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**POLICY, STRATEGY, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE &
ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS**

Walton Hill View Point near Street

9.0 POLICY, STRATEGY, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

POLICY

Environmental Protection and Enhancement

9.1 As set out previously [section 7.1.1 – 7.1.6] landscape is covered in national planning policy, NPPF para 170 confirms ‘Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment’ [9.1]. This is translated into Local Plan Policies such as currently contained in the MDC Local Plan (2006 – 2029 Adopted December 2014) [9.2]. Local Plan section six sets out key policies relating to the protection of the district’s distinctive character. Policies DP1 to DP9 relate to different aspects of landscape, heritage, biodiversity, residential amenity, environmental protection and transport.

9.2 Policies DP1 and DP4 specifically relate to the local identity and distinctiveness of the districts landscapes. As noted within DP4 ‘Mendip district is defined by its landscapes’ and within the introduction to DP1 the value of the districts landscapes to the local communities was a specific point of reference.

“Throughout the consultation that has been carried out on the Local Plan many contributors highlighted that the area and its constituent communities enjoyed and benefited from a clear sense of place and identity”.

9.3 This recognition of public interest confirms the point that the district landscapes are not only of intrinsic interest but are a valued resource.

9.4 The introduction to DP1 continues with the observation that:

“This sense of place and identity is evident from the high number of natural and heritage assets within the area, and also the range of protective designations present which have been introduced to safeguard these qualities of the physical and historical environment. It is also clear, particularly in the towns that the physical environment and range of activity combine to create distinct identities and a real sense of place.

In terms of backdrop, the landscapes of the Mendip Hills AONB, the Somerset Levels, and transitional areas around them provide a diverse and highly attractive rural setting which historically has influenced the dispersed settlement pattern of the area. This backdrop has also influenced the variety of habitats and wildlife present, as well as the nature of rural land use which in itself has shaped the character of the countryside for hundreds of years.”

9.5 The emphasis on the many different aspects of natural and heritage interests, activity and even settlement patterns found in the area reflects the point that these many and varied elements are integral to the sense of distinct identity and sense of place. The subsequent wording of policy DP1 again reiterates the point with reference to ‘distinctive street scenes, townscapes, views, scenery, boundary walls or hedges, trees, rights of way and other features’ which ‘collectively generate a distinct sense of place and local identity’.

9.6 The policy also makes the point that ‘such features may not always be designated or otherwise formally recognised’. It is envisaged that this update to

DP1: Local Identity and Distinctiveness

1. All development proposals should contribute positively to the maintenance and enhancement of local identity and distinctiveness across the district.
2. Proposals should be formulated with an appreciation of the built and natural context of their locality recognising that distinctive street scenes, townscapes, views, scenery, boundary walls or hedges, trees, rights of way and other features collectively generate a distinct sense of place and local identity. Such features may not always be designated or otherwise formally recognised.
3. Where a development proposal would adversely affect or result in the loss of features or scenes recognised as being distinctive, the Council will balance up the significance of the feature or scene to the locality, the degree of impact the proposal would have upon it, and the wider benefits which would arise from the proposal if it were approved. Any decisions will also take into account efforts made by the applicant to viably preserve the feature, avoid, minimise and/or mitigate negative effects and the need for the proposal to take place in that location.

the district landscape assessment will assist with the identification of how these aspects contribute individually and collectively.

- 9.7 Policy DP4 confirms the criteria applied in relation to the different landscape designations within the district. These are set out in relation to the AONB's and Special Landscape Features. In addition the policy also confirms that;
- 9.8 "Outside of designated landscape areas, proposals should demonstrate that their siting and design are compatible with the pattern of natural and man-made features of the Landscape Character Areas, including cultural and historical associations, as detailed in the "Landscape Assessment of Mendip District." [referring to the 1997 study now updated by this report].[9.3]
- 9.9 The particular interests of heritage and biodiversity are set out within policies DP3 and DP5 respectively. The protection offered to both aspects is set out primarily in terms of protecting the interest for its own sake or intrinsic value; this is rather than as part of the district's landscape collection or as aspects that contribute to the public amenity. It is correct to note that many of the heritage and natural assets are designated and have sufficient status to justify the proscribed protection irrespective of any public awareness, access or view. In many instances the legal status provides protection beyond the remit of planning policy protection; again without any reliance on public access or perception.
- 9.10 Under the guidance for DP3 the Councils 'Overarching Heritage Strategy' is set out making reference to the intent to promote 'enjoyment of the areas historic environment'. The guidance also notes a Council project to list local heritage assets in partnership with

DP4: Mendip's Landscapes

Mendip district is defined by its landscapes. Proposals for development that would individually or cumulatively, significantly degrade the quality of the local landscape will not be supported. Any decision-making will take into account efforts made by applicants to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate negative impacts and the need for the proposal to take place in that location.

The following criteria will be applied in relation to particular landscape designations present in the district:

1. Within the nationally designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) shown on the Policies Map the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage will be the primary consideration in the determination of development proposals. New developments will be supported where:
 - they foster the social or economic well-being of the communities within the designated area or promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB - provided that such development is compatible with the wider purpose for which the area was designated, and
 - the site concerned, having regard to alternative options, offers the most appropriate means to limit or mitigate against any negative visual impact on the immediate locality and longer distance panoramic views, and

- the design and appearance of the proposal is responsive to its context and where visible within the wider landscape makes a positive contribution that reinforces the character of the AONB.

Proposals in areas adjacent to the AONB will, depending upon their prominence in the wider landscape, be expected to demonstrate that their location and form do not compromise the setting of the designated area.

