



CHIPPENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN_

Chippenham Town Council

Green Corridors Topic Paper

Appendix 10



POLICY OBJECTIVE(S)

- Protect, enhance and extend the ‘River-Green Corridor’ as a focal point for the Town, establishing green links to it from existing parks/green spaces, and connecting surrounding new development to it via green infrastructure
- Identify a linked set of green spaces that allow people and fauna to travel freely between the Town and surrounding countryside

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Green infrastructure corridors are a network of multi-functional green spaces that provide opportunities for the movement of wildlife (and humans through sustainable transport modes) between town and country. They are usually linear in form, and can provide multi-functional benefits for wildlife and biodiversity, and include opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activities, flood protection, and help to improve the overall environment and meet the priorities for health and wellbeing of the local community.
2. Chippenham has a unique network of Green Corridors, which is highly valued by the local community, but is often an overlooked asset for the town.
3. Whilst Chippenham’s green spaces are currently afforded some protection under more generally worded strategic green infrastructure policy in the NPPF and Wiltshire Core Strategy (CP52), there is currently no specific identification of such green infrastructure in Chippenham in the Development Plan and therefore a lack of clarity for decision makers and developers alike.
4. Neighbourhood Plan Policy G13 (Green Corridors policy) would seek to clarify those routes considered most important for wildlife and human movement. In doing so it would aim to protect and enhance these routes, identifying boundaries of green infrastructure and missing links and opportunities to provide new links within the existing network.

B. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5. The Development Plan for Chippenham is:
 - a. The Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)
 - b. Chippenham Site Allocations Plan (2017)
 - c. North Wiltshire Local Plan Saved Policies (2006)
 - d. Minerals Core Strategy (2009)
 - e. Waste Core Strategy (2009)

National Planning Policy Framework

6. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are applicable to Green Corridors:

8(c). ‘an environmental objective - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.’

92. ‘Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

...(c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs - for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.’

179. ‘To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation...’

Wiltshire Core Strategy

7. The following policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy are applicable to Green Corridors:

Core Policy 3: Infrastructure Requirements

‘All new development will be required to provide for the necessary on-site and, where appropriate, off-site infrastructure requirements’. Infrastructure to comprise ‘Essential infrastructure’ and ‘Place-making infrastructure’.

Note: ‘open space and green infrastructure’ are identified as an element of ‘place shaping infrastructure’ in Paragraph 4.42.

Chippenham Area Strategy

5.48 - Includes statement on River Avon as an important asset for the town and local environment including as a green corridor for wildlife (amongst other GI functions e.g. active travel, recreation).

5.54 - Includes requirement for development proposals for Chippenham Central Area to demonstrate how they will enhance the river as an attractive feature of the development, providing improved pedestrian and cycle routes, public open space and active riverside frontages

Core Policy 9: Chippenham Central Areas of Opportunity

‘...In addition, the River Avon Corridor will be enhanced for leisure and recreation uses in an environmentally sensitive manner and developed as an attractive

cycle/pedestrian route connecting the town centre with the wider green infrastructure network, while conserving and enhancing its role as a wildlife corridor.’

Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity

‘Protection - Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term... ‘

Core Policy 51: Landscape

‘Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:

- i. The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies
- ii. The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings
- iii. The separate identity of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe
- iv. Visually sensitive skylines, soils, geological and topographical features
- v. Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value
- vi. Important views and visual amenity
- vii. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion
- viii. Landscape functions including places to live, work, relax and recreate...’

Core Policy 52: Green infrastructure

‘Development shall make provision for the retention and enhancement of Wiltshire’s Green Infrastructure network, and shall ensure that suitable links to the network are provided and maintained. Where development is permitted developers will be required to:

- i) Retain and enhance existing on site green infrastructure
- ii) Make provision for accessible open spaces in accordance with the requirements of the adopted Wiltshire Open Space Standards

iii) Put measures in place to ensure appropriate long-term management of any green infrastructure directly related to the development

iv) Provide appropriate contributions towards the delivery of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and

v) Identify and provide opportunities to enhance and improve linkages between the natural and historic landscapes of Wiltshire.

