

Abbey Fields

Extended Consultation-Heritage Management Discussion Paper



December 2021

This brief report summarises consultation undertaken in early 2021. The report has been coordinated and prepared by Harrison Design Development Ltd with inputs from Warwick District Council and Idverde.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the site

1.1.1 Abbey Fields is located the heart of the historic core of Kenilworth Town, it lies immediately east of the spectacular Kenilworth Castle ruins. The whole of Abbey Fields is a Scheduled Monument and lies within a Conservation Area surrounded by many Listed Buildings. Designation Areas for Abbey Fields and surrounding Area are set out in Figure 1.

1.1.2 The origin of Abbey Fields is a monastic estate within a precinct wall. Today Abbey Fields survives as a series of open fields which contain the ruins of St Mary's Abbey, the church and churchyard of St Nicholas. There is a large lake in the fields which was created by Warwick District Council in the 1990's on the site of the old Abbey Pool.

1.1.3 The site is well used for formal (tennis courts, play area and swimming pool), and informal recreation. There is a modern swimming pool built in the centre of the field, which at the time of writing is planned for redevelopment.

1.2 Background and Appointment

1.2.1 Idverde UK are currently preparing a 10-year management and maintenance plan for Abbey Fields. An extensive consultation exercise was held towards the end of 2019, to discuss the management plan with stakeholders and consultants, consultation extended to landscape management, ecology, hydrology, history and archaeology of the site linked to the Scheduled Monument, on the site of Kenilworth Abbey.

1.2.2 HDD have been appointed by Idverde to assist with undertaking some extended consultation specifically focused on heritage elements of Abbey Fields, with the ultimate goal of developing heritage management content for the maintenance and management plan and improving management of the sites heritage.

2.0 SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT

2.1 Scope

2.1.1 The scope of this brief report is to report on the extended consultation exercise held in January 2021.

- Understand how the site management currently operates and the potential drivers for change to an alternative model.
- Consult with all parties in order to establish a shared sense of direction and ownership for the way forward, for the management of the sites heritage.
- Begin to gain consensus as to the format of the future management of the site heritage and provide an outline as to how this might be structured. (Further work and consultation will be required to progress this work).

3.0 EXTENDED CONSULTATION

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Following the extensive 'Fields for the Future' consultation undertaken in November and December 2019, it was identified that a number of key strands of the future management of Abbey Fields, including heritage required further work. HDD have been appointed to undertake extended consultation with key stakeholders in order to consider how the heritage of the site is currently managed and how heritage may be better managed in the future.

3.2 Consultees

3.2.1 Extended consultation was undertaken with the following statutory and local stakeholders:

- Historic England
- Warwickshire County Council-Archaeology
- Warwick District Council-Conservation, Green Spaces and Asset Management
- Kenilworth Abbey Advisory Committee (KAAC)

- Kenilworth History and Archaeology Society (KHAS)
- Kenilworth Town Council (KTC)
- Friends of Abbey Fields
- St Nicholas Church

3.2.2 The consultation took the form of interviews with individuals, (and individual groups). The interviews were undertaken by Claire Halestrap (Harrison Design Development), Andrew Kaufman (Idverde), David Anderson and Jon Holmes (Warwick District Council).

3.2.3 Prior to the meeting a brief discussion paper was circulated to all attendees, along with the 2005 Conservation Plan, written by KAAC. The extended consultation discussion paper is included at Appendix 1-Discussion paper for Extended Consultation.

3.2.4 A record of the meetings were made, and matters raised in the meetings have been used to inform the writing of of this report.

3.3 Summary of issues raised at Consultation Meetings

3.3.1 The 2005 Conservation Plan was received as a very helpful document and a good starting point for considering the future Management of Abbey Fields. However, during the consultation it was acknowledged that the Conservation Plan document did require some updating and that the policies needed further scrutiny, consultation and consensus. Not all parties were aware that the Conservation Plan existed.

3.3.2 All organisations were generally very positive about the existing management of Abbey Fields and felt that WDC were doing a good job balancing a number of different agendas. All comments to improve management were given in the context that the existing management is already pretty good. However, HE, KAAC, KHAS felt that over the last few years the balance between amenity and heritage was favouring amenity, with more resources being directed at amenity rather than heritage.