2. Proposals for development which lie within or which would affect the setting of Special Landscape Features (as defined on the Policies Map) will be determined with regard to their impacts upon their specific qualities as described in the 2012 "Assessment of Special Landscape Features."
3. Outside of designated landscape areas, proposals should demonstrate that their siting and design are compatible with the pattern of natural and man-made features of the Landscape Character Areas, including cultural and historical associations, as detailed in the "Landscape Assessment of Mendip District."
4. Proposals affecting Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) should seek to ensure that the integrity of the area designated is not compromised.

a network of local volunteers (para 6.20 g). Within the overview of the Heritage Conservation Policy the Council also note that;

- heritage assets are safeguarded or enhanced or the future, both for heritage merits and for the wider benefits they bring (para 6.22); and
- that the Council is keen to work positively with developers and landowners to ensure that local heritage gains wider appreciation. (para 6.23)

9.11 These wider public amenity points are not specifically referenced in the DP3 policy wording. This allows for decision making to be focused on the significance of heritage features in their own right. The wider landscape appreciation point is covered by policy DP4 (3. 'including cultural and historical associations' as detailed by the Landscape Assessment).

9.12 The Biodiversity and Ecological Networks Policy DP5 makes no direct reference to the wider benefits of public access to areas of nature conservation interest or contact with wildlife. Again this allows decisions based on DP5 to be made on the basis of intrinsic interest and for the perception aspect to be addressed as a landscape related issue. This would be appropriate under the wording of DP4 (point 3).

9.13 Policy DP7 relates to the design and amenity of New Development; the introductory text to the policy notes 'A well designed place takes into consideration the important relationships between buildings, spaces, functional needs and the wider context within which the planned building or structure sits'. Wider context within the Mendip district would include consideration of both connecting with the special qualities of the landscape and the declared Nature Emergency.

Future revisions of this policy could reinforce the potential benefits of designing in positive opportunities for nature conservation and wildlife interest. This topic also relates to the objectives of policy DP16 relating to Open Space and Green Infrastructure discussed further below.

9.14 Other aspects relating to the districts landscape condition are contained within the broader scope of the Environmental Protection Policy DP8. Specifically, light, noise and air pollution are addressed as either individual or cumulative impacts. Within the wording of the policy, development proposals in a rural setting and especially those in designated areas of the AONB's, should make all reasonable efforts to minimise noise and light pollution impacts. In respect of light pollution the policy explanation notes the point that light sensitive areas include the urban fringe and wider rural area where more lighting can have significant impact on local amenity and character. The urban fringe point having relevance where large edge of town developments are noted in this assessment as among the most intensive light pollution sources. The policy notes that 'extensive unfocused lighting can contribute to an impression of a larger urban extent than actually exists'.

9.15 In respect of noise, the point is noted that noise is a form of pollution which can give rise to significant impact on health and quality of life (para 6.73). However, the policy does not currently reference the wider impact on tranquillity (although this is noted in the NPPF – para 180).

9.16 From the above and the issues arising from the anticipated changes set out in Section 7, there would be some benefit in future iterations of the Local Plan addressing some additional points. In particular :

- with the anticipated impact of Ash die back, the district will see a substantial loss of existing trees, measures to replace these will take time and may need to take place alongside wider woodland plantings to address climate change. New development that diminishes tree cover would exacerbate these issues, but development could provide opportunities to provide greater numbers of replacement or wider regeneration planting.
- the impact of solar farms and wind generation has been mapped as part of this study. Further large renewable projects may be expected, but would add to this impact. In the objective for achieving carbon neutrality within the next decade, greater provision of renewable generation in locations/ situations with no/minimal impact would help minimise these impacts. More modest scale installations in and amongst large farm complexes or on large commercial roofscapes would help to do this; future applications for such development could be encouraged to include generation to this effect.

Note: - During the consultation period of this study, the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership published their Dark Night Skies and Light Pollution Position Statement for the AONB. This document provides added guidance to developers, land managers, farmers, householders, Local Authority decision makers, Parish Councils, Architects, Highway Authorities and other decision makers on desirable measures to conserve and enhance the dark night skies of the Mendip Hills National Landscape. The guidance relates to areas within both the designation and its setting.

Planning for Future Development and Growth

- 9.17 As required by national planning guidance the current local plan makes provision for future development requirements. There will also continue to be a requirement to plan for future growth of both residential and employment land uses across the district.
- 9.18 Areas already identified for development have been omitted from the landscape character area boundaries as it is clear these landscapes will change in the foreseeable future. In most locations it is evident on the ground how the landscape features of an allocation area relate to the wider LCA. From this updated study it would be feasible to draw in landscape references from the wider landscape to help inform appropriate design and landscape mitigation strategies for new development proposals.
- 9.19 As further development land is required in the future it is expected 'greenfield' areas will be needed. The landscape assessment will provide a baseline and indication of particular sensitivities that can be considered in the build-up of sensitivity and capacity studies to help guide the selection of development areas and guide mitigation strategies. In considering the opportunities to release future development allocations this assessment allows for strategic level landscape led assessment of potential sites. The structure of this assessment provides a framework for consideration of landscape and visual amenity issues against a comprehensive range of aspects; the headings below provide a logical format to such an assessment that will relate to the character area descriptions.
- 9.20 Sensitivity and capacity studies for other specific land use changes can also be informed by this assessment.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Assessment Headings

- Context
- Physical landscape characteristics
- Perceived character aspects (including tranquillity, wildness, remoteness and dark skies)
- Nature, Heritage, Cultural and Social Interests
- Access and recreational and permeable* function
- Visual amenity

Assessments should consider landscape at the wider context level, including NLC areas, along with the whole district character areas (LCA) and more site specific site character levels. While developments may be expected to generate inherently adverse impacts consideration must be given to potential beneficial effects and the potential to create more extensive net gains in other aspects landscape, visual or general environmental conditions. This may be enhanced by consideration of the potential contributions of Green Infrastructure and/or from wider landholdings adjoining potential allocations.

*potential permeable function: in most 'existing' circumstances few sites will offer connections beyond recreational PROW routes. As part of a comprehensive assessment approach potential for the functional connections to offer improved permeability of for non-vehicular connections may be appropriate.

In addressing the challenges of climate change it is anticipated there will be increased demand for further renewable energy projects within the district; assessing capacity in advance of this would help developers find the most appropriate locations. Objectives for extensive woodland planting and the potential for catchment management projects may likewise require strategic assessment to avoid sensitive landscapes and develop appropriate mitigation strategies.

