

Biodiversity Sites



Legend

- Local Nature Reserves
- Ancient Woodland (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Other wildlife areas
- National Nature Reserves

Administrative Boundaries
 Borough Boundary



Coate Water Country Park (much of the lake is a Site of Special Scientific Interest)

Figure 22: Swindon Borough Biodiversity Sites map

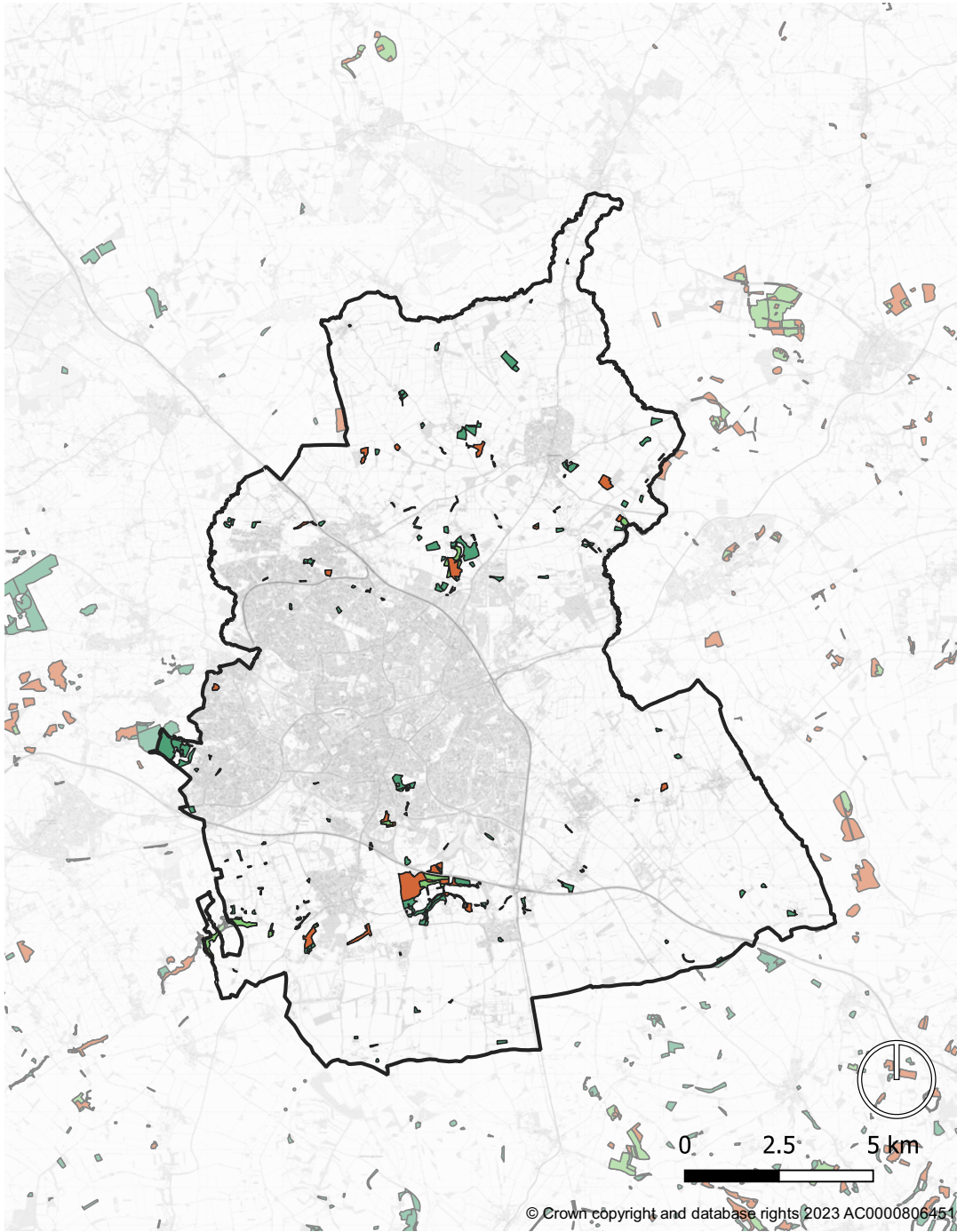
9.1.3 Trees and woodlands

There are numerous fragments of ancient woodland in the north of the borough, at Bydemill Copse, Highmoor Copse, Pickett’s Copse and Coombe’s Copse, all near Highworth; Crabtree Copse and Ashmead Brake further west of Highworth; Upper Widhill Farm and a copse near Blunsdon Abbey near Blunsdon; Stanton Park to the north of the town; Roughmoor Copse and Great Copse within the urban area and to the south Nightingale Farm and Burderop Wood, Oaken Ground Copse, Combe Bottom, Clouts Wood, Chilton Farm and Quidhampton Wood. To the east is ancient woodland at Hinton Copse.

In addition to this there are many areas which have been identified as ‘long established woodland and wood pasture’.

Tree canopy cover has been mapped for the borough by ward, measured as a percentage of land coverage. When looking at this mapping, we have to allow for the different sizes of the wards. However, this map does highlight some areas where canopy cover is particularly low, as one would perhaps expect, the lowest area is the Central ward at 4.78%.

Woodland



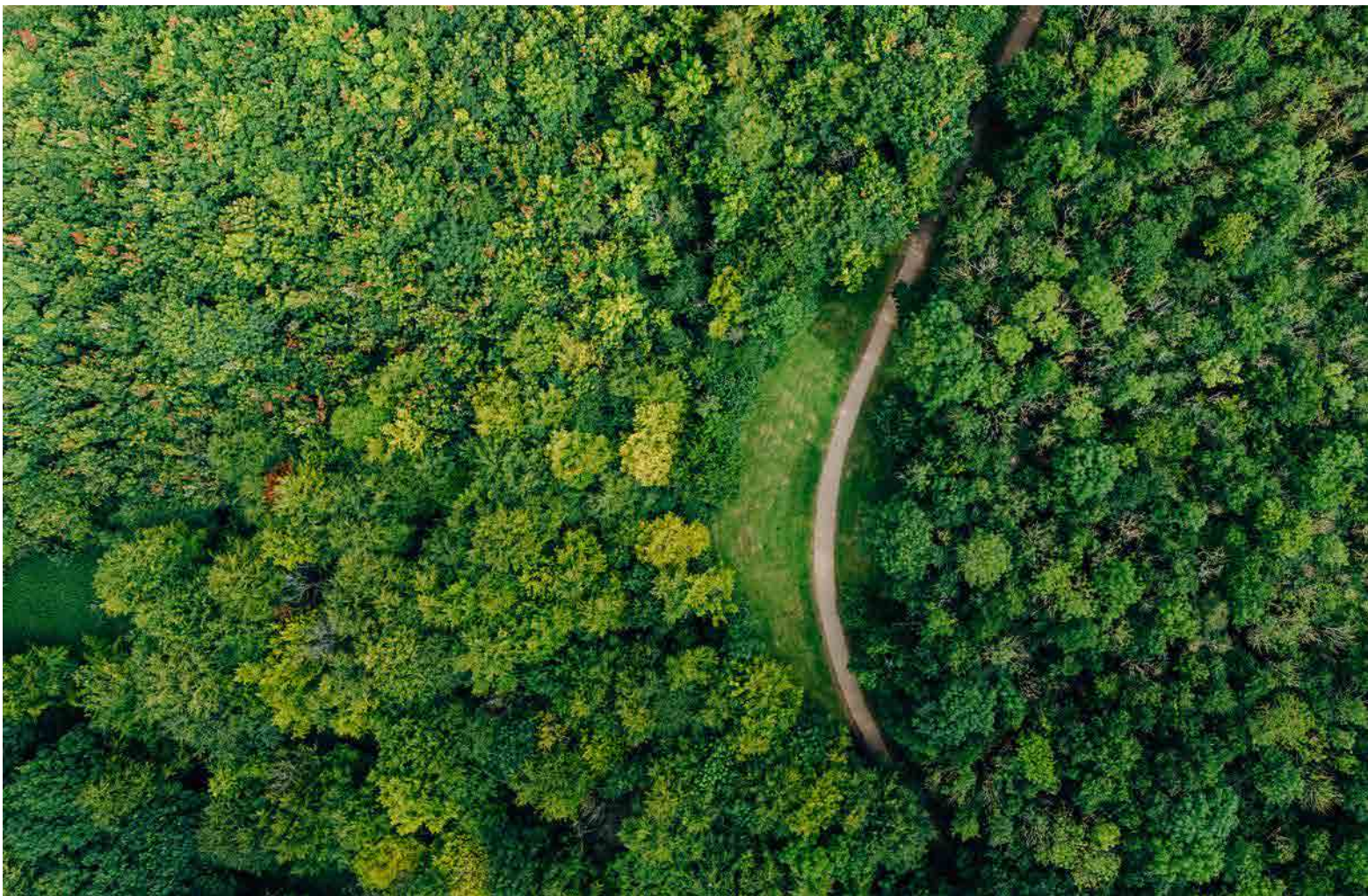
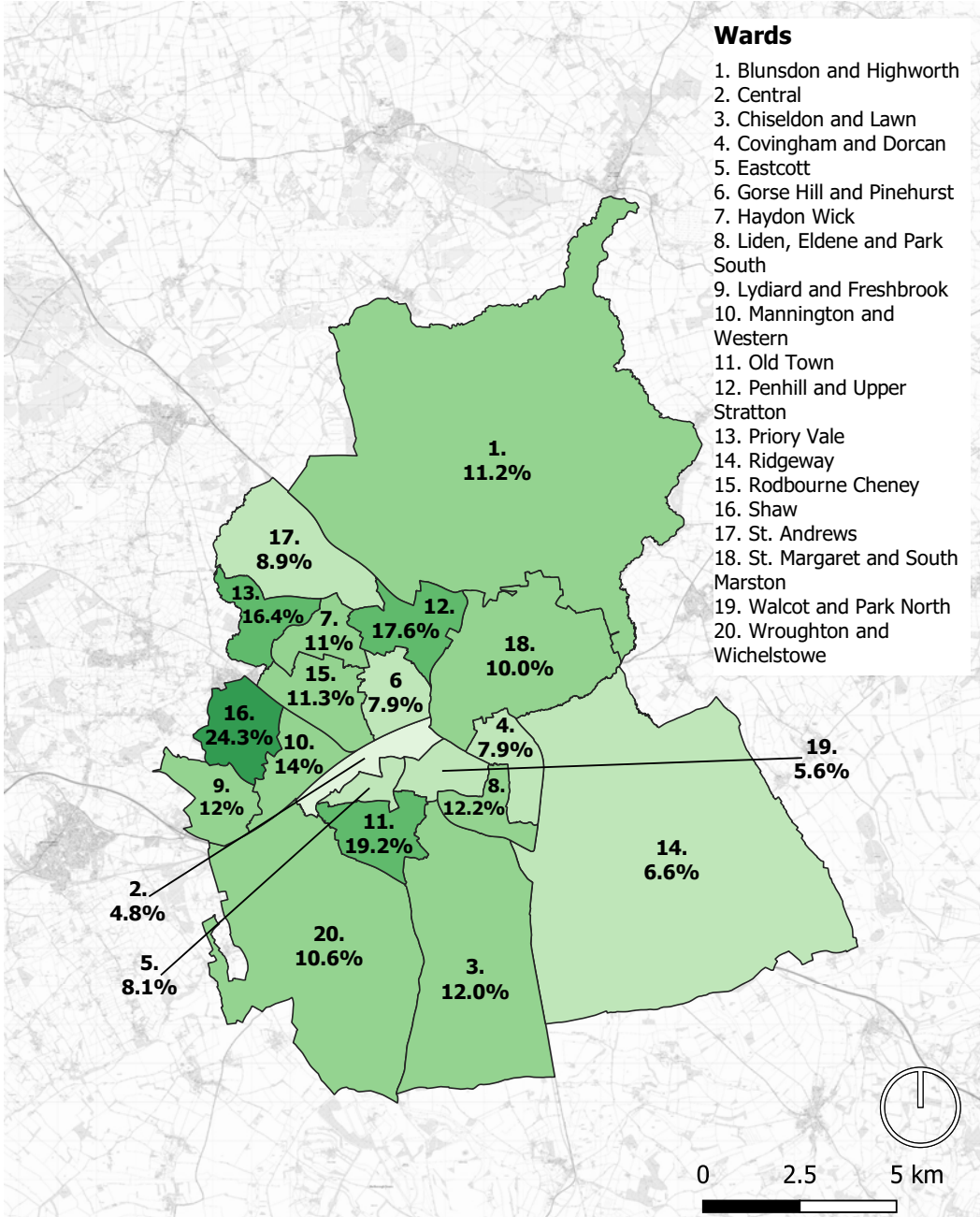
- Legend
- Administrative Boundaries
 - Borough Boundary
 - Ancient semi-natural woodland
 - Planted ancient semi-natural sites
 - Long established woodland and wood pasture



