



Highworth Neighbourhood Plan

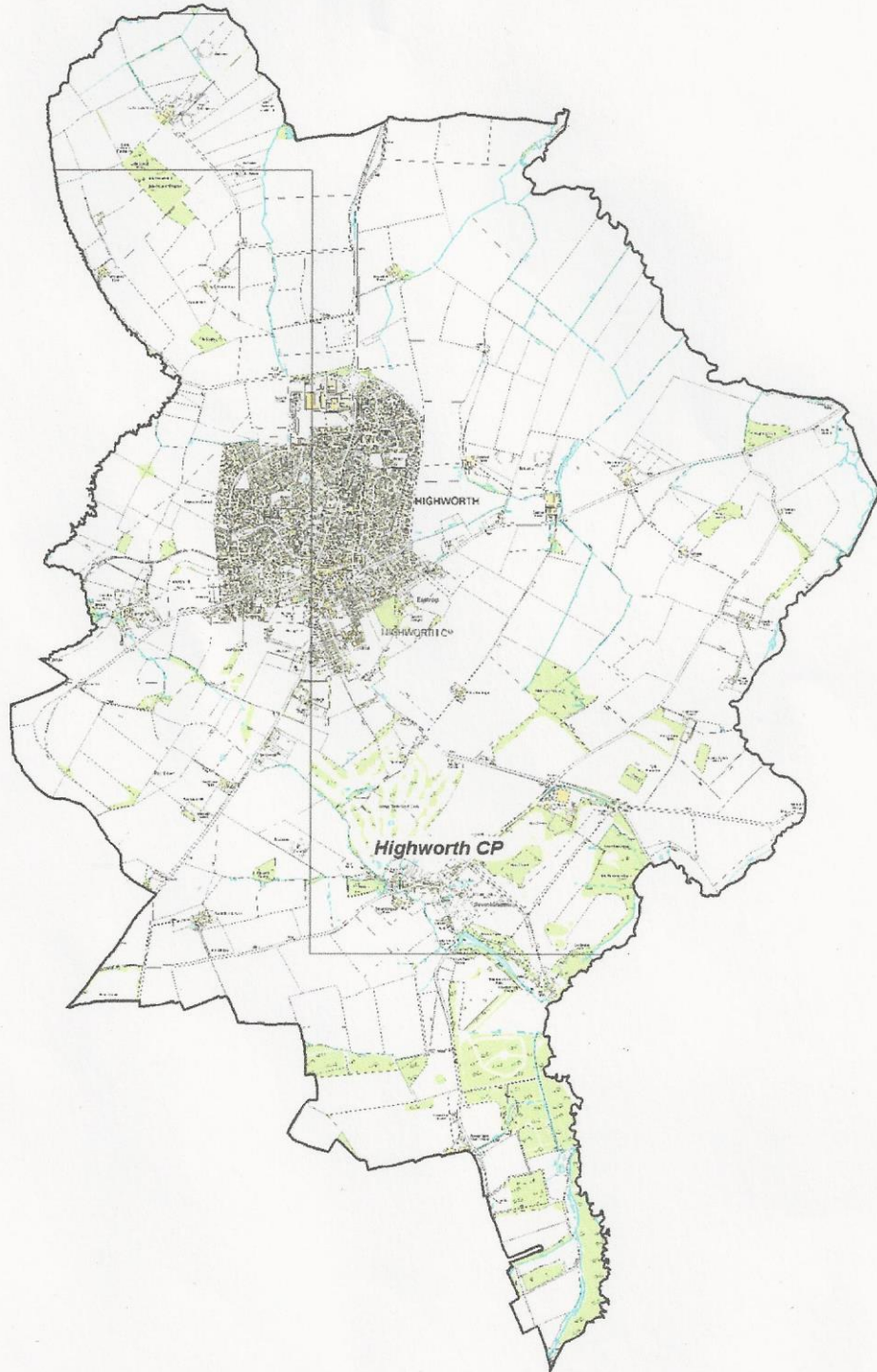
2015-2026 Final Version March 2017



HIGHWORTH GROUP
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

LB planning

The Parish of Highworth



©Crown Copyright all rights reserved: Swindon Borough Council 10024296/2008

Neighbourhood Plan Area – Parish of Highworth

Contents

Plan of Neighbourhood Plan Area	2	
Index to Policies	4	
1. Neighbourhood Planning an Introduction.....	5	
2. Highworth – A town with a past and a future	7	
3. A Vision for Highworth	11	
4. Policies for the Plan	13	
Housing	13	Policies 1 - 3
Economic Development.....	17	Policies 4 - 5
Transport	22	Policies 6 - 7
Arts and Culture.....	29	Policy 8
Environment	34	Policies 9-13
5. Appendices:		
Appendix 1 Development Briefs.....	50	
Appendix 2 Glossary.....	57	
Appendix 3 Local Community Groups.....	58	
Appendix 4 Swindon Borough Local Plan Policies.....	59	

All aerial photos are images from Google maps and copyright protected.

Acknowledgement - The Council would like to thank everyone who has made a contribution to this document, including all those who took part in the consultations.

Index to Policies

Policy 1: Housing Provision

Policy 2: Shared Ownership Affordable Housing

Policy 3: Development and the Rural Settlement Boundary

Policy 4: Town Centre

Policy 5: Proposals for Daytime Cafes and Restaurant Uses (A3) in the Primary Rural Centre

Policy 6: Rights of Way Network

Policy 7: Potential Cycle and Recreational Routes

Policy 8: Maintaining and Enhancing Community Facilities

Policy 9: Local Green Spaces

Policy 10: Open Space

Policy 11: Protection of Trees and Hedgerows

Policy 12: Local Wildlife and Biodiversity

Policy 13: Locally-Responsive Design

1. Background to this Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 Highworth's Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by Highworth Town Council in conjunction with Highworth Community Partnership Group (HCPG) who produced the original plan 'Highworth: The Vision'. It includes the hamlets of Sevenhampton and Hampton.

1.2 This plan aims to set out how Highworth can develop in a sustainable way, whilst meeting the desires and aspirations of local residents. The policies and objectives within the plan have come from the ideas, views and opinions of Highworth residents and businesses who have engaged in the consultation events that have been held over the last 3 years.

1.3 Whilst the intention of Neighbourhood Plans is to give local people the opportunity to decide the future of their neighbourhood, there are important legal requirements in the Planning Acts and Neighbourhood Planning regulations. One of these is that all Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with higher level local planning policies and government policy generally. For the Highworth Neighbourhood Plan the planning policy documents that are particularly relevant are the National Planning Policy Framework (referred to throughout as the NPPF) and Swindon Borough Council's recently adopted Swindon Local Plan 2026.

1.4. The objectives and policies which form Highworth's Neighbourhood Plan have taken into account the requirements of the NPPF and the Swindon Local Plan. The Basic Conditions Statement will set out how the plan complies with this higher level planning policy.

1.5 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Plan was not required, a screening opinion was produced by Swindon Borough Council and the decision that SEA was not needed was agreed by the relevant national bodies: Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

1.6 After this current consultation on the draft plan (required by Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012), a Consultation Statement will be prepared. This will set out the consultations that have been undertaken during the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan and report on the current 'Reg14' Consultation. The Report will note all comments received from residents, local businesses and other organisations, and will detail the response to them, and whether the draft Plan needs to be altered as a result.

1.7 A revised document, together with other required information will then be submitted to Swindon BC as the Local Planning Authority (LPA). They do their own six week publicity and arrange for the Plan to be independently examined. If the Examiner recommends that the plan meets the Basic Conditions then the Plan, as approved by the LPA, will go forward to a referendum. If there is a vote of more than 50% in favour of the plan it then becomes part of the formal Development Plan, along with the recently adopted Swindon Local Plan. There is a lot of work needed, but the final legal status of the Plan makes it worth it!

1.8 A key objective is to ensure that the ambitions of the Neighbourhood Plan are delivered and that mechanisms are in place to ensure this happens. Highworth Town Council and our partner organisation will review progress against the plan at least once every three years. If it is becoming

out of date, the option of amending it by redoing this process will be considered. There is currently no simpler way of modifying a made Plan unfortunately.

Key Policy Points from the Swindon Local Plan 2026 (see also Appendix 3 policies SD2 and RA1)

- The Vision for Highworth (Our Future Is In Our Hands) prepared by the Highworth Community Partnership Group in 2008, suggests that the economic development strategy for Highworth should seek to achieve “an appropriate balance between self-containment and openness to achieve economic viability”. To provide for future local employment opportunities approximately 5 hectares of land north of the existing Blackworth Industrial Estate is identified to provide an appropriate balance. To ensure that a range of job opportunities are provided for, the amount of B8 use Class is limited to no more than 50% of the allocation.
- New housing development should be at a scale to support the identity of Highworth as a hill-top settlement, and does not increase the level of out commuting, particularly by private car. However, a limited amount of additional housing is accepted to maintain the viability of Highworth, particularly the Town Centre. Highworth Town Centre is a small centre that suffers from a lack of ‘critical mass’ of shops sufficient to attract shoppers in significant numbers. New housing provision will increase the number of households in Highworth, which will help maintain the viability of shops. There is a pressing need to improve the pedestrian linkage between the Co-op store and Highworth Town Centre. The street frontage of the High Street should remain primarily for A1 use-class (retail) in line with Policy EC3.
- Pentylands Park is an important and cherished local amenity, with ambitions to designate it as a Country Park. It is therefore vital that it is safeguarded from development that would compromise its role and function.
- Opportunities should be sought from any future development to improve the key gateways to the Town Centre, particularly the Fox Roundabout.
- Highworth is one of only two Primary Rural Settlements outside Swindon.



Pump and Flowers in Gilberts Lane

2. Highworth – A town with a past and a future

2.1 Highworth is an ancient hilltop town that occupies a pre-eminent position above the Upper Thames valley, standing 133 metres (436 feet) above sea level. It is the highest town in Wiltshire. Archaeological evidence appears to suggest that Highworth has seen almost continuous occupation for 4000 years. Remains of the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman, Romano British, and Saxon have been found on and around its hill top. It is recorded in the Domesday Book. It made a brief appearance in the Civil War when the church was chosen as a Royalist stronghold. The church was attacked by Parliamentarians under Fairfax and forced to surrender. The scars from the cannon fire can still be seen today.

2.2 Highworth centre retains its great historical attraction and is designated a Conservation Area. The houses are mostly built of stone from local quarries with a sprinkling of elegant Georgian brick properties all centred around the church. John Betjeman, the one-time poet laureate, wrote that 'Highworth is extraordinary because it has more beautiful buildings than ugly ones', and 'I have never seen Highworth given due praise in guide books for what it is one of the most charming and unassuming country towns in the west of England', a description which we cannot better today.

2.3 The local Plan describes Highworth as a free standing settlement seven miles from Swindon, which retains a market town function within its catchment area. Highworth has a well-defined historic centre with a range of services and is surrounded by attractive countryside. In addition Highworth has a broad employment base that includes a business park at Blackworth Industrial Estate.

2.4 There are numerous stories, events and people that contribute to Highworth's unique and special character. There are too many to mention in detail in this document, but they include being a Cavalier stronghold during the Civil War, having a post mistress with a pivotal role in the British Resistance Movement during World War II, running the official Abba fan club from a house in Sheep Street, the mystery of the secret tunnels under the Market Place and not forgetting the many sightings of a ghostly monk!

2.5 Highworth is an example of a medieval planned town, with market place, main street and a church behind, laid out in a regular pattern. The property boundaries of the original burgage plots are still clearly fossilised in the modern property boundaries behind High Street and Sheep Street. Though the town's origins and basic layout are medieval, and many 16th and 17th century features survive, the town is most notable for its Queen Anne and Georgian buildings dating from the town's pre-eminence in the 18th century. There are no fewer than 84 listed buildings in the conservation area and the historic core remains remarkably unspoilt. Almost every building in the High Street, Market Place and Sheep Street area is listed. Most buildings date from the 18th century but many are based on earlier structures.

2.6 Understanding the demography of an area is a key step to designing strategies that are fit for purpose. Since 1974 when local government was re-organised, the administration of Highworth is now the responsibility of Swindon Borough Council. However, it is essential to understand the demographic differences that exist between Highworth and Swindon: Highworth is a small rural

market town, and Swindon is a large urban centre. At the last census in 2011, Highworth had a population of 8,259. In contrast, Swindon recorded a population of 209,156.

2.7 There is a significant difference in the age structure between Highworth and Swindon. In Highworth over 51% of the population is aged over 45, whereas in Swindon this is much lower at 39%. If Highworth follows the national trend for rural areas this difference will increase over time. See Figure 1 (*LSOA is a description of a census output area*).

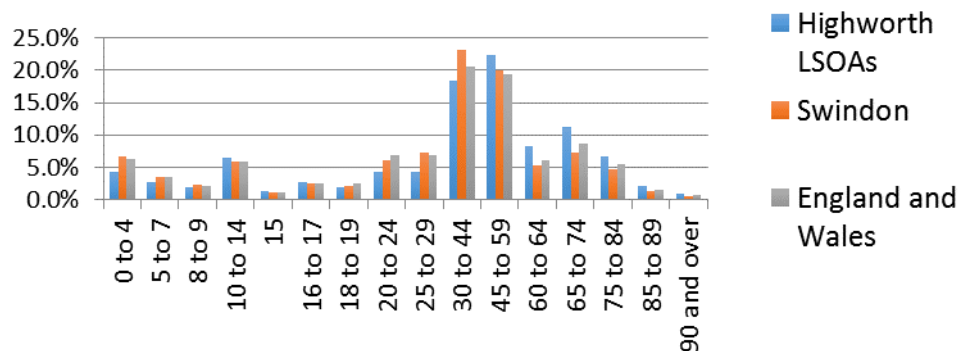


Figure 1: Age Structure (2011 Census)

2.8 At the 2011 census, 50% of the population of Highworth were economically active, with 0.7% registered as unemployed. The figures for Swindon Borough are 52.2% and 1.4% respectively. There is a significant difference between Highworth and Swindon regarding socio-economic classification, with 39% of economically active residents in Highworth in Managerial and Professional occupations, and 21% in Swindon, as shown in Figure 2.