- 9.21 As noted within Section 8 (para 8.13); with the general condition and interest of much of the district's landscapes the majority of potential development sites that would come forward in the future would inevitably have aspects of landscape interest, value or sensitivity. Where this is the case the reference to 'siting and design' contained with policy DP4 will be of particular relevance. It may increasingly be the case that more ambitious landscape and environmental mitigation schemes will be essential to offset the adverse effects of potential allocations. Within capacity assessments or at the early stages of allocation the opportunities to deliver substantive landscape or visual benefits should be ingrained into the assessment.

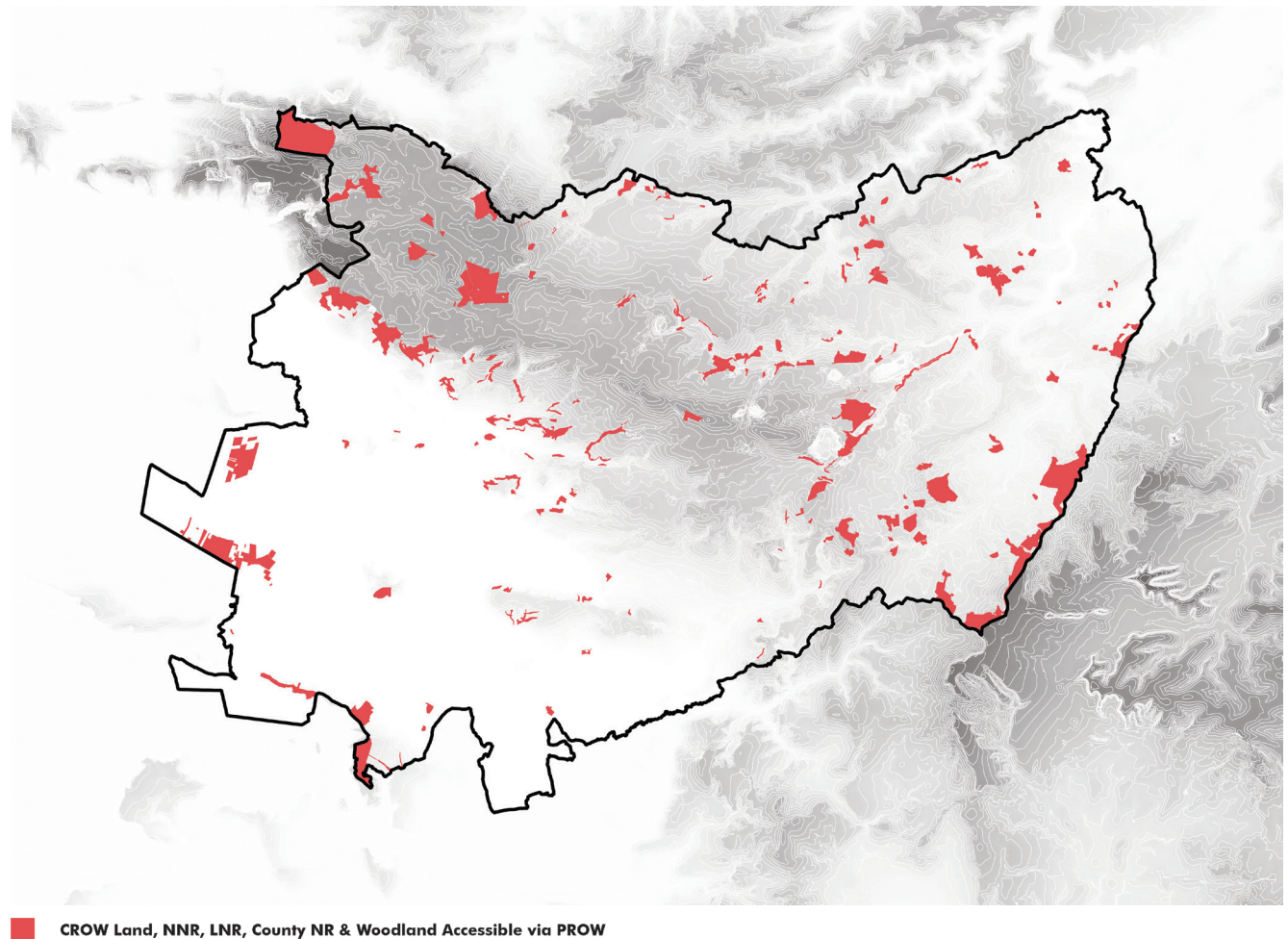
Open Space & Accessible, Natural Green Space

- 9.22 New development proposals will also need to make reference to Local Plan policy DP16 Open Space and Green Infrastructure. This discourages the loss of existing open space, sport or recreation facilities and determines the provision of new areas of the same. The introductory text to the policy highlights the point that 'the term 'open space can incorporate many different types of areas, ranging from formal recreation spaces like sports pitches and play areas;

civic spaces like parks and ornamental gardens; functional areas like allotments, cemeteries and churchyards; linear routes such as footpaths and cycle paths and river corridors; as well as incidental spaces like railway embankments, verges and landscaped areas within developments’.

9.23 The same local plan text also notes that ‘open space is normally considered to be public space’; which is clearly the case with most of the formal recreation spaces listed but may not strictly apply to areas covered by footpaths, cemeteries or churchyards or embankments. However, such space may provide an obvious public amenity even if private land. The range of spaces included in the above definition cover areas that would lie within or on the edge of the urban areas and so not generally covered by this assessment study and those which may extend out into the rural surroundings, which are.

9.24 The introduction to policy DP16 includes reference to accessible natural greenspace (including reference to the Natural England criteria and guidance: Nature Nearby [NE 265 March 2010]). It is noted that assessments for the Habitats Regulations have highlighted an expectation for increasing recreational pressure on sensitive habitats within the district. This identifies a need for wild or natural areas open to



public, accessible from the urban areas. The formal policy confirms all new residential developments will make provision for open space including 'accessible natural greenspace'. This assessment has highlighted that semi natural and wild landscapes are very much part of the overall Mendip character, as such these qualities need to be protected, but they can also be created or extended.