Figure 23: Swindon Borough Woodland map

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Canopy Cover by Ward



Shaw Forest Park, Swindon

Figure 24: Swindon Borough Canopy Cover map

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9.1.4 Historic Environment

The NPPF identifies that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. GI planning can be used to help achieve this.

Swindon’s historic environment and heritage assets are tangible evidence of past human activity and make an important contribution to the area’s historic landscape character - shaping the landscape, wildlife and economy of the Borough.

The character of its settlements including farms, shaped by their historic buildings, materials and function; the pattern of fields, hedges, farming woodlands, canals, tracks and roads, and historic monuments and archaeological deposits below ground all part of that contribution and evidence. Several heritage assets are identified as historic landscape features within Landscape Character Assessments. For example, the Iron Age hillforts such as Barbury Castle, Liddington Hill and landscape of the Ridgeway, and historic parkland, for example associated with historic estates such as Lydiard, Burderop and Stanton Parks.

Commensurate with the growth and development of the Borough’s towns and villages, there are historic public parks, for example Queen’s Park and Town Gardens, and the GWR Park in the railway village. Also, Coate water, now a Country Park but historically created as the reservoir for the Wilts and Berks Canal. Alongside churchyards and independent cemeteries, for example Radnor Street cemetery they shape not only the landscape but are communally valued.

Those designated heritage assets include registered parks and gardens, scheduled monuments and conservation areas. Others are identified as being commensurate with nationally designated sites or locally significant. Some have associative historic value in regard to their significance including the connection with the literary works of authors Alfred Williams and Richard Jefferies.

Evidence

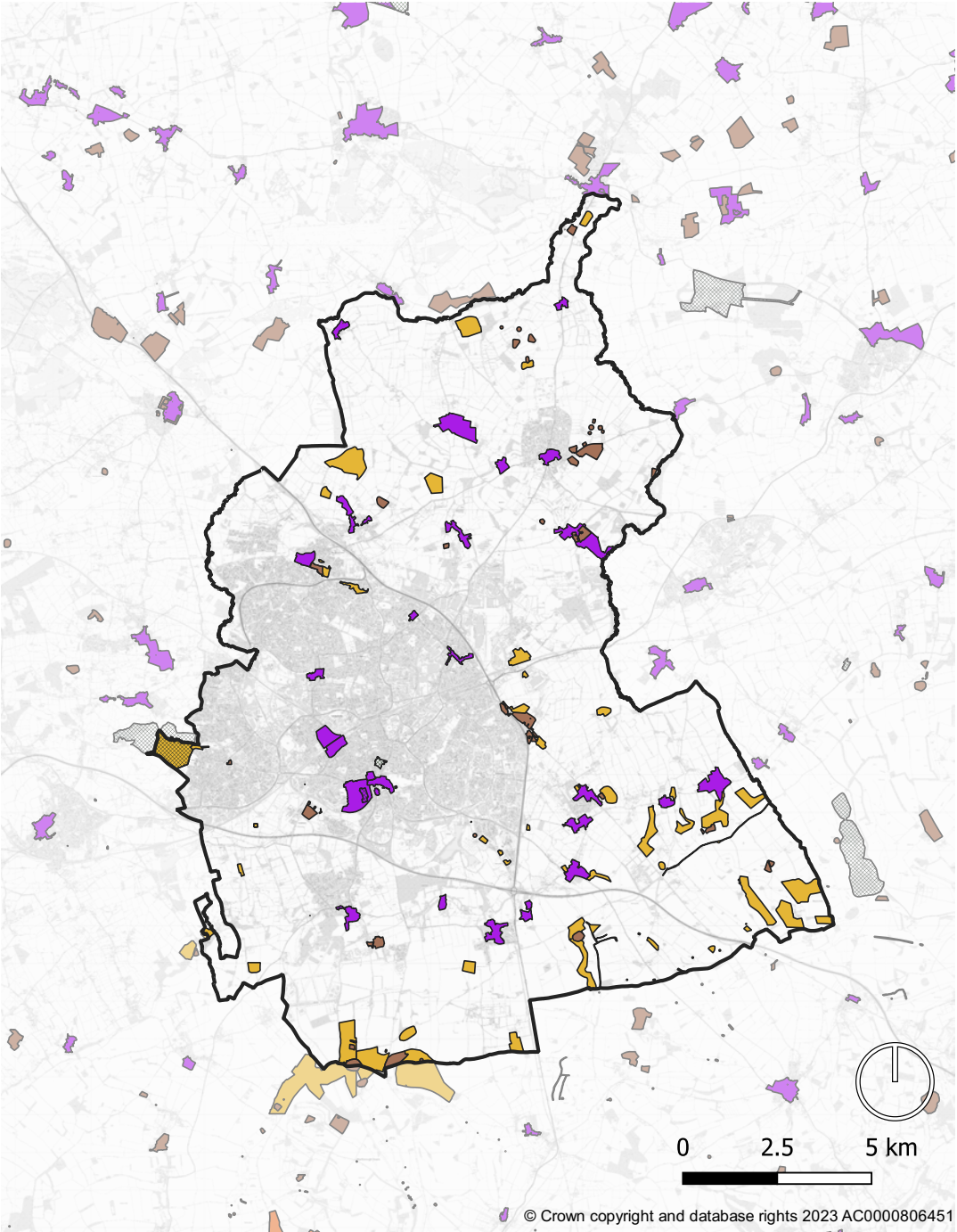
Heritage assets are evidenced via several sources and datasets; this includes the National Heritage List of England (NHLE) and adopted conservation area appraisals, within which the contribution of trees and greenspaces are often identified as important and positive contributions to their character and appearance. The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (HER) and Historic Landscape Character (HLC) datasets are also significant datasets. With over 4000 entries, the HER is a continuously developing and updated resource and relates to nationally and locally important archaeological sites monument and finds.

The HLC is the study and analysis of historic influences on the landscape. HLCs integrate with many attributes of wider landscape characterisation²⁶.

For the purpose of the strategy, those historic environment designations represented spatially include Archaeology (scheduled and other important sites), Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas. These are shown on map opposite.

26 The Wiltshire and Swindon HLC was undertaken by Wiltshire Council in collaboration with partners, including Swindon Borough Council (SBC) and Historic England (HE).

Historic Environment



- Legend
- Administrative Boundaries
 - Borough Boundary
 - Historic Environment Designations
 - Registered Parks and Gardens
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Conservation Areas
 - World Heritage Sites
 - Other identified nationally important archaeological sites



Figure 25: Swindon Borough Historic Environment

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Heritage as a component of high-quality green space and GI

‘Good quality local green space should respond to and enhance the character and history of an area to create beautiful, well designed and distinctive places’ (HE, online).

The significance of assets can be contributed to and enhanced by improvements including to their setting; the physical surroundings including pattern of use, historic and functional relationship and views.

Opportunities to develop or enhance the synergies between the historic and natural environment within the Borough by ensuring delivery of GI respects the preservation conservation and management objectives for heritage assets. This should include:

- identifying opportunities to enhance sense of place by including preservation and enhancement of historic assets with GI, and to seek to improve people’s experience and understanding of these features with interpretation, public art and events;
- ensuring GI enhancements such as street tree and other planting, positively respond to significance and character to bring about and contribute to wider regeneration opportunities;
- ensuring opportunities for new tree planting are informed by consideration of significance of heritage assets, including below ground remains, and [e.g. right tree – right place]
- identifying opportunities for collaboration as to the short, medium and long and term management needs of GI that have synergies with sustaining or enhancing the significance heritage assets and vice versa, and including in relevant management plans.



Sheppard Street ‘Pocket park’ in the ‘Heritage Action Zone’ near the Railway Village, Swindon. Located beside the historic route of the North Wilts Canal, and alongside the Western Flyer cycle route. The wall in the background is part of a historic bridge where the canal passed under the railway and is Grade II listed. The park enhances the existing heritage asset whilst also providing vital greening and amenity for people.