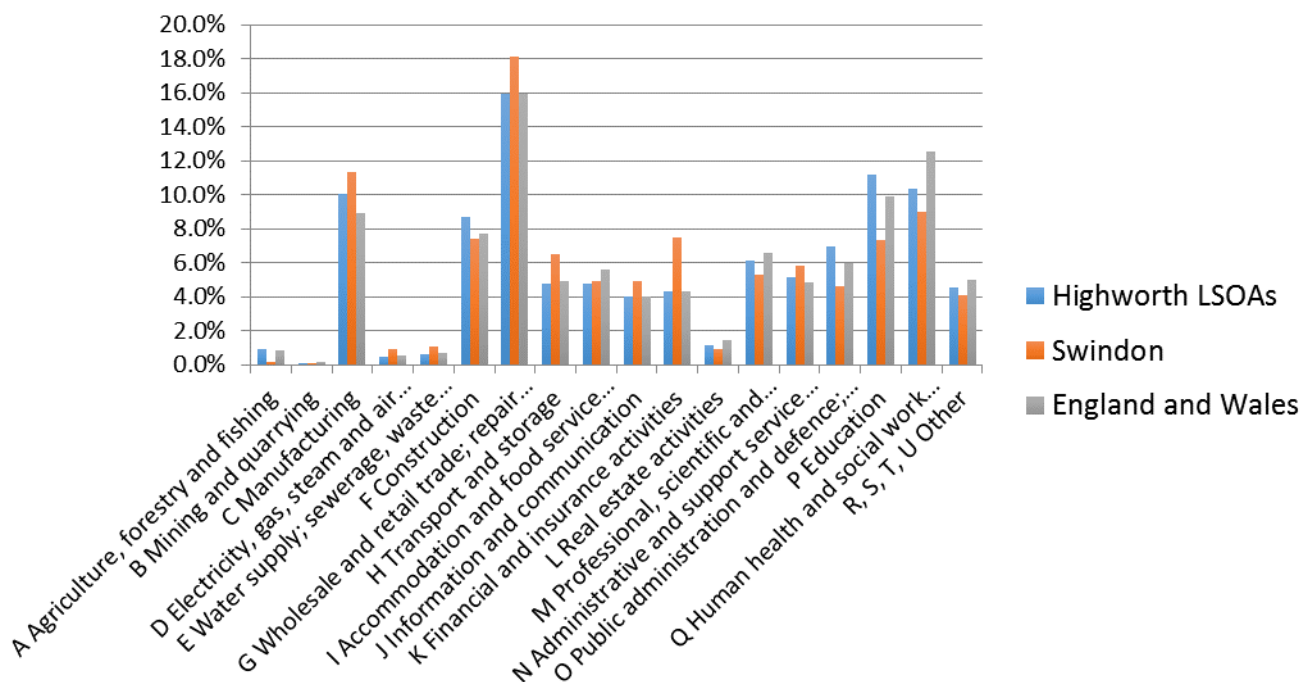


Figure 2: Industry worked in (2011 Census)

2.9 There are also differences in academic achievement between Highworth and Swindon, with Highworth having more people with higher qualifications. 26% of the population in Highworth have level 4 qualifications or above while in Swindon this figure is only 23% as shown in Figure 3.

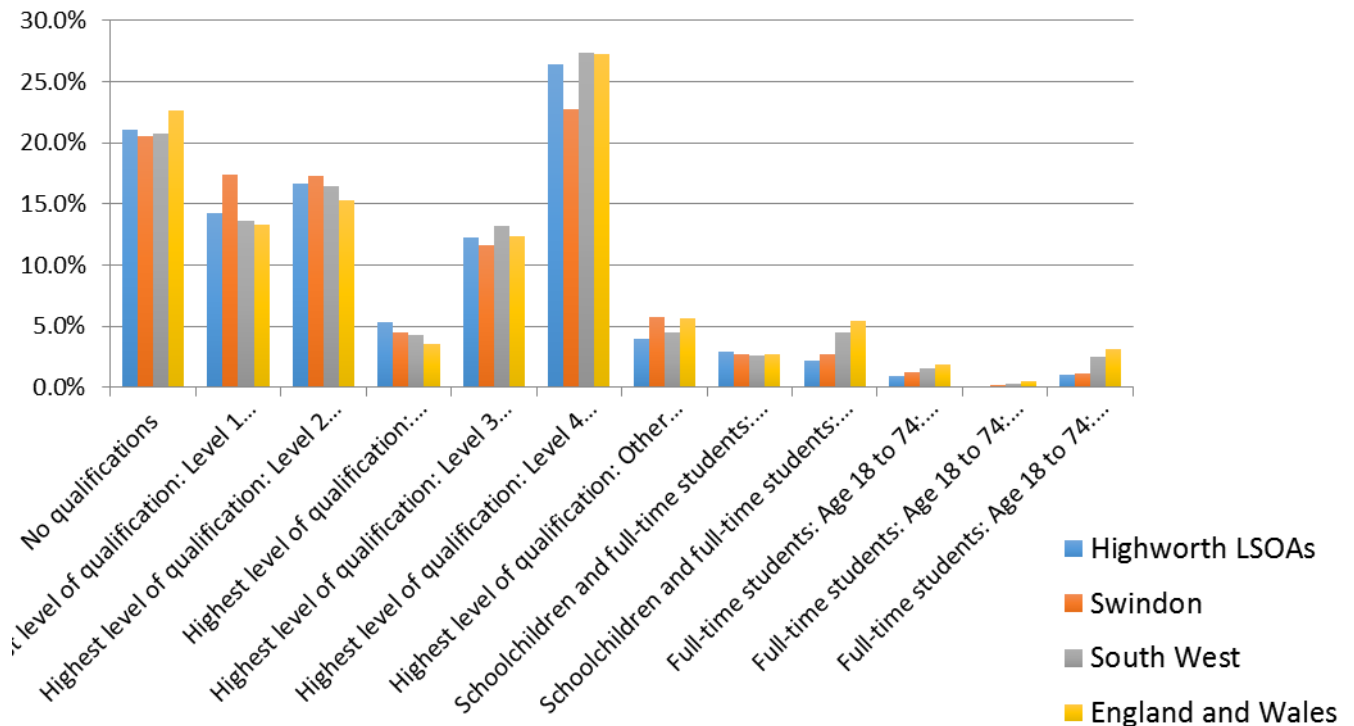


Fig 3: Qualifications and Students

Office for National Statistics 2011

2.10 Highworth is extremely fortunate that over the years a strong community spirit has been nurtured and encouraged. HCPG have been harnessing this energy and enthusiasm to turn The Vision and its aspirations into reality and what follows are some examples of Highworth's community in action.

2.11 Highworth Link is a monthly community magazine produced since 1972 by the churches of Highworth. It is financed entirely from advertising and is delivered to every home and business in Highworth and surrounding villages, and has a circulation of about 7,000 copies. Link generates sufficient income to employ a part-time administrator and to finance full-colour printing, but all other tasks, including editing, production and distribution, are done entirely by volunteers. There are about 20 frequent contributors and more than 100 people involved in the distribution.

2.12 The Highworth and District Lions Club have provided a community mini bus for Highworth for a number of years. They run a charity shop which produces a healthy profit which is used towards the purchase and maintenance of the bus. Both the shop and the mini bus are run by volunteers.

2.13 In 2010 the Northview primary school closed. Swindon Borough Council asked residents whether they could make use of the premises. HCPG offered to undertake a viability study as to whether the building could be used as a community centre. After some research, Highworth Community Association, a charity, was set up to run the centre. In June 2011 the Community Centre was officially opened by Justin Tomlinson MP and has gone from strength to strength ever since. It has a regular weekly footfall of over 250 people.

2.14 The annual May Day Charter market was instituted by the Highworth Historical Society assisted by the Highworth Community Partnership Group (HCPG) in 2010. Now organised by HCPG, each year the market

has a different theme from Medieval to the sixties, from Elizabethan to the Space Age. It is now in its seventh year and becoming more popular than ever, with crowds approaching 2000.

2.15 Another aspiration in the Vision was to make the town more attractive, with a profusion of flowers. With the help of Highworth Community Partnership Group, a group of residents set up Highworth in Bloom. There are now flower boxes on nearly every street corner. With displays in the town centre and at the five entrances to the town.

2.16 The Highworth Festival is a great example of community involvement, being run every four years since 1972. Events are spread throughout the year, run by local organisations and culminate in the main Festival weekend in September. The festival weekend comprises various activities and events including a street market a procession and a Flower Festival in St Michael's Church.

2.17 A couple of residents wanted local independent shops to sell locally sourced produce. A local organic farmer wanted people to buy locally reared beef and locally produced milk. With the support of HCPG they joined the Totally Locally organisation, which locally had developed links with Highworth Action for Fair Trade. Together they are encouraging more businesses to source locally and offer incentives for residents to shop locally.

2.18 Swindon's Rural Area Strategy of 2009 states, 'In market towns there is a need to address the sustainable growth of communities through strategic vision and a master planning approach, with community involvement. In Swindon Borough this applies to Highworth, where the Community Partnership has produced its visioning document "Our Future is in Our Hands". The next stage, implementing the community's vision, faces the problem of tapping into the funding streams necessary to carry the vision forward. The residents of Highworth are still waiting for those funding streams to start flowing.



Old Station Sign outside the Community Centre

3. A Vision for Highworth

We see a future where everyone has the opportunity to live healthy and fulfilling lives, enjoying Highworth's rich cultural heritage and living in a safe, strong and supportive community. Highworth will become a sustainable community offering lifestyle and work opportunities in an attractive environment; meeting the needs of residents, business partners and visitors. We recognise the importance of attracting wealth into our community and forging a future where poverty and exclusion have been removed.

3.1 Highworth's vision was developed for Highworth The Vision 2008, and it is still relevant for our Neighbourhood Plan. The residents and businesses of Highworth have told us that they want the plan to shape development so that it:

- Meets local housing needs;
- Maintains the town's separate identity from Swindon;
- Retains the hill top nature of the town;
- Preserves the key features of the local landscape;
- Supports and enhances the local economy;
- Further improves the town centre and protects the Conservation Area;
- Provides safe routes for walking and cycling;
- Ensures the infrastructure can sustain the increases in population;
- Protects Highworth's heritage.

3.2 The objectives to guide planning for Highworth over the next ten years have been developed from these aspirations, and relate back to the Aspirations and Objectives in the Vision where those have a land-use focus. They are presented under the five themes of:

Housing

Economic Development

Transport

Arts and Culture

Environment

The Community's Objectives for the Future

Housing

Meet the strategic housing requirement of the Local Plan in a way that benefits the town.

Provide a mix of housing to meet local need as evidenced at the time.

Promote shared ownership schemes as part of the affordable housing provision.

Economic Development

Sustainable business: Encourage economic development in Highworth to be sustainable.

Town Centre: Rejuvenate the town centre to create a lively, thriving and attractive focus for the town.

Tourism: Promote and develop the tourism industry and visitor facilities within Highworth.

Business development: Support and encourage existing businesses including home-working, while attracting new companies into the area.

Transport

Traffic Management: Promote traffic and road solutions that meets current needs and plans for the future.

Sustainable Mobility: A town in which people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

Protect and extend the Rights of Way and off-road Cycle routes to promote informal recreation and access to the countryside, sustainable travel and tourism.

Arts and Culture

Protect Community buildings, resist the loss of community facilities and extend and improve facilities where possible.

Use development contributions to fund Community projects and infrastructure.

Protect buildings and features of local historic interest to preserve the rich and unique cultural heritage of Highworth.

Environment

Promote good design in the built environment.

Protect open space, sport and recreation facilities and designate Local Green Spaces where appropriate.

Promote biodiversity and protect and preserve local wildlife sites.

4. Policies for the Plan

4.1 Housing

Objectives

Meet the strategic housing requirement of the Local Plan in a way that benefits the town.

Provide a mix of housing to meet local need as evidenced at the time.

Promote shared ownership schemes as part of the affordable housing provision.

4.1.1 Swindon Borough Council's Local Plan 2026 (SBLP) was adopted in early 2015. It indicates in Policy SD2 a minimum of 200 houses should be provided in Highworth during the plan period. Planning permissions and recent completions have accounted for 88 of these homes already, and this plan is therefore allocating residential development sites for a minimum of 112 further homes.

4.1.2 A site allocations exercise including consultation with residents has informed the allocations in this plan, and is detailed in a separate evidence document "Site Appraisal and Selection Highworth". Appendix 1 reproduces the development briefs for the allocated sites from this document.

4.1.3 There are particular issues which may constrain development on the allocated site at Crane Furlong, as explained in Appendix 1. This will necessitate close monitoring in the early stages of the Plan to ensure that a level of development can be achieved which meets the housing targets in the 2026(SBLP).

Policy 1 – Housing Provision

Land at Crane Furlong and Redlands, as shown on Figure 5, is allocated for residential development. Development on these sites should take into account the guidance in the development briefs in Appendix 1 of this Plan.

Proposals on these sites shall provide a mix of dwelling types for both affordable and open market dwellings to conform to the current evidenced housing need in Highworth in the briefs in Appendix 1 or the latest available survey.

Residential development will be allowed on other sites within the settlement boundary in accordance with policy 3, below, and other policies in this Plan and the SBLP 2026.

The Plan shall be monitored every three years by the Town Council in consultation with Swindon Borough Council with respect to the housing allocations and the ability to meet the Plan's housing targets, in a reasonable and consistent manner, through the Plan period.

In the event that within 3 years of the date this Plan is made, it is not proven, by the grant of planning permission that the site at Crane Furlong is able to deliver the requisite number of dwellings to meet objectively assessed housing supply targets for the Plan area, the Plan shall be updated to demonstrate how the housing targets for the Plan area can be met.

Criteria	Number of households	Criteria (same applicants)	Number of households
Applicants for shared ownership properties in Highworth	8	Desired property is a house with 2 bedrooms	4
Applicants for affordable housing, including shared ownership option, in Highworth.	2	Desired property is a house with 3 bedrooms	6

Source: 'Help to Buy South' email April 2015 (*columns add vertically only*).

Table 1: Applicants interested in Shared Ownership Housing in Highworth

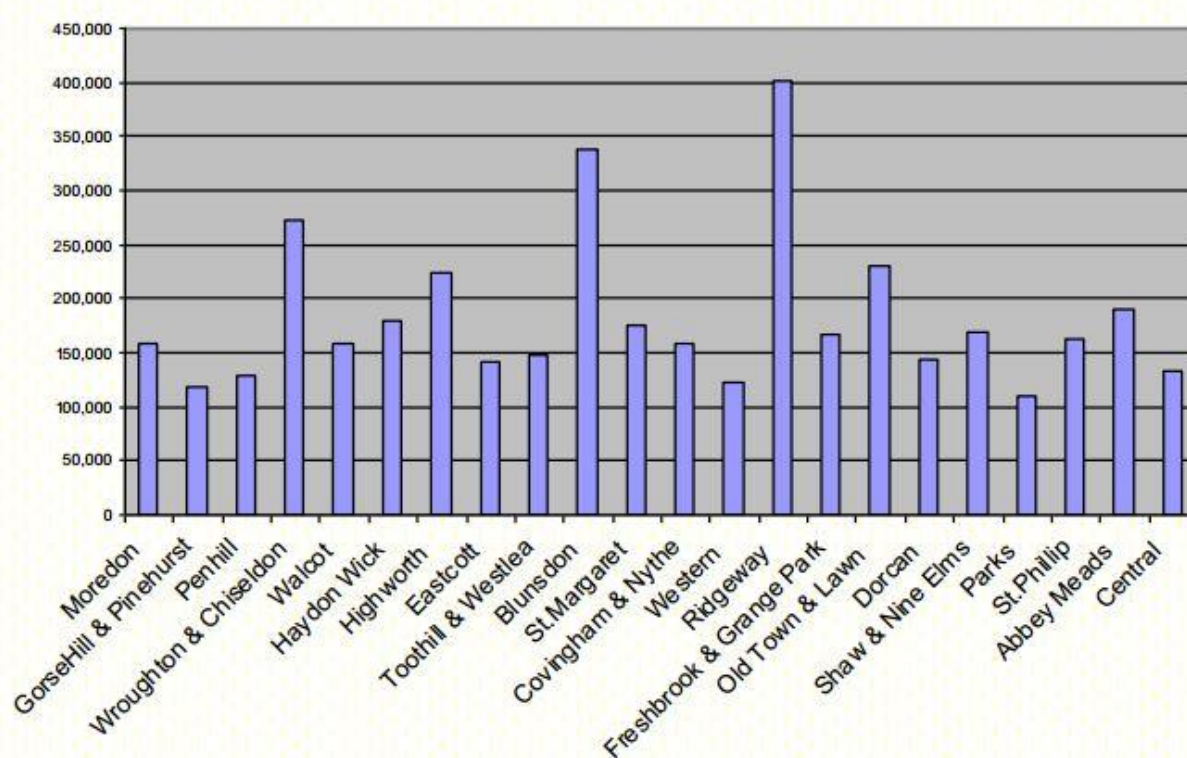


Figure 4: Average House Prices in Swindon Wards 2011

source: Hometrack

4.1.4 The SBLP 2026 policy HA2 states that on all developments of 15 homes or more, or on sites larger than 0.5 hectares, and subject to economic viability assessment, a target of 30% affordable homes should be provided on-site. Where it can be robustly demonstrated that on-site provision is not suitable, a proportionate contribution should be provided towards affordable homes offsite. Policy HA2 also requires that the affordable housing shall be of a mix and tenure that reflects local need.