STRATEGY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- 9.25 The introduction to DP16 also sets out the intention for a Green Infrastructure approach within the district. The requirement to consider Green Infrastructure is included as part of the strategic policies recommended by the NPPF (Para 20).

Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision¹² for:

[Items a) – e) omitted]

d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

- 9.26 In respect of Green Infrastructure the local plan text explains:-

In the past, spaces have been looked at on a more individual basis, being owned and managed for specific purposes. However, for a range of reasons this has resulted in some of our spaces, like school playing fields and incidental spaces being lost without appreciation for their wider benefits. These spaces can double as space for wildlife, natural drainage,

noise amelioration (where trees are also present) as well as providing opportunities for parts of the education curriculum to be delivered outside of the classroom. In river corridors, informal recreation can be delivered whilst maintaining flood storage areas.

Through appreciation and active management of our green infrastructure we can improve the use of what is available in our communities and ensure that new development makes well considered additions to our open space stock. Green infrastructure also encompasses the protection, enhancement and creation of priority UK BAP habitats such as ancient and native woodland.

The District Council will be encouraging the development of Green Infrastructure Strategies in each of the five towns in order to encourage a co-ordinated approach to effective open space provision and management. These strategies will allow communities to get involved in highlighting 'spaces of local importance' that may need protection under the provisions set out in relation to Development Policy 2, along with open spaces that could be improved and what improvements might be most effective. New potential areas for open space provision could also be indicated through these strategies. These strategies will identify specific open space priorities and provide a basis for the expenditure of development contributions collected. In rural areas parish councils will be encouraged to prepare their own strategies, more akin to management plans, to help inform how development contributions will be spent.

Further detail on the expectation for Green Infrastructure for each of the five towns is set out within section 5 of the local plan (Core Policies 6 –

10) – CP6 Frome Town GI Strategy reproduced as example. This as with the other towns is generally related to modest areas of potential new public open space, allotments and connections to the countryside. Reference is also made to multi-user paths leading out from each of the towns.

Extract of Core Policy 6: Frome Town Strategy

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for the town will:

- Identify how around 8 hectares of new open space, including provision for new allotments, will be secured from new development sites and other initiatives.
- Identify priorities for expenditure of development contributions towards improvements to the extent and quality of public open spaces and accessible natural green spaces. This will include improving access, recreation, education and wildlife opportunities along the length of the River Frome (identified as CP6D on the Proposal Map) establishing it as a linear park, as a collaborative exercise involving the Town Council, Environment Agency and local groups. Until detailed proposals are set out in the Green Infrastructure Strategy (or other delivery plan), proposals affecting land adjacent to the river corridor will need to demonstrate that schemes do not compromise the overall objective of securing continuous access.

9.27	To date no comprehensive Green Infrastructure Plans have been created for any of the urban areas. The Frome Neighbourhood Plan (July 2016) notes the River corridor as a central part of the Town's Green Infrastructure and the intent to prepare a Supplementary Planning Guide. The other towns and Wells have Neighbourhood plans in preparation.	9.32	As a precursor to further work there are a range of strategic objectives that would inform a comprehensive strategy. In line with the 'Ecosystem Services' approach set out previously, the response to Climate Change may well be an overarching theme below which the three strands of Biodiversity and Biosecurity, Health and Wellbeing and Economic Development can sit.	• The opportunity for a district wide response to Ash die back • The local objectives for health and well being that may be supported by the environment • Community ownership and engagement in management of landscape and wildlife sites
9.28	Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2014 the issues of the Climate and Ecological Emergency have come to the fore and guidance on Green Infrastructure has been reiterated by Central Government. [9.4]	9.33	The current work on the County-wide Nature Recovery Network; provides a potential foundation for other aspects of a Green Infrastructure Strategy. A consolidated plan that draws key objectives together provides more opportunities for funding and concentrating efforts. It can also draw other stakeholders and landowners closer to together and generate interest in the process and outcomes.	• Wild spots, wilderness and future re-wilding – objectives to build up the quantum and interest of accessible natural greenspaces within the district • The rights of way network, long distance paths, off road multi-use recreational and commuting routes • Protecting and extending tranquillity and dark skies
9.29	The above recent Government policy statements emphasise how natural infrastructure can contribute to mitigating climate change and flooding with carbon storage, cooling and shading and natural flood risk management.	9.34	Strategic guidance for Mendip Green Infrastructure could usefully confirm objectives for; • The district wide objectives to protect and enhance the collection of landscapes and the eight special qualities identified. These qualities were reviewed as part of the public consultation for this assessment, based on the generally supportive, although modest numbers of comments to qualities have remained unchanged. • The overall quantum of tree and woodland planting targeted for the district • The opportunities for Carbon sequestration within the soils of the district, relating to different existing land uses and the protection of soils within development and mineral operations • Catchment management objectives for improving flood mitigation	• Restoration of historic landscapes and promotion of public access and appreciation of heritage assets • Management and enhancement of the District's Special Landscape Feature Areas • The local objectives for supporting the rural economy, including the key sectors of agriculture, forestry and tourism and the existing rural employment sites • The condition and management of past, present and future mineral extraction sites in relation to landscape condition, meanwhile and after uses. Including areas of future strategic reserves.
9.30	Guidance highlights how Green Infrastructure helps identify the range of 'Ecosystem Services' at district-wide scale (or wider). By developing a broader Green Infrastructure strategy for the district, the valued aspects of the wider landscape and the opportunities to protect, enhance these in a coordinated plan would become more evident. The rationale for a Green Infrastructure approach is based on the multifunctional nature of landscape (including habitats and other environmental assets). Overlaying functions and Linking networks ensures greater maximum potential to realise and amplify such benefits.			
9.31	Networks are critical to the biodiversity objectives (as reflected in the work ongoing in Somerset on nature recovery network). The guidance also highlights the opportunities to engage communities in conservation work.			9.35 A district wide Green Infrastructure Strategy would benefit from the input of a range of strategic partners. Town and parish councils, conservation trusts, other

