

GREAT WESTERN COMMUNITY FOREST PLAN

A forest for now and the
future 2025-2050
November 2025



Forest Plan Key Partners

Swindon Borough Council
Parish Councils
Wiltshire Council
Natural England
Forestry Commission
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Woodland Trust
Forestry England
Countryside Landowners Association
DEFRA
North Wessex Downs National
Landscapes AONB
National Farmers' Union

If you would like to become involved in supporting the Great Western Community Forest contact us via: communityforest@swindon.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Western Community Forest (GWCF), founded in 1994, comprises a diverse mosaic of urban and rural landscapes, blending Swindon's green spaces with the rolling North Wessex Downs and the River Thames valleys. Since its inception, it has enabled the planting of 1.2 million trees across 46,000 hectares. Much has been achieved within the Forest, but there is still much to do.

This Plan sets out:

- **Why** community forests are important to people and to nature;
- **What** we hope to achieve over the coming 25 years to strengthen the forest;
- **How** we will go about achieving these objectives;
- **Where** we will prioritise investment within the community forest;
- **When** key projects are programmed to take place; and
- **Who** will be involved in helping to deliver these improvements, and who we hope will benefit from the investment.

The Plan sets out an overarching approach to:

- Enhance: actively monitoring and managing woodland
- Expand: tree planting and greening
- Engage: raising the Forest's profile and educating people about its benefits

Within this approach, key objectives and initiatives across five broad themes of:

- Maintain and increase canopy cover over all areas through woodland creation, maintenance and restoration
- Enhance biodiversity through wildlife and landscape conservation and preservation
- Support the health and wellbeing of our local communities and celebrate the community value of the Forest
- Support education and sustainable employment through the Forest
- Contribute to green infrastructure solutions to environmental challenges

Key projects are identified across the six Community Forest sub-areas, with partners and collaborators highlighted to help deliver on these commitments.

SETTING THE SCENE

SETTING THE SCENE

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Introduction

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Introducing the forest

THE PLAN

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Forest places and projects

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Making it happen

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FOREST?

Community Forests were first introduced in England in the early 1990s, following the Rio Earth Summit Agreement of 1992 which provided a renewed focus on sustainability. Originally, 11 Forests were set up and there are now 15 Community Forests fully established and functioning across the country.

While wooded land is a large part of Community Forests, it's not the only type of landscape. The forests span cities and towns, parkland and agricultural land and often include multiple forests within their boundaries - making Community Forests varied in their tree species composition, landscapes and ecosystems.



A critical aspect of a Community Forest is the "community" and how people can help to expand, enhance and enjoy the forest. A key aim of Community Forests is, therefore, to encourage community participation to increase the number and diversity of trees through tree planting initiatives. This community focus extends to improving access to woodland for deprived neighbourhoods; enabling people to enjoy their local woodland; providing opportunities to connect with nature and relax; and supporting sustainable employment opportunities.

Great Western Community Forest (GWCF)

The GWCF is located in the South West of England with the town of Swindon at its centre. It was founded in 1994 and has since become an integral part of the community, with tree planting projects bringing people together to increase greenery around Swindon.

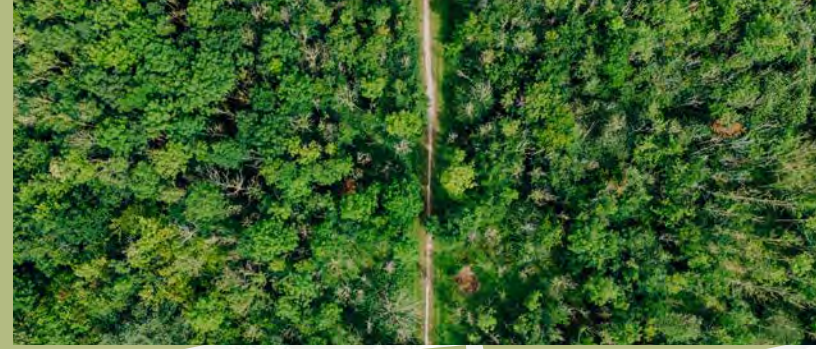


WHY DOES WOODLAND MATTER?

Woodland is incredibly important for human health, the environment, and our urban landscapes. Living close to greenery, especially heavily wooded areas, positively affects mental health and provides opportunities for exercise, which improves physical well-being. Spending time in woodland reduces stress, improves mood, and boosts the immune system (The Woodland Trust).

With climate change at a critical stage, woodlands are more important than ever. They act as carbon sinks, reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and also regulate temperature and prevent flooding. By introducing a varied flora and canopy cover, wooded areas are also sites for increasing biodiversity - a UK priority with new developments having to meet at least 10% increased biodiversity levels.

Woodlands create beautiful, colourful spaces that inspire local pride and bring joy to communities who live in and near them.

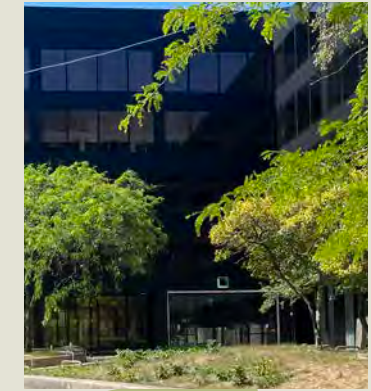


PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) Plan aims to:

- Introduces the Community Forest concept and its role to a wider audience to encourage community commitment to help the Forest to flourish.
- Examines the benefits of the Forest so far and its future potential – environmentally, socially and economically.
- Provides a broad vision for how we want the Forest to be, as well as a set of objectives and standards to help deliver this vision.
- Points to examples of good practice already underway and inspiring examples from elsewhere.
- Supports and complements the planning process and local landowners in delivering sustainable, effective green-based solutions to environmental challenges..

The Plan will be reviewed every five years with a new five-year plan adopted at each stage along with an assessment of the previous five years.



WHO IS THE PLAN FOR?

The GWCF Plan is intended for a wide audience, from local residents and landowners, to public bodies and Council officers. Working together and embracing the Vision for the Forest will help to ensure the environmental, social and economic benefits set out in the Plan are fully realised.

Local businesses within the Forest area engaged in forestry activities as well as cafés and shops who offer volunteers for planting projects.

Local businesses & enterprise

The Plan gives support to voluntary groups and charities on the ground who are managing green spaces, running education projects and organising tree-planting initiatives across the Forest.

Voluntary groups and charities

The Plan is for officers and departments within Swindon Borough Council, including the Planning department, the Country Parks Ranger team and Highways and Transport.

Local authority

The Plan supports landowners, including farmers and foresters as well as the Woodland Trust and Forestry England, to undertake woodland creation and management across the forest area.

Government & public bodies

There are several organisations involved in woodland creation and nature recovery for whom this Plan is relevant, including Natural England, the Forestry Commission, North Wessex Downs, DEFRA and Historic England.

Landowners, farmers & foresters

The Plan aims to improve access to local woodland and empower local communities to care for and enjoy the Forest through education, events and partnership working.

Local communities & individuals



POLICY CONTEXT

The GWCF Plan is informed by national and local policies and guidance that promote woodland creation, biodiversity, and climate resilience. A summary of each supporting policy document is provided in the Appendix.

At the national level, the Environment Act 2021, 25 Year Environment Plan, and Environmental Improvement Plan set targets for increasing woodland cover and improving nature recovery, while policies such as the Climate Change Act, Net Zero Strategy, and Green Infrastructure Framework reinforce the role of Community Forests in tackling climate change and supporting sustainable land management.

Regionally, the Plan supports delivery of the Wiltshire and Swindon Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Strategy, applying the “Right Tree, Right Place” principle to enhance habitats and improve access to nature. Locally, Swindon’s planning and green infrastructure policies incorporate the GWCF Plan as a key mechanism for achieving a greener, healthier, and more sustainable environment.



There is a range of national guidance and strategies relevant to woodland creation

National Policy and Legislation

- Acts of Parliament (e.g. Environment Act 2021, Climate Change Act 2008)
- National Strategies and Plans
- Policy Frameworks and Guidance (e.g. National Planning Policy Framework 2023)
- Sector Strategies (e.g. National Wood Strategy 2023)
- Agricultural and Land Management Plans

Regional Policy

- Wiltshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2030
- Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025
- Wiltshire Local Plan 2015

Local Policy

- Swindon Plan 2024-2027
- Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 / emerging 2043 Local Plan
- Swindon Green Infrastructure Plan 2025

THE GREAT WESTERN COMMUNITY FOREST

The GWCF was founded in 1994. Since its inception, the Forest has continued to support tree planting initiatives across the core area that covers over 46,000 hectares.

The Forest is centred on Swindon, one of the fastest-growing towns in the South West. Swindon's population of 240,000 (2021, ONS) represents half of Wiltshire's total population, with the most populous age range being 45-49 years old. As Swindon's population expands, so do the number of people who need green spaces to support a high quality of life.

As well as growing in popularity as a place to live, Swindon's strategic location between Bristol and London means the town is also a hub for a range of businesses, including insurance, banking, engineering, health, pharmaceuticals, and tourism.

The GWCF area extends to include smaller market towns and historic villages like Royal Wootton Bassett, Wroughton, Faringdon, Highworth and Cricklade, set within woodlands and open farmland.

46,235
hectares in
total area

1 protected
landscape
covering
23%
of the forest

16% of
the area is
urban or
suburban

7 is the average Indices of Multiple Deprivation decile for LSOAs* within the forest (1 being the most deprived and 10 being the least nationally)

13% of the
forest area is
tree covered

18% of
the woodland
is sustainably
managed

280,226
people live in the
forest area



*Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) is a small geographic unit used to report statistics from the Census and other sources





The GWCF is a diverse mosaic of urban and rural landscapes, blending Swindon's green spaces with the rolling North Wessex Downs and the low-lying River Thames valleys.

The area is defined by a network of habitats that includes ancient woodlands, new wooded areas, country parks, and a web of hedgerows and river corridors. This evolving landscape reflects a rich history and a clear future: to enhance and connect nature for the benefit of local communities and the environment.

...a diverse and historic LANDSCAPE

LOOKING BACK...

Swindon was first mentioned in 1086 in the Domesday book as 'Swine Dun', meaning 'the hill where pigs eat' - indicative of the presence of woodland in the Middle Ages. The presence and importance of woodland was evident in the 19th century with Swindon and the surrounding areas being home to multiple woods, copses and parks. The area's history is deeply rooted in its landscape and it was once the site of Braydon Royal Hunting Grounds, a vast expanse of dense woodland rich in wildlife. The importance of greenery and woodland is protected to this day with the creation of the GWCF.

19TH CENTURY

The area within and surrounding Swindon is rich in woodland areas, copses and parks such as Flax wood and Lydiard Park.

1972

The North Wessex Downs is established as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It now forms an integral part of the GWCF.

1993

The GWCF is introduced following the Rio Earth Summit the previous year. It is one of 11 initially - there are now 15.

2002

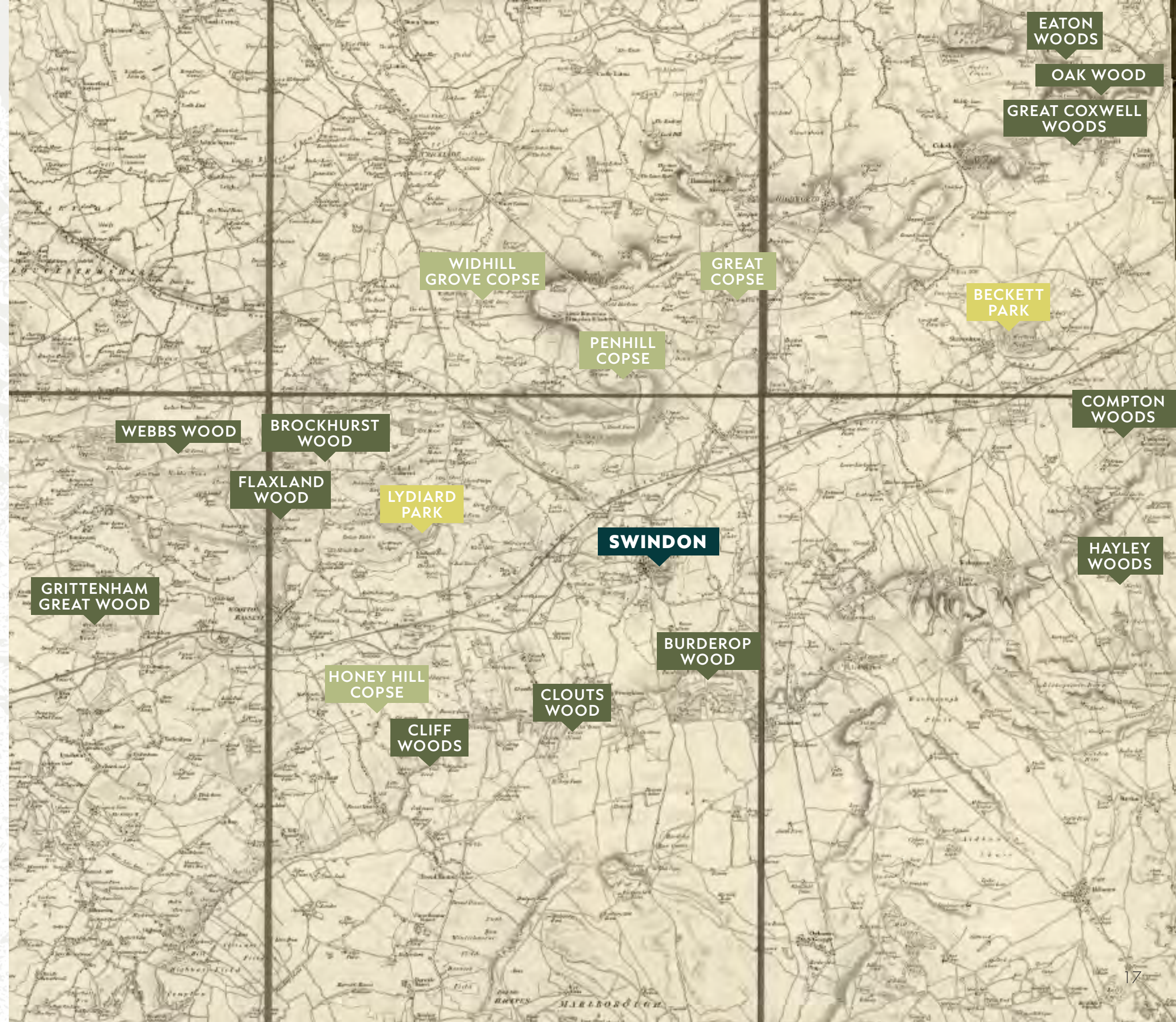
An updated GWCF plan is written and published. The plan focuses on improving the connectivity between and to green spaces, increasing woodland cover and enhancing biodiversity.