- 3.3.3 Stakeholders highlighted that communication could be a problem and often they were unsure which WDC department to liaise with in relation to Abbey Fields.
- 3.3.4 The current sitewide interpretation was highlighted as a major weakness by all parties, all stakeholders felt that there was the opportunity to rethink and radically improve the sitewide interpretation.
- 3.3.5 All the voluntary groups mentioned the struggle to operate with small numbers of volunteers and limited resources. Just keeping going required a lot of commitment.
- 3.3.6 WDC can get overwhelmed by requests for work/support at Abbey Fields, prioritising requests and managing a range of agendas, (heritage, biodiversity and amenity), with ever diminishing resources can be challenging.
- 3.3.7 The number of visitors using the site during the Covid 19 pandemic has increased dramatically, this has led to issues with increased erosion.

Table 1 below sets out the SWOT analysis from the consultation.

Table 1 SWOT Analysis from Extended Consultation

Strengths	Weaknesses and Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbey Fields is the Green Heart of the town and one of Kenilworth's greatest assets and a defining characteristic of the town. Abbey Fields is well used by local people. • There number of organisations involved in Abbey Fields and their dedication to the site is a real strength. • Designations assist with protecting the site. • The site is generally thought to be well maintained with the resources available. • Conservation Plan a good starting place for understanding the site heritage. • Works undertaken to the limes in the churchyard. • KHAS have a 3D rendition of the Abbey • Barn Museum • Gatehouse Project • Abbey Fields and Kenilworth Castle are key to Kenilworth's Tourism Offer • Abbey Fields is of economic benefit to the town, together with the castle it brings visitors into Kenilworth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDC officer time for meeting with stakeholders is limited, due to limited staff resources. • Stakeholder groups face a complex line of communication when dealing with WDC as several departments share responsibility for management of the Monument. • The current priority is to Conserve what is visible above ground and manage the deterioration of the ruins • Electricity supply to the Barn is limited and does not allow winter opening, (as supply not sufficient for heating). • No electrical supply to the Gatehouse and pavilion. • Lack of readily available expertise to assist with strategy, planning and specification and management of repairs to the monuments and Listed structures. (Particularly difficult for smaller repairs). • Designations (Listings and Scheduling require some adjustment as there are currently some inconsistencies/confusion). Everything currently treated as a SM which does give the assets adequate protection however reconsideration is appropriate to ensure/aid more effective management particularly of the above