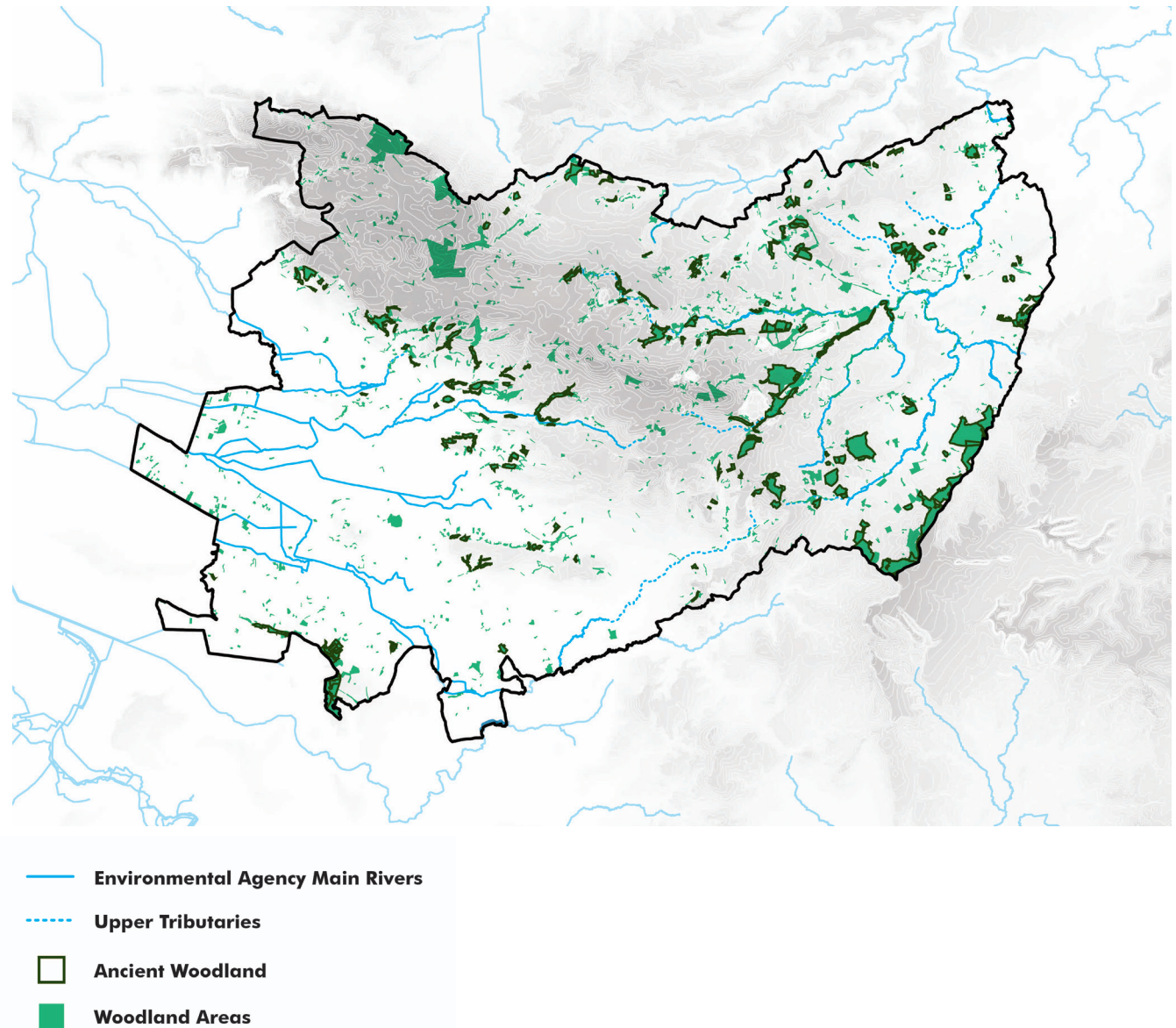
government agencies, the county and neighbouring authorities may have local and specialist knowledge. The farming community, utility companies and mineral operators may be able to contribute expertise, land and a range of other physical or financial resources.

9.36 The two AONB's have Partnerships with staff units and committees; these have developed comprehensive management plans for both areas of AONB within the district. The existing and future work within these plans would fit within a district wide Green Infrastructure Strategy and avoid duplication.

9.37 The importance of the wider view of a district level plan is also related to the position of the MDC area in relation to the larger centres of population particularly Radstock and Midsomer Norton and Bath and Bristol. With growth in the populations and continued changes in demographics and leisure activities the Mendip district may face increasing pressure for recreational activity. Unmanaged such pressure could lead to adverse effects on the districts natural landscapes; addressed positively and the district could offer many opportunities to absorb and potentially benefit from increased visitor numbers.

9.38 The Mendip area perhaps has more to offer than most local authority districts. The extent and range of existing natural, historic and cultural 'assets' provides a ready-made framework of natural infrastructure. Some of these align with the topography and river valleys such as the patterns of ancient woodland and recreational access.