2023

The GWCF is made a part of a new National Forest (the first in 30 years) - called the Western Forest.

2025

An updated version of the Great Western Community Forest is published - building upon the forest's rich legacy.



CHALLENGES FACING THE FOREST TODAY



Increasing pressures, such as development around Swindon, the value of productive farmland, and competing land uses, have made woodland creation particularly challenging. It's a difficult landscape in which to deliver new planting at scale, and this reality should shape future priorities and delivery models.

- Forestry Commission

The GWCF faces key challenges, from navigating a changing climate to adapting to changes in land use and environmental priorities. Addressing these challenges effectively will be essential for the long-term success of the Forest and its ability to deliver lasting benefits for both people and nature.

Sustainability and the climate crisis

Community Forests are one of the first large-scale initiatives in the UK to integrate the concept of sustainability into their processes. This commitment is now more critical than ever. A changing climate threatens the health and resilience of woodlands with issues like rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, extreme weather events and an increased risk of pests and diseases. To address this, the Plan is focused on promoting ecological resilience, enhancing carbon sequestration and supporting community resilience by using nature-based solutions to help communities adapt to climate impacts, such as flood mitigation.

Environment and biodiversity

The semi-urban land on Swindon's outskirts has become degraded and environmentally less rich with Swindon centre lacking significant quality tree canopy cover. Fragmented habitats, invasive species, and the pressure of surrounding development continue to pose a threat to local wildlife. The Community Forest is a key part of the solution to the wider crisis of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. The Plan seeks to build a network of connected, high-quality habitats that support a wide range of native species. This involves managing existing woodlands for maximum ecological benefit, restoring degraded habitats like grasslands and wetlands, and working with landowners and communities to expand and link green spaces.

Health and wellbeing

In Swindon, females are likely to spend 21.4 years and males 18.4 years of their life in poor health. According to the Borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2033, in the lowest

healthy life expectancy areas, over one-third of adults are physically inactive, and the percentage of children who are overweight or obese at age four to five is double in some wards compared to others. 15% of people in Swindon live with a condition such as anxiety or depression.

The Forest is a powerful resource for supporting physical and mental health. Encouraging walking and cycling, improving access to nature for residents to escape the pressures of daily life, and ensuring the health benefits of green space are available to all, regardless of where they live, are key ambitions for the Community Forest.

Integrated mobility and active travel

Private vehicle use, whilst relied on by many, especially in rural areas, continues to create significant problems in the Borough's urban centres. Issues such as air pollution, congestion, and a lack of accessible and safe routes for active travel (walking, cycling, and assisted mobility) degrade Swindon's urban and rural areas alike.

The Plan commits to work with partners to develop active travel opportunities for both leisure and commuting by implementing greenways within the Forest which link to other important transport infrastructure.

Farming

The farming community faces its own challenges to adapt to environmental, social and financial constraints. Since 2020 farmers and landowners have become increasingly open to diversifying their farming practices to include agroforestry. Farmers and landowners are becoming increasingly aware of how trees within the agricultural setting can benefit their businesses – helping improve the farming environment, control soil erosion, boost biodiversity and potentially increase profitability. The Community Forest team will continue to work alongside farmers and their agents to manage this process and ensure that the benefits of tree planting are clear and achievable.

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

A lot has been achieved since the Community Forest's inception in 1994 and the adoption of the first Forest Plan in 2002. Voluntary groups are working hand-in-hand with organisations like the Wildlife Trust to plant trees, expand woodlands, and educate local communities on the Forest and all it has to offer. Significant funding through the Trees for Climate (TfC) woodland creation programme, established in 2020, has enabled multiple tree planting initiatives across the Forest area, along with other funding opportunities.

1,100 ha
WOODLAND ESTABLISHED
SINCE 1994

The Community Forest has achieved a great deal since its inception and has had a hugely positive impact on the area.

- Forestry Commission

50,000
TREES PLANTED
IN THE LAST 5
YEARS

The Community Forest represents that sweet spot between delivering high impact professional projects whilst being rooted in community.

- Western Forest

1.2
MILLION
TREES
PLANTED
SINCE 1994



SHAW FOREST PARK

In March 2024, 90 volunteers from a local college, along with residents, Swindon Council and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust planted over 4,000 trees in Shaw Forest Park.



PEATMOOR

Volunteers met on the first Sunday of every month to complete four rounds of coppicing. The group cropped hazel and willow to allow them to regenerate, as well as hedge-laying and new planting. In the summer months, volunteers rebuilt the boardwalks and helped with the upkeep of the footpaths.



MOULDON HILL

Over 10,000 trees have been planted across the country parks of Mouldon Hill, Coate and Stanton, as part of the Forest Meadows project led by the Council and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. At Mouldon Hill, volunteers have created new areas of woodland, scrub and grassland.



ST MARKS REC

The recreation ground gained 'Green Flag' status in 2023. Investment has been mainly focused on sporting facilities such as tennis courts, as well as upgrades to existing footpaths and cycleways to improve linkages. New tree planting has helped to soften the space, add colour, and create an avenue for park users to enjoy.



Westcott Forest Garden



Heaton Close - Wiltshire Wildlife Trust



South Marston tree planting



Trowbridge Green Thread funded by TfC



Arlington Drive



Arlington Drive



Planting in St Andrew's parish



1st Swindon Sea Scouts



Tree nursery volunteer potting up plants



Volunteers at Westcott Tree Nursery

Local project achievements include:

- **Westcott Rec:** planted a 'tiny forest' of over 1000 trees, completed in 2022
- **Heaton Close:** planting of green saplings, organised by WWT, SBC and GWCF
- **Westcott Forest Garden and Tree Nursery:** focused on general upkeep and de-weeding
- **Kingsplay Agroforestry scheme:** planted 1600 trees in 5 fields, showcasing a range of agroforestry options along a public footpath and hosting educational visits
- **South Marston - Oxlease farm:** includes almost 7 hectares of planted broadleaved woodland (completed in 2004)
- **St Andrew's:** community-led tree-planting projects by St. Andrew's Parish Council and funded by TfC
- **Westbury Junior School:** pupils helped to plant a 80m corridor of low growing trees/ shrubs and sensory hedge in their playing field, funded by TfC
- **Trowbridge Green Thread:** 21 sites across the town were planted with trees - from orchards, trees, copses and hedgerows
- Other projects include at Friendship Farm, Canberra House Community Garden, Arlington Drive and the Railway Village Museum garden, among many others.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES have delivered 100s of projects

THE WESTERN FOREST - A WIDER VISION

The GWCF Plan exists within a new and ambitious context for woodland creation in the south west of England. The Western Forest is a new national Forest, stretching from the Cotswolds to the Mendips. It spans the local authorities of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and the West of England, and is led by the Forest of Avon Trust.

The Forest has three main goals - the creation of new woodland areas; increasing the number of Trees Outside of Woodland (TOW); and developing and implementing agroforestry. The overall aim is to plant 2,500 hectares of woodland by 2030, with a goal of 20 million trees by 2050.

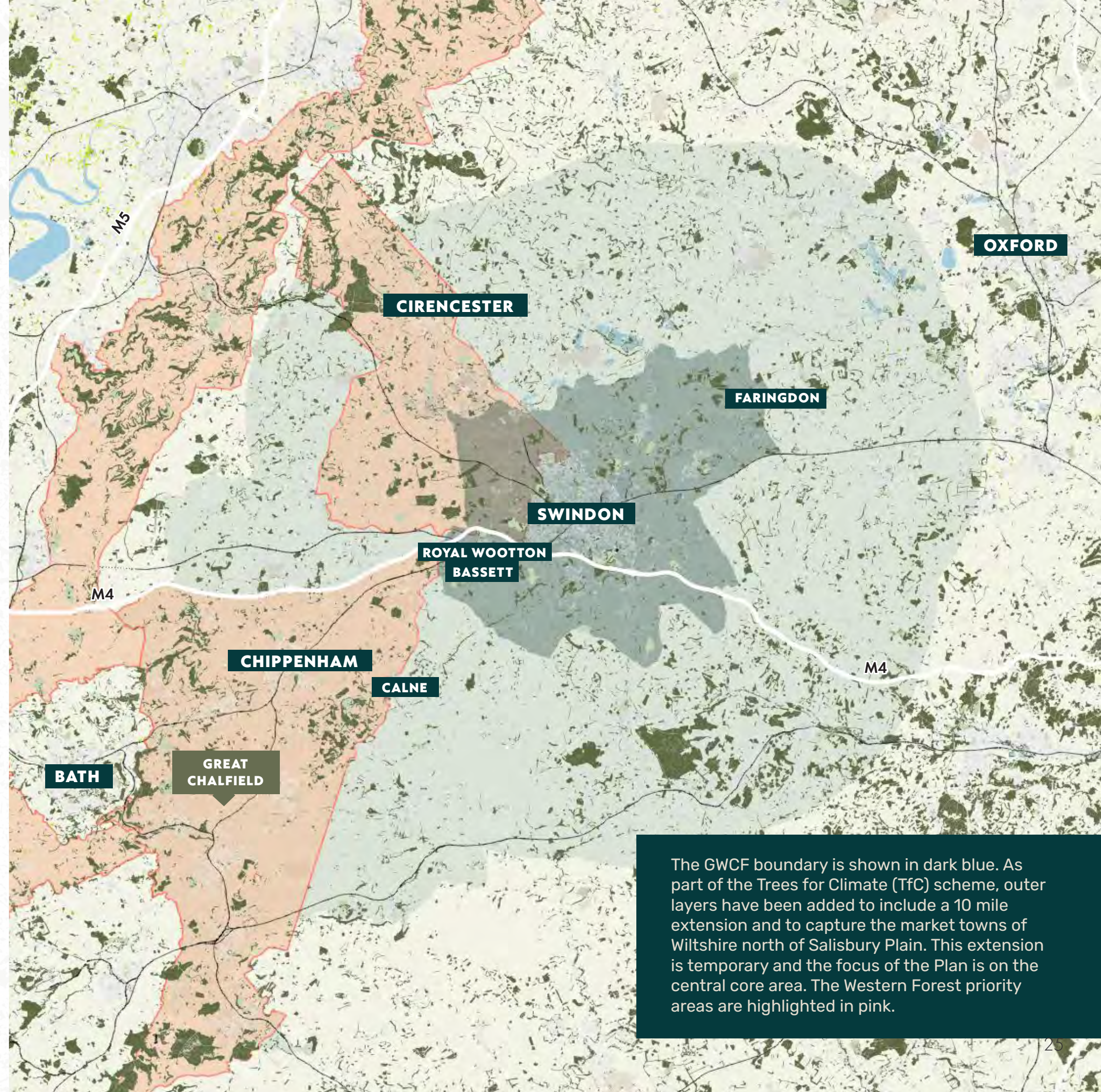
The Western Forest is intended to be a 'test bed' for ideas, particularly relating to agroforestry, that can be replicated across the country. The Western Forest team will offer "green skills" education to local communities, and provide financial incentives to farmers and landowners to encourage practices that support biodiversity and sequester carbon.

Drawing on existing strategies and conversations with partners, several priority areas have been identified which will be the focus of projects over the next five years. The "Upper Avon" and "Cotswolds to North Wessex Downs" priority areas fall within the GWCF.

Case study: Great Chalfield, Wiltshire

The National Trust and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust have partnered to establish an agroforestry hub at Great Chalfield Manor. Through the Trees for Climate scheme, the GWCF is also committed to creating a more biodiverse and resilient environment by planting 11,000 trees on the site. This project serves as an exemplar of the type of change that the Western Forest aims to implement across the West of England, demonstrating the importance of partnerships to make this a reality.

- GWCF boundary
- GWCF temporary extension
- Western Forest Priority Areas
- National Forest Inventory [2023]
- Traditional Orchards
- Woodland (OS data)
- Green space (OS data)
- Water
- Railways



The GWCF boundary is shown in dark blue. As part of the Trees for Climate (TfC) scheme, outer layers have been added to include a 10 mile extension and to capture the market towns of Wiltshire north of Salisbury Plain. This extension is temporary and the focus of the Plan is on the central core area. The Western Forest priority areas are highlighted in pink.

THE PLAN

A VISION FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

We will continue to create, maintain and restore a multi-purpose Community Forest, embracing Swindon and its environs. The forest will comprise a unique mosaic of individual trees, woods, farmland, open spaces, towns and villages; and help to celebrate the heritage and archaeology of the area.

The Forest Plan will help us to direct investment to achieve environmental improvements in and around our urban and rural communities, creating beautiful areas rich in wildlife and increasing tree canopy cover and associated tree equity. Provision for community access, leisure and education will make the Forest a more attractive place in which to live, learn, do business and enjoy leisure time.

Communities will be empowered to deliver the local environmental projects that matter most to them. Continuing engagement with local landowners, collaborative working with partners, and clear standards within planning policy will support a sustainable approach, and the biodiversity, climate resilience and well-being benefits that come with this.