4.1.5 Affordable housing, of which shared ownership is one type, is also generally in high demand in Highworth. It is expected that around 70% of affordable housing will be available to rent in line with the evidenced need (SBC Housing Department August 2016).

4.1.6 Evidence of housing need shows a demand in Highworth for shared ownership properties (table 1 above). This method of purchase, by allowing a part of the property to be bought and part rented, assists people into owner occupation who are unable to afford the full market price of a dwelling. The cost of housing in Highworth is above average for Swindon Borough, as figure 4

shows, and has risen more since 2001. Fourteen shared ownership properties were built in Swindon in the last financial year under the government “Help to Buy” scheme (Help to Buy South Report 2016). In accordance with SBLP Policy HA2 shared ownership housing is required in the Plan area which meets the evidenced demand. The current figures indicate that 30% of affordable housing is suitable for shared ownership and that 2 and 3 bedroomed houses are the priority.

Policy 2 - Shared Ownership Affordable Housing

When affordable housing is required under Swindon Borough Council’s Local Plan 2026, Policy HA2, shared ownership housing shall be provided as part of the affordable housing provision in accordance with the evidenced demand at the time.

Development and the Rural Settlement Boundary

4.1.7 The settlement boundary defines the policy differentiation in the SBLP 2026 between the ability to carry out certain forms of infill within the settlement whilst complying with policies relating to the rural countryside outside of the settlement. Policy SBLP SD2 is the main reference in these respects, although there are other relevant policies relating to specific development types.

4.1.8 Highworth’s hill top settlement setting requires a boundary setting for the town that will protect this iconic view from outside of the town, as well as setting limits to development in the lifetime of this neighborhood plan (HNP). The SBLP shows rural settlement boundaries as first set in the previous Swindon Local Plan. The HNP has allocated sites for residential development in line with policy SD2 of the SBLP, but these sites are outside of the settlement boundary as it was not possible to identify enough development land within it. Thus the HNP has set a new settlement boundary, based on the review work that has informed the Local Plan boundary and the evidence from consideration of shortlisted sites in the site selection process. The new boundary is thus based on the previous boundary but includes the allocated sites in Policy 1 and significant development which has occurred since the original boundary was drawn up, specifically the Pentylands development. It also now excludes sites within the settlement that would not be suitable for infill development, such as defined Open Space and industrial areas.

4.1.9 The survey work that informed the important views work for Policy 17 (page) has also informed the defined extent of the visually sensitive settlement boundary in Figure 5. Policy EN5 in the SBLP requires the intrinsic character of the borough’s landscape to be protected, conserved and enhanced. The Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Landscape Character Areas undertaken by the Borough Council in 2004, identified Highworth as bounding the Thames Valley Area, and noted that extensive views of the town could be taken from the Valley. To the south Highworth sits at the cusp of the Mid Vale Ridge Character Area, an area also noted for its views across the Thames Valley. The visual survey of important views and definition of particularly sensitive sections of the settlement boundary adds local detail to this requirement. This should not be seen to distract from the generally visually sensitive nature of the entire boundary with regard to the hill-top setting.

Policy 3 - Development and the Rural Settlement Boundary

Land enclosed within the red outline shown on Figure 5 is defined as the settlement of Highworth. Within this defined area infill and other development consistent with planning policy in the development plan will normally be acceptable. Outside the defined settlement boundary land is defined as 'open countryside' and development here will not normally be permitted unless it complies with rural development policies in the Swindon Development Plan.

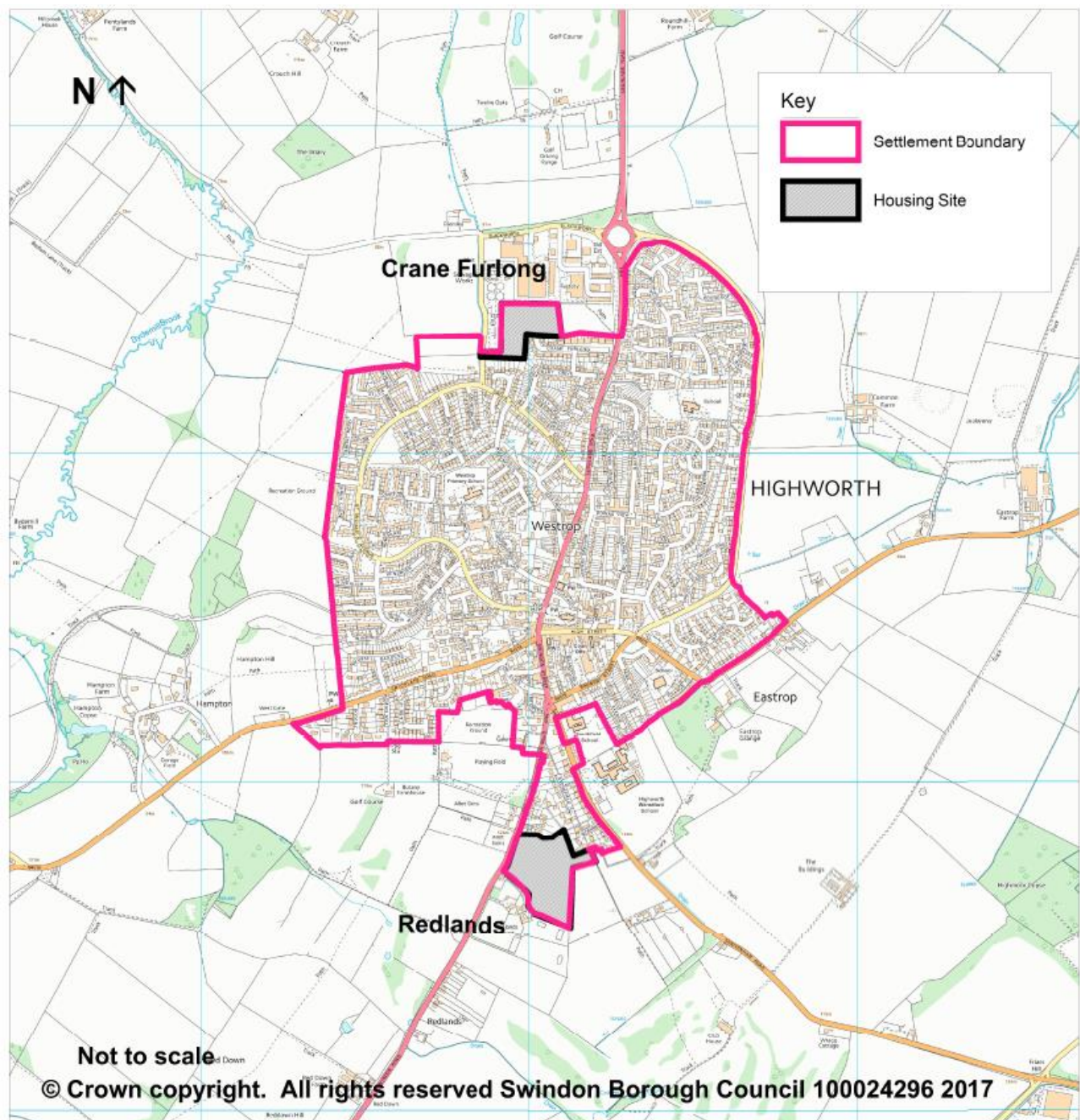


Figure 5: Highworth Allocated Housing Sites and Settlement Boundary.



View of Highworth from the Thames Valley to the north

4.2 Economic Development

Objectives

Sustainable business: Encourage economic development in Highworth to be sustainable.

Town Centre: Rejuvenate the town centre to create a lively, thriving and attractive focus for the town.

Tourism: Promote and develop the tourism industry and visitor facilities within Highworth.

Business development: Support and encourage existing businesses including home-working, while attracting new companies into the area.

4.2 Economic Development

4.2.1 Since the publication of the Vision in 2008 the range of businesses in the High Street and Swindon Street has changed significantly, with the emphasis on the service industry. Whilst, the tourist office, the butchers, the Christian bookshop all remain along with the Indian restaurant, the Indian take-away the fish and chip shop and two solicitors offices, the remainder of the businesses are now either hairdressers, of which there are nine in the town centre, or estate agents, of which there are five. We do boast however of an award winning delicatessen. The bakers has closed and

re-opened as a café/restaurant. With closure of NatWest Bank and more recently the Post Office there has been a noticeable reduction in footfall on the High Street. Also over the past 8 years two of our well known hardware stores closed. Fortunately a new one opened and has proved very popular.

4.2.2 There are currently 3 vacant retail spaces on the High Street. The bank has been recently sold and is to be changed into a coffee shop with flats above. The new owner wants to remove the ugly aluminium windows and replace them with old style bay windows. They are working with the Highworth Historical Society in order to ensure authenticity. The Post Office closed in mid-2015 and moved into the Co-op. This building has been let, but it is unclear whether it will remain as a retail outlet or be converted into flats. The third, double fronted space has been redecorated and is advertised as a letting.

4.2.3 On the small Blackworth Industrial estate, there have also been a number of changes. TsTech, which manufactures car seats for the Honda factory 3 miles away, is by far the biggest employer, with over four hundred workers, only about 2% of who live in Highworth. In recent years it has gradually taken over several adjacent units to its main building.

4.2.4 Page 25 of 'The Vision' also makes the case for the promotion of home-working as a way to keep support for local shops strong. This Plan also promotes development that facilitates home working, either on residential properties or joint facilities.

4.2.5 **The Town Centre** is defined as a Primary Rural Centre in the Local Plan, Policy EC3, which requires 70% of frontages are A1 Retail use. While this requirement is supported, the town centre is also required to assist with the promotion of a tourism and visitor economy, and the Town Council hopes to commission a study to investigate options for the physical and economic regeneration of the Town Centre. Table 3 below shows the current situation with the frontages in the defined town centre retail area. A1 uses are only 40% of the total frontages, just under 50% of the total retail use frontages. The Town Centre is a long way from the 70% required by Policy EC3 of the Local Plan. Thus this plan promotes tourist and visitor facilities for economic reasons, as long as at least 50% of the retail frontages are A1 use. Enhancements sought by Policy 4 below will need to comply with Policy RA1 of the Local Plan.

Class	Total	Type and Number	Percentage (rounded)
A1	30	Retail outlets 14 Co-op Supermarket 1 Charity Shops 2 Hairdressers 9 Empty outlets 4	41%
A2	17	Estate Agents 6 Financial Services 4 Solicitors 2 Building Society 1 Bank 1 Recruiting Agency 1	23%

		Betting Shop	1	
		Empty Bank	1	
A3	4	Restaurants		5%
A4	4	Pubs and Bars		5%
A5	6	Takeaways		8%
B1	4	Offices (1 empty)		5%
C1	3	Hotels	2	4%
		B&B	1	
C2	1	Residential home		1%
D1	5	Public library	1	7%
		Physiotherapy	2	
		Dentists	1	
		Veterinary surgery	1	

Table 2: Frontages by Planning Use Class in Highworth Town Centre

Policy 4 – Town Centre

The town centre is defined as a Primary Rural Centre in the Local Plan (policy EC3) and the continuation and rejuvenation of its retail and social hub in the town is strongly supported. Traffic and other environmental improvements that enhance the pedestrian and visitor experience, commercial vitality and viability of the town centre will be sought.

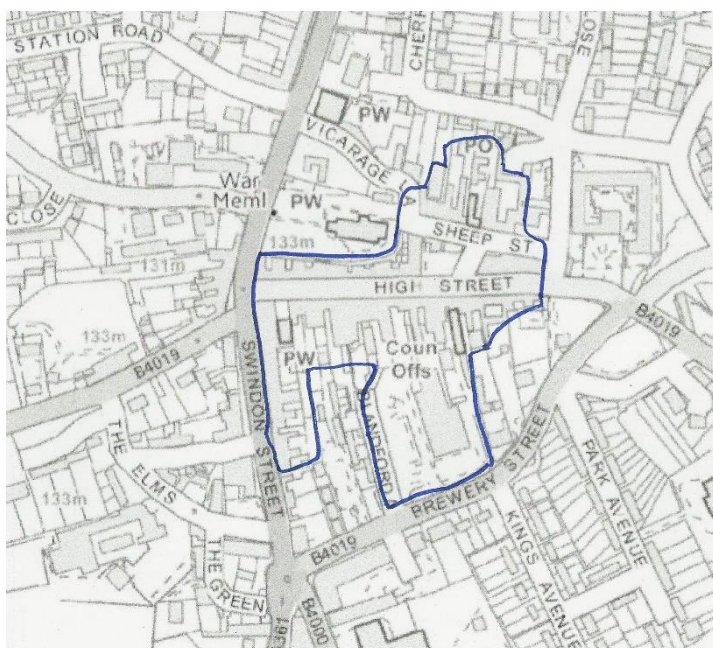


Figure 6: Primary Rural Centre - retail area (blue outline).

4.2.6 Tourism

Tourism is a major industry in England, and it is considered Highworth could be attracting more of this business. It has more listed buildings for its size than any other town in the borough, a commanding presence in its location and a pleasant historic centre that could be significantly enhanced with relatively low cost improvements to the public space. Policy 5 aims to promote the businesses that would attract more visitors, and this includes a more accommodating view of A3 daytime restaurant and café uses which are necessary to support tourism. Similar evening uses have less of a role in supporting tourists in the town which does not have a significant evening economy.

4.2.7 To date the promotion of tourism in the town still remains very much an aspiration. Although it is referred to in the Local Plan, (Policy RA1 – Highworth and Wroughton) no formal work has been undertaken. Informally, Highworth Community Partnership Group is the owner of Visit Highworth domain name. It has investigated, what is available in the town, it has encouraged the Historical Society to produce a Town Trail and it has highlighted the possibility of becoming a tourist hub, advertising destinations within 10, 50 and 100 mile radii of the town.

4.2.8 Ideally the town centre would comply with the 70% A1 retail frontages required by Local Plan policy E3. However, as shown in Table 3 above it is currently well below that level. While the Town Council will encourage an increase in the number of retail outlets in the town centre, proposals that would strengthen the tourist trade will also be encouraged. In this way increasing business for retail outlets may indirectly lead to an increase in A1 retail units.

4.2.9 Other proposals within the Primary Rural Centre and outside of it, which are tourist related, fall generally to be considered in relation to further policies in the SBLP 2026, in particular, Policies EC3: The role of the Centres and Main Town Centre Uses, RA1: Highworth, EC4: Conversions of Buildings to Employment Use in the Countryside and EC5: Farm Diversification.