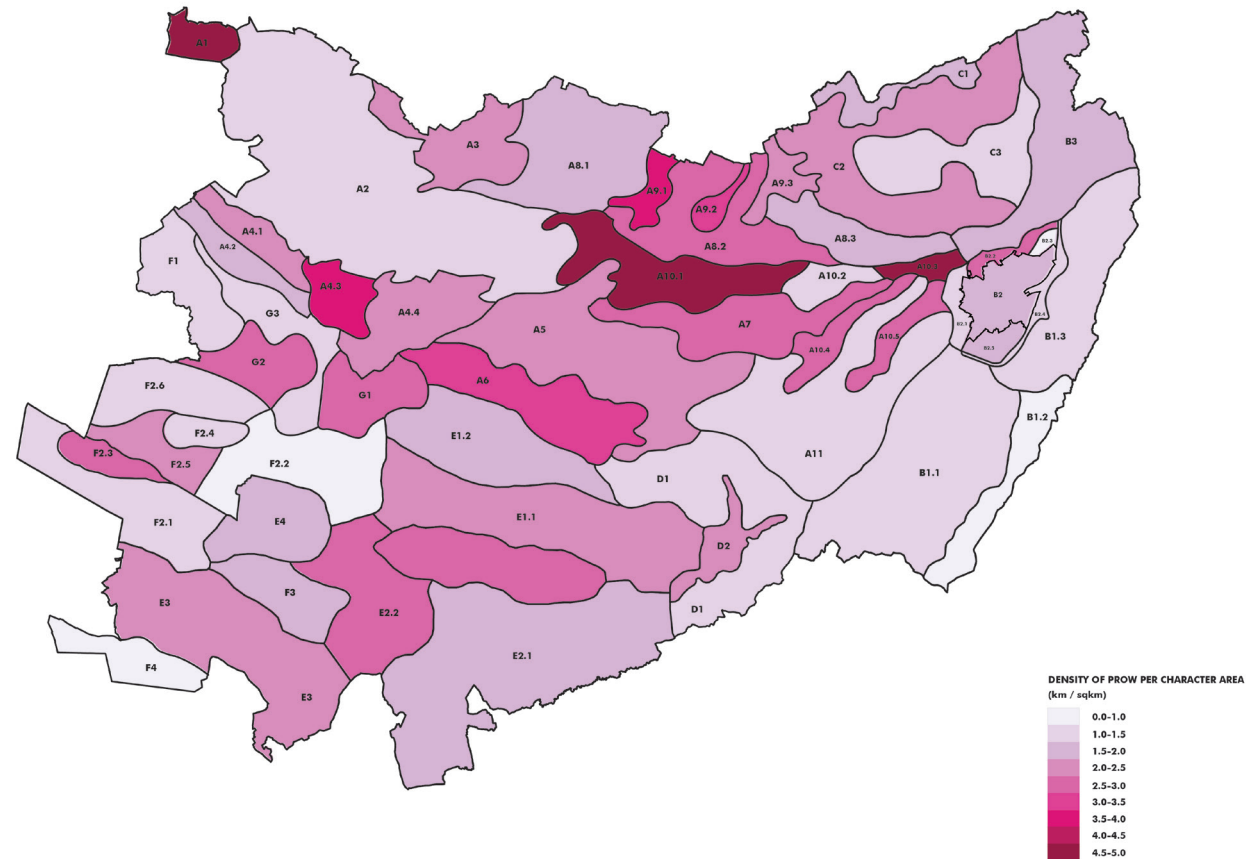
9.39 Specific elements of the existing framework include: River corridors and catchments; the District sits at the head of several main river catchments. The headwater areas may offer the greatest opportunity



to influence the rate of water flows downstream (potentially moderating storm events and maintaining summer flows). More natural measures to control flows within the upper catchment offers direct connections to habitat and naturalistic landscapes. Most of the districts rivers are accessible by the network of rights of way and provide continuous connected landscape experiences. The valleys of the Mells River and tributaries contain a strong network of ancient woodland and many other elements of interest.

9.40 PROW network, long distance trails and former railways; the district contains a generally very good network of interconnected public rights of way. There are some localised areas close to the urban edges where short new connections would open up access to the wider network. The five long distance paths and the sections of the national cycleway network through the district are a major asset, particularly for the long-term attraction of tourism. In addition, the existing sections of multi-use paths built on the former railways provide very well used cycle and walking routes. The off-road former railway paths provide multiple potential benefits in the form of; encouraging exercise for health and well-being, locations for young and inexperienced cyclists to gain confidence and as potential commuting routes. The district contains a pattern of former railways that link all the towns and crosses through some exceptional areas of landscape.

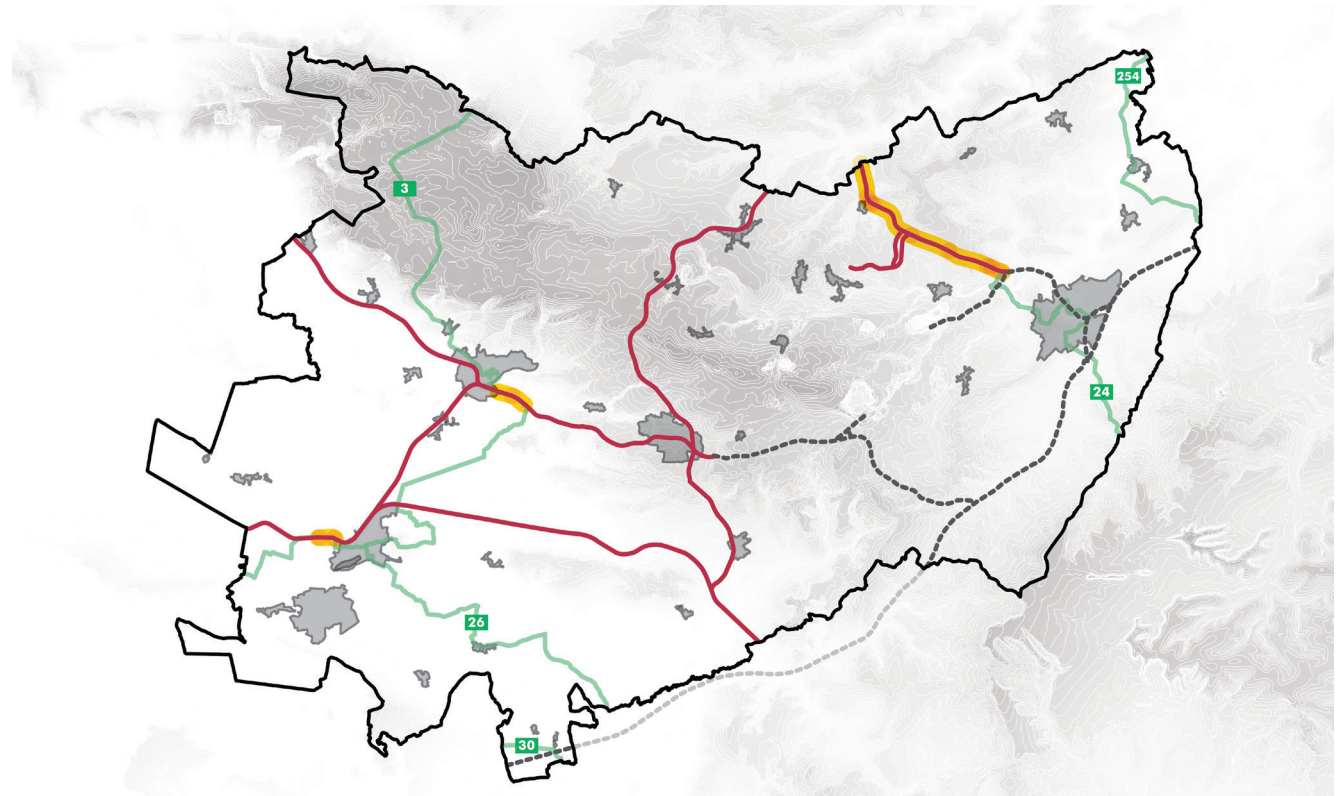
9.41 The patterns and extent of woodland cover; provide an extensive area of accessible natural green space, habitat and a carbon sink. As an established framework the addition of more woodlands could be achieved without necessarily radical change to the character of the district. The addition of further