9.1.5 Public Rights of Way and Open Access Land

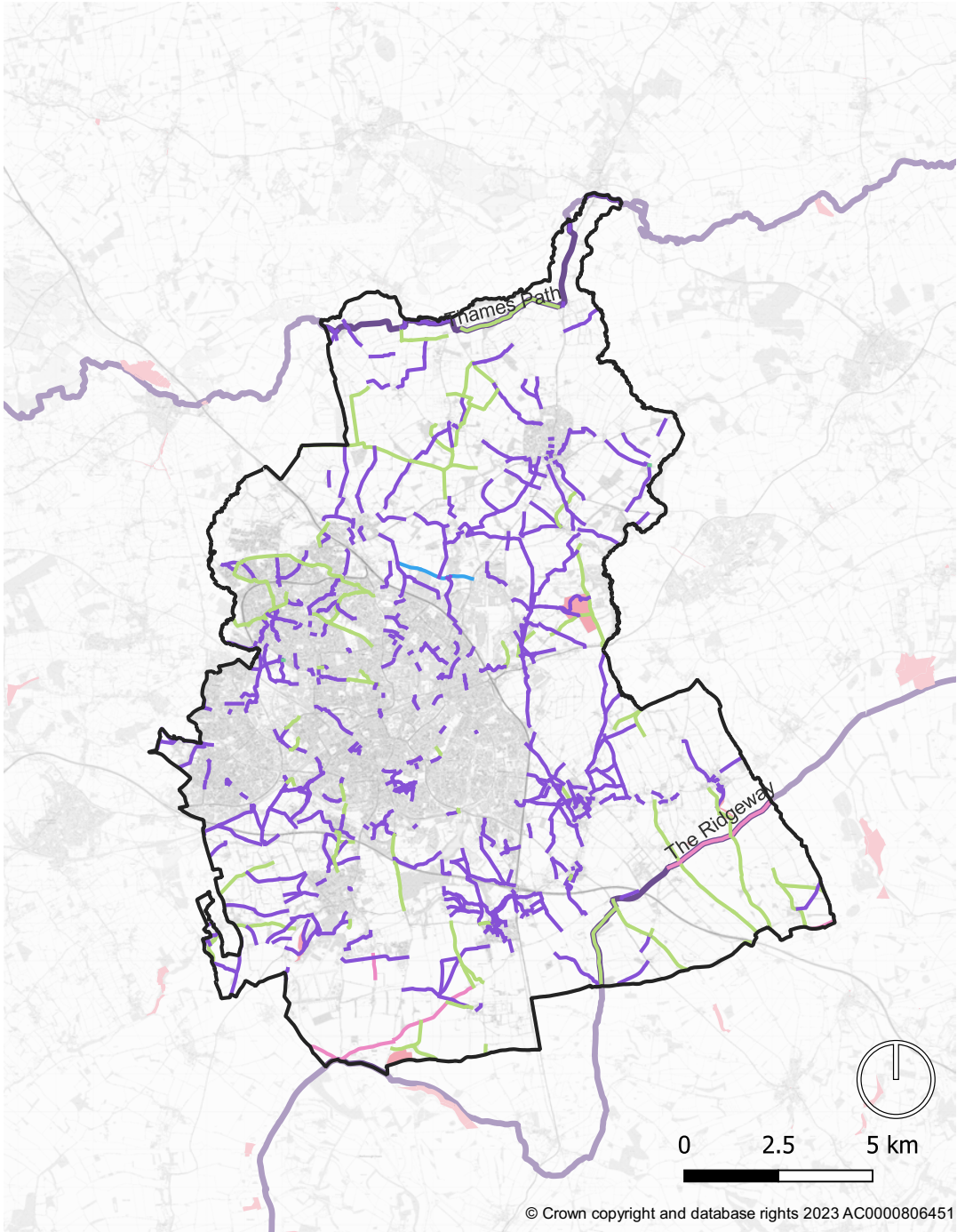
There is a good network of bridleways, footpaths and Byways across the borough. Two National Trails cross the borough, the Thames Path in the north, along the Thames, and The Ridgeway, following an ancient path, through the Downs in the south. It is via the Public Rights of Way network that many people access GI and the countryside, where they can experience many of the benefits of natural or green spaces outlined previously in this document.

Some of these rights of way are within the Swindon or Highworth urban areas and form important, useful links on routes to and from amenities or work and school, or for leisure walking. ‘Swindon Travel Choices’ have created mapped trails through the borough and some of the Parish Councils have put together trail routes to encourage leisure walking within the borough, such as the South Swindon Green Trail.

In the more rural parts of the borough, there are less frequent open spaces and it is here that the Public Rights of Way network becomes people’s main or only way of accessing green space.

There are five areas of open access land, made accessible through the Countryside Rights of Way Act (CRoW Act) 2000. These are Nightingale Woods, part of Burderop Down near Barbury Castle, Markham Hill and Markham Bottom, Charlbury Hill and strip lynchets at Bishopstone. ‘Open access land’ are areas with public right of access mapped as ‘open country’ (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land.

Public Rights of Way and Open Access Land



- Legend
- Administrative Boundaries
 - Borough Boundary
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Bridleway
 - Byway
 - Footpath
 - RestrByway
 - Open Access Land
 - National Trails



Figure 26: Swindon Borough Rights of Way and Open Access Land map

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9.1.6 Active Travel

The map opposite shows all the traffic free cycle routes within Swindon borough. Predictably there are more within the Swindon urban area. The map also shows new cycle routes proposed in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) from 2022²⁷. These include a possible route between the north of Swindon and Highworth, a route linking Wichelstowe/ East Wichel with Wroughton (recently constructed) and a route eastwards between South Marston and the edge of the borough.

There is an opportunity to link the cycle path between the north of the town and Highworth, with Stanton Park, and to provide a cycling hub/ cafe facilities there. There are two alternative routes- one along the route of an old railway line and one following the route of an existing footpath. Both these routes will be running through GI.

The new Fleming Way bus boulevard will integrate active travel routes, a public transport hub with some new GI, raingardens and some tree planting. There is the opportunity to roll this approach out to further streets, particularly around the town centre, to enhance its appearance, use for active travel, legibility and safety (see Central Area GI Concept Plan).

Many of the existing routes are ‘green’, shaded by existing trees, or through open spaces, however, these are not always suitable routes for certain commuters, or at certain times of year and morning or night when they might be dark and not be or feel safe. Alternative routes along main routes that are well used and overlooked should be provided and can integrate GI alongside providing separate cycle paths, like in the Grey to Green scheme in Sheffield, previously mentioned.

27 Swindon Borough Council (2022) *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)*. Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/8394/swindon_local_cycling_and_walking_infrastructure_plan.pdf Accessed on: October 3 2024.

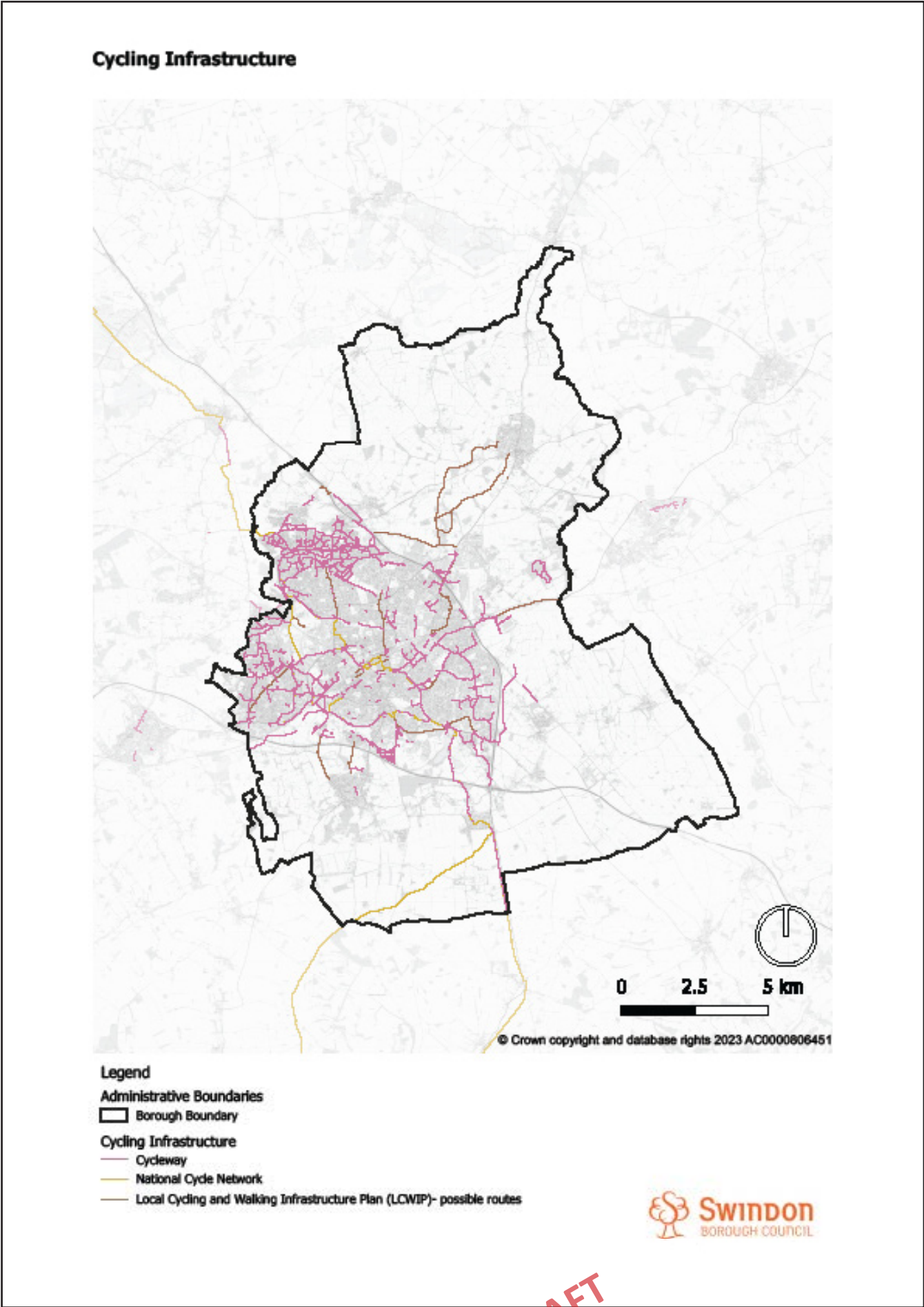


Figure 27: Swindon Borough Cycling Infrastructure map

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9.1.7 Blue Infrastructure

Swindon Borough is almost entirely within the Thames River Basin District. These are ‘the area of land and sea, made up of one or more neighbouring river basins together with their associated groundwaters and coastal waters...’ that have been delineated for the purposes of implementation of the Water Framework Directive²⁸. A very small ‘dogleg’ of the borough, incorporating Quidhampton Wood, near to Royal Wootton Bassett lies within the River Severn District.

For the purposes of the Catchment Based Approach to management, the borough is part of the Upper Thames Catchment.

The main rivers within the borough, both tributaries to the Thames, are the River Ray and the River Cole.

There are many chalk streams in the southern part of the borough, emerging along the springline from the chalk aquifers in the Downs. Chalk rivers are unique and important, often supporting a biodiverse aquatic flora and a diversity of invertebrates and fish. As the water emerges from aquifers, it is very pure, rich in minerals and remains at a fairly constant temperature all year round. Only 200 chalk rivers are known globally, 85% of which are found in the UK and 39 of which are in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. They can suffer from low flow due to over abstraction of water by water companies, and nutrient enrichment further down stream²⁹.

The Borough’s river corridors form vital GI links through the landscape.

There are also many waterbodies in the borough. Larger waterbodies include a small lake, Coate Water, in Coate Water Country Park in the south east of the urban area of Swindon. The lake and some of the areas adjacent to it are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as it is one of the most important in Wiltshire for breeding reed warblers and great-crested grebes, supports a wide range of dragonflies and damselflies and has botanical interest³⁰. There are also significant waterbodies at Stanton Park Country Park, Peatmoor Lagoon and Moulden Hill Lake. Queen’s Park, a Registered Park and Garden also has a lake.

The route of the historic Wilts and Berks canal goes through the borough, to the south of the Swindon urban area. Parts of this have been restored including a section just outside of the borough, to the south of Royal Wootton Bassett and a short section to the south of East Wichel and the new urban extension at Wichelstowe. The historic route of the North Wilts Canal also forms a spur linking the Wilts and Berks to the Thames and Severn north of Cricklade. Part of this spur has been restored through the Wichelstowe development. The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust have plans to restore more of the North Wilts Canal through the Swindon town centre and linking with a section at Moredon, then past Moulden Hill Country Park and north to Cricklade³¹.