WHAT IS THE OVERARCHING APPROACH?

The overarching approach to deliver the Vision is to:

- A Enhance**
Actively monitor and manage woodlands, wild meadows, grasslands and green threads within the Community Forest so they support local wildlife habitats and provide a climate resilient environment.
- B Expand**
Tree planting and greening to expand the community forest's varied patterns of woodland, wildflowers and grassland.
- C Engage**
Collaborate with stakeholders and communities to raise the profile of the Forest and strengthen its identity; and use the forest as a valuable educational tool for local schools and community groups.



INTRODUCING THE FOREST THEMES

We have identified five core themes for the Forest Plan. Within each theme are a series of objectives for the plan period up to 2050. These are:

1. Maintain and increase canopy cover over all areas through woodland creation, maintenance and restoration
2. Enhance biodiversity through wildlife and landscape conservation and preservation
3. Support the health and wellbeing of our local communities and celebrate the community value of the Forest
4. Support education and sustainable employment through the forest
5. Contribute to green infrastructure solutions to environmental challenges

1 MANTAINING
AND INCREASING
CANOPY COVER

2 ENHANCING
BIODIVERSITY

3 SUPPORTING
LOCAL HEALTH
& WELLBEING

4 ENCOURAGING
EMPLOYMENT
AND EDUCATION

5 BUILDING
CLIMATE
RESILIENCE



Connect with local communities and think about the type of plants they would like to include... - Woodland Trust



Great Chalfield Agroforestry project - planting undertaken by volunteers and DEFRA nature for climate team. Other teams involved include the National Trust and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

1 CANOPY COVER AND ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE

The Forest has many roles including locking in carbon, aiding to clean air and water, green infrastructure for flood mitigation, and positively contributing to the health and wellbeing of individuals.

Increasing canopy cover, not just in wooded areas, but also within urban centres will help us reach these goals - improving people's living spaces while aiming to mitigate negative climate change and health related effects.

CALCULATING CANOPY COVER

To calculate total canopy cover the following need to be added together:

1. Trees Outside Woodland (TOW) - refers mainly to street trees
2. National Forest Inventory (NFI) - tracks spaces of land bigger than 0.5 hectares with at least 20% canopy cover
3. Traditional Orchards - refers to managed groups of fruit and nut trees

Key objectives

- 1 Maintain and restore trees and woodlands through an active management programme, especially in vulnerable habitats like beech on chalk soils and ash on thin Cotswold soils. Champion sustainable forestry, inspired by leading estates like Stourhead and Rushmore.
- 2 Increase tree canopy cover within the Forest area until it reaches a sustainable average of 22% across the Forest. And to achieve this, plant 400ha of new woodland over the next 5 years across the Forest.
- 3 Restore and create coppice woodland, as part of the best remaining stronghold of hazel coppice industry in UK. Collaborate with the National Coppice Federation.
- 4 Address issues of tree equity across the Community Forest by directing tree planting towards areas identified as having the highest tree priority, based on current tree canopy and socio-economic factors. These include Penhill, Pinehurst, Upper Stratton, Walcot East and Park South.



LEEDS, TREE CITY OF THE WORLD, 2022

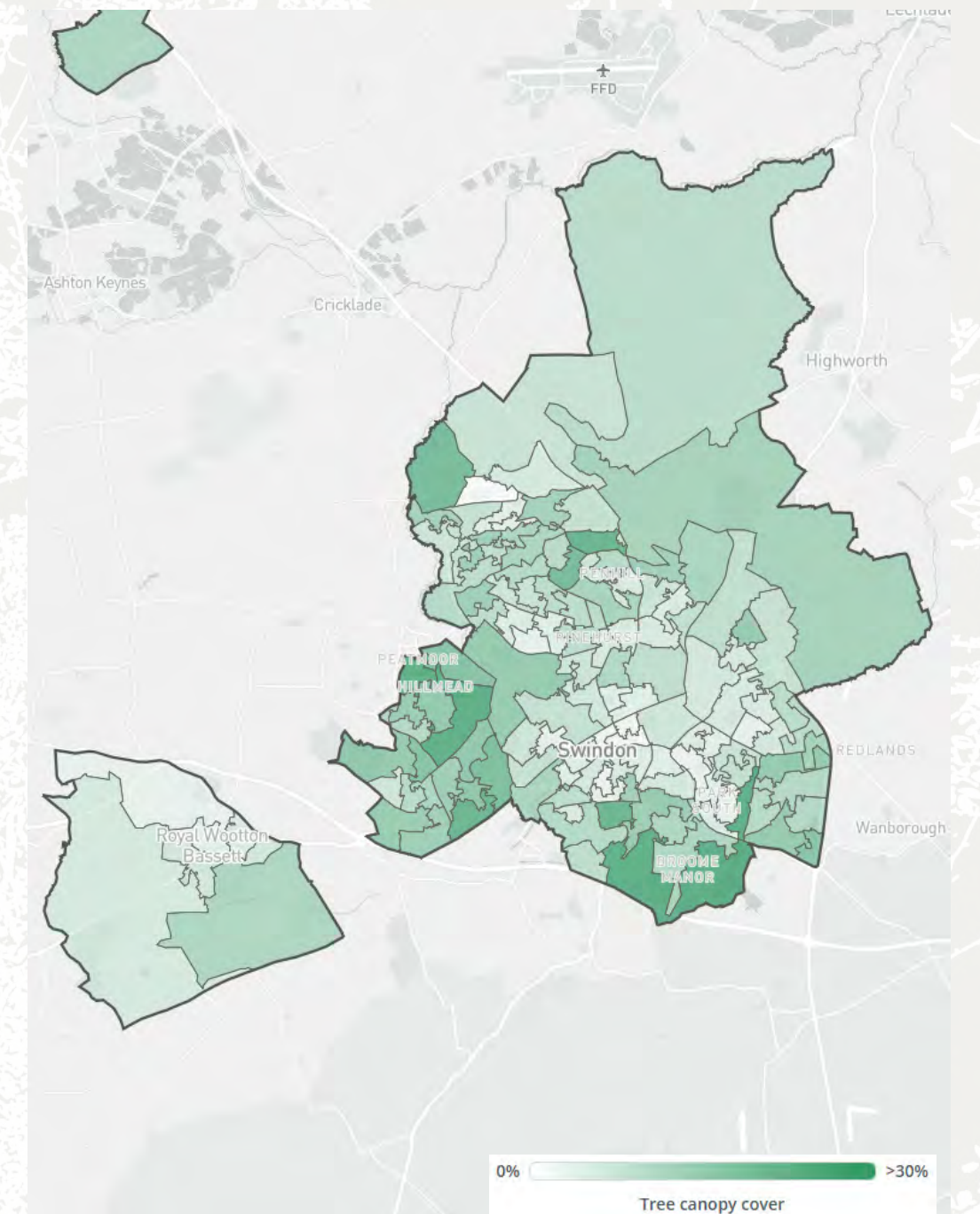
Leeds set a goal of increasing its tree canopy cover by 50% by 2025 and partnered with Leeds University and United Bank of Carbon to create a data-driven strategy. They planted 50 hectares of trees on Council land and 410,000 trees since 2020, providing a positive example of data-led canopy cover investment.



CAMBRIDGE CANOPY PROJECT, 2023

This project aimed to plant over 800,000m² of trees to increase canopy cover from 17% to 19%, with a focus on increasing trees outside of woodland. This demonstrates the value of creating a rich mosaic of canopy cover.

By planting more trees in the urban areas, you forge links out to the surrounding green areas - Woodland Trust



The tree canopy cover plan for Swindon Borough Council and Royal Wootton Bassett shows the existing percentage of cover by LSOA measured by the footprint of trees when viewed from above. Credit: The Woodland Trust

...examples from around the UK

2 ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

Lack of environments such as wooded areas, wetlands and grasslands has led to the loss of biodiversity, both in plant and animal species. A diverse habitat is essential to the functions of the forest and ecosystem.

Areas that are rich in biodiversity are more resilient to climate change and diseases - allowing them to become established and recover more quickly. Their importance also lies in providing the environment with clean air and water.

Key objectives

- 1 Protect sites of nature conservation value and create new opportunities for nature conservation and restoration.
- 2 Create new and bring existing woodland and hedgerows under management to nurture and support wildlife habitats, whilst retaining some areas as undisturbed woodland.

- 3 Reintroduce wildflowers and more traditional management of meadows to create, restore, enhance and better manage wildlife habitats.
- 4 Focus on native and varied tree, hedgerow and meadow species to support biodiversity and climate resilience, including orchard planting in common areas, to support pollinators and for community benefit.
- 5 Establish a record and support protection of ancient and veteran trees on farms and other private land, in collaboration with farmers.
- 6 Actively contribute to the Habitat Mitigation Zone of North Meadow SAC.
- 7 Create links with Savernake Forest and Braydon Forest to improve habitat continuity, general connectivity and coordinated management.
- 8 Actively engage with deer management groups such as Central Cotswold Hills DMG and encourage formation of new ones.



LEATHLEY WOODLAND, THE NORTHERN FOREST,

This project is centred around habitat restoration and has so far seen 11.25 hectares of land turned into biodiversity hotspots of woodlands, wetlands and grasslands. The planting was carefully planned to support wildlife and include a range of habitats.



WEALD TO WAVES, SUSSEX

When complete, this initiative will create a 100-mile green corridor linking existing green spaces from the High Weald to the Sussex Coast. Communities from all around Sussex will be encouraged to engage with this project to increase understanding of the importance of protecting nature.

Nature recovery is a priority. We need more protection for ancient and veteran trees

- Woodland Trust

- GWCF boundary
- Protected Landscapes
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- North Meadow Influence Zones
- Special Areas of Conservation
- Local Nature Reserves
- National Nature Reserves
- National Forest Inventory (2023)
- Traditional Orchards
- Woodland (OS data)
- Green space (OS data)
- Water



Plan showing the environmental designations within the Forest area, including the North Wessex Downs protected landscape, SSSI's and national and local nature reserves

...examples from around the UK

3 SUPPORTING LOCAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Spending time outdoors, especially in forested areas, has significant benefits for both mental and physical health. Spending time in nature bring restorative benefits, provide positive social contact and opportunities for physical exercise.

Not everyone has good access to trees and their benefits. Whilst the Community Forest has achieved a Tree Equity Score of 81 (100 being the most equitable), Swindon's densest areas have a significantly lower score compared with the rest of the Forest.

Key objectives

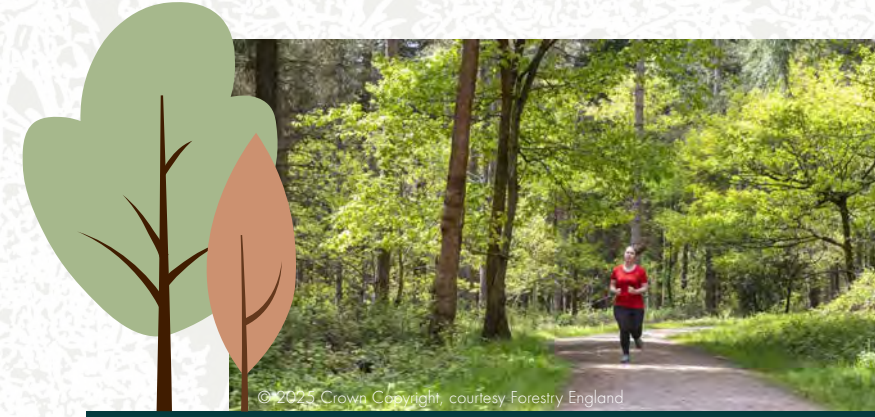
- 1 Restore and improve public access to urban woodlands, parks and open spaces, and to Forest destinations such as The Ridgeway and Thames Path, with a focus on health and wellbeing.
- 2 Prioritise increasing access to green spaces of all kinds for those areas currently lacking, through better connections to existing spaces, and opening up access to further spaces.

- 3 Connect people and places through identified 'green threads', facilitated by tree planting and greening and identify new opportunities for greening along designated cycle routes.
- 4 Encourage community involvement in tree planting initiatives and maintenance of the Forest through dedicated programmes and support, and instil a strong sense of local identity within the region.
- 5 Protect and enhance areas of high quality landscape and of historical or archaeological interest and preserve the character and special identity of towns and villages.
- 6 Increase opportunities for community sport and recreation, and for artistic and cultural events within the Forest, including activities for mental wellbeing such as 'forest bathing'.
- 7 Promote the Forest to visitors and to residents through community networks, marketing, engagement and social media.



FOREST OF AVON, WELLBEING GROUPS

The Forest of Avon community has recognised the healing, relaxing properties of the forest and has created safe spaces for vulnerable groups such as those with dementia, mental health needs and learning disabilities to spend restorative time in the outdoors.