If damage or loss of existing green infrastructure is unavoidable, the creation of new or replacement green infrastructure equal to or above its current value and quality, that maintains the integrity and functionality of the green infrastructure network, will be required.

Proposals for major development should be accompanied by an audit of the existing green infrastructure within and around the site and a statement demonstrating how this will be retained and enhanced through the development process.

Development will not adversely affect the integrity and value of the green infrastructure network, prejudice the delivery of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, or provide inadequate green infrastructure mitigation.

Green infrastructure projects and initiatives that contribute to the delivery of a high quality and highly valued multi-functional green infrastructure network in accordance with the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will be supported. Contributions (financial or other) to support such projects and initiatives will be required where appropriate from developers.'

Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping

'A high standard of design is required in all new developments...Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

i. Enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced

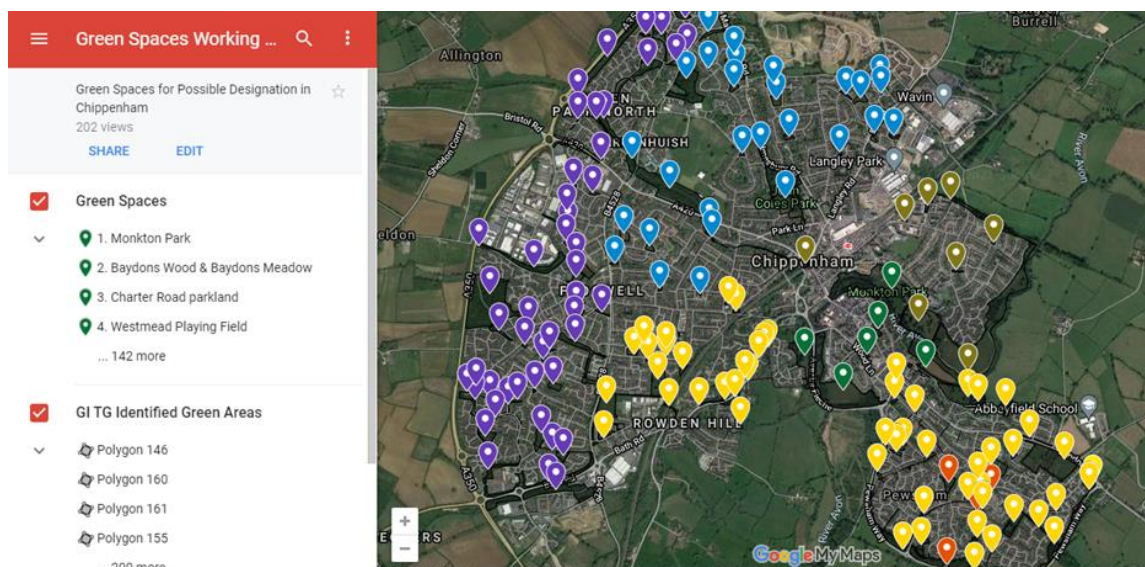
ii. The retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features, (for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses), in order to take opportunities to enhance biodiversity, create wildlife and recreational corridors, effectively integrate the development into its setting and to justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development...'

C. REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

Audit of Green Spaces

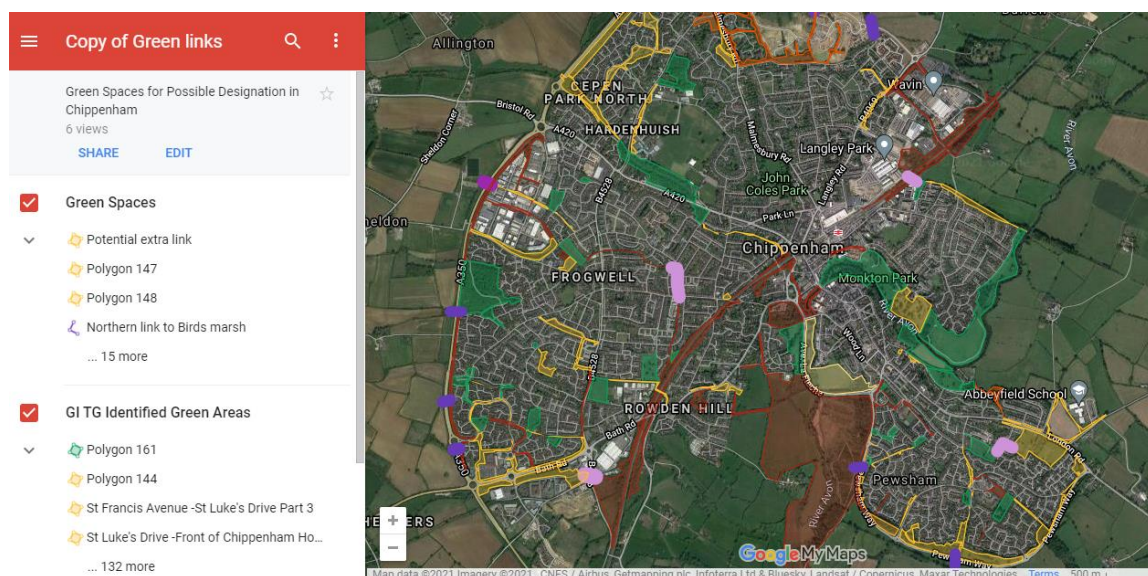
8. In order to begin the process of assessing the town's green spaces and finding out whether some of these were already linear in nature, or could be joined up to form larger green corridors, the Neighbourhood Plan's Green Infrastructure Topic Group Members looked at satellite maps of the town to discover existing green spaces.
9. The town was divided up geographically, with each Member having a defined area. Each Member then visited, on foot, the notable green spaces within their geographically defined area, picking up on any other green spaces that they deemed to be important, whilst out in the field.
10. Members were purposely not given pre-defined criteria as to the size or type of green space that they should record, in order to cast the net wide enough to capture all green spaces and for a 'bottom-up approach' to auditing. For example, some Members considered public footpaths with grass verges important, others considered grass verges to highways, parks or larger spaces to be important.
11. The audit took place between Autumn 2019 - Spring 2020. Members photographed each green space and audited it for its size, location, purpose and quality. The results of the 160 green spaces that the Group audited are presented in Table 1 in the Local Green Spaces Topic Paper (Appendix 5).
12. Topic Group Members created a Google My Map to show/share the geographic location of each green space visited, and the boundaries of that space as they deemed it to exist. **Figure 1** is a snapshot of the working Google My Map used by the Topic Group.

Figure 1 - Google My Map Used by Topic Group Members for Green Spaces Audit



13. Using the above map Topic Group Members were able to ‘join the dots’ of different green spaces together and this revealed that Chippenham had a number of Green Corridors. These were subsequently mapped out. **Figure 2** is a snapshot of the working Google My Map used by the Topic Group to map out/draw boundaries of Green Corridors using data from the green spaces audit and plotting existing/new green infrastructure links considered necessary in order to form Green Corridors.

Figure 2 - Google My Map Used by Topic Group Members to Understand How Green Spaces Might Link Together to Form Green Corridors



14. Once all areas had been plotted it became obvious to the Topic Group that there were four main green corridors in the parish - these being the River Avon Corridor, Hardenhuish Brook Corridor, Railway Line Corridor, and Wilts & Berks Canal Corridor. All of these ran through the town and linked into the countryside, except the latter which did not run through the town. The Group decided these were ‘Strategic Corridors’ because they linked the town to the countryside, and because of their long, and generally unbroken, nature.
15. In joining up green spaces on the map and also overlaying with Public Rights of Way (PROW) the Topic Group also noticed some less obvious green corridors, sometimes not continuous or as long in length, and not always connecting into the countryside, but which were considered to nonetheless be important for either wildlife or human travel, or both. The Group decided these were ‘Neighbourhood Corridors’.
16. The Group considered this two tier approach to designation of green corridors would help prioritise importance in decision making on planning applications, and for Neighbourhood Corridors how future development could then best link these into the countryside via either new connections to Strategic Corridors or through new ‘countryside connection points’ across, under or over main roads currently acting as barriers to movement, such as the A350, A4 or new distributor road running through North Chippenham. ‘Countryside connection points’ would be specific to the nature of the Neighbourhood Green Corridor. For example for a Neighbourhood Green Corridor

mostly used by wildlife a small tunnel underneath a road may be appropriate or narrowing of a road/central island with soft landscaping, for a Neighbourhood Green Corridor mostly used by humans a bridge may be more appropriate.