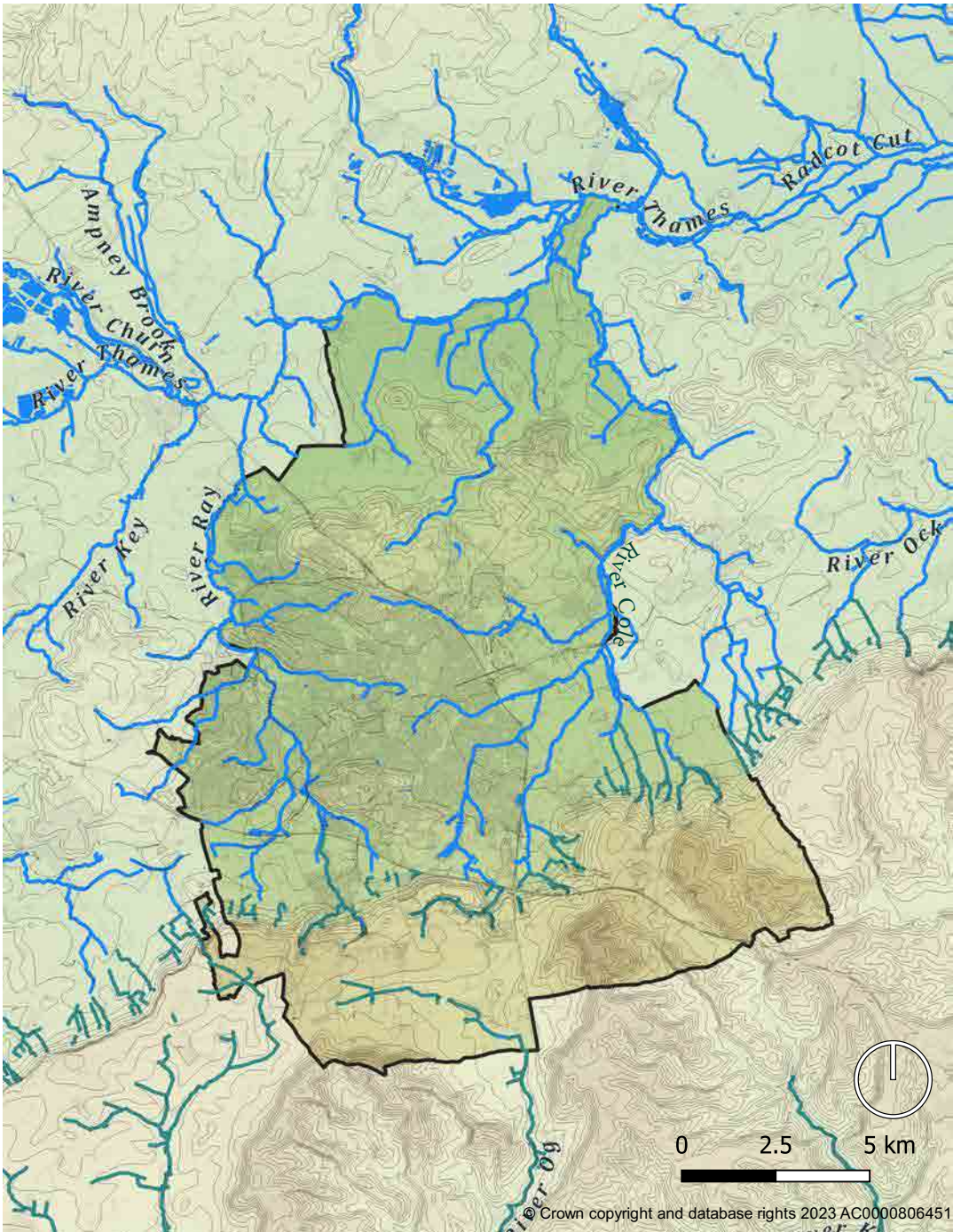
28 Environment Agency, UK Government (2024) *WFD River Basin Districts Cycle 2*. Available at: <https://www.data.gov.uk/data-set/368ae5fb-65a1-4f19-98ff-a06a1b86b3fe/wfd-river-basin-districts-cycle-2>. Accessed September 1, 2024.

29 North Wessex Downs National Landscape (2024) 39: *Chalk Streams*. Available at: https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/visit_explore/chalk-streams/. Accessed on September 1, 2024.

30 Natural England (2024) Designated Sites View. Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1001511> Accessed on October 3, 2024.

31 Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (2021) Wilts and Berks Canal Interactive Map. Available at: <https://www.wbct.org.uk/enjoy-discover/interactive-map> Accessed on October 3, 2024.

Rivers, watercourses and waterbodies



Legend

- Contour lines
- Lakes and waterbodies
- Chalk rivers
- Rivers and watercourses
- Administrative Boundaries
- Borough Boundary



Figure 28: Swindon Borough Rivers, Watercourses and Waterbodies map

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9.1.8 Tranquility

Tranquility is an aspect of landscape and GI that is found in the countryside, away from the influence of traffic, streetlights, movement, light and noise. It is an important contributing aspect of the amenity afforded by GI, particularly in the countryside. Tranquility enables people to experience the beauty and harmony of the natural world and to gain some of the health and wellbeing benefits covered in earlier sections of this report.

For the majority of people who live within the urban areas of the borough, accessing the countryside, to experience tranquility, will be something they can experience on a less frequent basis. Their day to day access to GI will primarily be places close to home, at the doorstep and local level. Swindon’s Country Parks allow the experience of a certain amount of tranquility and this quality should be protected. Stanton Park has already seen the erosion of visual tranquility with the construction of the B&Q warehouse, residential development at Catsbrain Farm and a battery storage facility adjacent to the park. Further incursions and erosions of the quality of the park should be avoided.

The amenity value of the northern, southern and south eastern rural parts of the borough should be valued and protected as an important amenity resource for the people of the borough and adjacent areas. The NPPF acknowledges the importance of tranquility. Paragraph 191b notes that planning policies and decisions should ‘identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason’.



Church Lane, Bishopstone in the east of the borough, currently within a tranquil area

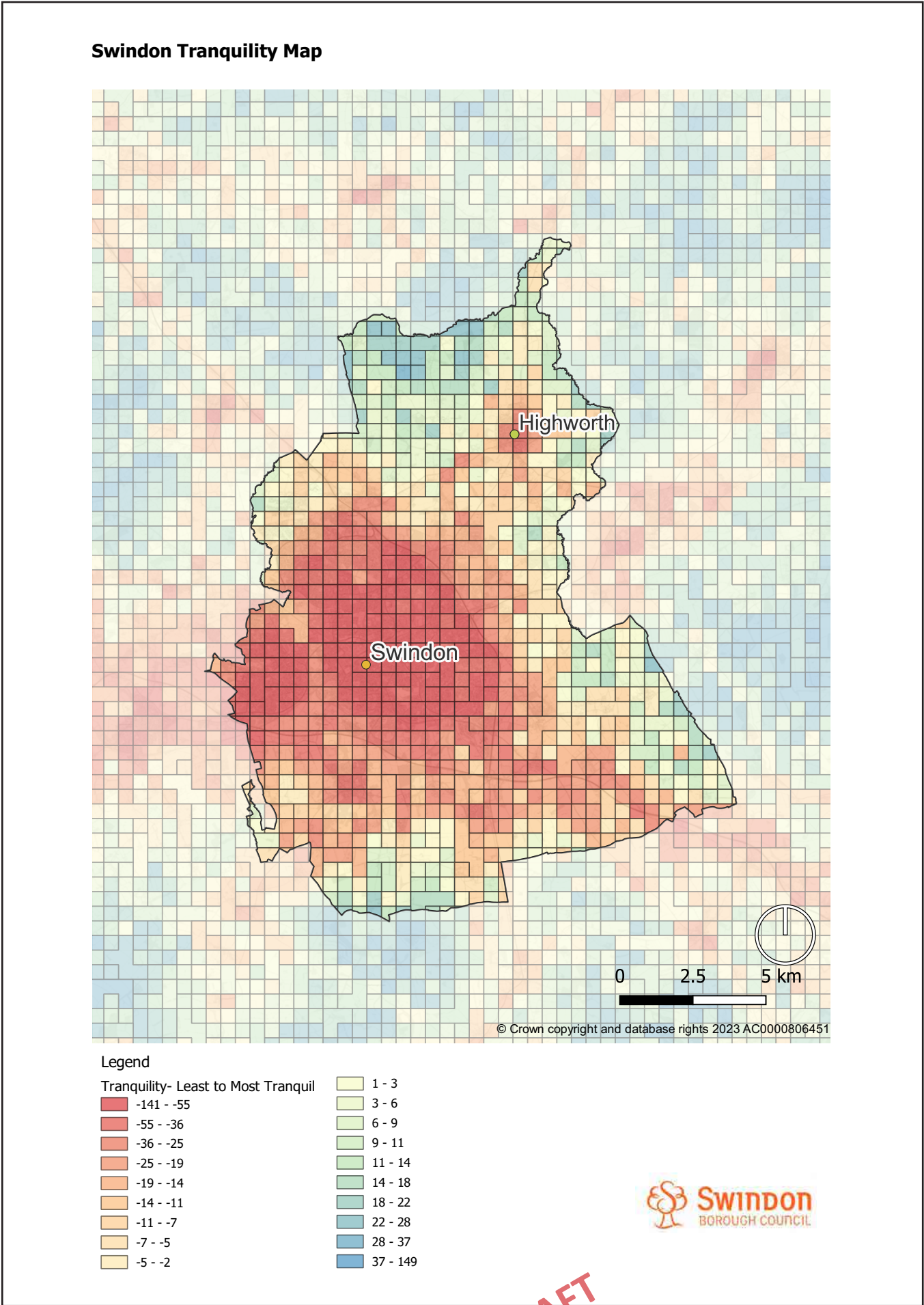


Figure 29: Swindon Borough Tranquility map

9.1.10 Open Space

There are a range of open spaces across the borough. There are five Country Parks: Moulden Hill, Lydiard Park, Stanton Park, Coate Water and Barbury Castle. These are currently managed by the Borough Council, by a team of Park Rangers.

There are several newer woodlands, Stratton Woods, near to Stanton Park, managed by the Woodland Trust and Nightingale Woods to the east of South Marston, managed by Forest England.

There are a range of other larger, natural or semi-natural spaces within the Swindon urban area such as Seven Fields, Shaw Forest Park and Peatmoor Lagoon, and East Wichel fields. Linear green corridors or parks are featured quite frequently within the town, such as Shaftesbury Trail Park, along the Austradius Brook, and Shaw Ridge Linear Park. There are more traditional recreation grounds such as Mannington Rec, Westcott Recreation Ground and Buckhurst Field.

Traditional more formal parks are a feature of the older part of the town and include Queen’s Park, Town Gardens, GWR Park and The Lawns.

Wroughton has access to some woodlands at Clouts Wood and smaller green spaces around the large village. Highworth currently has access to a range of open spaces that include Pentylands woodland park and smaller play areas and parks around the town.

Within many of the more rural parts of the borough access to green space is mostly restricted to the Public Rights of Way network.