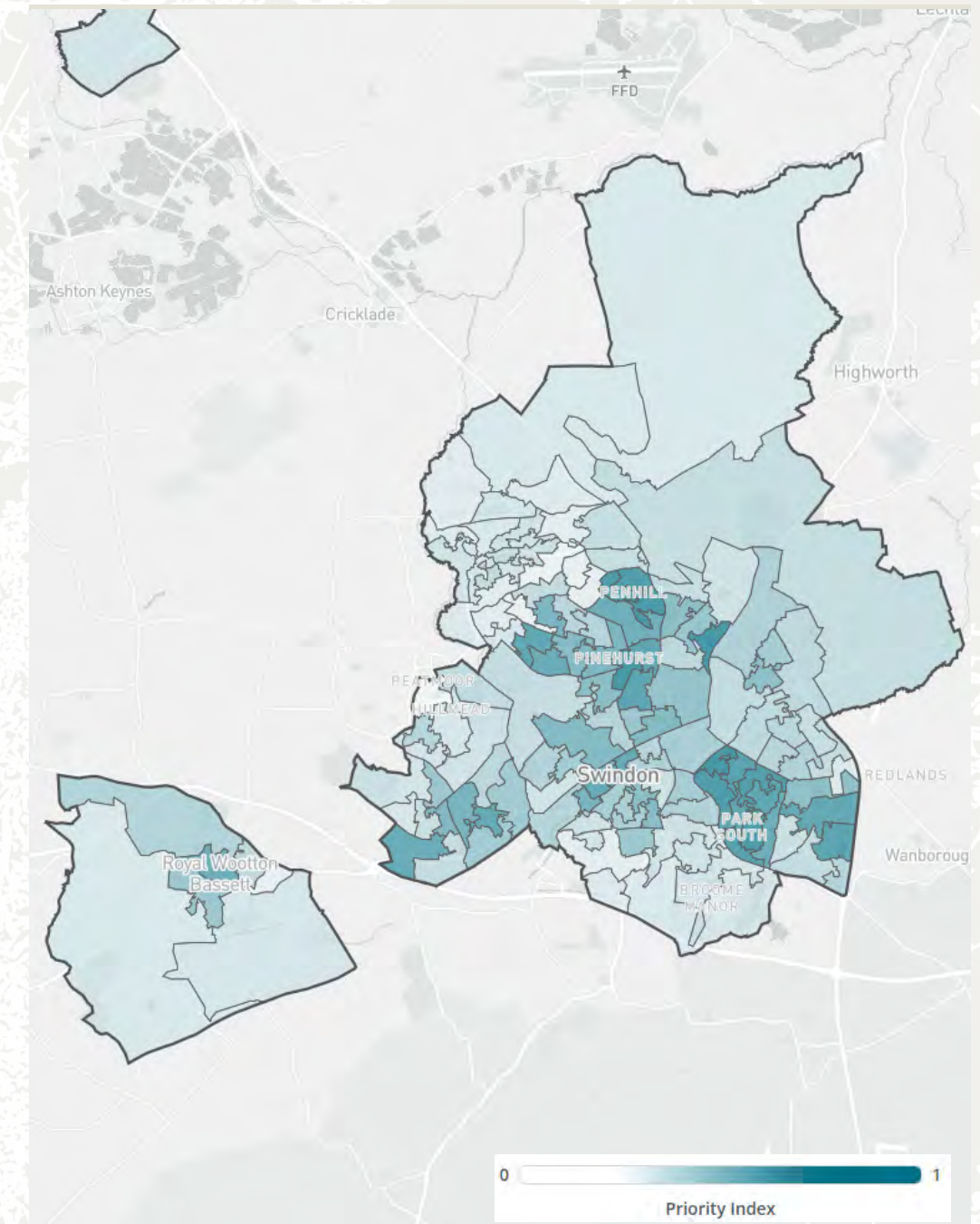


FORESTRY ENGLAND, WAYMARKED RUNNING ROUTES

Forestry England is encouraging people to get active in the great outdoors by creating safe, accessible, waymarked running routes weaved into the forest. They also offer challenges and prizes to further motivate the public to get involved in physical exercise. This will be a fantastic initiative to plug into.

...examples from around the UK

Focus efforts where social benefits are greatest, such as areas with low tree equity scores – Forestry Commission



The Tree Priority Index for Swindon Borough Council and Royal Wootton Bassett helps to prioritise the need for planting to achieve tree equity, combining social and environmental factors. 1 is highest priority. Credit: The Woodland Trust

4 ENCOURAGING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Community Forests are rife with employment and education opportunities, both in their establishment and management. Spanning both wooded land and urban centres, the employment opportunities are also varied. The forests support the function and vitality of the local economy while providing youth engagement opportunities to become involved with and learn about the environment.

Key objectives

- 1 Provide new opportunities for educational use of the Forest, ensuring that the diverse habitats meet the full range of environmental education needs for local schools, particularly for urban schools to fulfil National Curriculum requirements.
- 2 Develop opportunities for schools and colleges to be involved in creating, managing and using the Forest in their grounds.

- 3 Promote awareness, involvement and understanding of the Forest as an educational resource amongst local communities; and provide interpretation materials for wildlife, archaeology and historical interest within the Forest.
- 4 Protect and enhance the best agricultural land and increase opportunities for farm diversification elsewhere in accordance with Government agricultural and local planning policies.
- 5 Encourage sustainable employment opportunities within, and making use of, the Forest area, giving the public and private sector confidence in the area's long-term prospects and providing a robust base for investment.
- 6 Establish an agroforestry sector with a supply of trees, timber and other woodland products, taking local markets into account, drawing on existing Wiltshire initiatives and partnering with FC's Agroforestry Woodland Officers. Encourage use of this sustainably harvested timber in construction and developments in Swindon and its surrounds.



THE WOODLAND SKILLS CENTRE, DENBIGHSHIRE

Located in North-East Wales and situated within the Clwydian Range AONB, the skills centre is an NFP community-owned hub that provides employment and education opportunities. They have two permanent Forest Schools on site and are responsible for organising craft courses and family holidays.



NATIONAL FORESTS, PRIMARY SCHOOL OUTDOOR EDUCATION

After many years encouraging educational institutions to take-up outdoor learning, since 2024 90% of the primary schools that sit within a national forest are partaking in regular outdoor activities. This provides an important link between learning and nature. A review of local schools' activities in our Forest will be valuable.

- 7 Create jobs in the new woodland industries, through management of woodland and use of the raw materials and within the leisure industry developed in and around the Community Forest.
- 8 Sustain other local jobs by providing an outstanding environment as a comparative economic advantage over competitor areas.
- 9 Improve the environment near housing and local industry and to increase the desirability and value of properties and businesses.

There is more opportunity for interaction, learning and nature connections

- Forestry England

...examples from around the UK

5 BUILDING ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

With climate change as a growing, persistent problem, forests need to be used to mitigate and prevent its effects. They can be used efficiently as physical barriers against natural disasters and less severe events such as flooding.

Air pollution is also a major issue associated with climate change - trees act as natural sieves for the air, filtering out pollutants and emitting healthy air.



Key objectives

- 1 Regenerate the environment of the Green Belt and equivalent areas, where it is public policy to keep, and help to ensure that these areas remain permanently green and open.
- 2 Strengthen the strategic green infrastructure corridors and the Green Spine within the Swindon urban area to aid climate mitigation and adaptation through shade, drainage and carbon sequestration.
- 3 Focus on 'smart tree planting', making use of technology and data to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions and aid Green Infrastructure.
- 4 Target planting of appropriate tree species that can absorb air pollution in urban areas, to improve air quality in priority zones.
- 3 Help farmers build resilience through 'vertical' crops of elder trees and productive hedgerows, should the 'horizontal' crop of wheat or barley fail.

...8 months after planting!



MIYAWAKI FOREST PROJECT, NORTH NORFOLK

Named after a Japanese Botanist, Miyawaki Forests are densely planted to allow for fast and tall tree growth. Due to their increased density, these forests are more efficient at carbon sequestering and preventing flooding, making them more climate resilient than other wooded areas. There may be scope for a local Miyawaki forest.

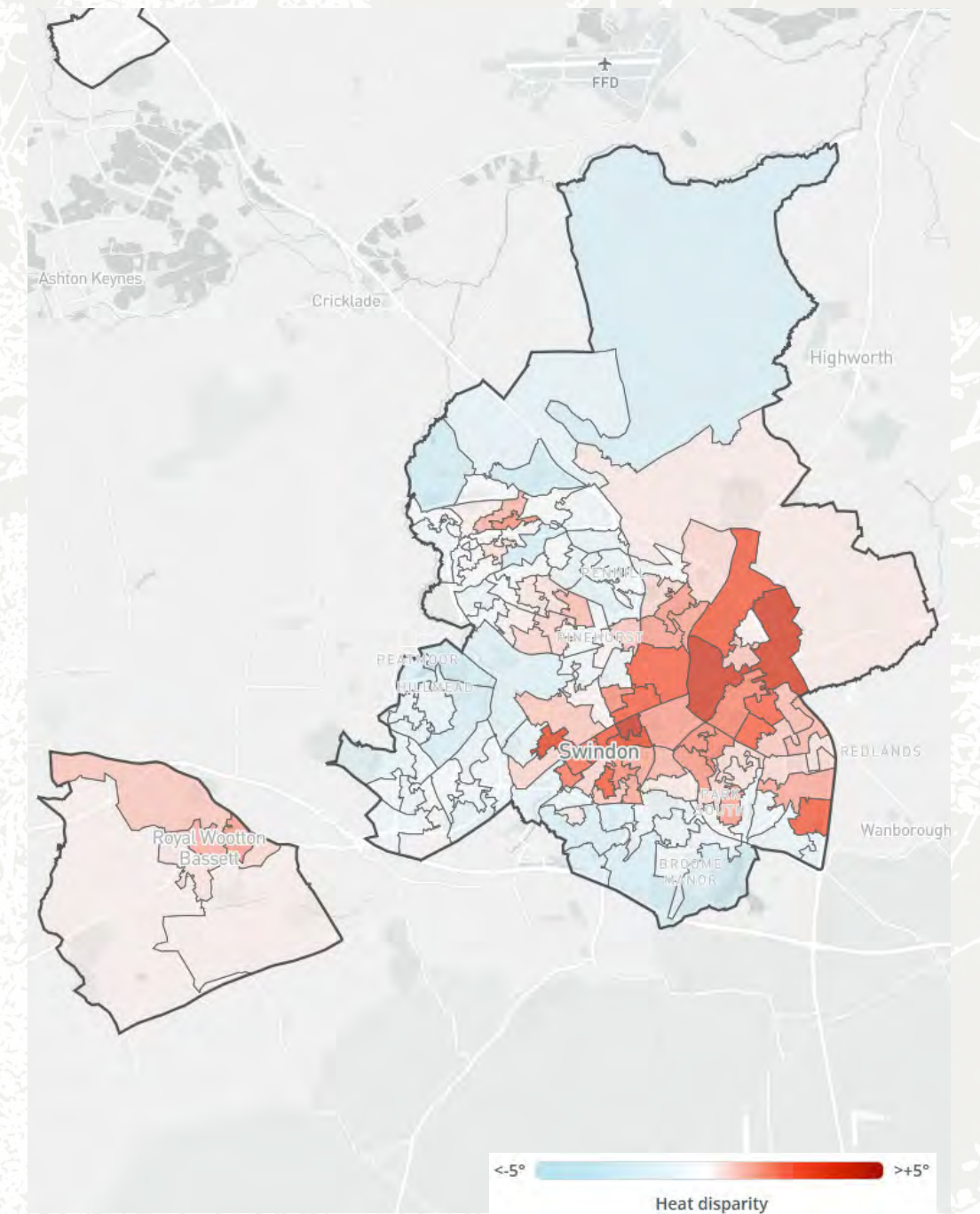


MIXED SPECIES, MICHELDEVER FOREST, HAMPSHIRE

Mixed species forests have been found to be particularly useful for increasing climate resilience. Different tree species will react differently to stresses such as diseases and extreme conditions (such as temperature changes), reducing the factors that make the entire forest vulnerable. This approach will inform the GWCF planting strategy.

...examples from around the UK

Planting more trees can help alleviate droughts and floods, making us more resilient to climate change - Woodland Trust



The heat disparity for Swindon Borough Council and Royal Wootton Bassett plan compares average neighbourhood heat extremity with the local authority average. The Broad Green and Greenbridge areas show particular high disparities. Credit: The Woodland Trust

FOREST TARGETS

The Forest Plan sets ambitious targets for the Forest area up to 2050. These build on the achievements of the local community, voluntary groups and public bodies since the adoption of the previous plan in 2002.