Policy 5 - Proposals for Daytime Cafes and Restaurant Uses (A3) in the Primary Rural Centre
Within the defined Primary Rural Centre daytime A3 uses (restaurants and cafes) will be encouraged, provided that A1 retail uses occupy at least 51% of the street frontage.

4.2.10 Employment

Highworth is in the middle of a rich agricultural area and was once known for its wool and cheese, but now there are no traditional industries remaining in the town; and no modern alternatives have taken their place. Unlike other market towns in the Cotswolds, there is no 'tourism industry' in Highworth, despite its cultural heritage. There are known to be two hundred businesses which are listed with a Highworth address (M4 Business Resource), but no analysis has been conducted to establish the nature of these enterprises.

4.2.11 There is an Industrial park on the outskirts of the town (the Blackworth Industrial Estate) that has 32 small units and 9 larger industrial units, however there are no business premises for non-industrial business activities in the town. The Blackworth Industrial Estate is protected for

industrial use by Policy EC2 of the SBLP, and land has been allocated to the north of it for an extension of the Industrial uses (Policy RA1).

4.2.12 Highworth is considered to be a dormitory town, and this is confirmed by the self-containment percentage for Highworth, i.e. the percentage of residents who live and work in the same town. This figure of 13.2% of working residents who live and work in the town is extremely low compared with other towns in the area. This has huge implications for Highworth's economy, with over 85% of working adults having the option to conduct their personal business in the vicinity of their workplace, rather than in Highworth. It also has a wider implication for communication within the town; the traditional word of mouth, posters on notice boards and pick-up leaflets will not reach the commuters, creating a large 'hard to reach' group within the community.

4.2.13 Currently Highworth has very few facilities to encourage the virtual commuter and homeworking: there are no serviced offices or business suites for rental and limited access to shared office equipment such as fax, photocopying, mail boxes etc. There are also very few, if any, business networking groups in Highworth that are open to all, and unusually for a market town there is no Chamber of Commerce. The town centre also suffers from poor mobile signals from all the major companies and variable internet access.

4.2.14 In the 2007 public consultation 'encouraging more shops to open' was considered the most important priority. However this will need to be a carefully considered strategy – relying on footfall figures from local residents will not be sufficient as long as such a high percentage commute on a daily basis. However Highworth is geographically well positioned to attract business from nearby urban settlements and rural hinterland – if it can find niche markets in which it can succeed. More traditional retail outlets may be able to flourish on the trade brought in by the specialist enterprises.

4.2.15 Key Services as referred to in Policy 6 below are those that promote health, education, leisure and community activity. Highworth Westrop Surgery has recently received a 'good' inspection report from Care Quality Commission, but it is struggling to cope with an ever increasing workload. Whilst our infant and primary school have viable numbers of children, there are insufficient secondary aged pupils to fill the school and it relies on pupils from outlying areas. It is fortunate that it is an excellent and popular school. Whilst Highworth currently has good leisure facilities for a small town, they are currently going through transition – as Swindon Borough Council divests itself of leisure infrastructure.

4.2.16 This plan supports the policies in the SBLP 2026 which are concerned to develop the town as a sustainable community offering economic opportunities and levels of community infrastructure and social capital to ensure it continues as an attractive place to live for new and existing residents. The Town Council will support proposals which conform to SBLP policies concerned with delivering sustainable economic growth. These are:

- EC1: Economic Growth through Existing Business and Inward Investment
- EC2: Employment Land and Premises (B Use Classes)
- EC3: The Role of the Centres and Main Town Centre Uses

EC4: Conversions of Buildings to Employment Use in the Countryside

EC5: Farm Diversification

The Town Council is particularly keen to promote employment opportunities on mixed-use development sites, live-work units and homeworking. It also supports the extension and promotion of community and leisure facilities to provide employment and the setting up or improving of initiatives to develop skills and employment opportunities. Opportunities for employment which enhance the town and prevent the loss of key services will be encouraged.



Shopping and Market Stalls in the Town Square

4.3 Transport

Objectives

Traffic Management: Promote traffic and road solutions that meet current needs and plans for the future.

Sustainable Mobility: A town in which people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

Protect and extend the Rights of Way and off-road Cycle routes to promote informal recreation and access to the countryside, sustainable travel and tourism.

4.3.1. The future economic viability of Highworth will be dependent on an efficient transport system, both in terms of transporting people, goods and services but also to reduce the 'carbon footprint'. Although a complete traffic survey for Highworth has not yet been undertaken it is

possible to build a picture of the traffic problems in the town by extracting data from the 2011 census (figure 7). The data on Travel to Work paints an interesting picture for Highworth – one that will need to be radically changed if it is to become a sustainable community. Most people use private vehicles to travel to work, and only a small percentage (under 5%) are passengers.

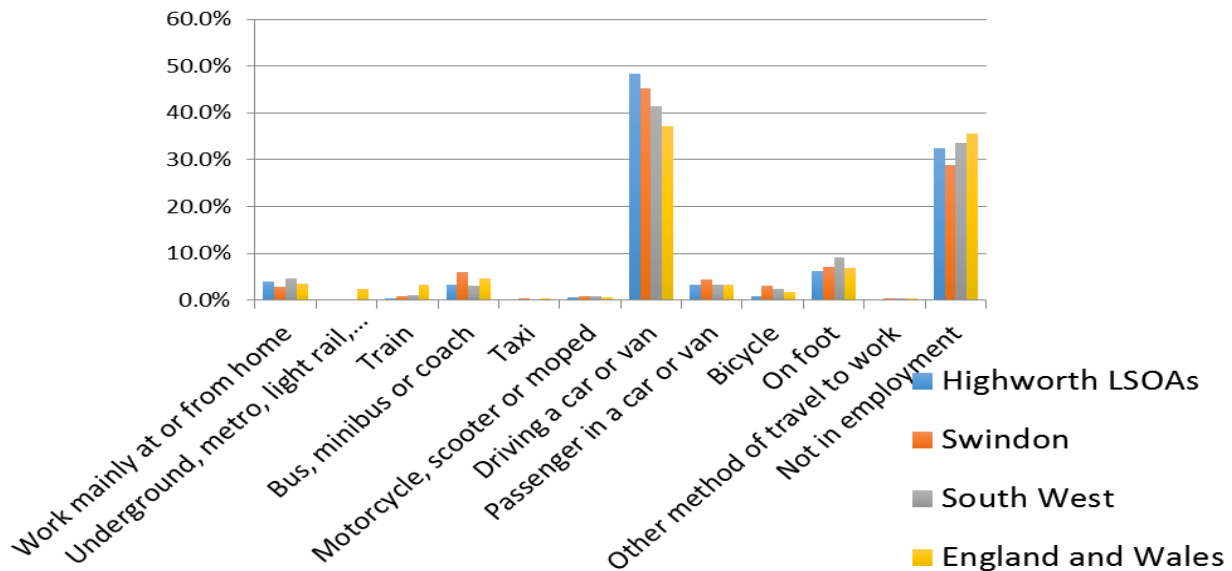


Figure 7: Travel to Work (2011 Census)

4.3.2 It is also important to study the destination location of commuters from Highworth, (Figure 8), which reveals why such a high percentage of people use their cars. Unless the 2,128 people that work in Swindon work close to the main Highworth to Swindon bus route, it is unlikely they will choose to travel by bus due to the inconvenience of changing buses. All other work destinations are not on direct public transport routes and are too far to cycle or walk, meaning that 925 people, i.e. 30% of all workers from Highworth, need to rely on private vehicles to get to work.

4.3.3 Highworth does not have a railway station – public passenger services were withdrawn in February 1953 from the Highworth Branch (formerly the Swindon & Highworth Light Railway), and the line completely shut in 1962. As a result, commuters to destinations such as Bristol, Bath, Reading, London, Didcot and Oxford which are all on train routes, are unlikely to add to an already long journey by using the public bus service to get to the train station in Swindon.

Place of work by Local Authority	Highworth
Swindon	2,128
Vale of White Horse	336
Wiltshire	177
Cotswold	155
West Oxfordshire	96
Oxford	53
West Berkshire	48
Winchester	26
South Oxfordshire	17
South Gloucestershire	17

Figure 8: Destination Location of Highworth Working Population (2011) Office for National Statistics, 2011

4.3.4 The 3,053 people who drive to work will all need to drive through Highworth to get to one of the five external roads out of Highworth. Added to this are the commuters driving *through* Highworth to get to work, for example there are many servicemen regularly travelling from Lyneham to Brize Norton. In addition are people commuting *to* Highworth, as well those coming from other destinations. The majority of these are likely to be arriving by private vehicle.

4.3.5 There will be a number of factors affecting the high car ownership by residents of Highworth, and further research will be required to establish the complete picture. One aspect that could affect the use of cars is the public transport network. There is one bus route into Swindon, which means that anyone working in a part of Swindon not on the bus route will need to change buses at the main bus station. The bus service during office hours is very frequent, with buses every ten minutes and a journey time of thirty minutes. However the evening service is far less frequent with buses reducing to one an hour after 8pm, and it is impossible to use the bus service for an evening out at, for example, the Art Centre in Old Town, Swindon. The Commission for Rural Communities (2007) notes that the high level of car ownership in rural areas “strongly suggests that a lack of accessibility is making low income households in rural communities run a car when they might not if they lived in areas with better transport services.”

4.3.6 There are huge implications of an inadequate public transport system, and if Highworth is required to rely on Swindon for services, work and cultural activities, particularly those that occur out of traditional office hours, then the level of social exclusion for non-car owners will continue to be exacerbated. The Town Council therefore promotes the provision of infrastructure that facilitates sustainable and active travel modes to address this exclusion, as well as reduce the adverse effects of traffic such as greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, noise and danger. This is in line with policy TR2 in the Local Plan.

Transport and Traffic Management

4.3.7 We will work together with the Highway Authority, public transport providers, local schools and developers to develop a long term sustainable strategy for improvements to the highway network and the management of traffic in and around Highworth to reduce the impact of traffic on the community and environment by encouraging better access to and increased use of Public Transport; improving links within the existing built-up areas for walking and cycling and ensuring other vehicular traffic keeps to appropriate routes. We will endeavour to ensure that people with special needs and those using more vulnerable modes of transport are respected as well as encouraging 'safe routes to schools' schemes.

4.3.8 Consideration of the existing Rights of Way Network with walkers and cyclists identified the missing links and severance problems shown in figures 9 and 10. Where resources are identified for network improvements these problems should be a priority for improvements. Where development proposals impact on them then improvements to the Network should be required as part of any planning approval.

Policy 6 – Rights of Way Network

Development will be expected to protect and where appropriate extend and enhance the network of existing public rights of way in the Neighbourhood Plan Area as shown on Figures 9 and 10. Enhancement to include wherever possible making the paths accessible to those with special access needs and completing missing links in the network and severance due to traffic and other obstacles.