woodland cover provides scope to create additional accessible green space across the district but in particular close to the urban areas.

9.42 Existing and former mineral workings - the various mineral sites within the district may offer opportunities for greater landscape enhancement, habitat, access and recreation. Sizable areas of peripheral land around many of the quarries has been planted to-date but some areas of open land remain. As an early intervention in the objective to increase the woodland tree cover for carbon sequestration such areas may be possible to plant with minimal adverse effect.

9.43 Remote, semi natural, tranquil and dark landscapes – as part of the ‘offer’ that Mendip can make to the wider region the protection and reinforcement of these particular characteristics provides opportunities for escape and restorative experiences which are frequently hard to find in other parts of southern Britain.



Colliers Way Cycle Path near Mells



- **Active Rail Lines**
Mainline Railway, Mineral Line, Historic Steam Railway
- **Disused Railway Lines**
- **3** **Sustrans Route**
- **Former Railway Converted to Shared Multiuse Path**

ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

- 9.44 There is evident scope for public engagement in both the development and implementation of proposals to protect and enhance the districts landscape resource. Providing focus for people to influence and contribute can not only assist with the tasks; but gives opportunity for the community to be involved in ways that provide people with the sense of being able to make a difference.
- 9.45 This landscape assessment has been open to public consultation to invite comment and additional detail. Part of this process included an engagement with users of the countryside as a 'search for favourite walks and hidden gems'. This was envisaged as a simple submission of start and end points as place names or grid references via a website link. With contributions this would generate a 'heat map' of valued places. The response to Favourite Walks, Views and Hidden Gems is set out within the Project Consultation Report. More active engagement with this could be done through the formation/promotion of a simple online group using a selected mapping app (such as Strava or similar). This would automatically log routes and frequency of activity across the rights of way and recreational road routes around the district. This may add weight to discussions over the distribution of valued landscapes within the district and help identify locations for investment in management and improvement.
- 9.46 A further strand of the consultation would be to include contributes to the definition of the district's special qualities.
- 9.47 There are then opportunities to engage people in positive decisions and potential projects that could come forward for the district. From this study there

are a series of suggestions where the landscape resource could be better recognised, mapped or protected.

- 9.48 Several of the parishes across the district have produced village statements or neighbourhood plans. These contain useful histories and character descriptions at a more local level than this assessment. As a tool to help build up available information relating to landscape baselines it is proposed to include a list of these via the landscape character assessment website.

- 9.49 As noted earlier in this section the Local Plan policy DP3 made reference to the intent to build up a list of local heritage assets through a network of volunteers. It is assumed the parish councils are part of this process. From the overview of the history of the District's landscape it is evident there is a comprehensive collection of listed buildings, structures and registered historic landscapes. The details of the formally protected assets are in most instances very well documented (particularly the citations from Historic England). There are however many features that have not been identified as of sufficient interest or quality to be formally protected and so no citation information is provided. Examples of these include a few of the Iron Age defensive earthworks, the more minor railway bridges and other structures on the disused railway lines. Where these exist, it is often difficult to establish what if any information is available and over time as features degrade this resource may be harder to trace and recognise.

- 9.50 Although the WWII defences at Black Down are identified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument very few of the other smaller defences are protected by listed structure status. This includes line of pill box

defences that extend across the district as part of the GHQ – Green Stop Line that formed a link between Burnham on Sea and Melksham. While some data on the location of these can be found (for example via the archaeology data service archives – search for CHQ Anti Invasion [Xc]) there is little interpretation across the district that explains the full scale of the defence system that was created and how this is now fairing some 70 – 80 years after its planning and creation. A public project to recognise and improve the condition and interpretation of these features could be a suitable district wide activity and potential remembrance focus for subsequent years.

- 9.51 One group of assets noted as part of this study are the three towers that landmark the eastern section of the district. Cranmore Tower is located within the MDC area and already open to the public. Alfred's is just outside of the district and is owned and opened on occasions by the National Trust. The third tower the Jolliffe Column at Ammerdown is in private ownership. The feature is not currently and may not ever be suitable to open or improve