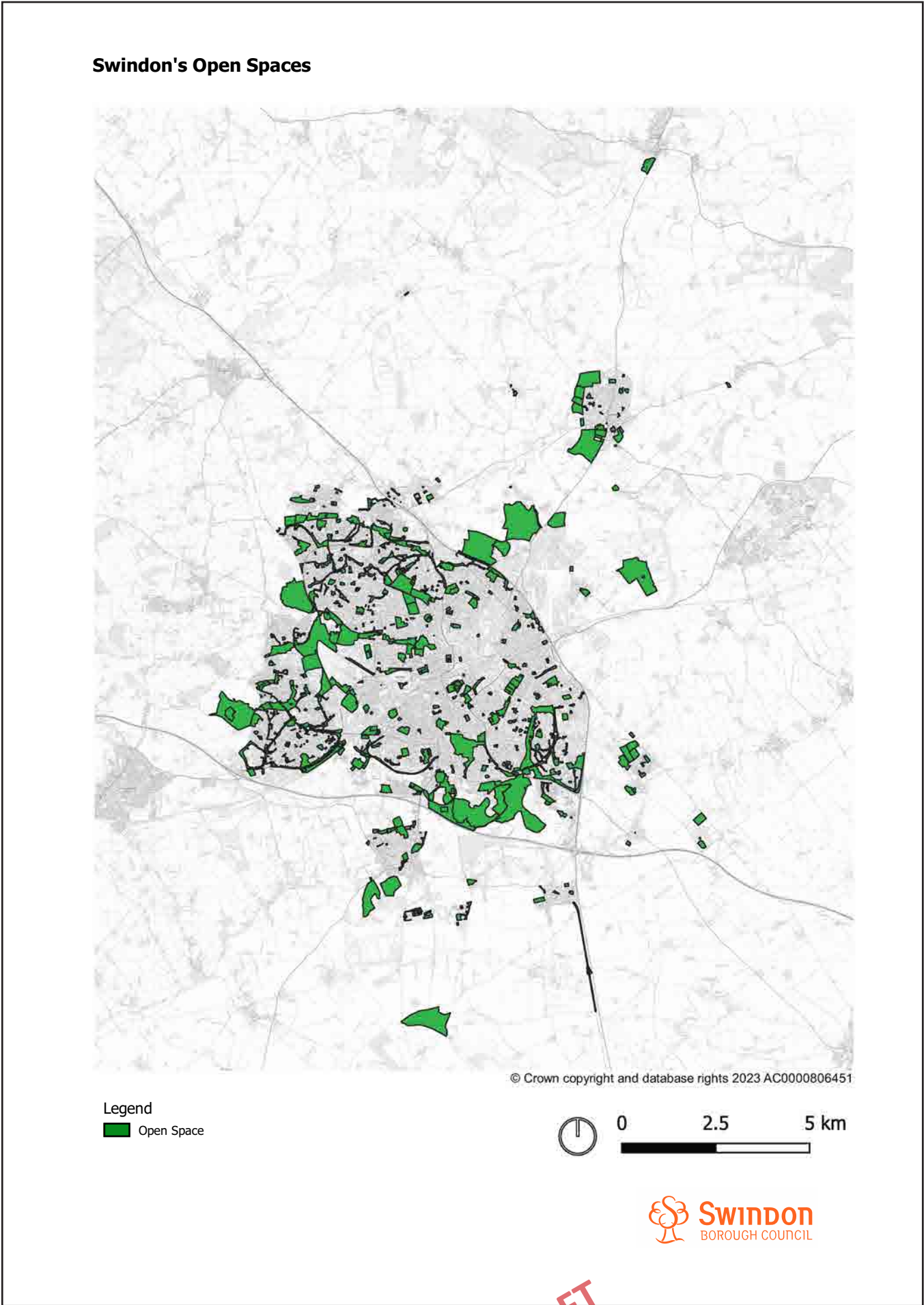


Figure 30: Map of Swindon's Open Spaces

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Open Space Accessibility

Natural England Green Space Accessibility Standards set out standards for the proximity of green space to where people live. These are:

- Doorstep (0.5ha within 200m)
- Local (2ha within 300m)
- Neighbourhood (10 ha within 1km)
- Wider Neighbourhood (20ha within 2km)
- District (100ha within 5km)
- Sub regional (500ha within 10km)

The coverage of the borough for doorstep, local and neighbourhood access combined can be seen in the plan opposite. There are gaps in provision around the town centre (Central Area, north and south of the railway), Walcot, and around the Oxford Road area of St Margaret and South Marston (see zoomed in image below). The GI/ Open Space Audit, will further look into gaps in access and provision, also assessing the quality of open spaces. This will include assessment of the 'multi-functions' of the green spaces in terms of biodiversity, sustainable drainage, urban cooling, and recreational functions- how attractive, welcoming, and resourced they are for people for play, relaxation, accessibility and inclusion and enjoyment of nature.

Figure 33 on the following page shows open space alongside Indices of Multiple Deprivation, highlighting some areas of high IMD and low levels of accessible greenspace in Park South and Park North, Pinehurst, Penhill, Upper Stratton and the Central Area. These areas should be prioritised in terms of funding and efforts to improve and regenerate green areas, ensuring they provide for everyone in the local community. Public engagement will help to ensure any regeneration is as accessible and inclusive as possible for everyone in the community.

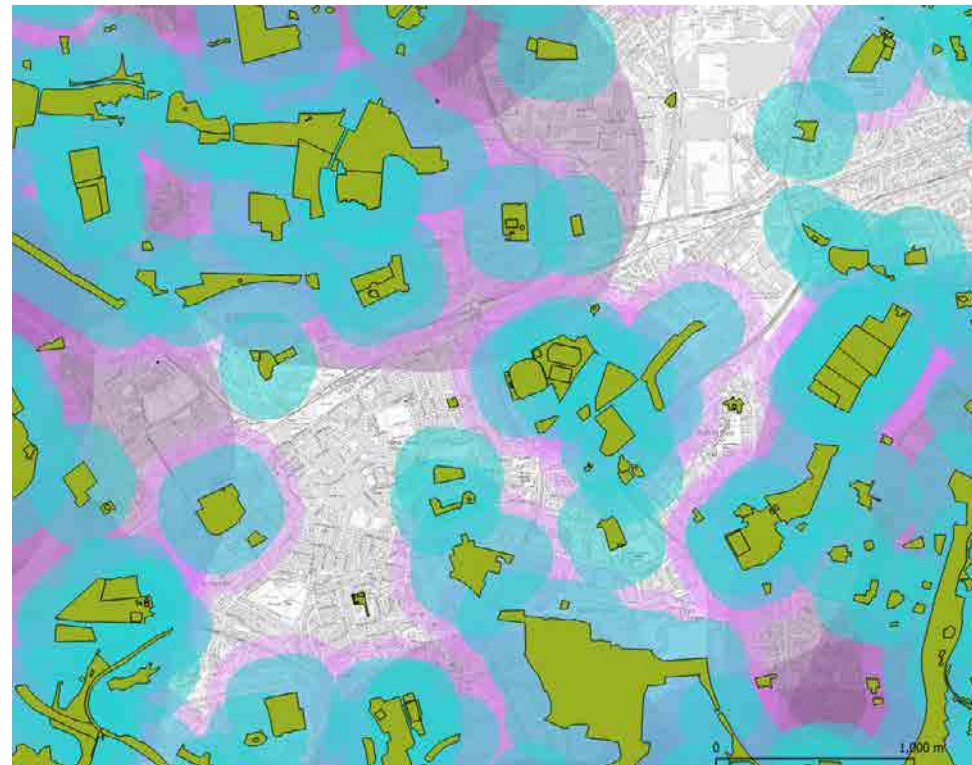
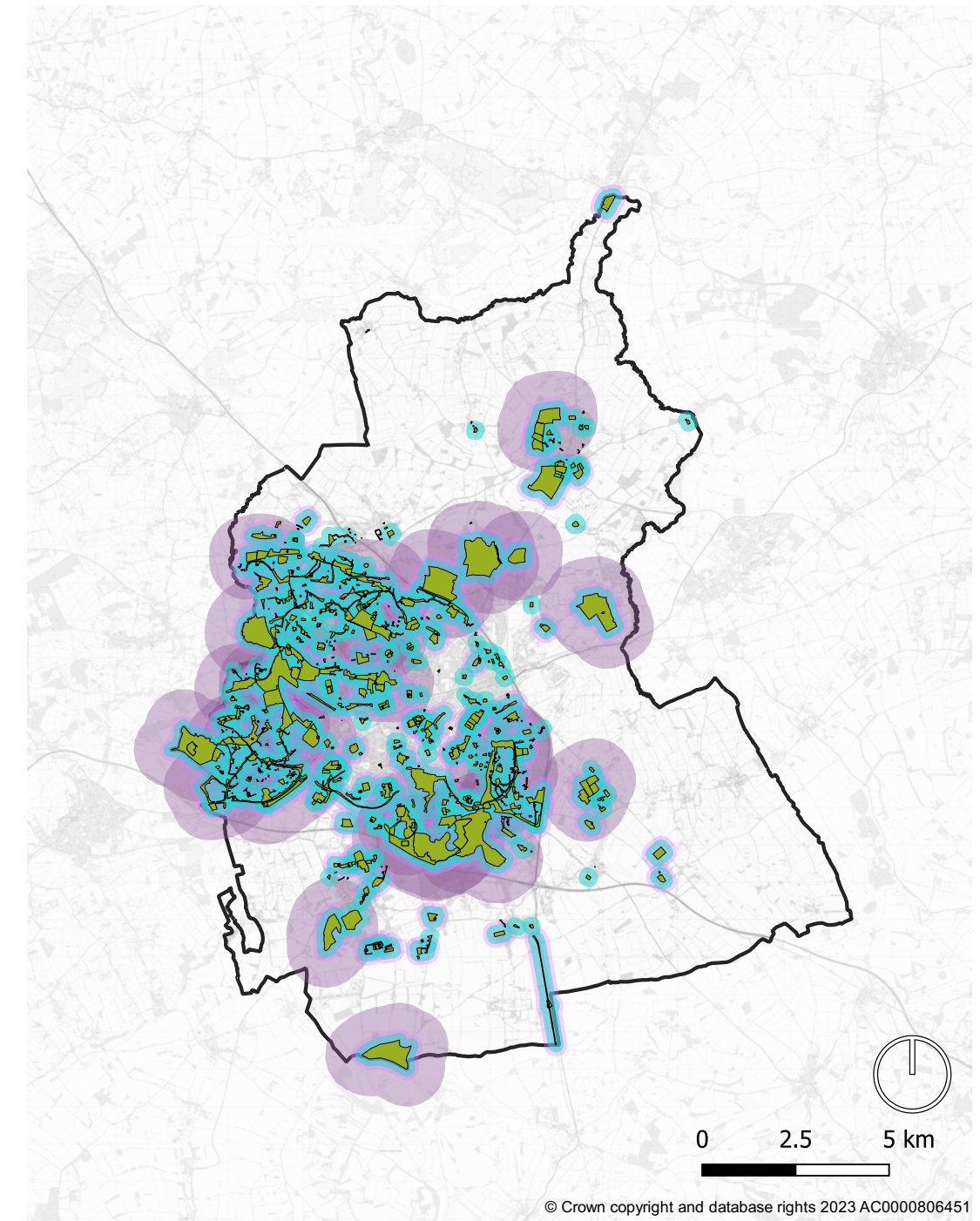