**1,000
NEW
STREET
TREES IN
SWINDON**

**£250K
OF FUNDING
RAISED BY
2050**

**750
VOLUNTEERS
INVOLVED
OVER THE
NEXT 5 YEARS**

**25%
UPLIFT IN
CANOPY
COVER AT NEW
DEVELOPMENT
SITES**

**PLANT
400HAS
OF NEW
WOODLAND
BY 2030**

**3,860HAS
TOTAL NEW
WOODLAND
PLANTED BY
2050**

**22%
CANOPY
COVER BY
2050**

**80 NEW
OAK
TREES**

**COMMEMORATING
80 YEARS SINCE
THE END OF WWII**

**125
BUSINESSES
INVOLVED OVER
NEXT 5 YEARS**

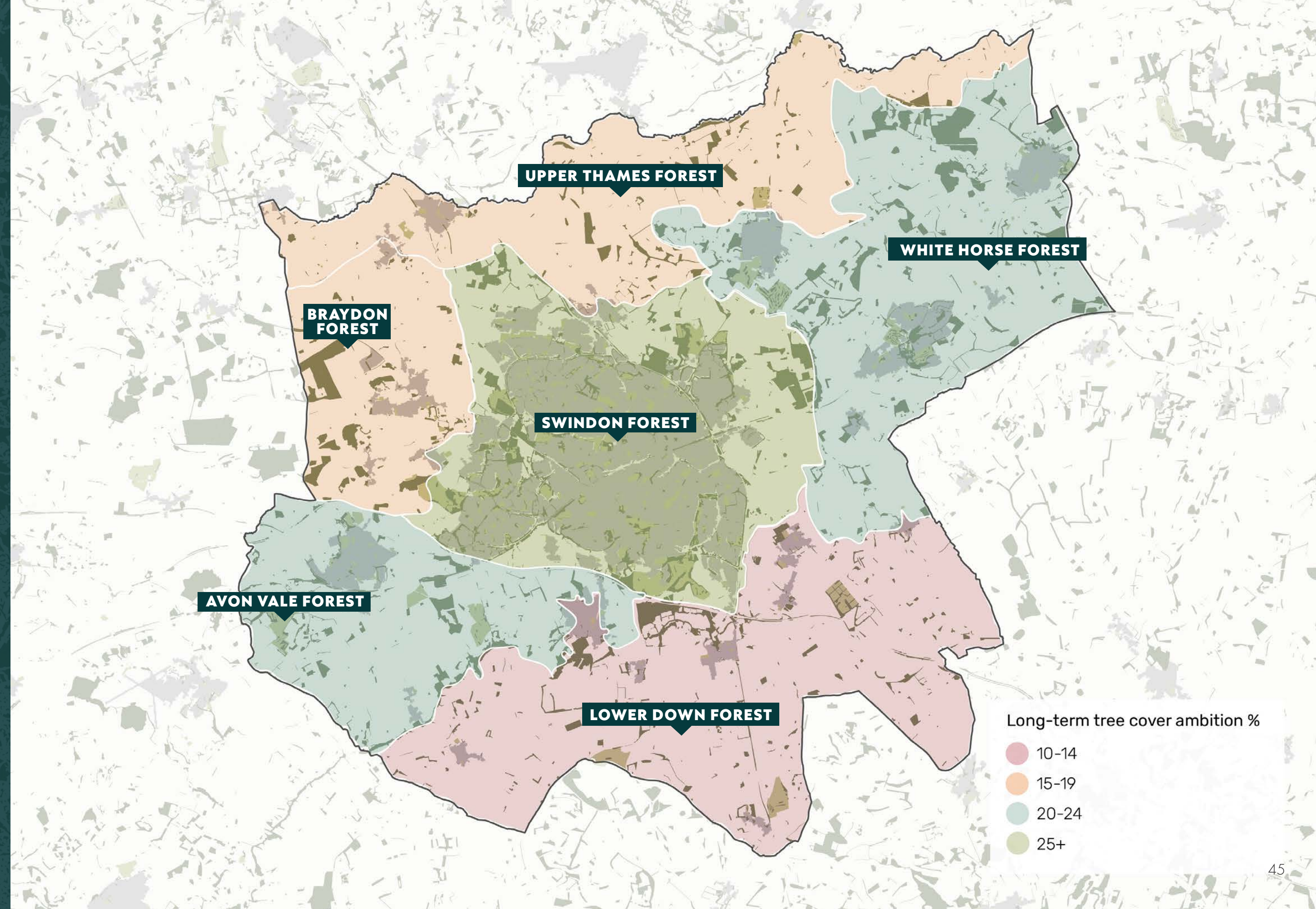
**80%
WOODLAND
SUSTAINABLY
MANAGED BY
2050**

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS?

The Forest is a combination of six forests that are both historical and fit in with the unique landscape character of each area:

- Swindon Forest
- Braydon Forest
- White Horse Forest
- The Lower Downs
- The Upper Thames
- The Avon Vale

The following spreads introduce each of the Forest places and the key objectives for each.



1 SWINDON FOREST



Swindon Forest lies around the small hills and extends into the heavily built-up area of Swindon via large stretches of open space. Swindon spreads into the surrounding countryside along its transport corridors, increasingly into sensitive gaps from Wootton Bassett, Wroughton and Shrivenham/ Watchfield.

Ridge and Blunsdon Ridge in the Northern Development and east to Wanborough.

4. Conserve and enhance the identity of separate parts of Swindon and settlements in the Swindon Forest, particularly Broad Blunsdon, Stanton Fitzwarren and South Marston.
5. Emphasise views along the River Cole.
6. Conserve the existing wildlife resource, especially along the valleys of the Rivers Cole and Ray, and also at Seven Fields Local Nature Reserve, Peatmoor Copse and Lagoon, Stanton Great Wood, and along disused railway lines and canals.
7. Enhance new urban features, including business parks, housing, road and rail corridors, school grounds and retail outlets, to soften the impact of developments on the surrounding countryside.
8. Manage and promote the existing country parks at Lydiard and Coate Water as "Forest Gateways", and establish more Gateways at Nightingale Wood, Mouldon Hill, Blunsdon, Stanton Fitzwarren, Wanborough, and Shaw Farm Forest Park.



GRAND UNION CANAL WELL-BEING WAY

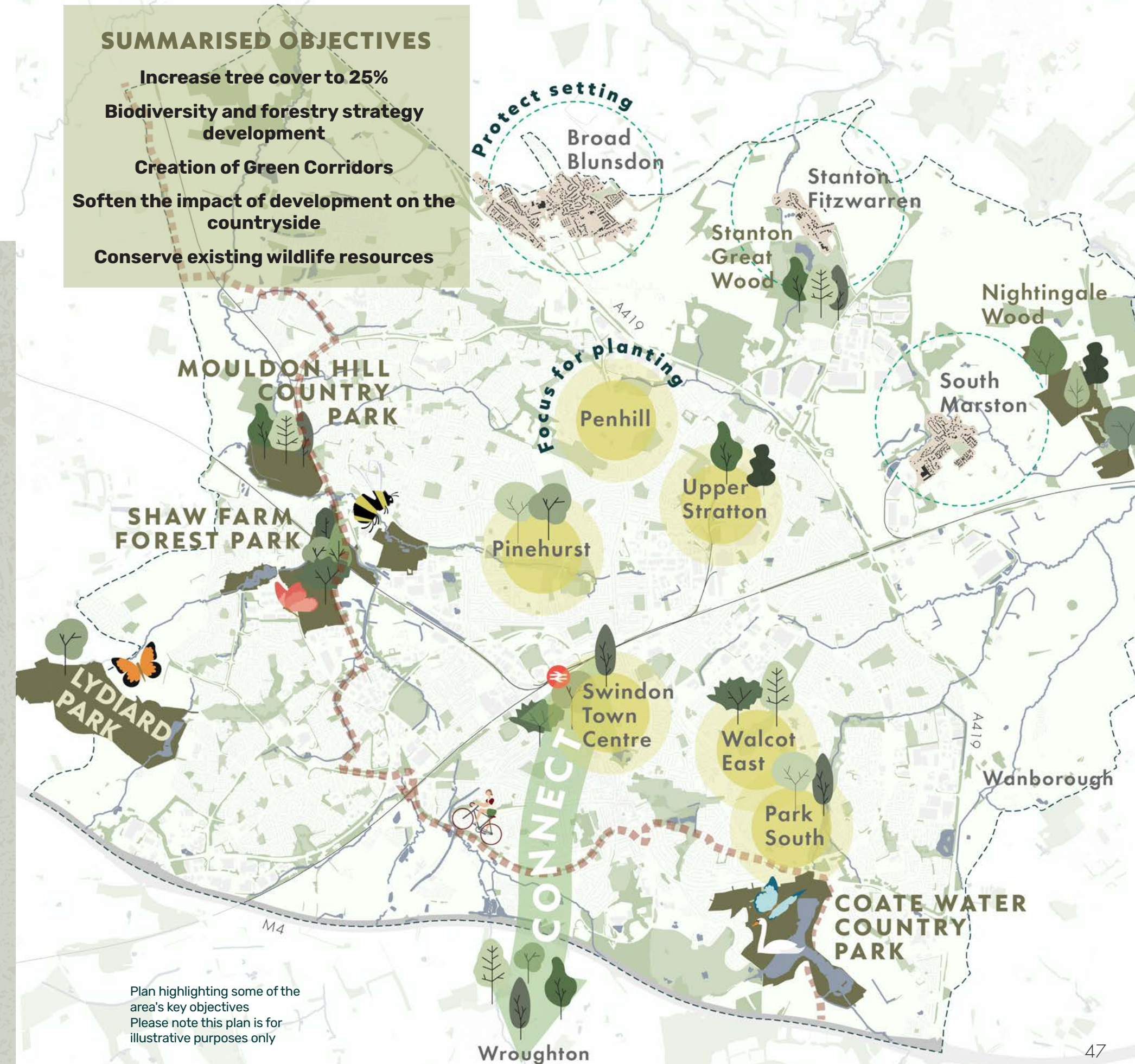
The Grand Union Canal Wellbeing Way in Southall aims to restore the canal towpath and connect green spaces into a green corridor. It will boost community wellbeing by improving access for walking and cycling, and enhancing biodiversity.

Key objectives

1. Increase tree cover to a minimum of 25% achieved mainly through hedgerows, shrub beds, orchards and planting individual trees in open spaces, business parks, road corridors and private gardens.
2. Focus planting in areas with the greatest need according to the Tree Priority Index. Namely, Penhill, Pinehurst, Upper Stratton, Walcot East, Park South and the town centre.
3. Conserve and enhance important topographical features including elements of townscape such as Swindon Hill, Toothill, the Shaw
9. Implement the Cricklade Country Way Project embracing restoration of the North Wilts Canal, restoration of the Swindon to Cricklade Railway and provision of associated footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths including Sustrans route 45.
10. Develop a Green Corridor between Swindon and Wroughton.
11. Support the development of a new, high quality town centre park.
12. Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Swindon Urban Area.
13. Create a network of off-road, non-motorised routes through the Swindon Greenways Project.
14. Develop an urban forestry strategy for Swindon.

SUMMARISED OBJECTIVES

- Increase tree cover to 25%
- Biodiversity and forestry strategy development
- Creation of Green Corridors
- Soften the impact of development on the countryside
- Conserve existing wildlife resources



Plan highlighting some of the area's key objectives
Please note this plan is for illustrative purposes only

2 BRAYDON FOREST

Braydon Forest is gently hilly with considerable remnants of the Ancient Royal Hunting Forest of Braydon, interspersed with small scale, often unimproved, hedged meadows. Settlements are small scale and generally absorbed into the landscape. A survey of this area of the Forest has recently been completed to facilitate its protection.

Key objectives

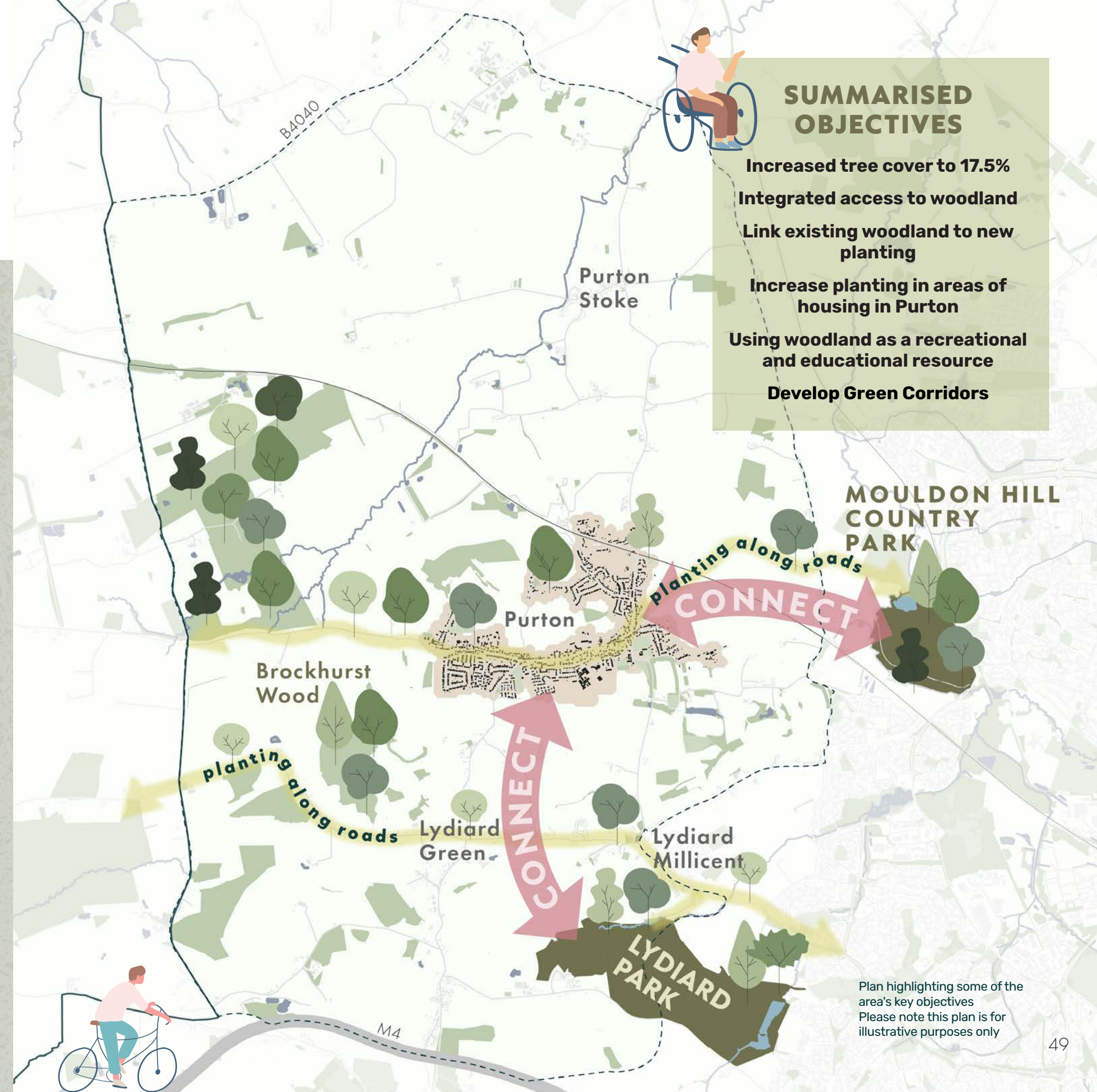
1. Increase tree cover to a minimum of 17.5% (10% as woodland and 7.5% as hedgerows and copses). The focus of planting will be along hedgerows and roads in order to link existing woodlands together and increase planting in and around areas of housing, particularly Purton.
2. Explore integrated access opportunities in the Braydon Forest, working closely with Wiltshire Council and Swindon Council to identify projects.
3. Encourage quiet, informal woodland recreation, emphasising crafts, educational visits and wildlife related events.
4. Develop Green Corridors between Mouldon Hill and Purton, and between Lydiard Country Park and Purton.