	<p>ground-built structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Path widths are too narrow, people step of the side of the path.• WDC Officer can get inundated with requests for Abbey Fields, how are issues prioritised?• Stakeholder Groups are reliant on volunteers and self-funded, just keeping going can be a challenge.• The road crossing linking Abbey Fields to the castle is dangerous and a barrier to linking the two historical sites.• Barn museum opening limited to a few days a year, due to reliance on volunteers, and electricity (see above).• Managing the impact that the high numbers of visitors (particularly during the pandemic), have on the site.• Interventions and repairs can take a long time due to consents, number of parties involved, skills and funding.• WDC asset management surveys and planned services have dropped off in recent years, due to staffing capacity.• There is currently an over reliance on volunteers to report damage to the historic structures. KAAC currently meet monthly to look at the historic structures and report to WDC Asset Management,• There is some uncertainty as to which party is responsible for
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	<p>asset compliance, when voluntary organisations are assisting with asset management. Asset compliance can be costly and complex for voluntary organisations manage eg fire protection for the Barn Museum. (Note the licence for the Barn Museum is currently under view).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbey Fields is competing with other demands on WDC staff resources on principle green spaces., there is less time for monthly meetings, when monthly meetings did happen the quality of management was raised.
<p>Threats</p>	<p>Opportunities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation growth on the structures. • Masonry Remains are breaking up in places. • Wilful vandalism of structures. • Accidental damage through climbing on the ruins. • Utilities companies- there should be no trenching on site without Scheduled Monument consent • Swimming Pool Development-(Priory Mill lies under the development site). • Climate change-there are more wet winters, stream flooding. • Covid 19-the site is getting higher levels,(also a strength) of use leading to erosion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further interpretation of the sites heritage features. This could be really innovative interpretation without unearthing more of the ruins. • Digital interpretation. • Updating of the 2005 Conservation Plan to included a Character Area based Assessment and update on the research and evaluation undertaken since 2005. • GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar), surveys of the ditches and walls. • Location of paths are these in best places to understand site heritage.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further encroachment of amenity activities onto the Fields • Anti-social behaviour -litter and graffiti on monument. • Increasing pressure on Abbey Fields as an open space as Kenilworth expands • Minor proactive works sometimes not tackled due to budgets-not attending matters often leads to larger costs eg clearing of the Barn Museum gutters. • Himalayan Balsam in Abbey Fields • Dogs in the brook and lake impacting wildlife. • Construction of the swimming pool (construction traffic and the concentration of users into smaller areas of the site during construction may lead to increase erosion and health and safety issues). • Lighting of swimming Pool. • Heritage has and will continue to degrade over time • Condition of the air-raid shelters unknown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to increase biodiversity in in areas where the heritage is less sensitive. • Bowling Pavilion could be developed • Regular Condition Surveys of barn and Abbey ruins and other built structure could be undertaken regularly to assist planned maintenance, similar to those undertaken for churches-quinquennial inspection (every five years). • Consider and develop a Heritage Partnership with Historic England. • Develop agreed specifications for work to enable programming and reacting to repair work, to historic built structures by WDC Asset Management. • Earthwork mapping (could be included in Conservation Plan). • WDC could develop a single point of contact to assist stakeholder groups when reporting issues to WDC. Potential to promote/encourage enquires through WDC webforms. • Open Gatehouse and the Barn Museum to the public on a more regular basis. • Consider how the balance of heritage/biodiversity and amenity is managed. • Develop path network to improve access to the heritage
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	<p>features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDC/Historic England could potentially support stakeholder groups with resources and funding. • Build on links with castle. English Heritage are currently reviewing the interpretation of Kenilworth Castle so there are opportunities to link into that initiative. • Linking into new Kenilworth Town Council's Wayfinding project. • When WDC do spend money at Abbey Fields, on repairs, a record of spend should be made, so the potential to match fund the spend can be explored. • Scope for opening the two chambers of the gatehouse. • Scope for interpreting the 3 WW2 air raid shelters. • Link site interpretation to the Coffin of Geoffrey de Clinton project, it is planned that the coffin will eventually go into Kenilworth Castle • Kenilworth Castle gets 90K visitors per year. • Further Research into the Priory Mill. • Opportunities to manage flooding. • Funding opportunities could include HS2, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Community Infrastructure Levey (CLI) funding.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking routes and trails • Cycleway through Abbey Fields (not unanimous). • Installing electricity to the Barn Museum, Gatehouse and pavilion. The swimming pool development requires a new substation, could this substation be designed to allow for the future needs of the Barn Museum and Gatehouse, without another sub station being required. • Increase biodiversity within the churchyard. • Achieving equal access throughout Abbey Fields. • Develop links to Faculty Heritage Officer (Churches heritage advisor). • Abbey Fields Champion to drive things forward. • Sustain monthly operational team meetings Asset Management, Green Space Team, Grounds Maintenance Contractor and other WDC staff as appropriate. • WDC to assist voluntary organisations with compliance issues Better clarity of roles and responsibilities of any lease or license holders. • Develop a process map for managing Abbey Fields proactively and reactively.
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4.0 SUMMARY OF EXISTING MANAGEMENT

4.1 Outline of Existing Management

- 4.1.1 Figure 2 Abbey Fields -Existing Management Structure, summarises the existing management structure for Abbey Fields.
- 4.1.2 The site is owned and managed by Warwick District Council (WDC). WDC'S Green Spaces Team are responsible for the day-to-day management and maintenance of the whole of Abbey Fields green space, and this includes the closed churchyard. WDC must keep the churchyard in good order and its walls and fences in good repair (Local Government Act 1972). WDC Asset Management are responsible for maintaining the built structures which include: the Gatehouse, Abbey Ruins, Barn Museum and the churchyard walls and memorials which are kept in a safe condition.
- 4.1.3 WDC hold on site monthly operational management meetings to discuss and agree the management of Abbey Fields. These meetings include Asset Management, Green Space Team, Grounds Maintenance and other WDC staff as appropriate.
- 4.1.4 Everyone Active lease the swimming Pool site from WDC and manage as a public swimming pool.
- 4.1.5 KAAC monitor the condition and maintenance of the fabric of The Barn Museum, the Gatehouse and the Abbey ruins, and inform their owners (WDC) of any defects or problems. WDC Asset Management then consider potential repairs.
- 4.1.5 KHAS operate the Barn as a museum under a licence agreement (under review at time of writing), with WDC but they have no formal role in the management of Abbey Fields.
- 4.1.6 Friends of Abbey Fields assist with the management of the greenspace in liaison with and under direction of WDC.