Figure 31: Swindon Borough Central Area Local, Doorstep and Neighbourhood green space access- zoom in

Local, Doorstep and Neighbourhood Green Space Accessibility



Legend

- Open Space EN3
- Doorstep Accessible Greenspace Buffer (min 0.5ha within 200m)
- Local Accessible Greenspace Buffer (min 2ha within 300m)
- Neighbourhood Accessible Greenspace Buffer (min 10ha within 1km)

Administrative Boundaries
Borough Boundary

Figure 32: Swindon Borough Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood green space accessibility map

Swindon Borough Indices of Multiple Deprivation Map (by Lower Super Output Area, LSOA) and Open Spaces

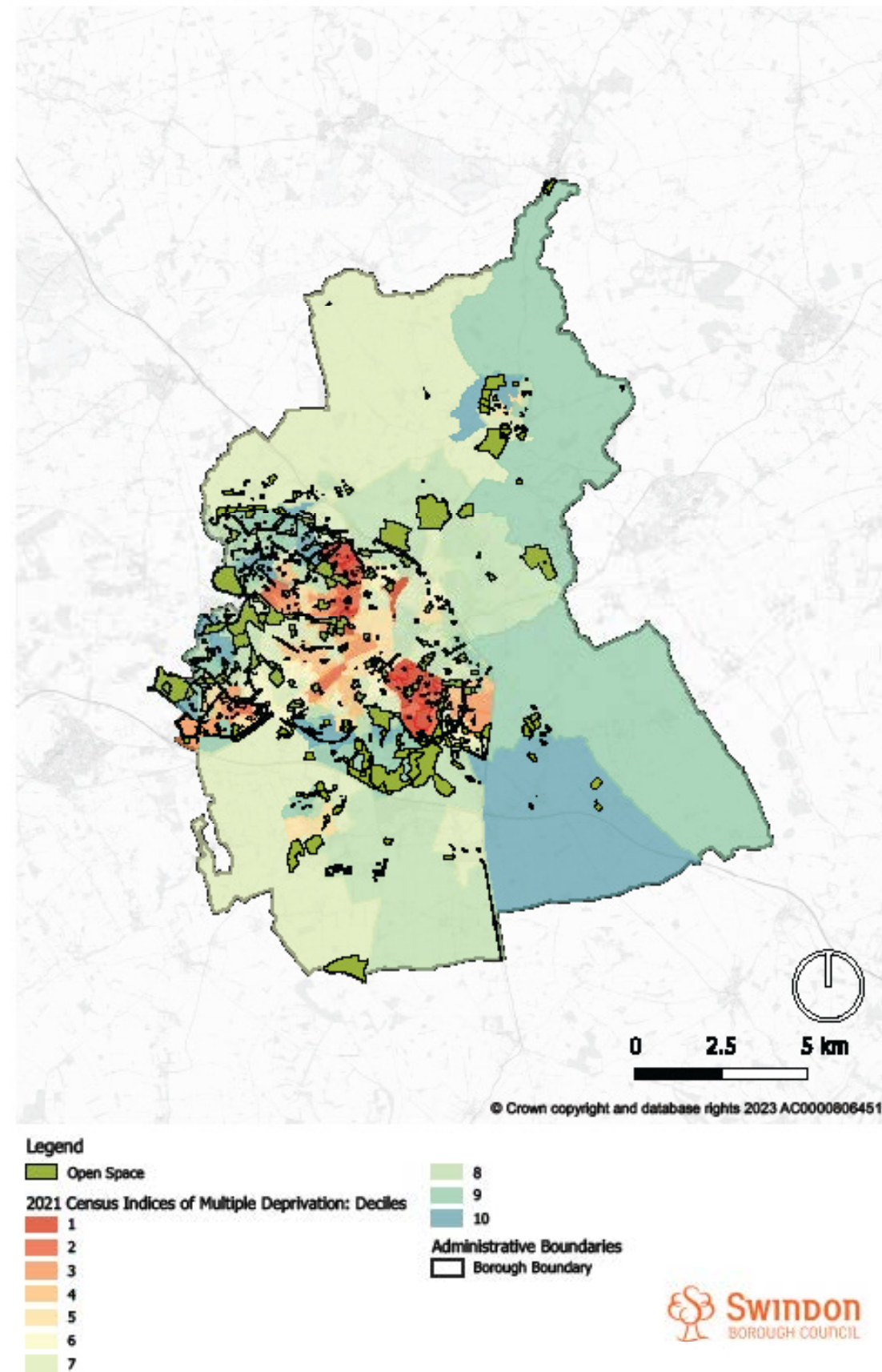


Figure 33: Swindon Borough IMD and Open Spaces map

WHAT DO WE HAVE?



Coate Water Country Park, Swindon

Country Parks

Country parks are important public green spaces often at the edge of urban areas which provide places to enjoy the outdoors and experience nature in an informal semi-rural park setting. Most were designated in the 1970s, under the Countryside Act 1968 with the support of the former Countryside Commission (now Natural England) with the intention of providing people with somewhere to experience being in the countryside close to where they live, and with facilities.

They usually have facilities such as a car park, toilets, cafe, paths and information for visitors, meaning they are accessible and inclusive of many people in the community, and may run activities and volunteering opportunities. They provide thousands of visitors a year the opportunity to enjoy the experience of being in the countryside, close to urban areas and can also serve as a gateway to the countryside, increasing the inclusivity and accessibility of the wider countryside. They have, however, suffered from a lack of funding over recent years and many of them are in some aspects run down and in need of investment.

Swindon has five: Moulden Hill, Stanton Park, Coate Water, Barbury Castle and Lydiard Park.

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10. ACTIONS

Actions	Short term	Longer term
Forum Set up a forum with regular meetings for main stakeholders to collaborate and work together on enhancing, protecting and creating high quality green infrastructure in the borough in a joined-up way. This will enable the most value added, efficient working, helping to maximise resources and avoid any working at cross purposes or doubling up of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial stakeholder meeting to feed into GI Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yearly day long conferenceBi-monthly (to be agreed) meetings to look at plans, evaluate progress and look at future actions
Planning policies and guidance Create a robust set of planning policies and guidance documents to ensure the protection, enhancement and creation of good quality and well designed green infrastructure within new development (in line with Natural England GI Planning and Design Guide). Well integrated into all relevant planning policies. Set of follow up guidance and other documents including Tree Strategy/ Forest Plan,Country Park Management Plans (and Masterplans where possible), Play Guidance (integrate GI), Landscape Design Guide, Design Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GI policies within the new Local Plan set requirement for good quality and sufficient quantum of GI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce Design Codes, integrating GI requirements Evaluate and assess every couple of years
Strategic scale Identify key links and corridors- how to improve connectivity, quality, multi-functionality. Work with stakeholders to identify key habitats and species to focus on throughout the borough. Link in with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and allocation of Biodiversity Net Gain (in approved sites). Focus efforts on improving the Country Parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic GI Plan included within this document and shared with the LNRS team. Produce more detailed plans of different linkages with proposed actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic GI plan to be reassessed and updated regularly
Local scale Improve quality, connectivity and access. Look at fair access to good quality green space, identify areas with lower access through the GI and Open Space Audit and Assessment. Work towards goal of nature close to home for all residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake GI/ Open Space Audit and Assessment, including public engagement (survey). Improvements to Spring Gardens and Town Centre (see below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce ‘Environmental Justice’ mapping and ‘Tree Equity’ scores for the borough.
Projects Projects to link in with aims for strategic linkages where relevant. These are SBC or joint projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country Parks (produce Management and Maintenance Plans and Masterplans and appoint Country Parks manager) Active travel network/ highways improvements- incorporate with GI, into ‘green routes’- pocket parks, planting, trees, raingardens, play-on-the-way, child friendly, pedestrian and cyclist friendly Central Area/ town centre- protect, enhance and create new green spaces and green the public realm Spring Gardens- enhance as an essential open space in an area of town with low levels of green space. Street tree planting (in line with Forest Plan- to follow) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanton Country Park ecology surveys and production of a Management Plan are currently underway. Spring Gardens- some improvement works currently underway, Masterplan to follow. Ensure plans for Town Centre incorporate sufficient and high quality GI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible ‘grey to green’ schemes within the town incorporating GI with active travel routes. Retrofit tree planting of street trees

<p>Management and maintenance</p> <p>Parish Councils now maintain many of the open spaces in Swindon. The Council still own and maintain Country Parks (as they are a borough wide resource), highways, active travel routes, the town centre and currently Spring Gardens open space. Maintain high levels of maintenance including horticultural excellence.for all bodies responsible for maintaining open spaces, including volunteer and community groups (e.g. Forest Meadows Project with WWT etc.)</p> <p>Look at how borough responsibilities for maintenance are funded and organised. Look at mechanisms for funding the town centre maintenance.</p> <p>Look at opportunities to train and apprentice young people. Make the most of volunteers, for maintaining parks and green spaces including the Country Parks by appointing volunteer coordinator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appoint manager for Country Parks to look at funding of parks etc. (grant, commercial, donations from Swindon large businesses, S106, CIL etc.)• Look at options for SANG funding and BNG to cover additional staffing including volunteer coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to prioritise management and maintenance of GI and open space to high standards and to maximise biodiversity within the GI network.
<p>Monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>Surveying, monitoring and evaluation of GI in the borough for biodiversity and multi-functionality. To be coordinated and shared through the Forum. To include biodiversity surveys (including citizen science and bioblitz), yearly questionnaires with residents and community engagement sessions and pop-ups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake GI/ Open Space Audit and Assessment with resident’s questionnaire.• LNRS is currently underway (includes an assessment of what is currently state of nature in Wiltshire and Swindon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular surveying of biodiversity in the borough to assess whether baseline is improving and to evaluate actions and BNG projects based on these results.



The Lawns, Old Town, Swindon

11. FORUM

11.1 Initial Stakeholder Engagement

Initial stakeholder engagement is needed to feed into evolution of this strategy, as was discussed in Section 2 including the Vision and Objectives. Ideally this will be via a workshop with key stakeholders (the Parish Councils, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Forest Meadows Project, SBC officers such as drainage, highways, public health etc.).

11.2 Wider Stakeholder Meeting and Workshops

A wider stakeholder meeting with workshops should be held once the strategy is more fully formed, to also include 'Friends of' groups and other volunteering groups managing green spaces, routes and river corridors in the borough, as well as the key stakeholders outlined above. This will help to engage the wider community and help to facilitate more collaborative working. This should also link up with the LNRS working group to see where we can work together, and align objectives and goals, including working together to secure funding.

11.3 Forum

After an initial 'launch' meeting and workshop, regular forums should be held, perhaps every two to three months.

11.4 Project Engagement and Collaboration

Engagement and collaboration will also happen on a project scale. When working at a project scale, consideration should be given for all groups, to ensure project outcomes are as accessible and inclusive as possible and fulfil the needs of everyone in the community.