PLANTS OF HICKLING, NORFOLK
A community walk in the beautiful Hickling Broad and Marshes, where experts and beginners alike are invited to join a guided walk to explore the different habitats and plant life that the Reserve has to offer.



GEOADVENTURES FESTIVAL, KENT DOWNS
Geosites are special locations across the aspiring UNESCO Cross-Channel Global Geopark that allow people to connect with our geological heritage. These sites are a hub for a variety of events, including crafting workshops where people of all ages can gather to draw, sculpt, and create together.



3 WHITE HORSE FOREST



White Horse Forest contains the expanded settlements of Watchfield, Shrivenham, Highworth and Faringdon. The A420 and Great Western Railway are dominant features. The landscape falls into three categories: the Coral Rag Hills, which are comparatively well wooded, the open and flat clay vale and the River Cole corridor.

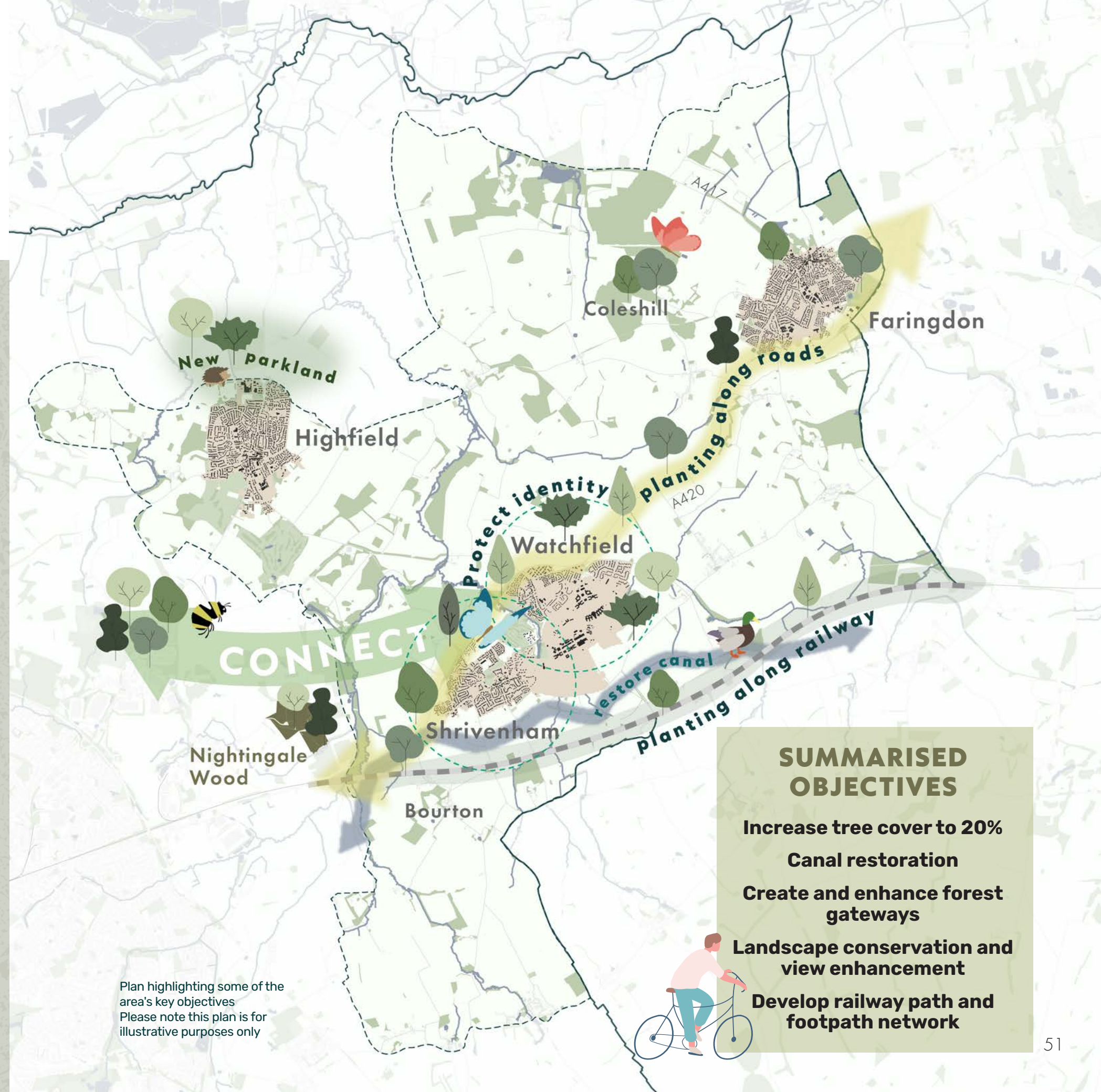
Key objectives

1. Increase tree cover to a minimum of 20% (10% as woodland and 10% as hedgerows and copses).
2. Use woodland to define the western edge of the clay vale, linking with the Swindon Forest tree planting to the east of Swindon, leaving a gap round Liden Brook to the River Cole at Acorn Bridge and North Coleshill to emphasise the Cole Valley.
3. Soften the impact of Watchfield and Shrivenham on their immediate landscape, and maintain their separate characters and identity in landscape terms.
4. Conserve and enhance views south to the Downs and north across the Thames Valley and the Cotswolds.
5. Create new wetland planting in the Cole valley, running from Horpit through Watchfield and Shrivenham to Faringdon.
6. Increase woodland around Horpit, Watchfield and Shrivenham, linking with the woodlands on the Coral Rag Hills.
7. Increase tree cover along the A420, the Great Western Railway and the Wilts and Berks Canal route.
8. Restore the Wilts and Berks Canal through the clay vale, promoting it to walkers, horse-riders and cyclists. Conserve and enhance views south to the Downs and north across the Thames Valley and the Cotswolds.
9. Promote Roves Farm and Nightingale Wood as a "Forest Gateway".
10. Create "Forest Gateways" in Faringdon, Highworth, Coleshill, Bourton, Shrivenham and the Coxwells.
11. Develop the disused railway path to Highworth and the footpath system around Highworth, especially linking with the new parkland to the north, the leisure centre and the golf course.



BOOTHBY WILDHAND, LINCOLNSHIRE

With the creation of 20 new ponds, this site is providing vital ecosystem services, including flood prevention, drought mitigation, pollinator habitats, and water purification. This is relevant to our wetland planting strategy.



Plan highlighting some of the area's key objectives
Please note this plan is for illustrative purposes only

SUMMARISED OBJECTIVES

- Increase tree cover to 20%
- Canal restoration
- Create and enhance forest gateways
- Landscape conservation and view enhancement
- Develop railway path and footpath network

4 THE LOWER DOWNS



SUMMARISED OBJECTIVES

- Increase tree cover to 10%
- Increase woodland cover along the Chalk Escarpment
- Promote horseriding
- Promote the Ridgeway National Trail
- Create a Green Corridor

The Lower Downs are within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They consist of the very open, remote chalk plateau to the south and its north facing, wooded escarpment along which spring line villages are constructed of chalk block. Many are now expanded. To the south a second ridge forms the southern edge of this Forest area.

Key objectives

1. Increase tree cover to a minimum of 10% (5% as woodland and 5% as hedgerows and individual trees).
2. Enhance the shared corridor of the A345, the rail path and the river Og, increasing tree cover.
3. Increase woodland cover along the chalk escarpment, between Broad Town and Wanborough, within Coombes and around towns and villages, especially south of Wroughton, to Overtown and Chiseldon.
4. Manage and promote the area for horse riding, reflecting the traditional use of the Downs.
5. Promote the Ridgeway National Trail.
6. Develop a Green Corridor from Chiseldon to Swindon.



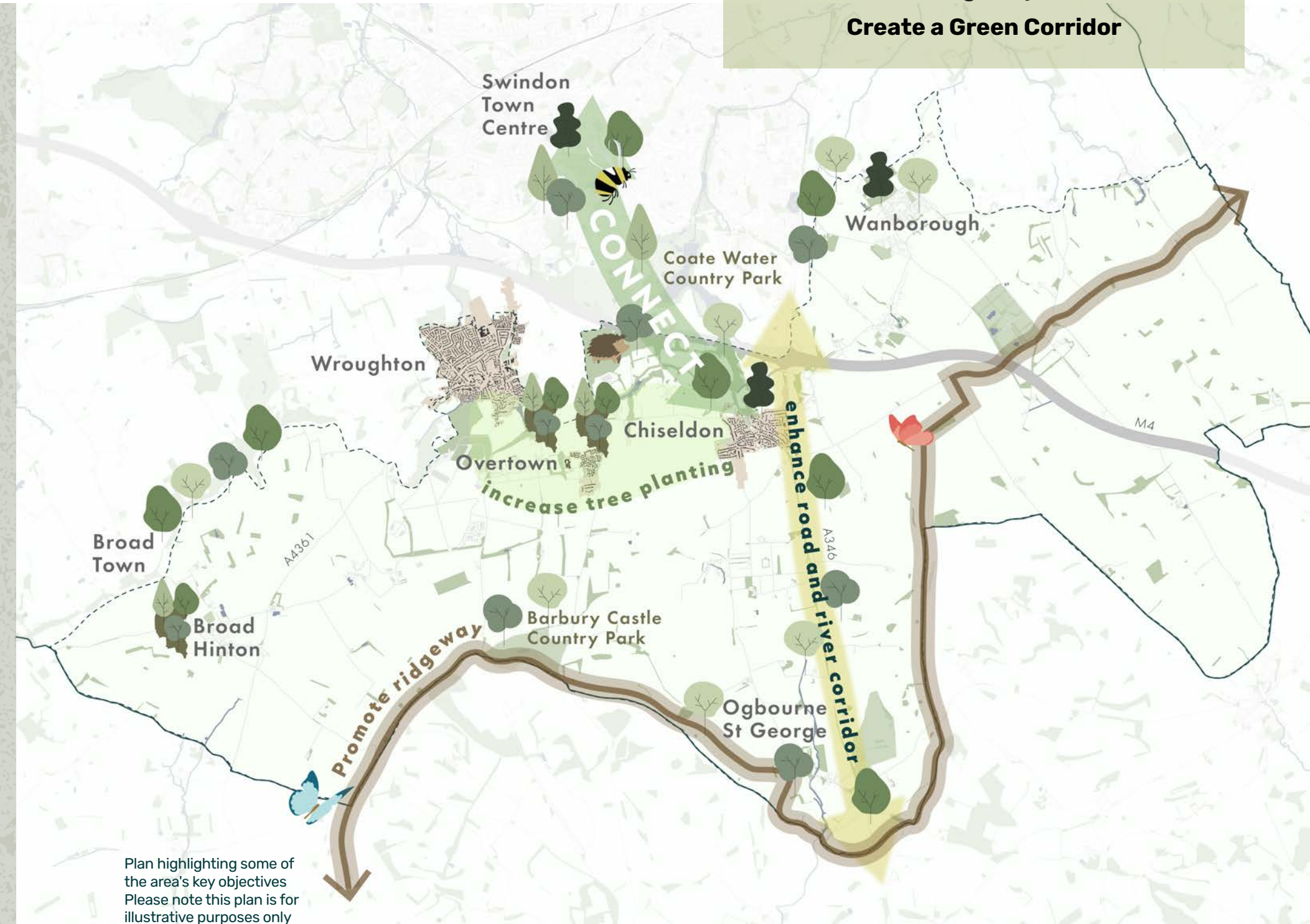
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK, EAST SUSSEX

Investment in and protection for chalk escarpment of the South Downs National Park has boosted this major draw for visitors across the UK. Its varied woodland along the escarpment makes for stunning views and a perfect hiking location.



HORSE RIDING TRAIL, HALDON FOREST

Haldon Forest in Exeter has new horse riding trails with signage that connect to a wider network of routes, roads, and public rights of way. The trails make the forest a safer and more enjoyable space for both riders and other visitors.



Plan highlighting some of the area's key objectives. Please note this plan is for illustrative purposes only.

5 THE UPPER THAMES

The Upper Thames comprises a part of the Thames Valley so far unaffected by gravel extraction. It is a flat open landscape of water meadows and mixed aged small woods and hedgerows. Settlements are small and far apart, some with dominant church spires.

Key objectives

1. Increase tree cover to a minimum of 18% (9% as woodland and 9% as hedgerows and individual trees). Planting will focus on the south of this section of the Forest, between Cricklade and Swindon, along road corridors, along the Swindon to Cricklade railway, the route of the canal and close to the northern edge of Highworth.
1. Enhance the A419 and A361 corridors.
2. Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Cricklade and Lechlade.
3. Increase tree cover on higher ground such as Lushill, Hannington, Crouch Hill, Bury Hill and Common Hill.
4. Create trails along the Rivers Ray and Cole, providing and promoting opportunities for walking cycling and horse riding.
5. Develop new parkland north of Highworth.
6. Implement the Cricklade Country Way Project embracing restoration of the North Wilts Canal, restoration of the Swindon to Cricklade Railway and provision of associated footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths including Sustrans route 45.



WYE VALLEY ROUTE, WALES

The Wye Valley Walk is a stunning trail that follows the River Wye as it forms the border between Wales and England. This scenic route, which can be explored from either side of the river, offers walkers a unique opportunity to experience the beautiful landscapes of both countries.