- 4.1.7 Kenilworth Town Council, comment on planning applications affecting the site, assist other local groups, consider linkages to other initiatives in the town and may assist with funding projects on Abbey Fields.
- 4.1.8 As a Scheduled Monument, Historic England, administer and oversee Scheduled Monument consents for the site.
- 4.1.9 Warwickshire County Council consider planning applications for the site in liaison with Historic England and Warwick District Council. WCC County Archaeologist consider matters that affect the monument below ground, WDC Conservation Officer, consider above ground matters relating to the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area.

5.0 POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Reasons for Change

- 5.1.1 All organisations were generally positive about the existing management and felt that WDC were doing a good job balancing a number of different agendas.
- 5.1.2 However, as set out in section 3 there were some issues raised that would improve the current management, in particular relating to the heritage aspects of the project.

5.2 Potential Future Management Structure for Consideration.

- 5.2.1 A potential revised management structure for Abbey Fields is illustrated in Figure 3. A revised management structure would be subject to a successful large funding bid eg National Lottery Heritage Fund).
- 5.2.2 The proposal is to bring all stakeholders together into an Abbey Fields Partnership Board. The Partnership Board would meet monthly to Steer the direction of Abbey Fields.
- 5.2.3 The Abbey Fields Partnership Board would in the first instance :
- agree a Terms of Reference;

- develop and agree a Shared Vision for Abbey Fields;
- build on and update the current Conservation Plan-agree Conservation Policies and formerly adopt the updated Conservation Plan.
- Consider an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Abbey Fields.

5.2.4 The Abbey Fields Partnership Board would then steer management in accordance with the agreed Vision and Plans.

5.2.5 For the Abbey Fields Partnership Board to function it would have to have a coordinator to administer meetings, chase actions and ensure the correct lines of communication. This could be a rotating role however it would be best undertaken by a member of WDC staff. WDC do not currently have the resources to support a Partnership Board. NLHF may potentially be a source of funding for an Abbey Fields Development/Project Officer. Should this be the case and WDC be able to support a Project Officer. This Officer would then channel all enquiries and issues from the board to the correct WDC department or other organisation. This one point of contact (WDC Project Officer) would resolve the issue that stakeholders don't always know who to speak to about issues at Abbey Fields. Meanwhile WDC Green Space Team will continue to manage Abbey Fields.

5.2.6 It would be important that all Stakeholder matters relating to Abbey Fields were directed through the Abbey Fields Partnership Board. This would ensure that only shared priorities in accordance with an agreed Vision, Conservation and Management Plan policies were actioned. An agreed reporting mechanism and agreed priorities would assist management and assist with the current issues of numerous requests received by WDC for work at Abbey Fields, for which WDC may not have the resources to deliver.

5.2.7 The WDC and/or the Partnership Board could work towards developing a Heritage Agreement with Historic England. The Heritage Agreement would set out works that could be undertaken without discussion with Historic England, works requiring an exchange of letters but not requiring full Scheduled Monument Consent, and those works requiring Full Scheduled Monument Consent.

6.0 NEXT STEPS –

Management Structure

- 6.1.1 The extended consultation work has been undertaken with individual groups over a short space of time with limited resources and it is acknowledged that there is more work to do to gain consensus.
- 6.1.2 The issues raised in the consultation require further discussion with all stakeholders present. Initial discussions were held 'one to one' with each stakeholder group'. Ideally further consultation would take the form of a workshop with all stakeholders present, using this document as a discussion paper.
- 6.1.3 Following further liaison all parties can take a view as to whether change is required or whether management of Abbey Fields remains as it is.
- 6.1.4 Prior to establishment, the governance of the Abbey Fields Partnership Board would need agreeing and set out in a formal (but not legally binding) Memorandum of Agreement/Terms of Reference Document.
- 6.1.5 Whatever future management structure is agreed it is important that a shared Vision for Abbey Fields is developed. This should be undertaken ahead of a changed management structure and revising the management structure is likely to take some time and is reliant on obtaining funding for a project officer to support a revised structure.