Pill Box off Iron Mill Lane - Oldford

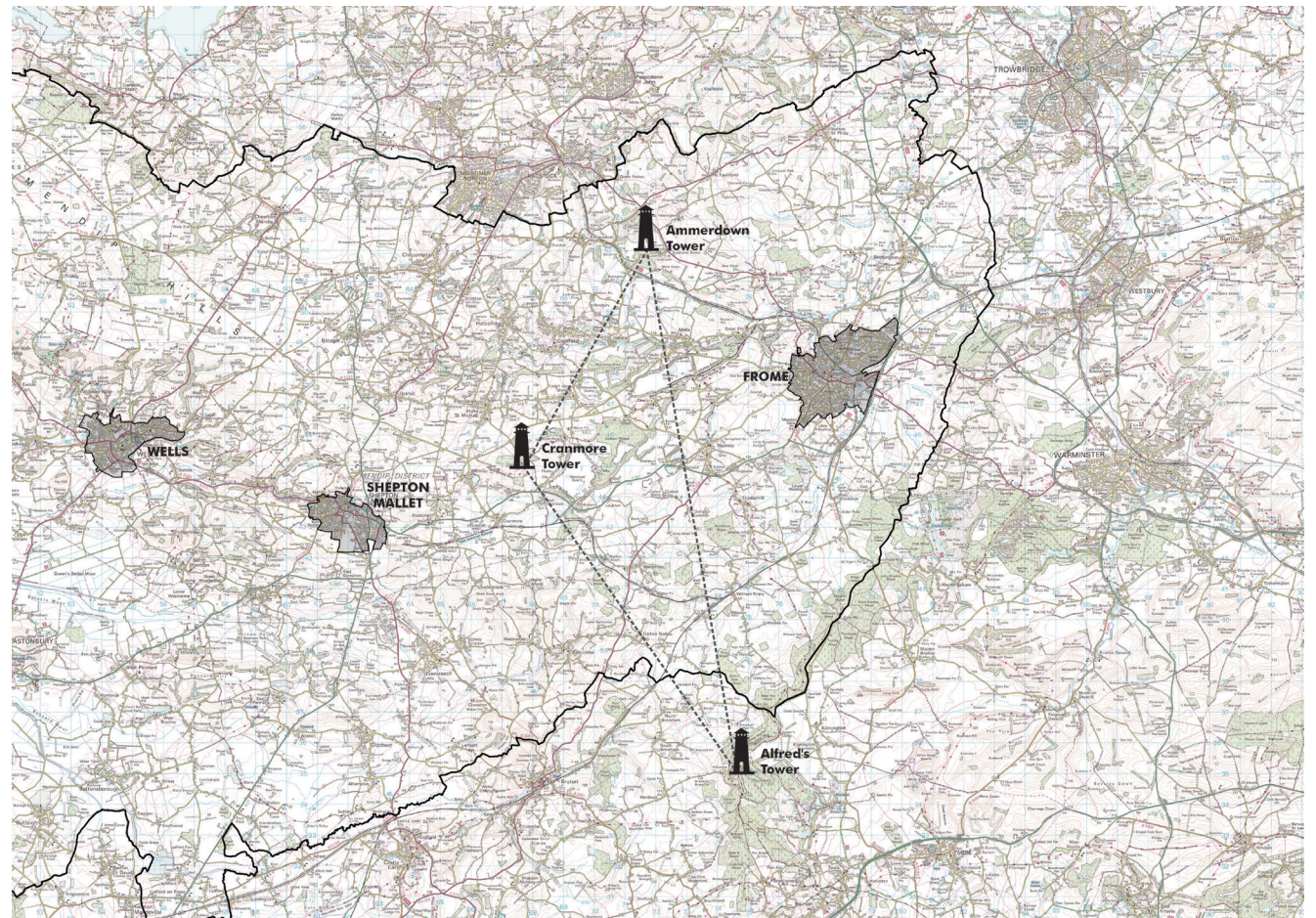
access to. However, the feature has lost its original glazed lantern which would have helped locate it in the landscape. As an iconic feature in the landscape visible from the outskirts of Frome, the Cranmore Tower and from points close to Midsomer Norton there could be scope to engage public subscription or sponsorship to see the feature restored.

9.52

The value of the various disused railway lines across the district are noted as both potential sustainable transport links* and as historic landscape features. The work to reopen any of these routes as shared cycle/pedestrian facilities is expected to be a long slow process. As part of the debate on the district's response to the Climate Change challenges public engagement with this could be promoted as a physical contribution that individuals can assist with.



Cranmore Tower viewed from the Old Wells Road



* (Sections of these are identified in the Local Plan for either future transport use or safeguarded for new cycle or footpaths.)

What can green infrastructure include?

Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies. References to green infrastructure in this guidance also apply to different types of blue infrastructure where appropriate.

Why is green infrastructure important?

Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.

What planning goals can green infrastructure help to achieve?

Green infrastructure can help in:

- **Building a strong, competitive economy**

Green infrastructure can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.

- **Achieving well-designed places**

The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, green infrastructure exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.

- **Promoting healthy and safe communities**

Green infrastructure can improve the well-being of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. Outdoor Recreation Value (ORVal) is a useful online tool that can be used to quantify the recreational values provided by greenspace. Green infrastructure can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.

- **Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change**

Green infrastructure can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of water quality and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural flood risk management.

- **Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**

High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.

How can a strategic approach be taken to green infrastructure?

Strategic policies can identify the location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks and set out appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement. To inform these, and support their implementation, green infrastructure frameworks or strategies prepared at a district-wide scale (or wider) can be a useful tool. These need to be evidence-based and include assessments of the quality of current green infrastructure and any gaps in provision. Existing national and local strategies – for example on tree and woodland provision – can inform the approach to green infrastructure; and standards such as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard can be applied when assessing provision.

The green infrastructure strategy can inform other plan policies, infrastructure delivery requirements and Community Infrastructure Levy schedules. In view of their potential scope and use, authorities need to collaborate with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders such as Local Nature Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Local Enterprise Partnerships when developing green infrastructure strategies.

How can green infrastructure be considered in planning decisions?

Green infrastructure opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision.

Depending on individual circumstances, planning conditions, obligations, or the Community Infrastructure Levy may all be potential mechanisms for securing and funding green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure will require sustainable management and maintenance if it is to provide benefits and services in the long term. Arrangements for funding need to be identified as early as possible, and factored into the design and implementation, balancing the costs with the benefits. Local community engagement can assist with management and tailoring provision to local needs.

[Xc]https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/dob/ai_r.cfm?group=GHQ%20Line%3A%20Green%20&CFID=2bb5e58f-fd18-40c0-8e1c-b1fb5cf9f51f&CFTOKEN=0

REFERENCES FOR SECTION 9.0

- [9.1] *NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework July 2019)*
- [9.2] *MDC Local Plan (2006 – 2029 Adopted December 2014)*
- [9.3] *Landscape Assessment of Mendip District 1997*
- [9.4] *<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#green-infrastructure> update 21 07 2019].*

APPENDICES

Footpath View Sharpham Park near Street