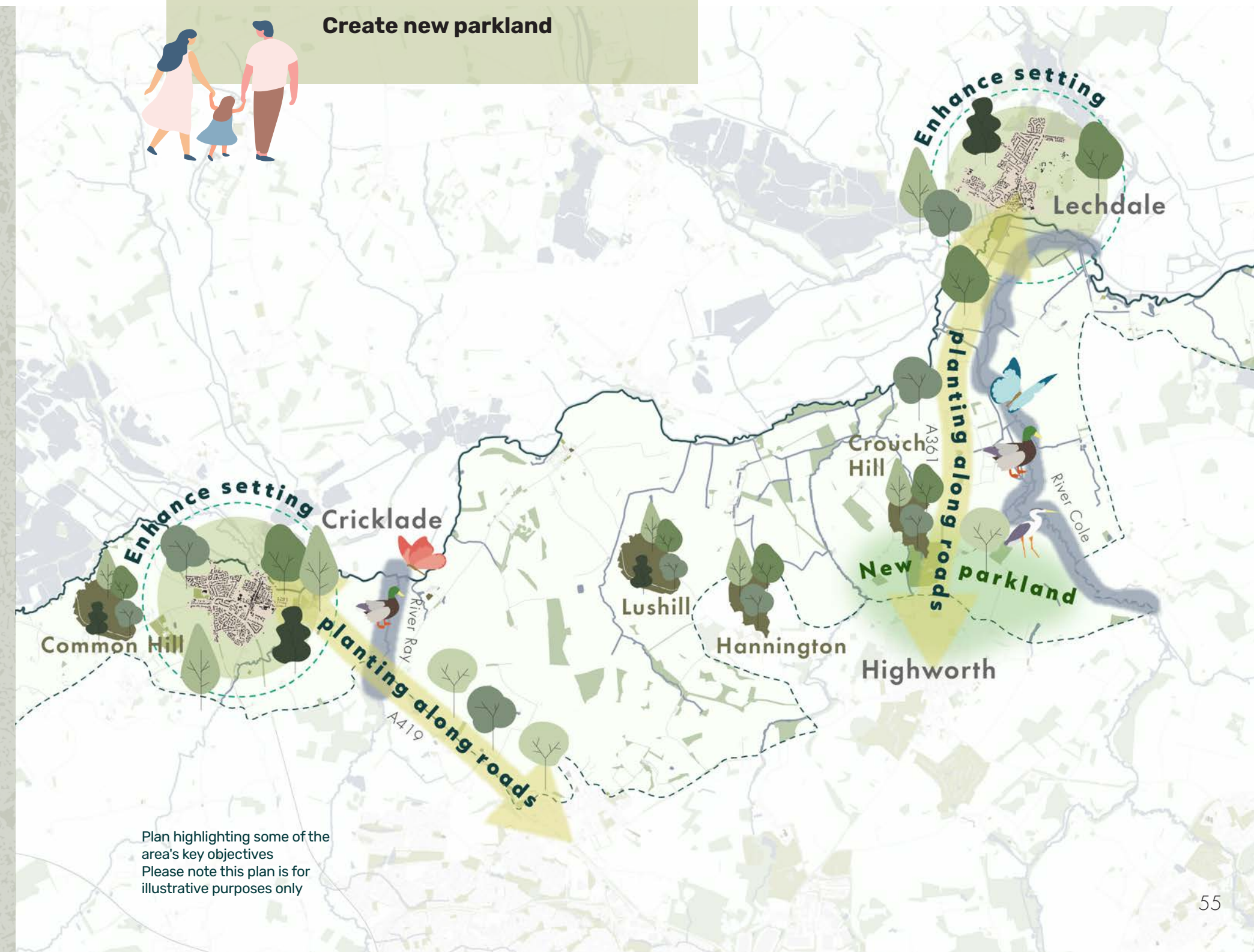
CLUMBER PARK, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Once home to the Estates of the Dukes of Newcastle, Clumber Park has benefited from a planting strategy and is now a 'beautiful expanse of parkland, heath and woods covering more than 3,800 acres'.



SUMMARISED OBJECTIVES

- Increase tree cover to 18%
- Enhance road corridors
- Conserve and enhance landscapes
- Canal restoration and path creation
- Create new parkland



Plan highlighting some of the area's key objectives
Please note this plan is for illustrative purposes only

6 THE AVON VALE



SUMMARISED OBJECTIVES

Increase tree cover and woodland to 20%

Conserve and enhance character area

Canal restoration

Create a Green Corridor

The Avon Vale is the eastern extension of the clay vale. It is gently undulating, with dairy farming and sparse tree cover due to field enlargement and Dutch elm disease. Transport corridors run east/west and dominate. The expanded settlements of Wootton Bassett and North Wroughton are prominent.

Key objectives

1. Increase tree cover to a minimum of 20% (7.5% as woodland and 12.5% as hedgerows and individual trees).
2. Conserve and enhance the post-enclosure character west of the A361 and Coate Water, south of a line between Wootton Bassett and Swindon and north of the bottom of the chalk escarpment, extending north around Wroughton and linking up with Burderop Wood.
3. Continue to increase woodland cover around Wootton Bassett, south of the railway line to west Swindon.
4. Continue to increase woodland cover around North Wroughton.
5. Support the restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal between Wootton Bassett and Swindon.
6. Develop a Green Corridor between Jubilee Lake, Wootton Bassett and Lydiard Country Park.



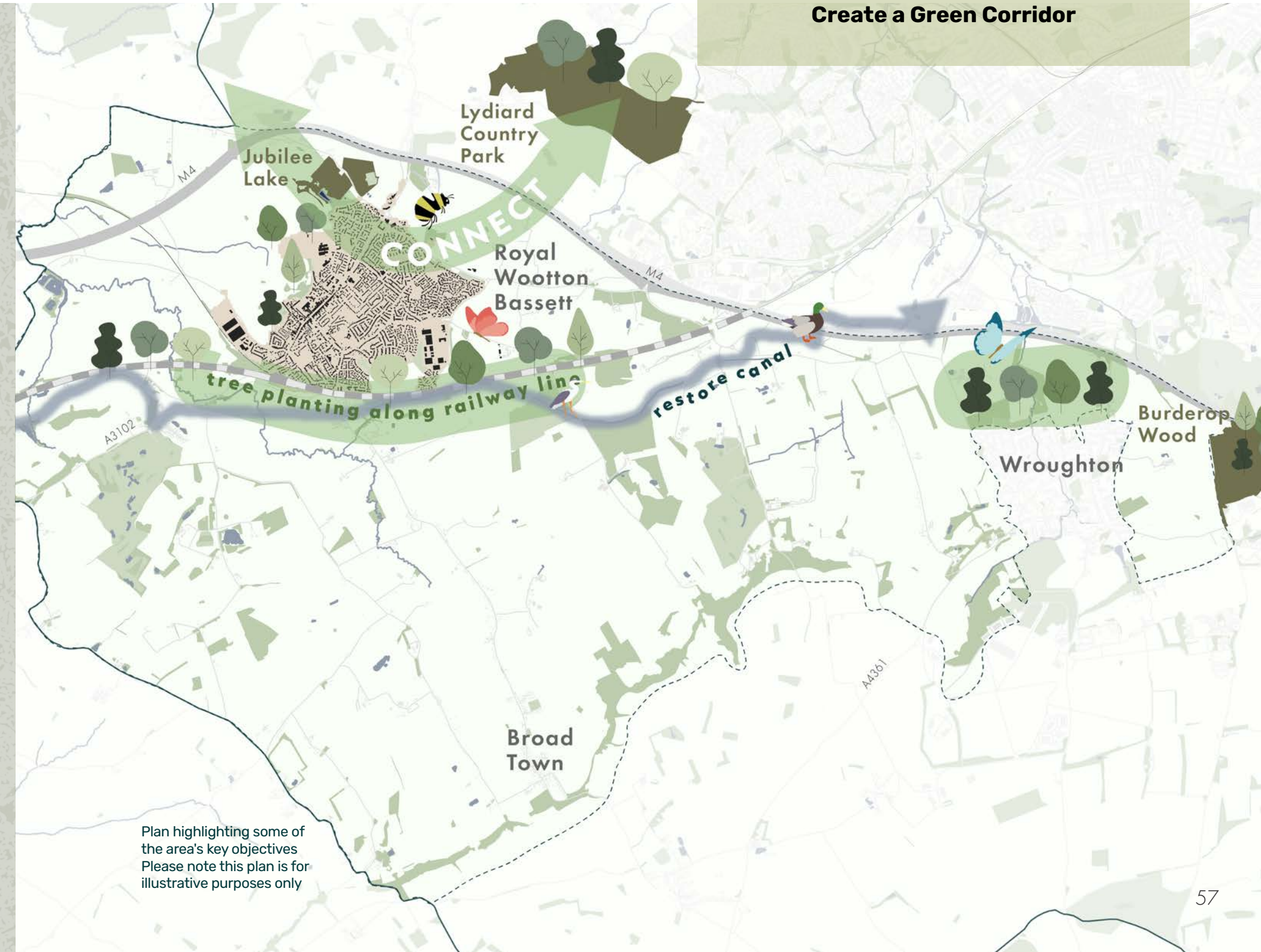
MONTGOMERY CANAL, SHROPSHIRE

The Montgomery Canal is currently under restoration after being fully closed in 1944. As well as being an idyllic addition to the local community, it is of 'considerable ecological interest' - showcasing the importance of restoring these canals.



WESTERN FOREST, WEST ENGLAND

England's first new national forest in 30 years will be led by the Forest of Avon and will be called the Western Forest (not to be confused with the GWCF) - plans include increasing canopy cover by planting 2 million trees in the next 25 years.



Plan highlighting some of the area's key objectives
Please note this plan is for illustrative purposes only

WHO WILL HELP DELIVER THE PLAN?

Partnership working

The Forest team will engage, empower and collaborate with its recognised partners to ensure the plan is focused and on track. Its key partners are:

- Swindon Borough Council
- The Parish Councils
- Wiltshire Council
- Natural England
- Forestry Commission
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Woodland Trust
- Forestry England
- Countryside Landowners Association
- DEFRA
- North Wessex Downs National Landscapes AONB
- National Farmers' Union
- Developers

In addition to this list is strengthening its partnership with the Western Forest team, working together effectively and efficiently

to ensure the Community Forest takes advantage of opportunities that the Western Forest creates, and that the Western Forest builds on existing GWCF projects.

The team will explore new partnerships where it is mutually beneficial and there is no conflict of interest between all parties. Any partnership will follow set governance arrangements as stipulated by the Council.

Planning and Policy

The Forest Plan relies on local, regional and national planning processes to help deliver its objectives. This collaboration at different scales ensures that developments of all scales incorporate significant environmental, social, and economic benefits. The Forest Plan will be aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the wider Western Forest Strategy (once completed), the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), as well as strategic and local plans,

The Forest Plan supports the Council's ambition to deliver its green infrastructure targets across Swindon and its surrounds - specifically, a requirement for new developments to increase canopy cover by 25% where appropriate, which will be a key metric for delivering the tree-planting goals set out in this Plan.

Funding and Investment

There is a need to diversify funding to reduce reliance on Central Government. Opportunities should be prioritised that provide both revenue and capital to ensure long-term sustainability. In the past, funding has been successfully secured from a variety of sources, including:

- The National Lottery
- Landfill tax
- Business sponsorships
- Developers' contributions (e.g. through Section 106 agreements)
- Charitable trusts for land acquisition and tree planting

The Forest is well-positioned to leverage new funding opportunities, offering a proven record of delivery, a clear strategic vision, and a network of local, regional, and national partnerships.

Just maintaining the 'status quo' will be a challenge moving forward... A multi-partner approach with funding is needed to protect the site and engage with future audiences.

- Forestry England (referencing future development around Swindon)

The relationship [between Western Forest and GWCF] has the potential to be a brilliant platform for future development, building on the success the Community Forest has already achieved. - Western Forest

Funding from central government schemes like the Nature for Climate Fund and the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) can help to deliver the Plan, as well as private finance to support the Forest's growth and financial resilience. Existing relationships can help support Landscape Recovery Scheme bids to help restore habitats, recover native species and enhance wildlife-rich areas.

The Forest team will also look at creating sustainable commercial woodlands for timber production and woodland activity. To enable this GWCF will be managed through collaborative working between Swindon Borough Council, Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and other partners.

Community and landowner engagement
Since 1994 the Community Forest team have been working with a broad partnership of organisations to make the Forest vision into a reality, negotiating and working with farmers, land owners, planners, volunteer groups, schools, local communities and businesses. This will be continued with a drive to engage further with key partners.

The Forest Plan promotes community engagement with its partners and local businesses to deliver tree planting and woodland creation, particularly in and around Swindon.

Core to its education and community engagement is the ongoing partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT). Through the Swindon Forest Meadows Programme, WWT provides several environmental opportunities for education and community groups, engaging directly with the communities that stand to benefit most from the Forest's creation. This direct involvement is vital to ensure the Forest is relevant to their needs.

The long-term sustainability of the Forest depends on the custodianship, care, and support that local people provide. The Forest aims to involve community representatives at every stage of its development to ensure it is meeting local needs.

The Forest team will also engage with rural communities, developers, and landowners to deliver sustainable blue and green infrastructure solutions. This includes encouraging agroforestry, the creation of new orchards, and woodland management for the benefit of the environment and economy.

Securing land suitable for woodland creation and forestry enterprise is a priority. The Council and other partners will work with Forest Enterprise, farmers and landowners to identify and acquire sites that contribute to the strategic vision. Strong collaboration with Forestry Commission Land Use Advisers will help identify projects that need EIAs.