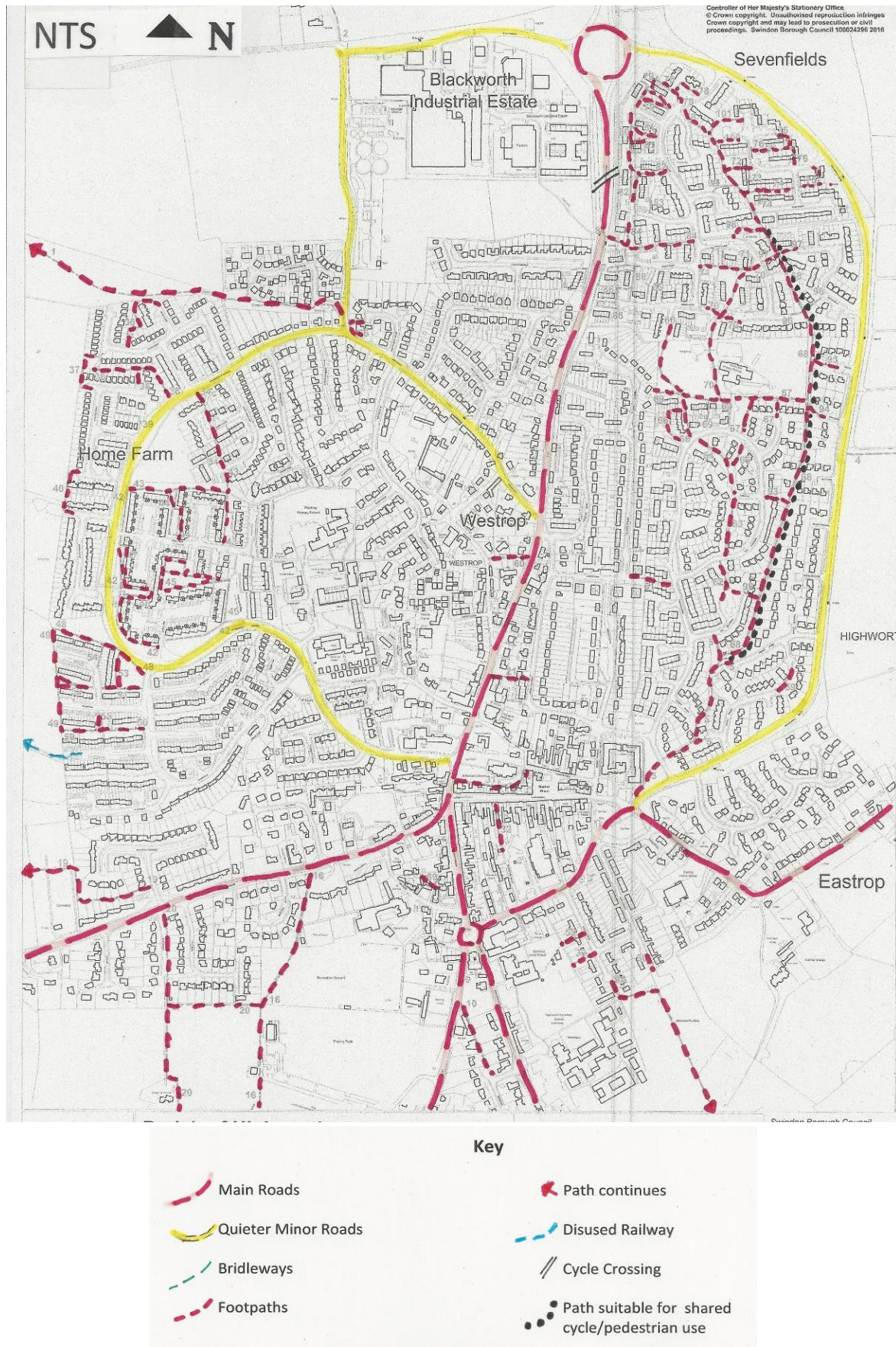


Figure 9: Rights of Way Network in Highworth Showing Improvement Opportunities

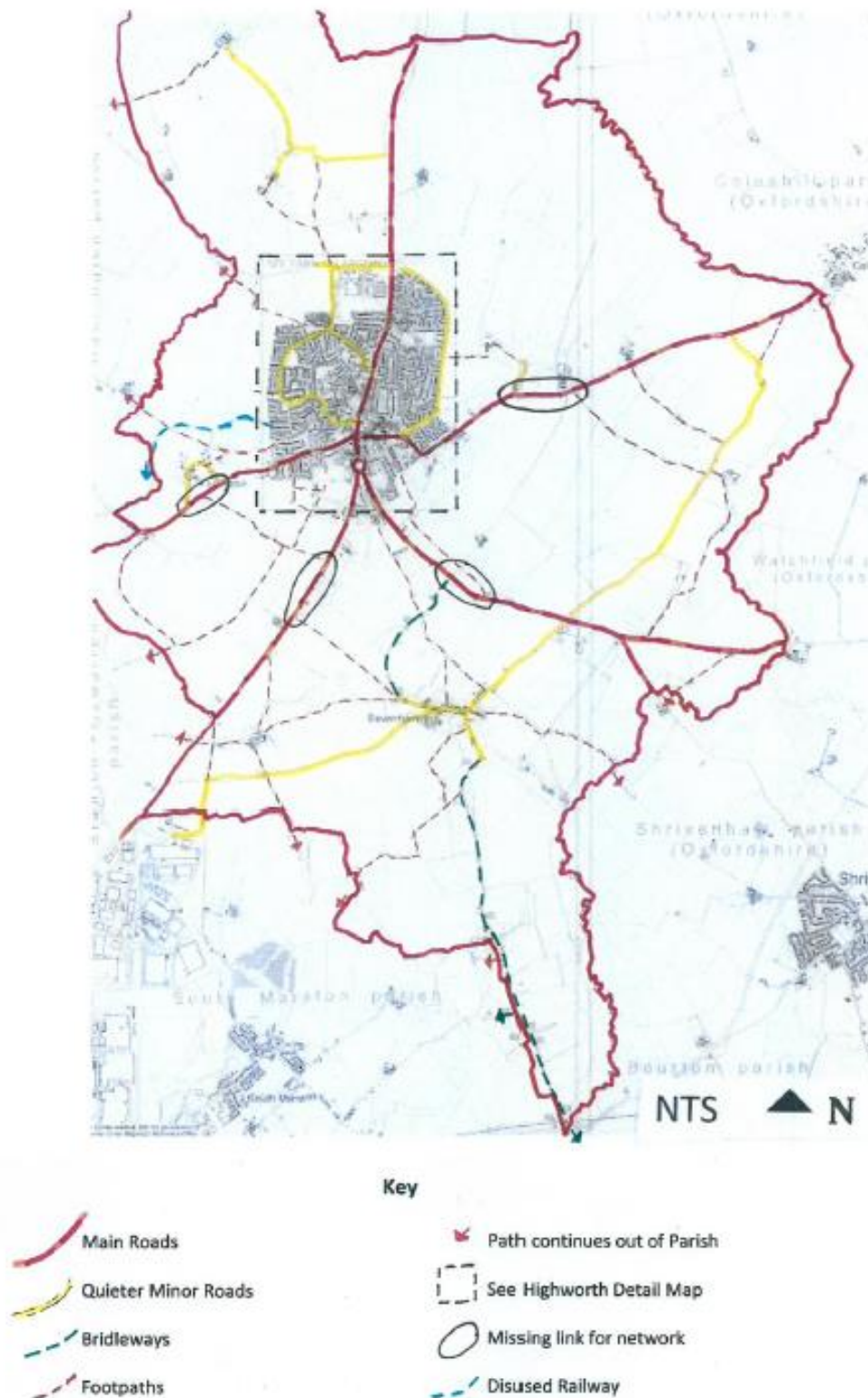


Figure 10: Rights of Way Network in Highworth Parish Showing Improvement Opportunities

4.3.9 The Swindon and Highworth Light Railway was affectionately known as the Highworth Bunk. It was first proposed in 1873 to provide a rail connection to the GWR in Swindon, to help revive Highworth's flagging cattle market and to connect the GWR to the East Gloucester Railway at Lechlade, although the latter was never realised.

4.3.10 The route was set out in 1874 and the Bill passed through the Houses of Commons and Lords in 1875. The construction was marred by a service of mishaps, not least the shortage of money. The first passenger train ran for invited guests in 1880, but the line failed the Board of Trade Inspection in 1881. In 1882 GWR bought out the shareholders and invested a further £18,000 into the operation bringing the total cost to £78,872. In 1883 the line was passed by the inspector and the first public train departed Highworth at 11.00am, 8th May 1883. As well as Highworth and Swindon stations there were three other stations at Hannington, Stanton Fitzwarren and Stratton. On 28th February 1953 the last public passenger train ran to Highworth. Workers trains continued until 3rd August 1962, when the line closed.

4.3.11 This disused railway line from Highworth to Swindon is an ideal safe route off the road. It offers the potential for an off-highway route for cyclists in particular to travel safely, both on commuting and leisure journeys. Although not currently available for development, it is considered important to safeguard the route in the event that any development proposal were to arise that potentially impacted on it.

4.3.12 Cycling has increased in popularity in recent years; children are looking to cycle to school and recreation grounds, adults would like safe cycle routes to work. The off road pathways in Highworth are many and it is recommended that they be considered as “shared paths” – dual use for pedestrians and cyclists. One such proposal is shown in Figure 9. There is, however, a lack of safe, accessible pathways/ tracks that lead to schools and The Rec in the centre of the town and new pathways would need to be constructed. The High Street, Brewery Street and Swindon Street triangle could be a one way system to create a safer town centre for cars, pedestrians and cyclists.

4.3.13 Local cyclists have identified a number of other routes that if implemented would greatly assist the promotion of this sustainable mode of travel. A key one is a safe alternative to travelling on the A361 Swindon Road, and thus this is specifically promoted in Policy 9 as well. Pathways could be constructed to the side of the road where wide grassed areas are accessible and available. This would be a more direct route to and from Swindon from Highworth, and would take cyclists onto Lechlade and the Cotswolds from Swindon.

Policy 7 – Potential Cycle and Recreational Routes

The disused railway shown as a potential railway path route on Figure 11 is to be protected within the neighbourhood plan boundary. Where a development proposal impacts on the route of the disused railway, upgrading of the surface and access will be required as part of that development proposal.

The provision of a safe cycle facility and route alongside the A361 is encouraged as and when funds are available to strengthen safe cycle routes into and around Highworth and improve sustainable travel access to the countryside. Development proposals on the A361 should facilitate and provide this route as appropriate.

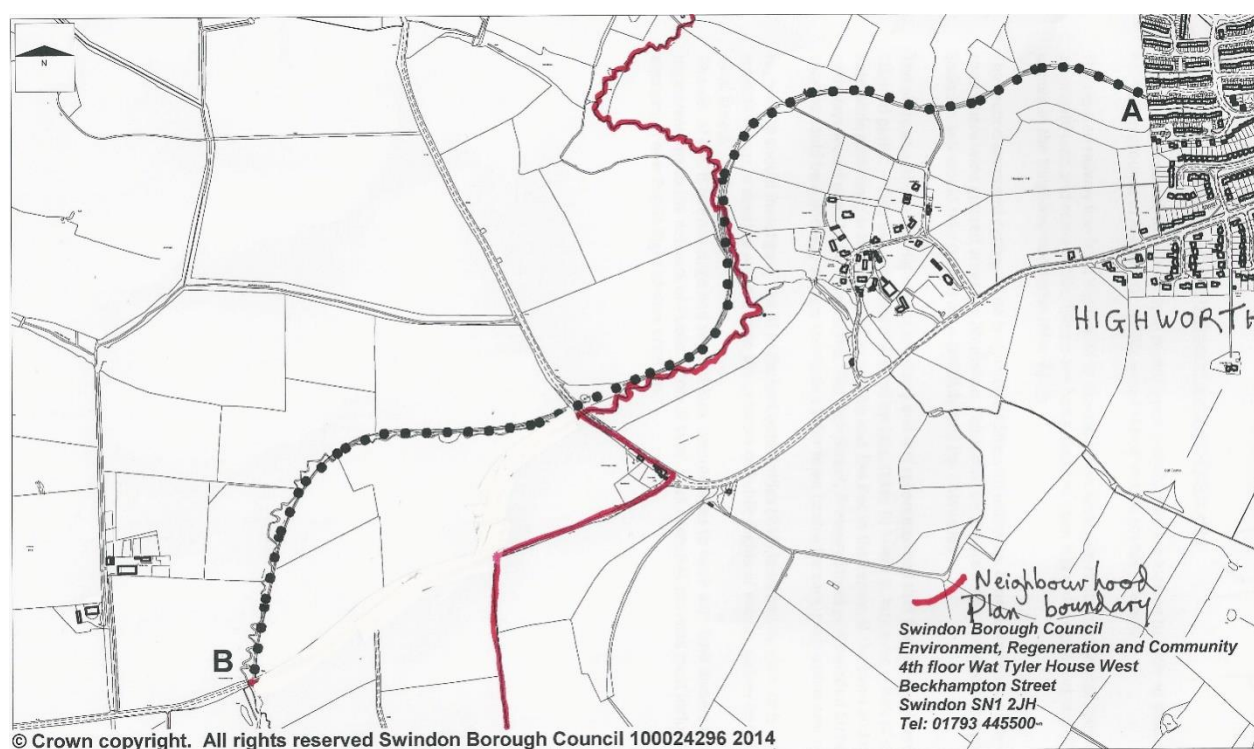


Figure 11: Route of the Disused Railway showing section within the Neighbourhood Plan

4.4 Arts and Culture

Objectives

Protect Community buildings, resist the loss of community facilities and extend and improve facilities where possible.

Use development contributions to fund Community projects and infrastructure.

Protect buildings and features of local historic interest to preserve the rich and unique cultural heritage of Highworth.

4.4.1 Highworth has a thriving network of local groups that need the existing community facilities to continue to flourish, as demonstrated by the list of them in Appendix 2. Whilst each community facility has its own set of clients many activities are replicated in each venue.

The Highworth Recreation Centre (The Rec) is used for most of the sporting activities in the town, with sports hall, gymnasium and swimming pool. It also has a community hall, which is used for classes such as Yoga, Zumba and keep fit. Outside there are tennis courts owned by Highworth Town Council and leased to the Tennis Club, plus football and cricket pitches.

Town Council Community Room is used for country markets, artist's society, St Johns Ambulance and birthday parties and is available for hire.

The Youth and Community Centre, which is in a sad state of repair, still has a few youth activities but these are greatly reduced due to major cuts in Youth Service funding. It also hosts clubs for senior citizens.

The Community Centre situated in a former primary school, has a wide range of activities and meetings including Rainbows and Brownies; a weekly playgroup, Yoga, Pilates, slimming groups, an artist group, a masonic lodge, amateur dramatics, table tennis club and dance groups. It has an Autistic Resource Centre for primary aged children during the week and a charity called Music Alive, which encourages people with disabilities to explore the world of music. The centre is open seven days a week and in all there are over 40 activities, with a footfall of around 250 people.

Highworth Churches Together Highworth boasts four churches, Anglican, Methodist, United Reformed and Community Church. As well as each having its own unique identity they function as a group called 'Highworth Churches Together'. Among other activities they produce the Highworth Link, a prize - winning community magazine, published 10 times a year and delivered to every home in the town and local villages, free of charge. They also work together in combatting poverty, deprivation and debt. Recently the churches have contributed to the new Nexus Youth Café Project. Church Halls also facilitate a wide range of activities including Highworth Film Society and a U3A petanque and Tai Chi group.

The Library is another major hub in the town. It is the fourth biggest library in Swindon. As well as its main function it hosts activities including Job Club, children's craft activities; adult colouring sessions, talks and computer training. It has a permanent exhibition space for Highworth Historical Society as well as display cabinets to promote the work of local artisans. It is supported by an active Friends of Highworth Library Group.

The Schools With one infant, two primary and a secondary school Highworth is well supplied. All of our schools perform well and are popular with parents. As well as producing high academic achievement they are delighted to share in community activities. All of them will share space with the community. The secondary school has recently built a new sports hall, dance studio and all - weather pitch, all of which are used by the public during the evenings and week-ends. The school also boasts an impressive Big Band that often performs locally. All of our schools are a real asset to the town.

4.4.2 The SBLP 2026 Policy CM4 offers protection to community facilities which are viable and popular. Their loss is not allowed unless it can be proven they have been properly marketed for at least a year with no response and that an alternative facility exists nearby or the facility is no longer required. The Town Council is concerned to support this policy and has identified, in the Plan process, a list of local facilities to which the policy applies. This list is not exclusive but is referred to in the policy below.

Policy 8 - Maintaining and Enhancing Community Facilities

Proposals for new or extended community facilities and involving the loss of such facilities will be considered in relation to SBLP Policy CM4 and other relevant policies, including those in this Plan.

Local facilities to which this policy relates have been identified as follows. This list is not exclusive.

Highworth Recreation Centre

Town Council Offices

St Michael's Church Hall, old coach house.

St Michael's Hall, Paradise Path

Highworth Methodist Church

United Reformed Church

The Library

Highworth Community Centre

Youth and Community Centre

Development proposals to sustain or extend the viable use of existing community facilities and the development of new facilities will normally be supported if they comply with other policies in the development Plan.

Development proposals that will result in the loss, or significant reduction in the scale and value, of a community facility will not be permitted, unless alternative facilities of equal or better accessibility, size and suitability are provided. If it cannot be demonstrated that the operation of the asset is not in demand by the Community or no longer economically viable, and it has been marketed at a reasonable price for at least a year for that, or any other suitable community facility use and no interest in acquisition has been expressed, then alternatives may be considered.

4.4.3 Built Historic Heritage

4.4.3.1 Highworth has a long history of human occupation, and the Neighbourhood Plan Area has significant protected ancient monuments and areas of archaeological sensitivity. Policy EN10 in the SBLP provides protection for this prehistoric heritage, and protection of buildings nationally listed for their heritage value. There is also useful Supplementary Planning Guidance on Buildings of Significant Local Interest, although this would be strengthened if the Borough Council were able to implement the commitment in the SBLP (4.380) to draw up a local list of heritage assets. The Swindon Residential Design Guide 2016 is also an important reference point.

4.4.3.2 The HNP is concerned that buildings and features of more local interest are also offered protection for their historic and heritage value. Highworth has a lot of listed buildings for its size and Swindon BC's Conservation Area map shows buildings worthy of local recognition as 'Key building of interest', but there are plenty of other buildings of local note outside of the Conservation Area. The Town Council is concerned to ensure that all buildings which are considered as heritage assets are afforded protection from unsympathetic development proposals by close consideration in relation to policies in the NPPF (Section 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) and local policies as referred to above in paragraph 4.4.3.1.

4.4.3.3 Some of the more important buildings include The Church of St Michael and All Saints which is a grade one listed building dating back to the 13th Century. Including the church several other buildings are listed in Pevsner's 'The Buildings of England' (1951-74) including the hotel No 1 Westrop (formerly Jesmond House Hotel) and adjacent to it is Highworth House. In the High Street he mentions The United Reformed Church (formerly Zion Congregational Chapel). He describes Inigo House as the finest house in Highworth. It is early 18th century, four bays wide, three storeys high, with segment headed windows with aprons. It has a doorway with Corinthian pilasters and a broken-back segmental pediment. The King and Queen public house is another fine building; together with the Saracen's Head, next door to which is the Manor House, which has been carefully restored and converted into 5 separate dwellings.



