage perspective there the value for money is open to question as most of the cost relates to hard engineering works. There is limited scope for community engagement in the scheme. |
| 8 | EU Life Funding & EU Regional Development Fund | Large sums of money (£millions) are potentially available. In 2014 an unsuccessful bid was made – helpful feedback was given. | With Brexit this funding will be unavailable. The bidding and project timescales mean that we will have left the EU before the start of the project and we could therefore not be successful. The scale of improvements to the eco-system was also an issue |
| 9 | WWF | WWF have funded projects on Chalk streams/ivers | Funding has been through money from HSBC which has now dried up and through Coca Cola – but only in areas where they extract water for making their drinks. |
| 10 | Esme Fairburn Foundation | In 2016 they allocated £49.1 million of funding towards a wide range of work including the environment. | They no longer fund capital costs |
| 11 | Highways England | Highways England had £300 million for environmental improvements to the road network. | This money is only related to Highways England own strategic highway network, this does not include the A40 in Wycombe. |

Appendix 4: Investigation of potential funding sources for remaking the river.

| | Name | Description | Issues |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 12 | Crowd Funding and sponsoring. | This could provide several thousand or perhaps 10s or even 100s of thousands towards the costs. | We cannot start a funding campaign unless we are sure we will do the work. Therefore this could be a potential funding source for top up funding but we would need a decision first. The administration of funds would need to be considered further. |
| 13 | Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) | Both Cabinet and High Wycombe Town Committee are able to allocate CIL funding for the area in question. This money is collected from developers so that appropriate infrastructure improvements can be made. | CIL receipts are used to support the development of the local area, by funding: (a)the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or (b)anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area. Hence CIL funding is suited to projects like this which would bring about infrastructure renewal and support the regeneration of the town centre in a way that is consistent with the development framework and the Councils town centre vision |
| 14 | Capital Funding | Capital funding comes from the councils own funds. The Capital Programme agreed by February 2018 Cabinet and Full Council noted the aspiration to allocate £19m through CIL and Capital funding between 2019/20 and 2022/23 for the continuation of public realm and highway improvements in High Wycombe town centre. This has included provisions of £3.1 million for the remaking of river. | It is often (but not always) invested with the expectation of creating an asset or achieving a return. Remaking the river would produce long term returns to WDC as well as other returns e.g. place making, health & wellbeing, environmental gain, to the town and its businesses and people. |

To Conclude:

- There are only a small number of available funding options for remaking the river.
- If the scheme has the Council's support it will almost certainly need to provide the majority of funding to reopen the river through CIL and/or Capital funding.
- Crowd funding and other smaller grants may be able to provide a small amount of additional funding.