Suggestions for Actions to Improve existing Management of Abbey Fields

Short Term (1 - 3 years)

- 1 Stakeholder workshops to follow on from separate interviews with each stakeholder group
- 2 Liaise with WDC on available resources/priorities
- 3 Work with all stakeholders to develop a shared Vision for Abbey Fields
- 4 Liaise with NLHF on the potential of making a Heritage Fund grant application for Abbey Fields
- 5 Consider making a Round 1 Application to NLHF
- 6 Update the Conservation Plan, to include a Character Based Assessment of the site, review and gain consensus on the Policies section, update on culvert works
- 7 Continue to manage the deterioration of what's there. Conserve what is visible, before putting resources to further excavation work
- 8 Review and amend Designations to resolve current inconsistencies - Historic England
- 9 Consider a revised management structure and reporting for Abbey Fields
- 10 Develop process map for planned and reactive repairs, in consultation with Green Spaces Team and Asset Management Team.
- 11 Consider what further historical/archaeological evaluation of Abbey Fields are desirable (prioritise)
- 12 WDC conduct, preliminary condition surveys of built structures.
- 13 Develop standard method statements and specifications for regular works, to assist with consents and commissioning of repairs eg masonry repairs, vegetation management.
- 14 Develop a Heritage Agreement for Abbey Fields with Historic England

Medium - Term Potentially as part of National Lottery Heritage Fund Bid (4 - 6 years)

- 15 Prepare a Round 1 NLHF application
- 16 Prepare a site wide outline Master Plan for the site and integrate with the Conservation Plan and Management Plan
- 17 Review lists of available Conservation Specialists to assist with Conservation works, consider framework agreements, so reactive works can be more easily commissioned.
- 18 Regular updating of condition surveys minimum every 5 years.
- 19 Earthworks mapping using Lidar
- 20 Prepare a Round 2 NLHF application
- 21 Improve interpretation of the asset.

Longer Term - Potentially National Lottery Heritage Fund (7 – 10 years)

- 22 Undertake works as set out in NLHF bid
- 23 Abbey Fields Project Officer, funded through NLHF