St Michaels Church

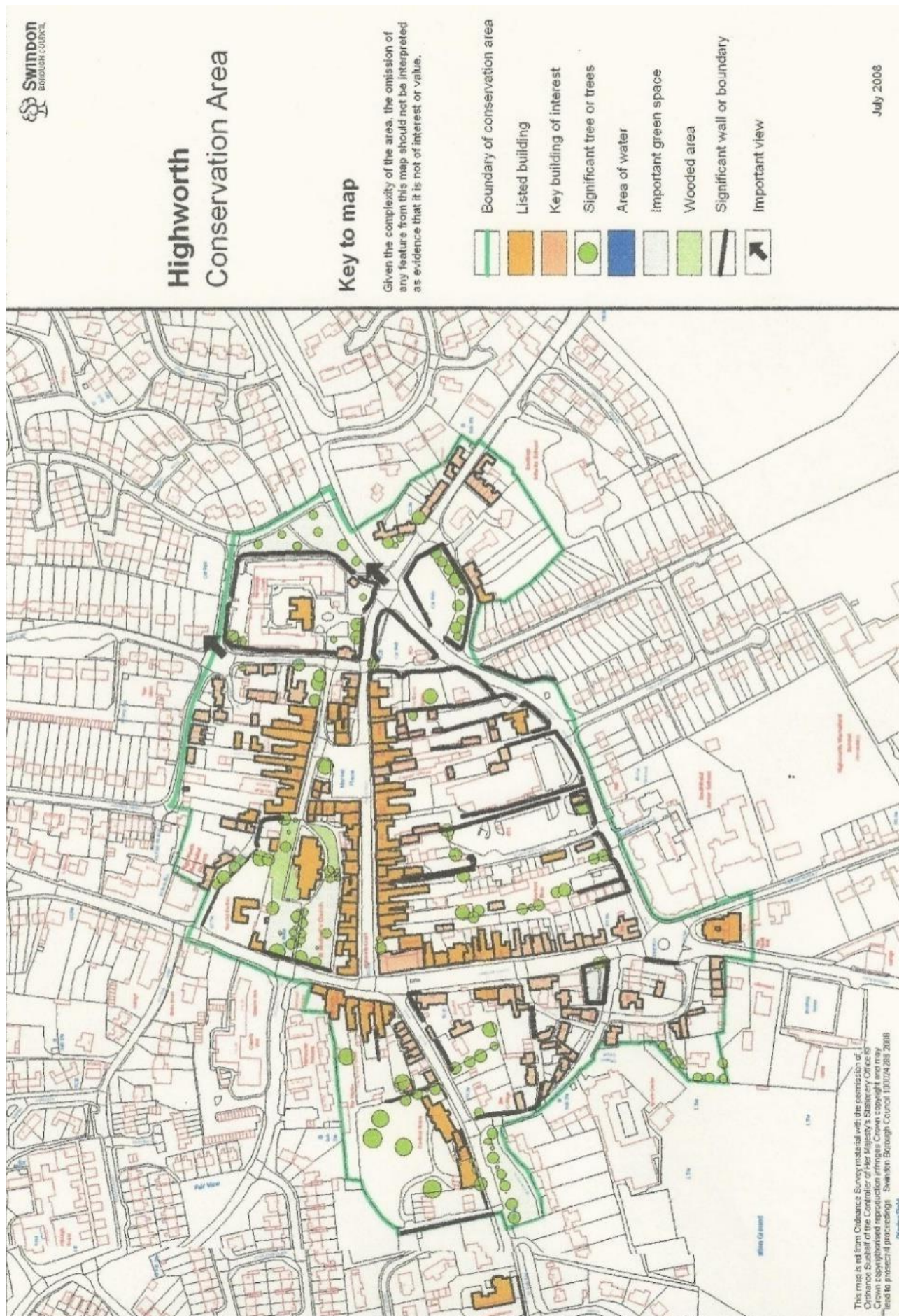


Figure 12: Highworth Conservation Area Map

4.4.4 Local Infrastructure Priorities

Although it is likely that priorities for development contributions received will change over time, it was felt useful to set out the current priorities as the Town Council and consultation process sees them. The Town Council can benefit from 25% of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arising from the development that takes place in the Plan area. Swindon BC has had an agreed CIL Strategy in place since 2015. This list is provisional and non-binding. Should finance become available, further consultation will be undertaken on project priorities and the nature of any works.

Community infrastructure priorities to be funded from Developer Contributions

Financial contributions received by the Town Council from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be allocated to community priorities agreed at the time and may include, but not exclusively, the projects listed below.

- Works required in relation to town centre regeneration.
- Public Lavatories
- Podium
- Fox Roundabout & Town Gardens improvements
- Cemetery Extension
- Swindon Street
- Environmental Improvements to Gilbert's Lane
- CCTV in the High Street.
- Cycle facilities
- Children's play areas
- Other open space improvements

4.5 Environment

Objectives

Promote good design in the built environment.

Protect open space, sport and recreation facilities and designate Local Green Spaces where appropriate.

Promote biodiversity and protect and preserve local wildlife sites.

4.5.1 Protecting biodiversity and providing a natural environment that is visually pleasing and accessible, offers health benefits for the local population and an attraction that can increase the visitor and tourist economy. Highworth overlooks the Thames valley with the Cotswolds Water Park close by, and is well placed to develop Green Infrastructure links to key recreational facilities and Swindon.

4.5.2 Within or adjacent to the urban area, the new designation of "Local Green Space" can be made for land that meets the criteria of the NPPF (paragraphs 76 and 77) within a Neighbourhood Plan. Local Green Space is demonstrably 'special', and this guidance makes it clear that it will not

be appropriate for the majority of open space in a neighbourhood plan area. The following special areas have been designated in this Highworth Parish:-

THE VILLAGE GREENS – WINDRUSH

These are 2 areas of visually important green space at the main entrance to the Windrush estate, one a small area in front of numbers 1-13 Windrush, the other, larger area adjoins this area on the south corner of entrance to Windrush. The Village Greens have been a favourite space for the residents on the Windrush estate for over 25 years. HCPG joined with the residents in 2010 to try and save them and after a protracted legal battle had them officially registered as Village Greens under the guardianship of HCPG. They provide space for respite and recreation for one of the largest housing estates in the town. They provide valuable play space for the children, who have no formal play area on the estate and they are used for the occasional estate events.

HIGHWORTH CEMETERY

A local green space situated along the Cricklade Road on the western side of the town. This is a tranquil area with a small chapel and commanding views over the Thames valley.

HIGHWORTH PARISH CHURCH CHURCHYARD: A tranquil and historic open space within the Conservation Area, visually important to the setting and character of the historic town centre.

SEVENHAMPTON CHURCHYARD: A tranquil and historic open space within the Conservation Area of the hamlet, visually important to the setting and character of Sevenhampton. Ian Fleming is buried here.

Policy 9 - Local Green Spaces

The following areas shown on Figure 13 are designated as Local Green Space:

1. Village Green
2. Cemetery
3. Highworth Parish Church Churchyard
4. Sevenhampton Churchyard

Development on Local Green Spaces will be considered in the same manner as development in the Green Belt as explained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), section 9. This establishes a presumption of resisting most forms of development which is detrimental to the openness and character of the green spaces.



Sevenhampton: Ian Fleming's grave in the Churchyard (left) and the Cricket Ground (right)

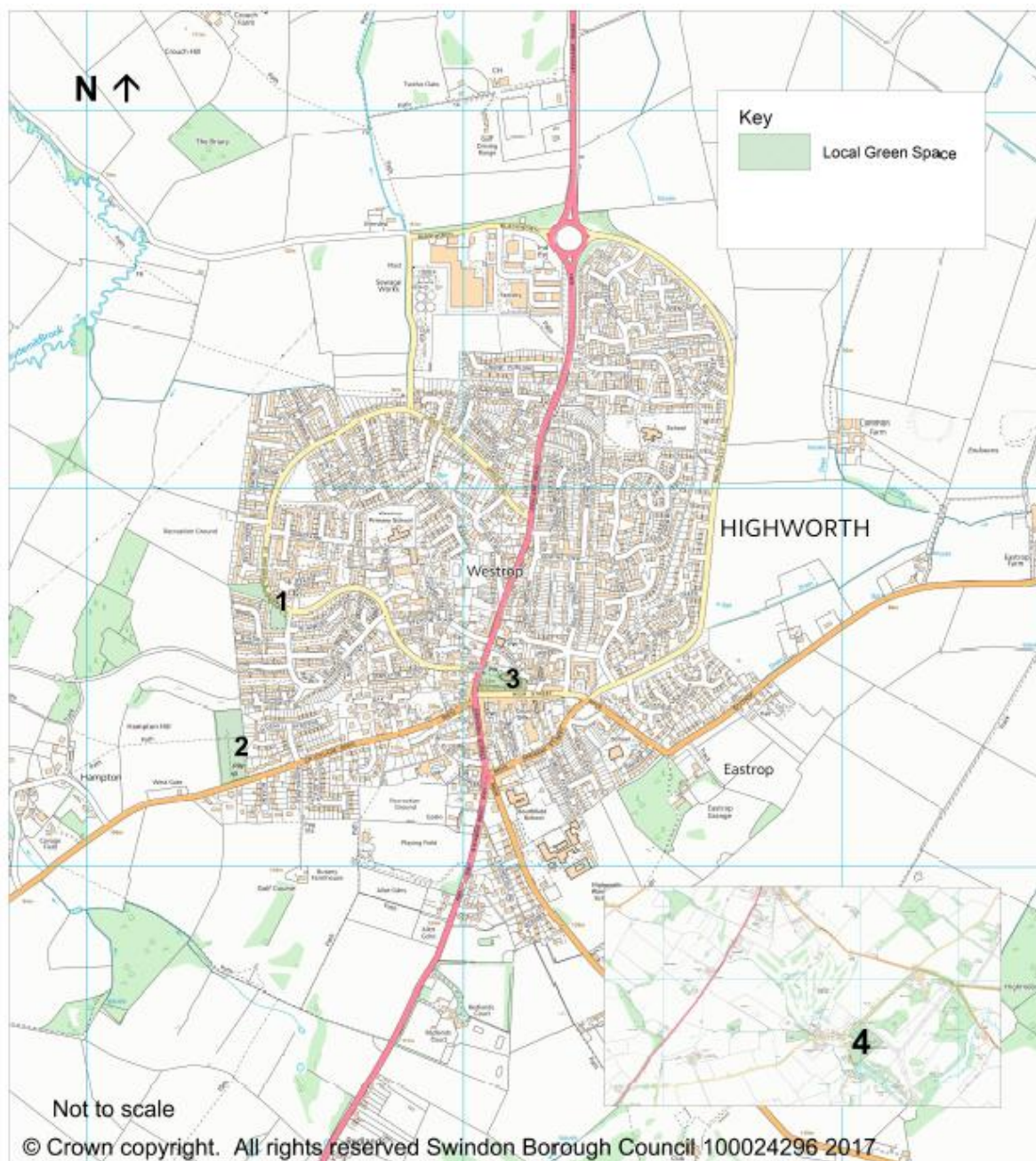


Figure 13: Local Green Space in Highworth

4.5.3 Besides Local Green Space, Highworth has many areas of open space that fulfill important recreational, play and visual roles for the local community. Policy 14 below details all the areas of public open space in the Parish that this plan protects, unless alternative facilities of equal value can be provided and alternative community value gained from the development. Some of the Open Space designations of Policy EN3 in the Swindon Local Plan have become Local Green Space in this plan, a designation the Local Plan did not deal with.

Designated areas of open space include the following:

THE GOLF COURSE

The course was developed in the lower area of the Recreation ground using one of the higher fields for a pitch and putt area. There is a golf shop and toilet block for users of the course under the ownership and (currently) control of Twigmarket, leased from Swindon BC. It is a 9 hole course. It is an attractive area, well landscaped and containing walking paths, which are well used by runners and walkers and can be accessed from several paths leading off Cricklade Road and the Upper Rec. Its position on the hill leading into Highworth from Swindon creates an attractive landscape when entering the town.

RECREATION GROUNDS – UPPER AND LOWER FIELDS

The Elms Rec is Highworth's principal outdoor Leisure area. It comprises the Upper Rec and the Lower Rec extension fields. The Upper Rec, known as the Elms Rec is owned solely by Highworth Town Council and has a sporting pavilion and changing rooms, and hard standing tennis courts. Besides being the key recreational resource for the town, it is also used as informal open space and by various public bodies in Highworth for public events, such as the Highworth Festival etc. The Upper Rec also provides facilities for Highworth Town Football Club in the winter and Highworth Cricket Club in the summer under separate licenses. The Lower Rec provides facilities for the Highworth Junior Football Club and is the site for local music festivals and a touring circus.

PENTYLANDS COUNTRY PARK

It is a key area on the slopes of Highworth used for informal recreation and protecting key views out over the Thames valley. Pentylands Country Park consists of 5 fields surrounding the North West quadrant of Highworth. The fields lie beneath the sandstone brow of Highworth and have a relatively thin coating of soil on top of Oxford clay. The fields are now owned by Swindon Borough Council and Highworth Town Council is the leaseholder on the one at the rear of Barra Close where there are play areas for toddlers and older children. "The Friends of Pentylands Country Park" have managed the Park since 2006 with the consent of SBC and do what they can to improve the park – including the construction of bridges and a campaign to get the Environment Agency to deal with a heavily polluted stream. Recently the Friends have created a wetland area, installed seating and planted a community orchard.

ALLOTMENTS

Allotment gardens in Highworth are provided by HTC at three sites:

- Swindon Road - This site is in the ownership of HTC
- Adjacent to Highworth Golf Complex - This site is in the ownership of SBC but on a long lease to HTC. HTC is currently attempting to acquire this land under an Asset Transfer.

- Park Avenue Allotments - This site is in private ownership and is leased from the current owner by HTC.

TOWN GARDENS

A small area of green space on the corner of Swindon Street and The Elms, surrounded by a stone wall. It is a pleasant area with a lawn in the centre and shrubs around the periphery.

HARESFIELD PLAY AREA

Public open space behind The Dormers and adjacent to the former Northview School and Knowlands/Sevenfields at the bottom of the slope, being the site of a Play Area belonging to Highworth Town Council.

HIGHWORTH COMMUNITY CENTRE

Playing fields attached to the community centre. Used for a variety of activities including, fetes, children's sporting activities and Barbeques.

BARRA CLOSE CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS

Play areas for younger children situated inside Pentylands Country Park and included in that designation as Local Green Space.

CRANE FURLONG RECREATION GROUND

This recreation area is regularly waterlogged. Highworth Town Council, sited a set of goalposts and residents use it for family picnics and ballgames.