17. Finally, the Group identified some Neighbourhood Green Corridors where just a link across a main road or opening up of a section of waterway would make a significant difference to connecting green spaces together to form a continuous corridor. These were labelled as 'Link Enhancements'.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - River Avon South West of Town Bridge, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (2020)

18. This Appraisal, which can be found in Appendix 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan, was produced by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust for the Neighbourhood Plan to present an initial assessment of the potential ecological constraints and management opportunities relating to arguably the town's most important green corridor - the River Avon green corridor - which bisects the town, linking the town centre to the countryside. The Appraisal reviews the section of riverside corridor which runs south west from the Town Bridge to the pedestrian bridge at Westmead Playing Field and makes a number of key recommendations for managing this section of the corridor.
19. Page 3 of the Appraisal explains '...the linear aspect of the river corridor found at this site should not be overlooked. It is an important link between the areas of open countryside on the north-east and southwest of the town. There is a clear link through the town centre that is only broken by the installation of the radial gate weir and to a lesser extent the town bridge. Examples of species that will use this type of corridor include brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), and water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*).'
20. Pages 6 notes that 'In addition to the weir structure, the Town Bridge is also a barrier to the wildlife corridor that runs through Chippenham. It is recommended that feasibility options be looked into for the transfer of wildlife between the river bank upstream of the Town Bridge and the river bank downstream.'
21. Pages 10-11 recognise that wildlife is important along this green corridor, particularly the area downstream of Gladstone Road bridge where 'the secluded nature of this stretch ensures that public access is relatively low and wildlife can thrive with little disturbance. The main public usage along this stretch is dog walking although there were some signs of ad hoc fishing usage. Several members of the public were seen and engaged with during the site visit, with one person reporting having seen otter (*Lutra lutra*) in the past. These sightings and reports illustrate how important the River Avon is as a wildlife corridor, even in the most urban of areas.'

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Land at Monkton Park, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (2020)

22. This Appraisal, which can be found in Appendix 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan, was also carried out by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust for the Town Council, to appraise the riverside corridor where it runs through Monkton Park up to the Town Bridge. The Appraisal makes key recommendations for the future management of Monkton Park.
23. Page 4 of the Appraisal confirms ‘the Bristol Avon is an extremely important natural feature and acts as an arterial route into (from the east), and out of (to the west), Chippenham town centre. The river is nationally important for its communities of dragonflies and aquatic plants.’
24. Page 5 notes historic sightings of Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), and water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) within 250m of the River.

Monkton Park Management Plan, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (2021)

25. The Monkton Park Management Plan sets out how the high level recommendations from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which mainly relate to biodiversity enhancements, will be taken forward in detail by the Town Council’s management of the land over a five year period. It also sets out a schedule of works for the different areas of Monkton Park.

D. COMMUNITY VIEWS

Pre-Vision Survey Results

26. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group carried out an online and paper Pre-Vision Survey with the local community in May 2019.
27. Question 1 of the Survey asked respondents ‘What do you most like about living in Chippenham?’. The answer with the second highest number of mentions was categorised as ‘green spaces and parks’ (190 mentions - open-ended question).
28. Further breaking down the results from this question, of the respondents that mentioned they most liked ‘green spaces and parks’: 35% referred to ‘parks’, 25% to ‘green space’, 22% to ‘John Coles Park’, 11% to ‘Monkton Park’, and the remaining 7% to other components.
29. Question 3 of the Survey asked ‘Looking to the future what kind of place should Chippenham become?’ (open-ended question). The answer with the 12th highest number of mentions was categorised as ‘maintain/protect green spaces and parks’.
30. Question 4 of the Survey asked ‘Please select the 5 topics you feel are most important for Chippenham?’ (closed question). Out of a list of 17 topics to choose, the third most selected topic by respondents was ‘green spaces and green infrastructure’ (299 mentions).
31. The results from the Pre-Vision Survey clearly demonstrate the value the community places on its existing green spaces (Q1, Q3 and Q4) and desire for them to be maintained and protected (Q3), something which the Green Corridors policy would achieve. The results also demonstrate that the community value a variety of different green spaces and parks within Chippenham (Q1).