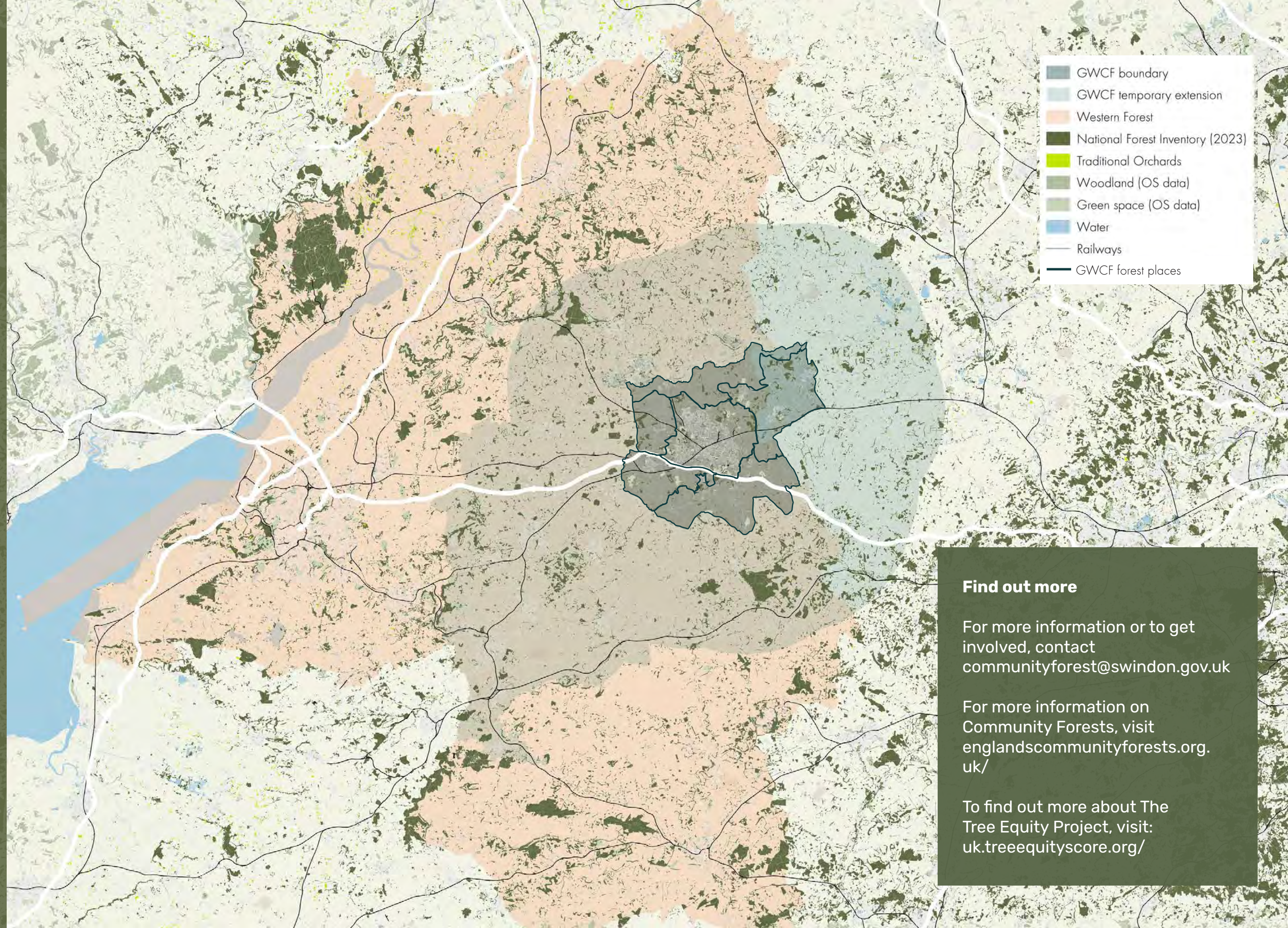
Raising awareness
Key to the delivery of the Forest Plan is to raise awareness among stakeholders, voluntary groups and residents. The Forest team is committed to increasing its promotional activities and online presence to reach a wider audience and to better communicate its goals and achievements.



NEXT STEPS

Several priority projects have been identified to advance the Forest Plan over the next five years, working in close partnership with the Western Forest team. The projects are:

- **Oaks at 80** – commemorative planting of oak trees to mark 80 years since the end of WW2 (*short-term*)
- Dedicating **120 hectares** across the forest to include **community projects and agroforestry** (*short-term*)
- Plant another **400 hectares by 2030** via the Trees for Climate programme (*short-term*)
- **Street tree planting as part of Swindon Town Centre's regeneration** led by Swindon Borough Council (*ongoing*)
- Community projects as part of the **Swindon Forest Meadow Programme** (*ongoing*)
- **Country Parks and Open Space green corridors strategy** - linking people to nature (*ongoing*)
- **Tree Equity project** by The Woodland Trust (*ongoing*)



Find out more

For more information or to get involved, contact communityforest@swindon.gov.uk

For more information on Community Forests, visit englandscommunityforests.org.uk/

To find out more about The Tree Equity Project, visit: uk.treeequityscore.org/

APPENDIX

PLACING THE PLAN IN CONTEXT



The GWCF Plan and its delivery is informed by national, regional and local policy.

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): UK policy is influenced by 17 SDGs, with Community Forests contributing to goals such as Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3), Climate Action (SDG 13), and Life on Land (SDG 15).

NATIONAL

UK national policy focuses on creating and restoring woodlands to address public health, land use, biodiversity, and climate change.

The Environment Act 2021: This act aims to improve the natural environment by setting targets, including increasing tree and woodland cover to 16.5% of England's total land area by 2050. It also requires local authorities to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and mandates a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for

new developments. Community Forests align their plans with these strategies.

The 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 (DEFRA): This plan sets long-term goals for improving the environment. It supports Community Forests in their role of urban tree planting, creating green infrastructure, and connecting young people with nature.

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023: A revision of the 25 Year Plan, this document sets an interim target to increase tree and woodland cover by 0.26% (34,000 hectares) by January 31, 2028, to stay on track for the 2050 goal.

National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (DLUHC): This framework guides local planning and recognizes Community Forests as valuable for improving the urban environment and providing for recreation and wildlife. It states that an approved Community Forest Plan may be a key consideration in planning decisions.





The Climate Change Act 2008 (revised 2019): This act sets a legally binding target for the UK to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It led to funding initiatives like the Nature for Climate Fund, which supports the work of Community Forests.

Net Zero Strategy 2021 (DESNZ & BEIS): This long-term strategy aims to achieve net zero by 2050. A key commitment is to treble woodland creation rates, with England contributing 7,500 hectares annually by 2025. Community Forests are a key partner in meeting this target.

Green Infrastructure Framework 2023 (Natural England): This framework promotes urban greening and sets standards, such as Urban Tree Canopy Cover, to help embed green infrastructure in decision-making. Community Forests support regional growth by providing green infrastructure and targeting activities in disadvantaged areas.

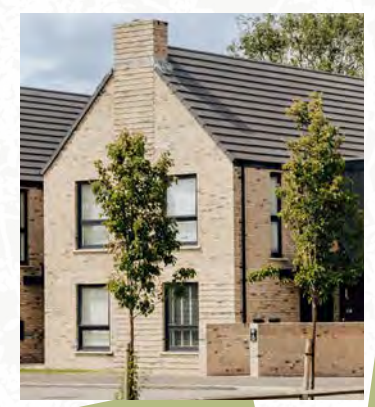
Woodland Access Implementation Plan 2023 (DEFRA): This plan promotes safe and appropriate public access in woodlands. Community Forests are credited with providing more than half a million people with access to woodland within 500 metres in a single year.

Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024 (DEFRA): This plan was introduced to support the transitional period from the EUs Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme. It encourages sustainable farming practices, including woodland creation and management. It supports farmers in diversifying their land use to contribute to national environmental goals by reducing untargeted spending fully by 2027.

National Wood Strategy 2023 (Confor): Developed with government and industry collaboration, this strategy aims to increase the growing, harvesting, and production of timber in England. Community Forests support this strategy through sustainable forestry practices.

Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy 2022 (DfE): This strategy aims to make the UK a world leader in sustainability education by 2030 by fostering a greater connection to nature. Community Forests provide a practical way to achieve this vision.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024: This framework promotes actions in Protected Landscapes, with a target to increase their tree and woodland cover by 3% by 2050. Several Community Forests are within these landscapes and contribute to this target.



Wiltshire Council



REGIONAL Wiltshire Green and Blue infrastructure strategy 2022-2030: This document identifies the North Wessex Downs AONB as a sub-regional strategic area for Green and Blue Infrastructure. This is a key region of the GWCF and its prioritisation will enhance the natural environment that already exists.

Wiltshire Local Plan 2015: This identifies the GWCF as an area to be maintained and enhanced as a green infrastructure resource, and achieving the objectives of the GWCF is a key strategy in achieving this. It also highlights agriculture and forestry as important provider of employment

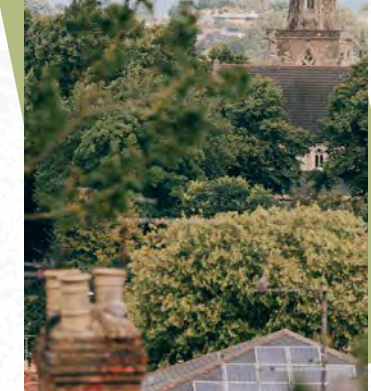
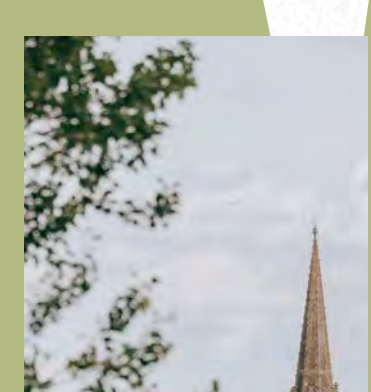
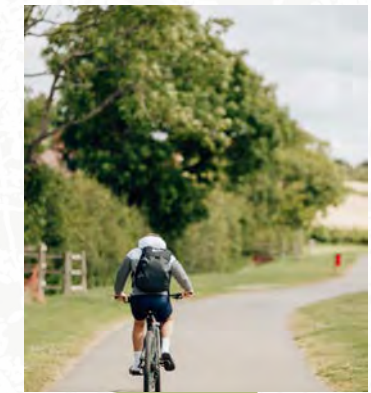
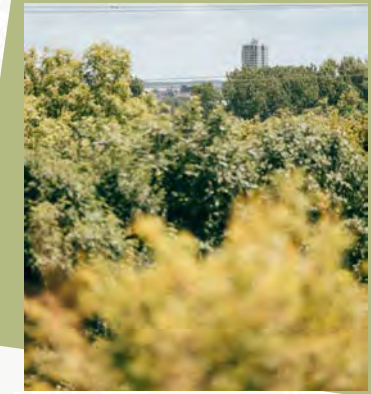
Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025 (LNRS): The LNRS maps priorities for nature recovery and drives habitat creation, restoration and connectivity across

Wiltshire and Swindon. The strategy aims to reverse biodiversity loss and provide community benefits such as cleaner air and water, flood resilience, and better access to nature. The GWCF is a key partner and established delivery vehicle for many of these goals. In turn, the LNRS provides a framework and mapping to help the Forest Plan deliver its vision and ensure a strategic, joined-up approach between partners.

The LNRS identifies woodland as a priority habitat of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) significance highlighting Ancient Woodlands and existing woodlands for protection and enhancement, and identifying opportunities for new woodland creation. It also seeks to restore plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites. It defines what "good" woodland looks like, featuring diverse ages, at least 80% native species, and habitat links through native hedgerows where possible.

The strategy also emphasises sustainable woodland management to deliver wider environmental outcomes such as flood mitigation, water quality improvement, and responsible timber production.

Finally, the LNRS provides practical guidance for those leading nature recovery projects. Of particular relevance to the GWCF is the "Right Tree, Right Place" principle - ensuring species and planting locations suit site conditions, landscape character, and purpose to maximise biodiversity, climate resilience, and recreation benefits. The LNRS signposts the GWCF as a key partner for project planning, funding, site selection, and species choice, alongside the Wiltshire & Swindon Tree Warden Scheme.



LOCAL Swindon Plan 2024-2027:

The Council's corporate strategy outlines its long-term priorities to improve the quality of life for residents. The three core missions are to build a "fairer", "better", and "greener" Swindon. The Plan supports the strategic objectives of the Council to 'Build a Greener Swindon', demonstrating its commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity through tree planting and new nature habitat creation.

Current Swindon Local Plan 2026 (Adopted March 2015): The Local Plan recognises the GWCF as a vital part of the Borough's green infrastructure. It views the Forest as a tool for sustainable development, contributing to climate change resilience, biodiversity, and community well-being.

The Plan's policies aim to integrate the GWCF into all new developments by requiring them to incorporate green infrastructure and, where necessary,

mitigate any loss of trees. Furthermore, the Local Plan highlights the importance of the GWCF as part of a wider, cross-boundary partnership.

New Swindon Local Plan 2023-2043:

The New Local Plan, yet to be adopted, will run until 2043, and highlights the importance of the GWCF. It reiterates the main objectives of the Forest:

1. Landscape and nature conservation;
2. Woodland management and creation;
3. Lifestyle and health for communities; and
4. Economic regeneration

It also specifies that major developments should aim for a future canopy cover of 25% on site, and where not possible make contributions to off-site Forest objectives.

Swindon Green Infrastructure Plan (2025): The Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan identifies what GI exists in the Borough and where, and sets out a strategy for how to protect, enhance and restore GI holistically for the benefit of communities and nature.

The Plan includes a Vision and set of objectives within the themes of 'Inclusivity and Access'; 'Health and Wellbeing'; 'Connectivity'; 'Nature Rich and Beautiful'; 'Urban Greening'; 'Management and Maintenance'; and 'Climate Change'.

It includes a table of actions, including the development of the Forest Plan as part of 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. A strategic GI network has been identified and shows where GI assets and corridors link between each other and to the wider landscape beyond.

Great Western Forest Community Plan (2002): The previous Plan for the Community Forest was adopted in 2002. The Plan sets the context for the establishment of the Forest including key challenges. It gives a Vision for the future of the Forest alongside objectives and a five-year action plan.