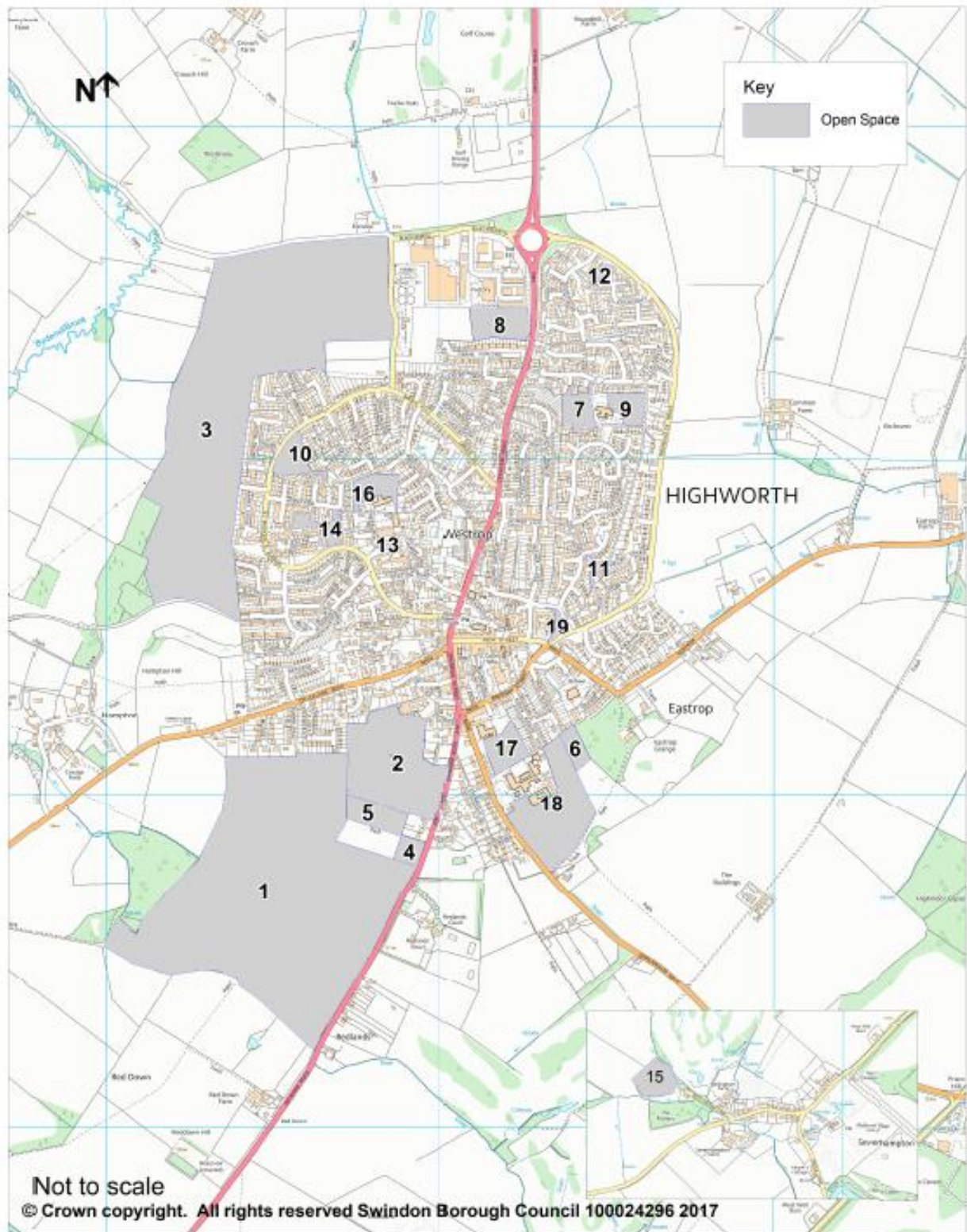


Figure 14: Open Spaces in Highworth Parish

Policy 10 - Open Space

Public open space assets defined on the Figure 14 will be protected from development unless:
it can be demonstrated that alternative provision can be made locally of equivalent or better size, quality and accessibility; or

the proposed development is ancillary to the main use of the site and protects its public open space function; or

the proposed development is subject to an Open Space Appraisal to ensure it does not adversely affect local needs and/or existing quality of open space within the area in accordance with the Council's Standards, as set out in Appendix 3 (of SBLP 2026) and in the most recent Open Space Audit and Assessment; or

when assessed against the Open Space Appraisal, the proposed development provides community benefit which outweighs the loss of open space.

- 1. The Golf Course**
- 2. Recreation Ground Upper and Lower Fields**
- 3. Pentylands Country Park**
- 4. Swindon road allotments**
- 5. Allotments adjacent to Highworth Golf Complex**
- 6. Park Avenue Allotments**
- 7. Haresfield Play Area**
- 8. Crane Furlong Recreation ground**
- 9. Highworth Community Centre Playing field**
- 10. The Triangle**
- 11. Priory Green**
- 12. Sevenfields Entrance**
- 13. Newburgh Open Space**
- 14. Home Farm Green Space**
- 15. Sevenhampton Cricket Ground**
- 16. Westrop Primary School**
- 17. Southfields School**
- 18. Highworth Warneford School**
- 19. Town Green (adjacent to Parsonage Court)**

4.5.4 Woodland and trees

The strategic Great Western Community Forest which Swindon BC hosts, covers Highworth, it is a project that has been planting trees and developing wooded areas for over ten years now. Locally trees and established hedgerows are an important part of the landscape, both at the edge of town and within the urban area. Thus Policy 12 looks to protect existing mature trees and hedgerows affected by development. Two copses of trees are included in the County Wildlife Sites, and they are included in policy 13.

4.5.4.1 Highworth is part of the Great Western Community Forest (GWCF). It is one of England's community forests where local people and organisations are working together to create a better environment. It covers an area of 168 square miles stretching from Wootton Bassett to Faringdon and the North Wessex Downs to the Thames.

4.5.4.2 The project is an exciting partnership between a wide range of local and regional organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors which work together to deliver a comprehensive package of urban, economic and social regeneration. The Community Forest works closely with local people and enjoys strong community support. Project activities provide local communities with many occasions to make decisions regarding improvements in their neighbourhood and to take ownership of their environment.

4.5.4.3 GWCF is creating high-quality environments for local people by diversifying land-use, revitalising derelict landscapes, enhancing biodiversity and providing new opportunities for leisure, recreation, cultural activity, education, healthy living and social and economic development. GWCF plays a crucial role in contributing to sustainable development in Swindon, the urban fringes and in the varied and beautiful surrounding countryside including Highworth. This plan therefore wishes to promote the protection of trees and hedgerows within development, so that the ideals of the GWCF are reflected in that development.

4.5.4.4 Trees which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and those in Conservation Areas are subject to specific control. Many trees, however, are not subject to these controls and when affected by development proposals are covered by the following policy.

Policy 11 - Protection of Trees and Hedgerows

Development proposals must seek to retain trees and hedgerows of amenity value whenever possible.

Development proposals affecting trees and hedgerows must be accompanied by an arboricultural survey which justifies any felling in terms of the health of trees or danger presented by any tree as a result of its condition or position. Trees to be retained must be the subject of proposals for their protection during construction.

4.5.5 Local Wildlife and Biodiversity

Swindon's Local Plan has policy EN4 which protects county wildlife sites as well as the nationally and internationally designated wildlife sites. Nationally designated sites are protected by national legislation, but policy 13 is designating our County Wildlife Sites for protection as well. Within Highworth there are also four regionally important Geological sites on historic walls and these are specifically mentioned in Policy 16 as well.

4.5.5.1 In the context of the natural environment, Swindon Borough has a wealth of natural and "man-made" green spaces, open spaces and habitats. These spaces are part of our everyday lives: where we work, do business and learn, the way we travel around, where we play, celebrate and spend our leisure time. They play host to wildlife, are part of our cultural heritage and sit in a

landscape shaped over the centuries. Their presence, cumulatively, contribute to providing cleaner air in the urban environment, help attenuate flood risk, and help mitigate against carbon dioxide emissions and the wider challenge of a changing climate.

4.5.5.2 The 40 hectares making up Pentylands Country Park has been in local authority ownership for more than 50 years. Community involvement in the land started over a quarter of a century ago with the Highworth Preservation Society which initiated the first community tree planting on the site, in 1998 The Great Western Community Forest commenced an ongoing program of tree planting with significant plantings in 1998, 2000 (millennium tree planting) 2003 as part of the branching out ceremony, 2004 consolidating the 2003 tree plant and 2009 with the Valentine's Day tree plant. To date some 10,000 trees have been planted.

4.5.5.3 Since their first involvement GWCF have taken responsibility for the trees in the park and still retain that responsibility. There is an annual walk round with a member of GWCF to gauge the state of the trees and discuss and put in place the ongoing management. In 2006, following a year of consultation between residents, GWCF and SBC, the Friends of Pentylands Country Park were formed, and they have managed the Park ever since with guidance from GWCF and SBC. The Friends remit was and still remains to manage the Park for conservation and biodiversity, to ensure there is suitable wildlife habitat, to provide and expansion area as part of SBC's wildlife corridor, and to provide informal recreational space for the people of Highworth and residents of the wider Borough at large.

4.5.5.4 As part of this responsibility records are kept and whilst the lists are still being added to: currently 136 varieties of wild flowers including orchids have been identified, 50 species of bird, 19 species of butterflies and moths, 29 different grass species. Two species of Dragonfly have been identified in the wetland area along with 5 species of Damselfly. The wetland is a thriving breeding ground for frogs and the streams contain sticklebacks, freshwater shrimps and crayfish. Fungi are an important indicator of the health, well-being and good management of a conservation area. In 1998 a survey of the Park identified 5 species of fungi; the last Fungi survey identified 42 species not including slime moulds. The Park is well supported by the local community who are very protective of the valuable amenity the Park provides.



Figure 15: Regionally Important Geological Sites in Highworth

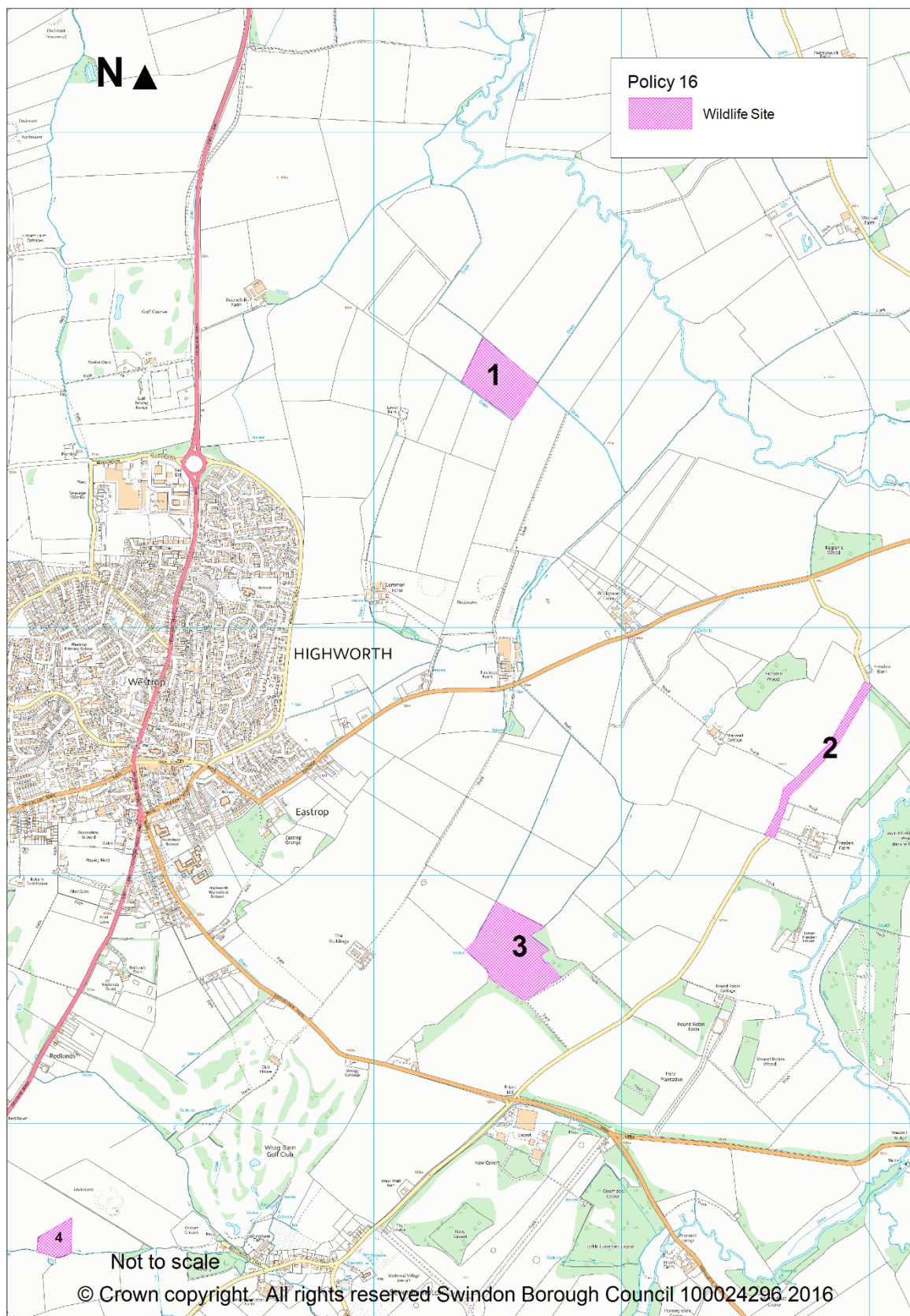


Figure 16: County Wildlife Sites in Highworth Parish (numbers refer to Policy 13)

Policy 12 – Local Wildlife and Biodiversity

Areas of local wildlife and biodiversity value will be protected and development that significantly harms or destroys the biodiversity and ecological value of the sites will not be permitted. County Wildlife Sites as shown on Figure 16 and listed below are areas of local wildlife and biodiversity value for the purposes of this policy shown on Figure 15. County Wildlife sites are:

- 1. Common Farm**
- 2. Fresden Farm Verge**
- 3. Highmoor Copse**
- 4. Picketts Copse**

Where acceptable mitigation of potential damage is possible, development may be permitted subject to requiring mitigation and protection of the asset during development.

New development is encouraged to include new areas of wildlife and biodiversity value where potential exists.

4.5.6 Locally – Responsive Design

The hilltop location of Highworth is special, and the town has a unique character. The surrounding open rural landscape requires a careful design assessment of all developments.

4.5.6.1 The SBLP 2026 and the Swindon Residential Design Guide 2016 are important references in design assessments.

4.5.6.2 There are conservation areas in Hampton and Sevenhampton where development should preserve and enhance their traditional character. Each of these areas has an appraisal and management plan which highlights features and buildings of significance which have to be taken into account.

4.5.6.3 The hilltop location of Highworth is special, and a survey of the best views both from the town and looking up to the town was undertaken to further assess this unique aspect of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The results are documented in Figures 17 & 18 below, an assessment supported by previous Borough Council work in the SPG on Landscape Character Areas (para 4.1.7 above).

4.5.6.4 The Highworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP), notes that from the Conservation Area the outlooks that best illustrate the old town's hill-top setting are the views to the north-east towards Coleshill and the Vale of White Horse, gained from the eastern end of Brewery Street by Parsonage Court and the corner of Cherry Orchard by the entrance to The Mews.



Figure 17: Important views out of Highworth from 2016 survey.



Figure 18: Views looking into Highworth the hilltop town.

4.5.6.5 Good Design of development in Highworth is important to the community, and in Policy 17 we set out what we feel good design is, and the particular local characteristics of the built form. The landscape character and the views are the unique aspect of Highworth, but there are other defining characteristics. Stone boundary walls are traditional, and a feature that should be protected and extended where possible. The local building materials are stone and red brick, and landmark trees feature within the urban environment.

4.5.6.6 The requirements of NPPF are that development supports the move to a low carbon future as part of the need for development to be sustainable (paras 93 – 95). Policy 17 therefore also supports energy efficiency designed into buildings, which also includes rainwater recycling and collecting where possible. It is considered that house prices in Highworth although challenging in terms of affordability are not so high to exclude requiring compliance with the relatively modest requirements of the 2015 Government Space Standards for Residential Development.