Community Survey Results

32. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Topic Groups carried out an online Community Survey in March/April 2020 on a range of different topics. Green Infrastructure Topic Group Members assisted in the formulation of questions for green infrastructure.
33. Question 15 of the Survey asked ‘Overall, what is your favourite venue or location in Chippenham?’ (171 responses). John Coles Park was the overall favourite cited by 28% of survey respondents, followed by Monkton Park (16%). When combined, outdoor spaces including parks, riverside walks and canals were listed as a favourite location or venue for 50% of people who responded.
34. Question 20 of the Survey asked ‘Which of the following purposes for green space do you think are most important to you? Please rank them in order of importance, where ‘1’ is most important and ‘7’ is least important’ (204 responses).’ Overall, survey respondents rated wildlife and biodiversity as most important for green space, followed by recreation and play.

35. Question 21 of the Survey asked ‘How do you rate the provision of green space in Chippenham for a range of uses including recreation, wildlife and biodiversity, flood prevention etc?’ (204 responses). Overall, just under half of survey respondents said that the provision of green space in Chippenham was ‘Good’, a further 37% felt that the provision of green space was ‘Average’. This suggests that survey respondents broadly feel the current provision of green space including recreation, wildlife and biodiversity in Chippenham is satisfactory.
36. Question 22 of the Survey asked ‘How do you rate your access to green space?’ (203 responses). 47% of survey respondents who answered this question said that their access to green space was ‘Good’ with a further 26% who said ‘Excellent’ and 23% who said it was ‘Average’. This suggests that respondents are broadly satisfied that they have reasonably good access to green space in Chippenham.
37. Question 23 of the Survey asked ‘Name one improvement to Chippenham’s ‘Green Infrastructure’ that you would like to see’ (158 responses). 20% of survey respondents felt that protecting existing green spaces was a priority for Chippenham’s green infrastructure.
38. The results from the Community Survey clearly indicate that parks and green spaces are highly valued by the local community, with John Coles Park being named as the overall favourite location or venue for Chippenham residents (Q15).
39. Survey respondents rated wildlife and biodiversity as most important for green space (Q20) and the Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3 would encourage movement of wildlife through the Town. Provision of, and access to, green space was considered satisfactory by Chippenham residents (Q21 and Q22), something which could be maintained by Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3. 1 in 5 of survey respondents felt that protecting existing green spaces was a priority for Chippenham’s green infrastructure (Q23), which Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3 would help to achieve.

Public Consultation Events

40. Green Infrastructure Topic Group Members attended two events - the Chippenham Community Area Board meeting at Sheldon School on 3 February 2020, and the ‘Overcoming the Barriers to Climate Action’ event at Sheldon Sixth Form Centre on 9 March 2020.
41. At each event a laminated map was displayed and members of the public were invited to identify their favourite green space in Chippenham by sticking a dot on this map. They were also invited to fill in a table to record why this green space was special to them. This is reproduced in Table 3 of the Local Green Spaces Topic Paper (Appendix 5).
42. A total of 41 respondents from these events identified a variety of different green spaces throughout Chippenham that were special to them, and these varied in size, geographic location and type.