Public engagement 'pop-up' at Spring Gardens park, Swindon

12. STRATEGIC GI

12.1 Strategic GI Network

12.1.1 A strategic GI network has been identified and is shown on the map opposite. This outlines where GI assets and corridors (open spaces, biodiversity sites, river corridors and waterbodies) link and coalesce to form a network through the borough which in turn links to the wider landscape beyond. GI assets and corridors within this strategic network shall be preserved, enhanced and, where there are missing links, created. Within these areas are particular areas of opportunity to strengthen and create a strategic, landscape scale GI network for the benefit of people and wildlife. As has been mentioned previously in this document, connectivity is an essential aspect of GI that gives biodiversity the best chance of thriving and provides a network for people to access and use for active travel via the public right of way and cycle path networks.

12.1.2 These areas will feed in to the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (requirement of the Environment Act 2021), helping to identify priority areas for the delivery of landscape-scale projects and allocation of Biodiversity Net Gain funding.

12.1.3 Some areas identified as ‘GI Assets’ that lie within the strategic GI linkages and corridors are already protected as they are open space, accessible to the public or fall under biodiversity or heritage designations such as SSSIs, Ancient Woodland, Scheduled Monuments or Registered Parks and Gardens etc. However, the other areas identified as part of this network provide potential connectivity along these routes and offer areas of opportunity for enhancement of the strategic network of woodlands, grasslands and wetlands. Proposed built development or transport infrastructure within these areas should be avoided to maintain and allow the enhancement of the function and connectivity of the network.

12.1.4 However, it should be noted, that areas outside of these identified large scale, strategic links include local scale GI networks and important GI assets which are protected as open space, areas protected by biodiversity and heritage designations, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, or are open countryside. For some focal areas, these are looked at in more detail in section 13 ‘Local GI Networks’.

12.2 Strategic GI Assets and Landscape Context

A summary of the strategic GI assets, corridors and landscape context, listed by Local Plan Area, is set out below.

1. North East

The Thames; the Thames Path National Trail; Thames Vale and Midvale Ridge Landscape Character Areas; tranquil areas; River Cole; Share Ditch; Bydemill Brook; Castle Hill Scheduled Monument; ancient woodlands; Stanton Park Country Park; Pentylands Country Park; Roves Farm; Nightingale Woods; other scheduled monuments; public rights of way network.

Strategic GI Links:

Stratton Woods- Stanton Park- Bydemill Brook- Pentylands Park- Bydemill Brook- Thames river corridor - River Cole river corridor

2. South East

North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB); Warneage Wood; County Wildlife Sites; The Ridgeway National Trail; Liddington Hill; Bishopstone Strip Lynchets, scheduled monument; River Cole; The Coombs, Hinton Parva SSSI; ancient woodland; Hall Place Scheduled Monument; other scheduled monuments; public rights of way network.

Strategic GI Links:

Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan

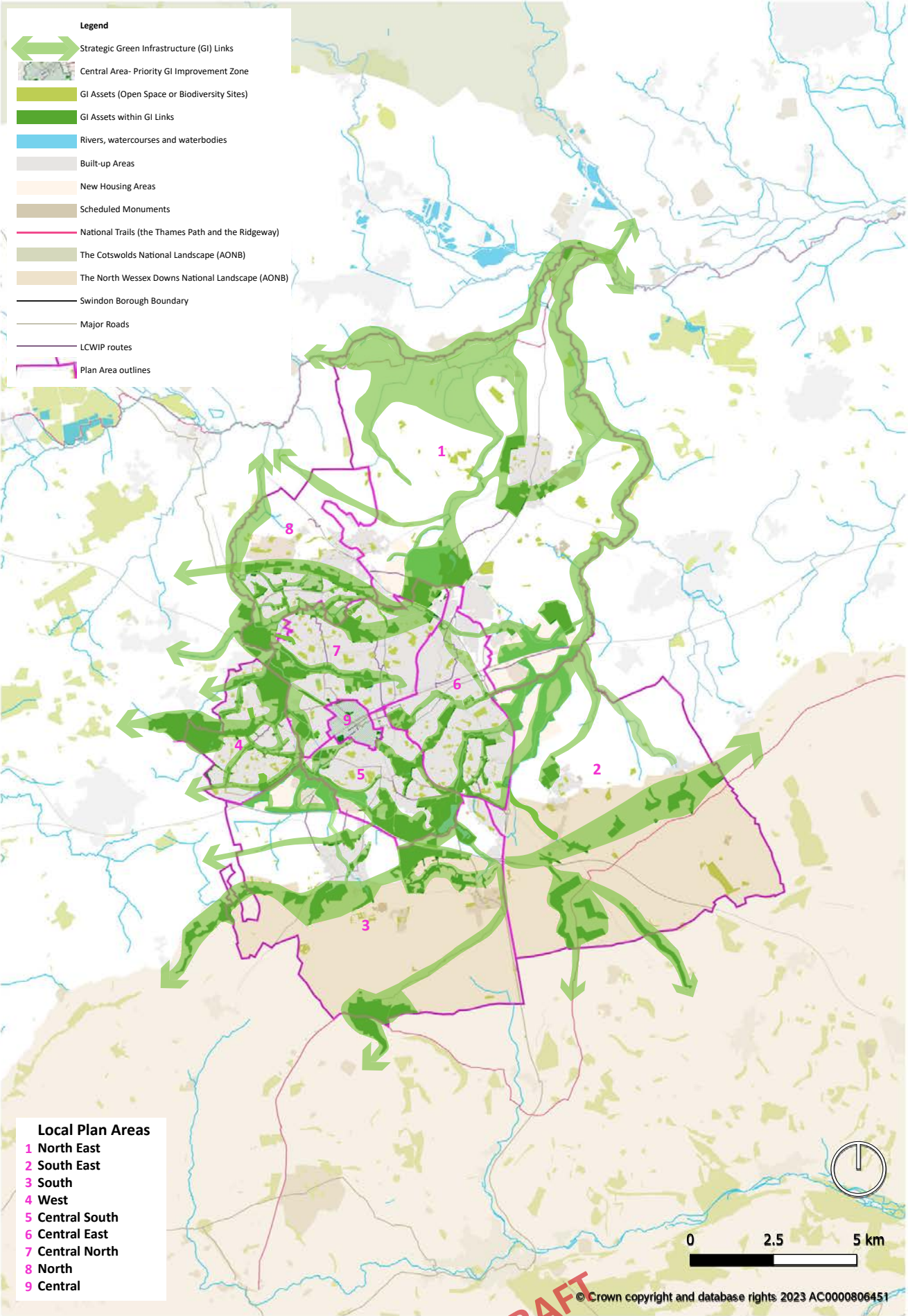


Figure 34: Swindon Borough Strategic GI Plan

Eastern Development Area GI Corridors

Warneage Wood- River Cole tributaries- River Cole Corridor

Bishopstone- River Cole tributaries- River Cole Corridor

Liddington- The Coombs SSSI- Charlbury Hill- Bishopstone Strip Lynchetts- chalk grassland habitat.

Liddington- Liddington Hill- chalk grasslands beyond Borough boundary.

3. South

Barbury Castle Scheduled Monument, Local Nature Reserve and Country Park; Burderop Wood ancient woodland; Kings Farm Wood, Clouts Wood and Markham Banks ancient woodland, SSSI and Local Nature Reserve; Quidhampton Wood ancient woodland; small part of the Ridgeway; North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB); National Cycle Network routes 482 and 45; Wichelstowe GI network; public rights of way network.

Strategic GI Links:

Old Ridgeway (Byway Open to All Traffic)- Barbury Castle- chalk grasslands beyond Borough boundary.

Pinkcombe Wood- Oaken Ground Copse- Burderop Park- Burderop Wood

Burderop Wood- Coombe Bottom- Clouts Wood and Markham Banks- Salthrop Wood- Basset Down

Wood- Quidhampton Wood- Binknoll Wood beyond the Borough boundary.

4. West

Urban area; Lydiard Park Country Park and Registered Park and Garden; Shaw Ridge Linear Park; Shaw Forest Park; Rivermead Park; Deciduous woodland and amenity grassland along linear road corridors; Peatmoor Lagoon; Peatmoor Community Woodland; Middleleaze Park; cycle path network; some of route 45 of the National Cycle Network; Lower Shaw Farm; public footpath network.

Strategic GI Links:

Lydiard Park- Shaw Ridge Linear Park- Rivermead Park- Shaw Forest Park

Shaw Forest Park- Peatmoor Lagoon- Peatmoor Community Forest

Wide green corridors along roads

5. Central South

Old Town Railway Path; East Wichel Park; Open space to north of East Wichel; Glenwood Close allotments; school grounds; deciduous woodland around Nationwide building; Broome Manor Golf Course; Broome Manor allotments; Coate Water Country Park and SSSI; Polo Ground; Dorcan Stream; Croft Woods ancient woodland; The Lawns including Scheduled Monument and three listed buildings; Queen's Park Registered Park and Garden; Westcott Recreation Ground; Wescott allotments; Rushey Platt Park and nature reserve; garden trees; Angel Ridge open space; Radnor Street Cemetery; Savernake Park; Croft Sport fields; street trees; Bruddel Wood; Great Quarry wood SSSI; Celsius Grove Play Park; Sand Pit Park.

Strategic GI Links:

Old Town Railway Path- Rushey Platt Nature Reserve and park- Rushey Platt allotments- Westcott Recreation Ground and allotments- Cambria Bridge Play Area- Town Centre.

Old Town Railway Path- East Wichel Open Space- Croft sports field- Croft Wood- Broome Manor allotments- Nationwide playing grounds and woods- Broome Manor golf course- Coate Water.

Queen's Park- The Lawn's- Bruddel Wood- green corridor with trees along Queen's Drive- Sandringham Road open space.

6. Central East

Urban area; Richard Jeffries Parkway; Dorcan Way corridor; Snodshill Park; Eldene Primary School grounds; Liden Parkway; Wick Lane, Liden; Liden Lagoon; Liden Green amenity area; Eastmere play area; play areas and amenity open spaces within Eldene and Liden; Dorcan Academy grounds; Dorcan recreation area; Cranmore Avenue allotments; amenity open spaces within Walcot; Buckhurst Field; Oakfield open space; Greenbridge Road open space, community forest and allotments; Swindon Rugby Club; Dorcan Way play park; Covingham Drive green corridor; Dorcan brook stream corridor; Swindon Town Football Club; Swindon Cricket Club; Foundation Park; Shrivenham Road allotments; Covingham Drive open space.

Strategic GI Links:

(Coate Water)- Richard Jeffries Parkway- Dorcan Stream- open space south of St Paul's Drive- Dorcan Stream- (River Cole)

(The Lawns)- Buckhurst Fields- Oakfield open space- Greenbridge Road allotments- Greenbridge Road open space- Swindon Rugby Club- Dorcan Way play park- River Cole river corridor.

Swindon Cricket Club- Foundation Park- Swindon Town Football Club- Shrivenham Road allotments-

Holy Cross Primary School- River Cole- Ocotal Way- River Cole river corridor.