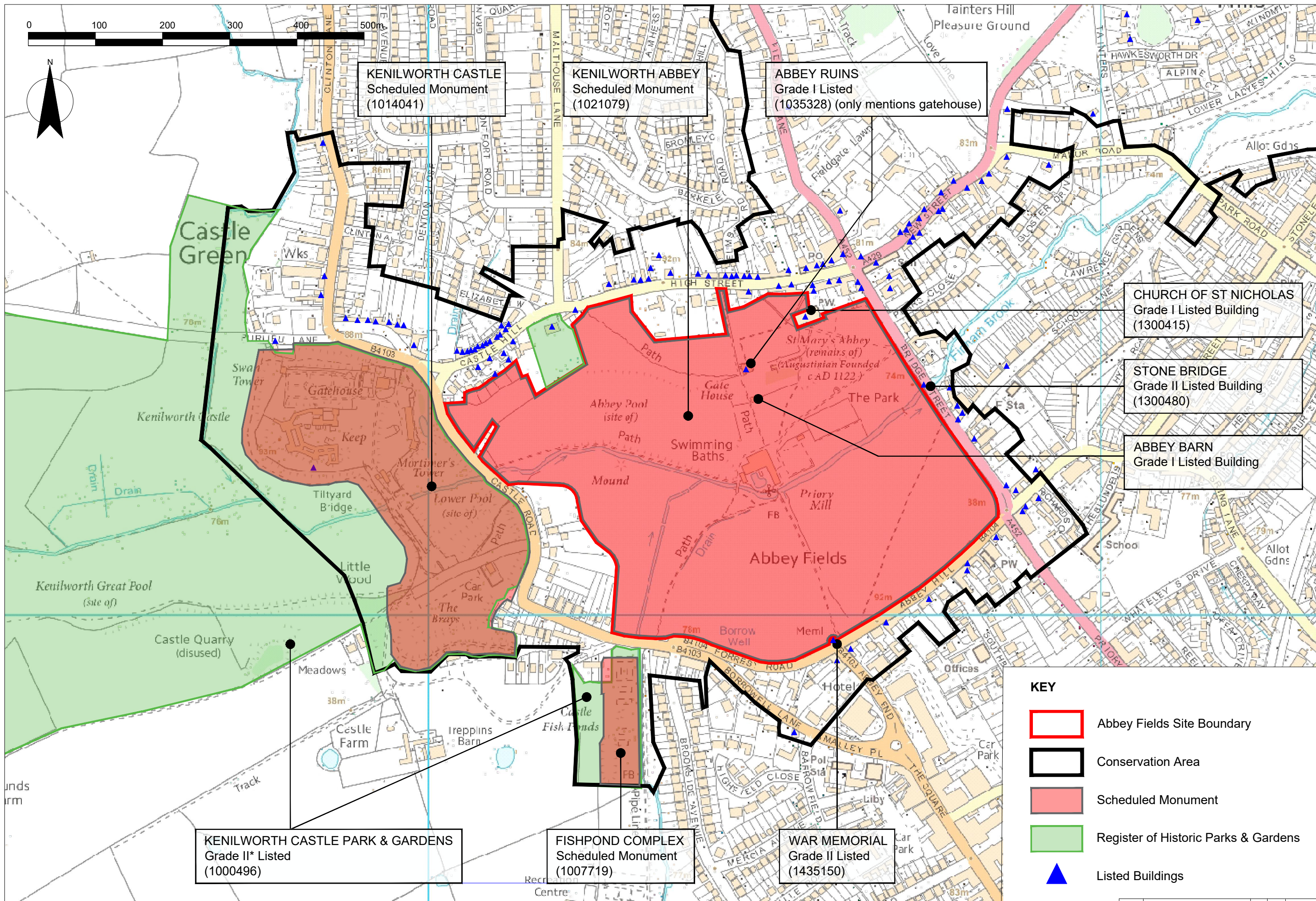


FIGURE 2 - ABBEY FIELDS CURRENT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE - vs3 (Draft)