E. DISCUSSION

43. Existing green spaces are highly valued in Chippenham, as evidenced by the Pre-Vision survey results, Community Survey results and public consultation events.
44. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisals for the River Avon South West of the Town Bridge, and for Monkton Park identified the River Avon as being an important green corridor for the town, which allows movement of wildlife and humans between town and countryside.
45. Through the Audit of Green Spaces exercise carried out by Green Infrastructure Topic Group Members, it became apparent that there were some sites that did not necessarily meet the NPPF criteria for designation as Local Green Space. Usually this was because they were not necessarily legible and self-contained sites, and were quite extensive in length, sometimes flowing through different residential estates following the course of public footpaths, cycle lanes or natural features such as brooks. The Topic Group determined that these areas were important as green arteries for Chippenham and should still be protected for wildlife, amenity, recreation and movement under a separate Green Corridors policy.
46. Whilst Chippenham's green spaces are currently afforded some protection under more generally worded strategic green infrastructure policy in the NPPF and Wiltshire Core Strategy (CP52), there is no accompanying policies map in the Wiltshire Core Strategy identifying the location of such green infrastructure - and therefore no clarity as to which sites in Chippenham might constitute 'green infrastructure'. Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3 would add that local level detail by identifying the green infrastructure in the town that is most important for wildlife and human movement and strengthen those arteries between countryside and town.
47. The existing Development Plan fails to identify a hierarchy of green infrastructure. Identifying such a hierarchy can be helpful in understanding the importance attached to different green spaces in decision making. Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3 would resolve this by introducing two tiers of Green Corridor: Strategic Green Corridors and Neighbourhood Green Corridors.
48. In mapping Green Corridors (**Figure 2**) it became apparent that there were a number of missing connection points between the countryside and Green Corridors, often due to main roads bisecting the Town and countryside e.g. the A350. It was considered that Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3 should show opportunities for connection points on its linked map and support development seeking to re-connect the town and countryside.
49. In mapping Green Corridors it was also discovered that there were sections of the network that have either been severed or where there are missing links that are tantalisingly close - sometimes a stream that has been overly sterilised for flood prevention but more often than not severance by a single main road where a simple speed bump might save animal lives. It was considered that the Neighbourhood Plan Policy GI3 should identify these as 'Link Enhancements' on the accompanying policy

map and support development opportunities that seek to realise or improve these links.

50. The integrity of the Green Corridors should be retained through positive place shaping considerations for both people and biodiversity to enhance and invest in the natural capital of the area. It is envisaged that this is achievable on all developments that may be within or near to Corridors through a range of design features that are most relevant to that site and location and often act as drivers for the design of the place.
51. Where development is planned within or in close proximity to a Green Corridor, it should become an integral feature to the design and 'identity' of the development site to ensure that the connectivity of the Green Corridor network for both public benefit and biodiversity is retained and enhanced.
52. There are various ways in which green infrastructure can be incorporated into proposals, for example, through the incorporation of open space and recreational areas, raised fences allowing wildlife to move between rear gardens of houses, planting of new trees and landscaping, green walls, green roofs and Sustainable Urban Drainage systems. Green Corridors should be multifunctional spaces that reflect and enhance the character of Chippenham and also operate at a landscape scale across the town as a whole.
53. The Green Infrastructure Topic Group discovered through mapping green spaces in the town that some parts of the town benefit from having a good network of Green Corridors, particularly those newer Post-War residential estates such as Cepen Park where existing green infrastructure was a fundamental component incorporated into the design of new housing estates. Other older parts of the Town, and residential estates in deprived Wards where green spaces are generally isolated from one another, suffer from having few, if any, Green Corridors.

F. MATTERS EXCLUDED FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

54. The Town Council either owns or manages some of the green spaces in Chippenham, to which the Local Green Space policy would apply. It either has produced, or is currently in the process of producing, management plans for the larger green spaces it owns, based on advice from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The Town Council will seek to enhance those Local Green Spaces it owns, in consultation with the local community.

G. CONCLUSION

55. Green infrastructure corridors are a network of multi-functional green spaces that provide opportunities for the free movement of wildlife and humans. They include road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths and rights of way, as well as blue infrastructure such as rivers, streams and ponds. Green spaces that connect to form a network of green corridors provide multi-functional benefits for wildlife, biodiversity gains, opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activities, flood protection and leisure opportunities, helping to improve the overall environment and meet the priorities for the health and well-being of the community.
56. Chippenham is blessed with having a unique network of Green Corridors, which is highly valued by the local community, but is an often overlooked asset of the town, with poor connections into the surrounding countryside.
57. Neighbourhood Plan Policy G13 sets out a network and hierarchy of Green Corridors. It aligns with Paragraph 179 of the NPPF and Policy CP52 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy by identifying a green infrastructure network for the town and seeks to ensure that the integrity of the overall green infrastructure network is not compromised by inappropriate development and land management.
58. Neighbourhood Plan Policy G13 also highlights those missing links and poor connections within Chippenham's Green Corridor network, where development opportunities to realise or enhance these links and connections could make a fundamental difference to the longevity and effectiveness of the network.