Woodland adjacent to Merlin Way- Hathersall Close central- St Margaret's Cemetery- Lower Stratton play park- Lower Stratton play park- Winton Road play park- Barrowby Gate/ Taylor Crescent open space.

Liden Academy- Liden Green amenity area- Dorcan Way corridors- North of Dorcan way, Dorcan Stream corridor- St Paul's Drive- Firecrest amenity space- Dorcan Stream corridor.

7. Central North

Urban area; Stratton Woods Woodland Trust site; Pinehurst Parkway; Cheney Manor Pond; Shaw Forest Park (part of); Hreod Parkway; Moredon Sports Hub and Playing Fields; Pembroke Gardens Recreation Field; Austradius Brook and corridor; River Ray and corridor; Whitworth Road Cemetery; Grindwylles Lacu; allotments; small amenity open spaces in Penhill, Pinehurst, Moredon, haydon Wick and Kingsdown; St Mark's Recreation area; Seven Fields Local Nature Reserve; Edinburgh Street Recreation Ground; allotments; school grounds; Meadowcroft Recreation Ground; Crosslink Centre grounds; open space south of Kingsdown Road.

Strategic GI Links:

Grindwylles Lacu corridor- Stonecrop Way amenity area- Westfield Way copse- Blunsdon Road allotments- Goodearl open space- Rydal Close amenity open space- Haydon Brook Parkway West- (Brookfield Open Space)- Sevenfields Local Nature Reserve- Penhill Recreation Ground- Penhill Park- Millenium Fields- St Catherine's School Grounds- Kingsdown School Grounds- unknown river corridor- Stratton Woods.

8. North

Moulden Hill Country Park; Ashdown Way Recreation space; Queen Elizabeth Drive/ Ashdown Way amenity area; Taw Hill Greenway Central open space; Taw Hill East; Westfield Way green space; Westfield Way recreation area; Toreen Way open space; Clary Road Park; Thamesdown Drive open space; school grounds; amenity areas; Brookfield play area; Penhill Copse; Heaton Close open space; Haydon Brook Parkway north; Blunsdon St Andrew East amenity area; Blunsdon Roman Villa site; Tadpole Garden Village green infrastructure network; Abbey Farm open space; allotments; Ashmead Brake ancient

woodland; Groundwell Wood ancient woodland; Upper Widhill Copse ancient woodland; Haydon Meadow SSSI; Grindwylles Lacu; River Ray.

Strategic GI Links:

(Moredon Railway Field, Wiltshire)- Moulden Hill Country Park- Moulden Ponds- Grindwylles Lacu stream corridor- Burleigh play park- Torun Way play area- land south of Orbital Park- Catherine Wayte Primary School grounds- Heaton Close play area- Elstree Way play park- Haydon Brook Parkway West- Tockenham Way amenity space- Grindwylles Lacu stream corridor.

9. Central

Urban area; Ferndale Road South open space; railway cuttings; Oasis open space; Faringdon Road/ GWR Park; Spring Gardens open space; Civic Offices gardens; churchyard of St Mark's Parish Church; street trees (Princes Street, town centre); Polaris House grounds; pocket park by Heelis (National Trust); Sheppard Street Pocket Park; Western Flier cycle path.

Strategic GI Links:

See Swindon Central Area GI Concept Plan on page 39.

12.3 Future Strategic GI Planning

Future iterations of this strategy should include assessment and planning for each of these GI linkages and corridors looking in more detail at where there are deficiencies within the borough (information that will come out of the upcoming GI and Open Space Audit and Assessment); where there are missing links and opportunities to strengthen connectivity; where there are opportunities for networks of particular habitats such as woodlands, grasslands or wetlands; where there are opportunities and a need to improve water quality and quality of the water environment; where there are opportunities for nature based solutions for flooding and looking at management prescriptions for areas in a joined up way. This landscape scale assessment and planning should also look at active travel networks and opportunities to integrate them with the GI network and should look at opportunities to increase the accessibility of the network for everyone in the borough. This should be undertaken in close alignment with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.



View across Eastcott Ward towards the County Ground and football stadium

13. LOCAL GI NETWORKS

13.1 Introduction

As well as looking at GI at the strategic, landscape scale which is vital, particularly for wildlife (creating the bigger, better and more joined up wildlife habitats that the Lawton Review identified as essential for nature recovery¹), we also need to look at GI at the local level. As the diagram on page 8 shows, GI exists and can be looked at on a range of scales from the level of a single building (or even a window box planted with pollinator friendly plants or some herbs) up to the landscape scale (and even beyond at regional or national scale).

It is at the local level however, that most people access GI the most regularly and therefore is essential to GI's role in supporting health and wellbeing. Local Authorities are encouraged to set as a minimum a target of everyone having access to a variety of good quality green and blue spaces within 15 minutes walk of their home. The full range of size- proximity Accessible Greenspace Standards are outlined in the appendices. These reflect the need for people to have greenspace (natural if possible) close to where they live, that they can experience on a regular basis.

Local GI networks, at the building level including green roofs and walls, trees and planting near to buildings, can help with cooling buildings and providing outside amenity near to people's homes. At the street level street trees, raingardens, GI integrating active travel routes, as well as making areas more attractive, bringing birds and other wildlife close to where people live, contribute towards resilience to the impacts of climate change such as flooding and heating. At the neighbourhood level doorstep and neighbourhood green spaces, provide places people can access on a daily basis, or form parts of routes to work and school. Green lanes, active travel routes incorporating GI, and places near to canals and rivers also form GI people can access on a daily basis during their busy lives. The wider GI network including Country Parks and the open countryside, accessed via the Public Rights of Way network, are more likely to be accessed by most people at weekends or during holidays.

This section of the report includes smaller scale plans of some focal local areas, with initial ideas for projects within these. These include the following

- **Central Area** (which currently has low levels of green space, tree cover, and general GI) and is also a focus area for regeneration within the Swindon Plan and the Local Plan.
- **The North East area around Stanton Park**
- **Greening the grey corridor (to follow)**
- **Eastern Development Area District Centre (to follow)**

Photo opposite: Premiere Inn in the town centre. There are some street trees within the pedestrianised areas but potential for more and more planting areas and open spaces within the wider central area

¹ DEFRA (2010) Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network. Available from: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130402170324mp_/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf Accessed on October 8, 2024.



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13.2 Central Area

13.2.1 A Central Area has been identified for the purposes of the local plan, which includes the town centre, Hawsworth Industrial Estate, North Star site, Polaris between Great Western Way and the railway, the Designer Outlet, Steam, and surrounding area, carriageworks, GWR Park, railway village, train station and office areas south of this, town centre down to Commercial Road, Kimmerfields site, Wyvern Theatre, Civic Offices and Spring Gardens. The GI Concept Plan that follows in this document sits within with area analysis and plans within the ‘Central Growth Area Framework’ produced as part of the Local Plan.

13.2.2 The Central Area currently suffers from many vacant units, a run-down public realm and the dominance of traffic, although there are also areas that are more successful such as the Designer Outlet Village. The Central Area currently has the lowest level of tree canopy cover within the borough (at 4.78%). It also currently has low levels of access to open space and particularly play. In terms of legibility, permeability and access by walking and cycling, the area is dominated by busy roads, creating severance and a ‘concrete collar’ around the town centre. There are high levels of parking provision, including multi-storey and ground level car parks. The town centre is quite narrow and contained, following Victorian street patterns with most buildings facing inwards to this, with their backs and delivery areas forming the edge of the centre. This creates a further barrier between the centre and surrounding areas, creating a lack of permeability and legibility, and lack of open, welcoming routes that are easy to navigate for pedestrians and cyclists.

13.2.3 The town centre and Central Area (including the Oasis) are priorities to Swindon residents and are political priorities. These areas also offer the best opportunities for the sustainable location for development that can easily be accessed by active travel and public transport. Within the local plan this will be a key area for regeneration, with plans for an increase of residential development within the area, including working with providers to deliver a new entertainment venue, creating a vibrant, mixed use centre with reduced retail area. There are currently at least 10 potential redevelopment sites within the Central Area.

13.2.4 A ‘Swindon Vision’ document has been produced by Allies and Morrison, working with key stakeholders in the Central Area. This proposes 8 high level commitments:

1. Living in the centre

The creation of four new mixed neighbourhoods, with shops, services, transport and green space on their doorstep.

2. Letting creativity flourish

Establishment of a new cultural venue.

3. A centre for learning

Giving higher education institutions a place in the centre, creating a hub for students, and social enterprise centre for young people.

4. Growing Swindon’s knowledge economy

Bringing leading enterprises into the heart of Swindon and providing a mix of spaces to support small businesses and encourage collaboration.

5. Responding to the climate emergency

‘Town wide urban park’. Tree planting to provide shade, sustainable drainage and pollinator friendly planting with low carbon homes and buildings.

6. A new type of centre for all

Evolving the centre so it meets everyone’s needs with mix of shops, homes, work spaces, places to eat and drink, community space and events and activities.

7. Making connections

Stronger connections between central areas and better walking and cycling links into the heart of Swindon and the train station.

8. Responding to our layered history

A commitment to creatively reuse historic buildings and thoughtful, responsive design.

13.2.4 GI will play an important role in this regeneration.

The following GI interventions could enhance the public realm and contribute towards a green regeneration of the Central Area:

Green Streets and Green Gateways

Redesign of the ‘concrete collar’ to incorporate separate two way cycle paths, enhanced with rain gardens and planting strips and better, more frequent crossing points for pedestrians. Redesign of Commercial Road with tree planting, mini pocket parks and delineated parking (to prevent on pavement parking), cycle parking and separate cycle lane. Link up with GI assets such as open spaces. Connectivity, legibility and a sense of welcome and entrance can be enhanced by the creation of ‘green gateways’ at key locations- enhanced with planting, seating, signage and public art.

Enhancement of existing civic spaces

This includes Wharf Green, the town centre cruciform of streets, areas around the old town hall and Wyvern Theatre. Interventions could include planting areas, tree planting, green walls and pocket parks.

Proposed pocket parks

Mini parklets, or pocket parks, with seating (where possible combined with catering outlets), provision of planting and shade, or ‘play on the way’ features to enhance the public realm, encourage people to dwell, and to enliven the public space.

Enhancement of existing green open spaces

The three open spaces within the Central Area have great potential for enhancement. The GWR park has already been refurbished in recent years with new planting areas, new paths, benches, and a ‘Blossom Circle’ amongst other things. The park now has a dedicated team of gardeners who are due to be increased. There are plans to introduce more play elements underneath the trees, with some natural play, aimed at older children. Spring Gardens has recently had a new path installed, will be getting new benches, and there are plans for native hedge boundaries, wildflowers, tree and bulb planting. Future plans include the provision of play equipment for all ages, outdoor gym equipment and more seating.

Proposed green spaces

The introduction of more housing to the Central Area will require an increase in levels of open space to provide recreation for residents. These should be as multi-functional as possible, designed in line with the Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guidance and in order to comply with Urban Greening Factor policy.

The introduction of new green spaces should include play areas, particularly within the Town Centre, providing an attractive leisure offer to families which increases the offer and attractiveness of the area, helping to draw in visitors and increase their dwell time.

Swindon Central Area GI Concept Plan



Figure 35: Swindon Central Area GI Concept Plan