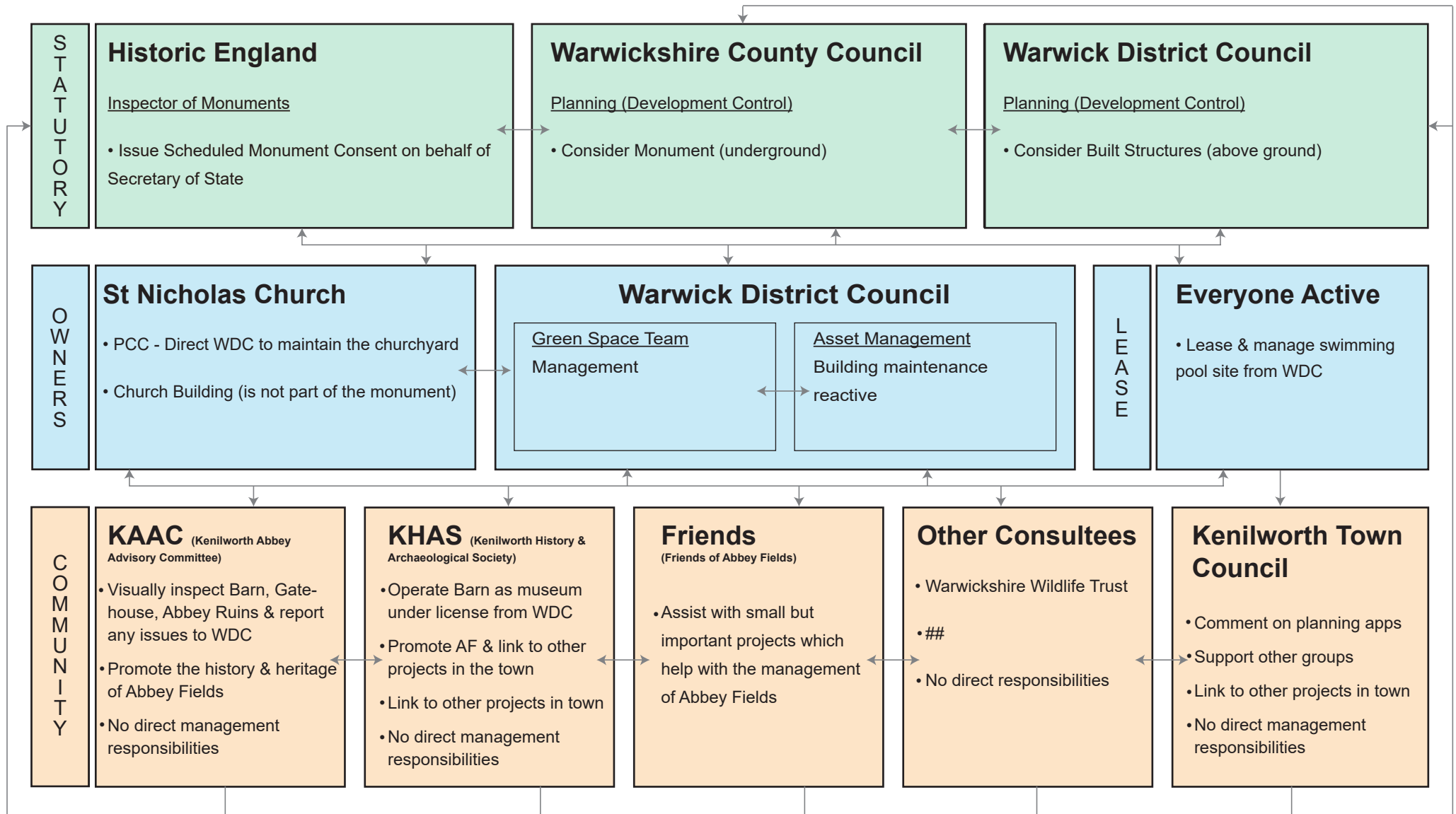
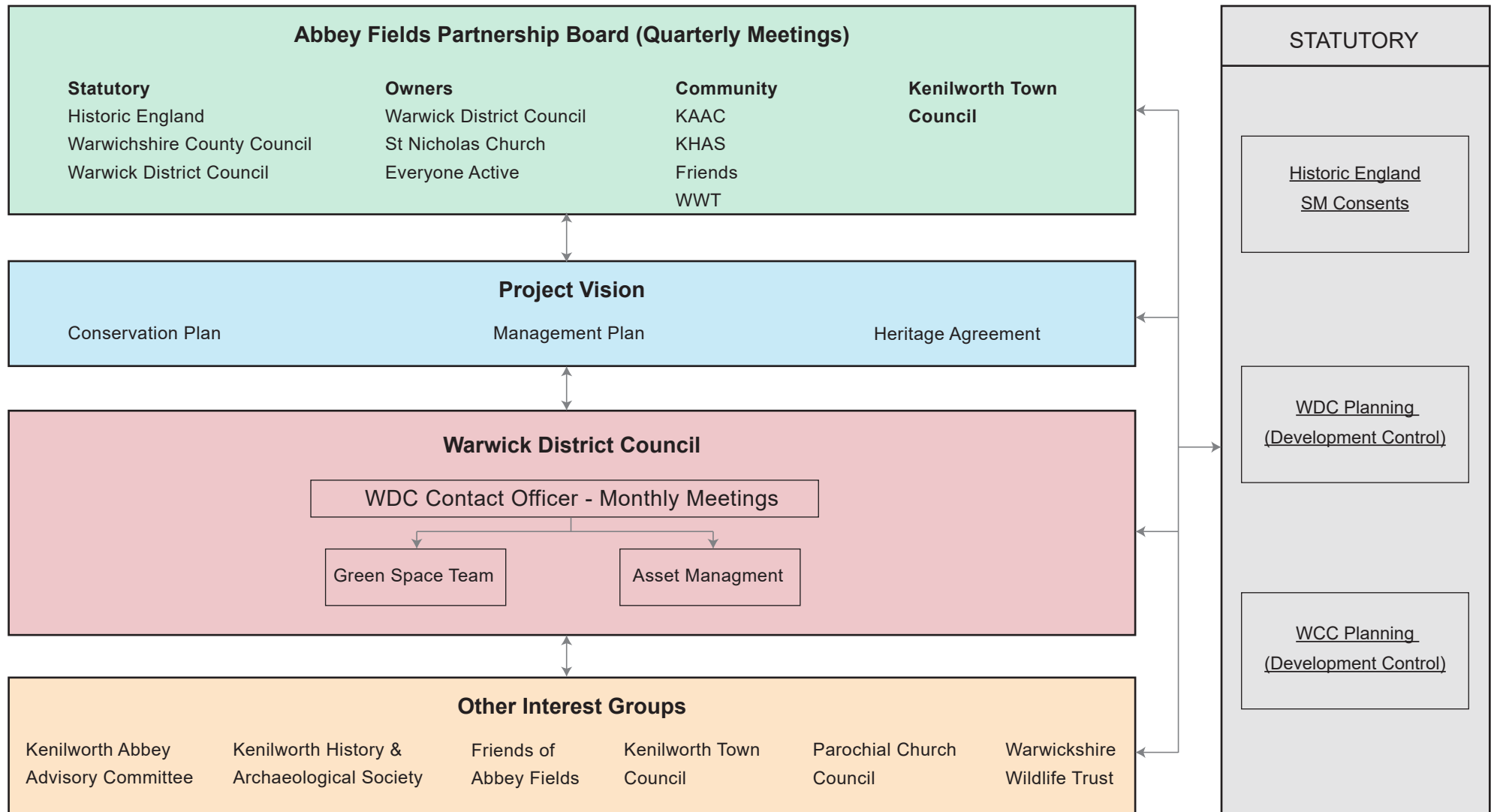


FIGURE 3 - ABBEY FIELDS PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE (With External Funding Support) - vs3 (Draft)



APPENDIX 1

Discussion Paper Extended Consultation

Project: Abbey Fields		DISCUSSION PAPER
Date: 27 th January 2010		Project No: 133-01
Circulation	Parties as below	
No	ITEMS	
<p><u>INTRODUCTION</u></p> <p><u>Purpose and Background:</u></p> <p>1.1 HDD have been appointed by Idverde to assist with developing a heritage management content for the maintenance and management plan. The first stage of this is to undertake extended consultation with key stakeholders. This file note is to assist that consultation process.</p> <p>The stakeholders that we are currently inviting to participate in the extended consultation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of St Nicholas and St Barnabus • Friends of Abbey Fields • Historic England • Kenilworth Abbey Advisory Committee (KAAC) • Kenilworth History and Archaeology Society (KHAS), • Kenilworth Town Council • WCC Archaeology • WDC Parks • WDC Property • WDC Conservation • WDC Bereavement Services <p><u>BASELINE SITUATION</u></p> <p><u>Existing Heritage</u></p> <p>1.2 Significance of the existing heritage components of the site and their significance. How does Conservation Plan sit with this? Is the Conservation Plan satisfactory summary of the site heritage and significance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled Monument as a whole • St Nicholas Church and Churchyard (& garden of remembrance) • Abbey Gatehouse • Chapter House • The Barn • Abbey Church of St Mary • The Priory Aqueduct • War memorial • Mound • Lake • Parkland Landscape • Natural Landscape • Burials • Finham Brook <p>1.3 Do you consider protection of assets adequate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of existing assets-designations • Protection of existing assets-management 		

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Existing Management

- 1.4 We want to understand each organisation understanding of their role in managing the sites heritage, and each organisations understanding of what other organisations contributions are to manging the sites heritage.
- 1.5 What is your understanding of the existing management regime for the site, particularly in relation to the sites built heritage?
- 1.6 Resources for managing the assets are limited and finite, however, in your organisation's opinion are current resources correctly utilised? Why?
- 1.7 In your organisation's opinion is the balance of protecting the built heritage, the natural heritage and amenity value of the site currently about right?

CONDITION, CHALLENGE, RISK AND OPPORTUNITES**Risk to Heritage**

- 1.8 What does your organisation consider are the potential Risks to the sites heritage? How could these be mitigated with better management?

Challenges

- 1.9 What are the main challenges to managing the heritage currently and in the future?
- 1.10 Coordination? Ownership? Legal protection? Formal Documentation ie Conservation Plan and Management Plan? Management Structure? Resources? Financial? Skills? Increased use? Use patterns? Climate?
- 1.11 Consider existing users and their impact on the assets and explore potential of new users and stresses they may cause.

Opportunities

- 1.12 Does your organisation have any proposals for better management of Abbey Fields?
(Explore each organisations ideas for improving management of the site how this may be managed 'who should be responsible for what, coordination of management activities. Opportunities for developing the site New Users, Heritage Assets, Amenity, Interpretation, Education, Biodiversity).

CONSERVATION POLICIES**Proposed Management Polices**

- 1.13 Do you have any thoughts on the Policies as set out in the KACC 2010 Conservation Plan?
- 1.14 Do you have any thoughts on the Policies as set out in the Kenilworth Town Council (KTC) Neighbourhood Plan?

Other comments

- 1.15 Do you have any other comments that you think WDC/ Idverde should consider when developing the Abbey Fields Management Plan? Ownership, Policies, Management?

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