Policy 13 – Locally Responsive Design

Design of development proposals should take into account the following guidelines:

- Policies in the SBLP2026 in particular Policy DE1: High Quality Design; Policy DE2: Sustainable Construction: EN5: Landscape Character and Historical Landscape: Policy EN10 Historic Environment and Heritage Assets and the Swindon Residential Design Guide 2016
- In Conservation areas the respective Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans will be an important reference in design assessments.
- The impact of development on landscape character and important views will be taken into account and resisted where it is unduly intrusive or unrelated to existing features; and
- Boundary wall treatments are to preserve existing stone boundaries, and extend and reflect this local feature where possible; and
- The local building materials of stone and red brick are the preferred main elevation materials particularly development which is prominent in the public realm; and
- Where possible, new landmark native trees should be incorporated into soft landscaping of any development proposal; and
- Development should be designed to integrate well with the existing neighbourhood and work with the character and scale of existing buildings and the surrounding area; and
- Major development proposals will be expected to undertake design review at pre-application, outline or reserved matters stage(s) as appropriate, by means of referral to the Swindon Design Review Panel; and
- All development should aim to maximize the energy efficiency of a building's performance, harvest and use rainwater efficiently and make use of renewable energy technologies where possible.
- The need to protect Regionally Important Geological Sites.



Highworth has a situation corresponding with its name. On every side you go uphill to it, and from it you see to a great distance all round and into many counties.'

William Cobbett, Rural Rides, September 1826

References

Highworth the Vision 2008

Historical Highworth Jo Clark

Site Appraisal and Selection Highworth NP: LB Planning for Highworth Town Council Sept 2016

Swindon Borough Council:

Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2010-2026

Swindon Residential Design Guide 2016

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2013

Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Swindon 2007 - 2011

Highworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan April 2006

Sevenhampton Conservation Area Appraisal

Hampton Conservation Area Appraisal

Swindon Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012

Swindon BC Local Transport Plan 3: 2011-2026

Swindon BC Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule 2015

Rural Issues Paper: Swindon BC Local Plan Issues Paper

Swindon BC SPG Landscape Character Areas 2004

Regional and National:

Help to Buy South Application and Completion Statistics for Swindon April 2016

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2014 and online updates

Appendix 1: Draft Development Sites for Crane Furlong and Redlands

Development Brief for Crane Furlong Site



1. Crane Furlong Site Description

1.1 The site slopes very gently to the north and is located on low-lying land (90 – 85m contours) to the north of the town, adjacent to the Industrial estate and sewage works. Its current use is low level grazing agriculture, and it is 2.32ha in size. It is located between residential development to the south and the Industrial Estate to the north, and the unadopted Pentylands Lane and Crane Furlong both currently offer access to the site.

2. Planning Context

2.1 The site is outside the settlement boundary carried over into the Swindon Local Plan 2026 (SBLP) from the previous Swindon Local Plan. Allocations outside this boundary in Neighbourhood Plans are acceptable within the terms of Policy SD2 c) of the SLP, and the Highworth Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) will revise the settlement boundary in line with allocations made. The site has been assessed in the SHLAA; sites 731 and 1135 refer, and assessed in this document as deliverable in 0-5 years. Development will be required to comply with planning policy in the HNP and the overall Development Plan. Particular attention is drawn to policies DE1, DE2 and EN7 in the SBLP.



3. Site Constraints

3.1 There are no significant flood risks associated with the site, although adjacent development is reported to have dealt with small springs and ground water. Thames Water consider wastewater infrastructure capability adequate, but surface water should not be taken to the public sewer.

3.2 Environmental Health at the Borough Council have indicated initial concerns about the proximity of the site to the sewage works and industrial area; odours from the former and noise nuisance from the latter are issues. The developer will be required to use part of the site for mitigation purposes, as discussed below.

3.3 The land to the east of the site is owned by Highworth Town Council on a lease from Swindon Borough Council and is used for recreational purposes. The land was originally to be available for

a new access to the site from Lechlade road. The Town Council have since decided however not to release their land, and so this potential access has not been considered in this brief.

4. Site Requirements

4.1 The number of dwellings achieved on this site should be a minimum of 42 unless constraints, which may be evidenced as part of a detailed planning application, are identified and require a lesser number.”

4.2 The development will not be required to provide an area of open space, but will be required to contribute to the improvement of the adjacent area of open space. Improvements may include provision of a Multiple Use Games Area (MUGA), seating areas, planting and drainage works which will have to be considered further, in detail. CIL receipts for the Town Council are likely to be spent on Town Centre improvements.

4.3 Thames Water and Environmental Health require an Odour Assessment to determine the extent of mitigation and the buffer zone. Environmental Health have concerns about the proximity of the site to the Industrial Estate and will also require a noise evaluation to be undertaken. The map shows an indicative landscape buffer to allow for appropriate mitigation. Its exact extent will depend on the results of the assessments referred to above. The County Archaeologist requires an archaeological survey to be undertaken as part of any planning application. In the event of any archaeological finds appropriate mitigation measures will need to be considered which may constrain the extent of development.

4.4 There are two access options via Pentylands Lane and Crane Furlong which are shown on the plan in this appendix. The access onto Pentylands Lane is required to encourage turn left only movements, and will need to suit any new access constructed as part of the development to the west of the site (Planning permissions S/11/0280 and S/RES/12/0640 refer). Further improvement works on the wider adjacent residential roads may be required as well.

4.5 The housing mix, types and densities of dwellings shall be in accordance with Policy HA1 of the SBLP 2026. It is estimated that 42 dwellings can be provided on the site but this is contingent on the result of the noise and odour assessments. The affordable housing component should be 30% in accordance with Policy HA2 in SBLP 2026. The mix, type and tenure of affordable housing shall be in accordance with the latest housing needs assessment. The current housing needs data produced by Swindon Housing Department indicates that 70% of affordable housing shall be for rent and the remainder should be for shared ownership.

4.6 Design of housing is to comply with policy 17 in the HNP and other requirements of the Development Plan. There is a need to protect the privacy of dwellings which currently abut the site and proposed dwellings need to be set back from the boundary to achieve this. Main external elevational treatments to be brick in keeping with rest of the town. Any development will also need to comply with the design requirements of policy DE1 of the Swindon Local Plan and the Residential Design Guide (June 2016). The developer is encouraged to submit proposals for design review prior to any application, and consult with local residents and the Town Council.

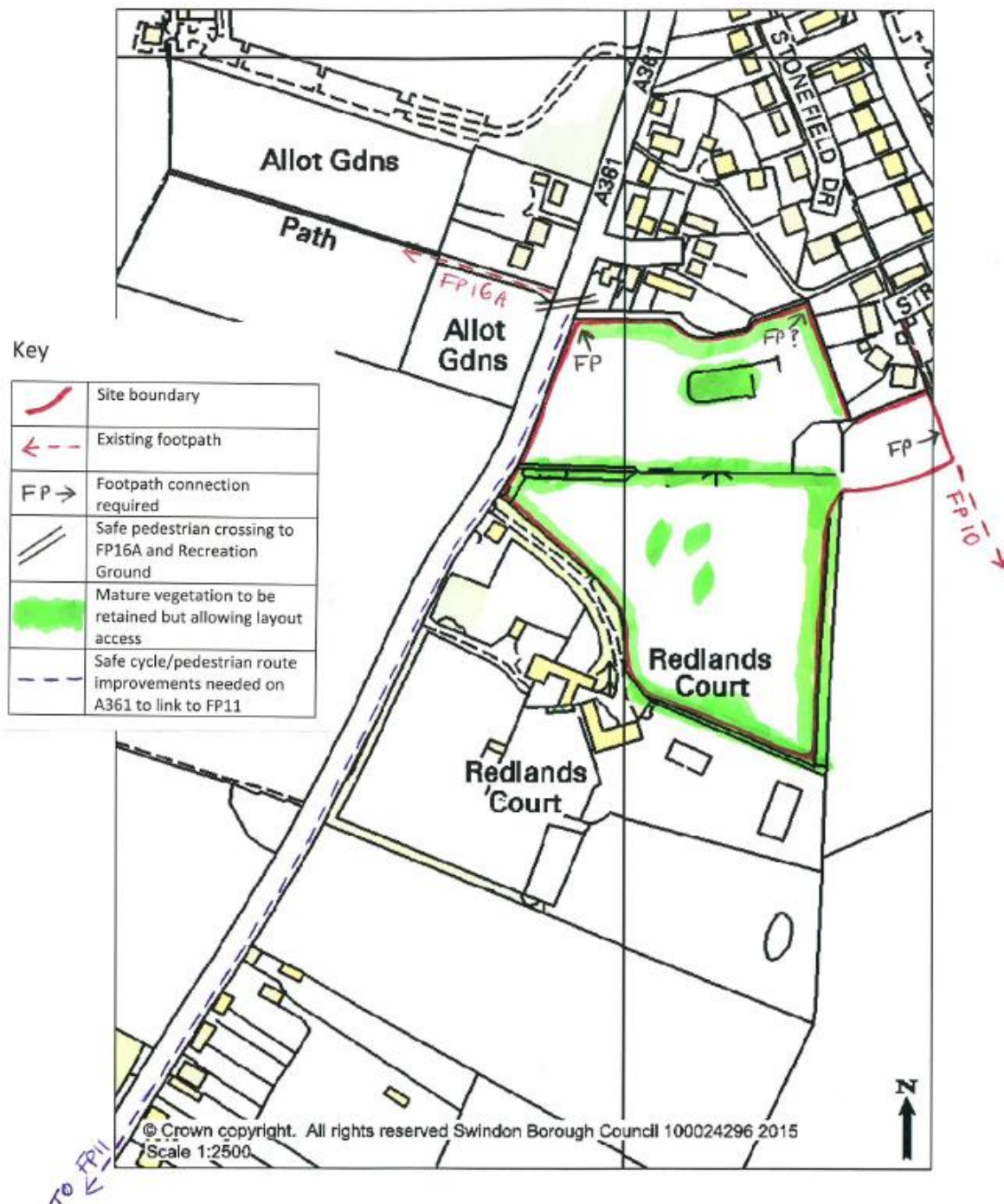
5. Further Information

SBC Planning Department is the local planning authority that will deal with the planning application. It can provide advice on any charges which may be required by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Highworth Town Council will be happy to provide further local information. Contact Details as follows:

Swindon Borough Council: E-mail: forwardplanning@swindon.gov.uk Tel: 01793 445500

Highworth Town Council: <http://www.highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk/contact.asp> Tel: 01793 762377

Draft Development Brief for Redlands Site



1. Redlands Site Description

1.2 The eastern side of the site has been identified in the SHLAA 2013 as being visually more intrusive in its impact on the setting of the town. For this reason the site allocated for housing has slightly reduced in size the original site consulted on, and discounted for the life of this plan development on the eastern section of the site.

1.3 The site has mature trees and hedgerow boundaries, most of which would need be retained in any future development. Previous development schemes for the site have included a community orchard and agricultural area, and these would be welcome in future development proposals.



2. Planning Context

2.1 The site is outside the settlement boundary carried over into the Local Plan from the previous Swindon Local Plan. Allocations outside this boundary in Neighbourhood Plans are acceptable within the terms of Policy SD2 c) of the Swindon Local Plan 2016 (SBLP), and the Highworth Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) will revise the settlement boundary in line with allocations made. A larger site, of which this area is a part, is considered in the SHLAA 2013, sites 732 and 733 refer. It is considered that reducing the SHLAA 2013 site to the northern component has reduced the adverse impact on the green corridor to the south of Highworth identified as a problem in the SHLAA. Development will be required to comply with planning policy in the HNP and the overall Development Plan. Particular attention is drawn to policies DE1, DE2 and EN1 in the SBLP.

3. Site Constraints

3.1 There are no significant flood risks associated with the site. Thames Water consider wastewater infrastructure capability adequate, but surface water should not be taken to the public sewer.

3.2 The site has a stand of mature trees within it, several mature trees on the boundaries and trees standing alone within the site. The site layout is required to retain these trees and the hedgerows on site, and integrate them well into the public circulation spaces where possible. A green corridor should flow into and through the site, linking these existing ecological assets and wildlife assets should be protected and enhanced. There is a need to provide an ecological survey and mitigation report to determine the presence of any protected species and mitigation measures.

3.3 The County Archaeologist requires an archaeological survey to be undertaken as part of any planning application. In the event of any archaeological finds appropriate mitigation measures will need to be considered which may constrain the extent of the development.

4. Site Requirements

4.1.1 There is an existing Public Footpath (FP10) and link to the countryside to the North east of the site, and access to this path should be made in any layout. A link between the existing footpath FP16A Starting on the west side of the A361 adjacent to the site and path FP10 Should be facilitated within the layout (footway acceptable), and safe pedestrian crossing facilities provided to link the site to FP16A And the recreation ground.

4.1.2 The A361 is a potential cycle route to Swindon, and measures that improve the situation for cycling along this road will be required as part of the development. In particular, making a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists between the site and the junction of FP11 with the A361 will improve connectivity on the rights of way network and promote active and sustainable travel.

4.2 Access will be taken from Swindon Road, the A361, which has significant traffic flows. A treatment of the junction that improved traffic safety for all transport modes will be required as part of any development. A mini roundabout with pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities is the preferred option. There is a need to position an access which minimizes the loss of trees whilst achieving a design which provides acceptable highway and pedestrian safety.

4.3 Public Open Space is not required to be allocated within the site, but an alternative contribution to improvements to the recreation ground on the opposite side of Swindon Road to the development (pedestrian access via an existing footpath through the allotment gardens) will be required.

4.4 A contribution to Town Centre environmental improvements will be required from the development.

4.5 The number of dwellings achieved on this site should be a minimum of 70 unless constraints which may be evidenced as part of a detailed planning application are identified and require a lesser number. In accordance with SBLP policy HA2, 30% of homes should be affordable. A minimum of three plots for self or custom build should be offered for sale for a minimum of three months at a reasonable price, agreed independently. If there is no interest then these plots can revert to open market housing. Other housing should be provided in line with housing needs as expressed in SBLP Policy HA1. The overall housing mix on the site will be considered in relation to SBLP 2026, Policy HA1: Mix, Types and Density.

4.6 The development should respect the site location on the edge of the settlement, and maintain a 'soft edge' with screening landscaping (sometimes retained) and native tree planting to boundaries with the open countryside. Development should be no more than 2 storeys high and main external elevational treatments to be brick in keeping with rest of the town. Any development will need to comply with the design requirements of policy DE1 of the SBLP, Policy 17 of the HNP and the Borough Council's Residential Design Guide (June 2016). The developer is encouraged to submit proposals for design review prior to any application, and consult with local residents and the Town Council.

5. Further Information

SBC Planning Department is the local planning authority that will deal with the planning application. It can provide advice on any charges which may be required by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Highworth Town Council will be happy to provide further local information. Contact Details as follows:

Swindon Borough Council: E-mail: forwardplanning@swindon.gov.uk Tel: 01793 445500

Highworth Town Council: <http://www.highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk/contact.asp> Tel: 01793 762377

Appendix 2: Glossary:

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework 2012

NPPG National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 and as updated online

SBLP Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 also referred to as the “Local Plan”

HNP Highworth Neighbourhood Plan

HCPG Highworth Community Partnership Group

Swindon BC Swindon Borough Council

Highworth TC Highworth Town Council or the “Town Council”

LSOA Lower Super Output Areas

Appendix 3: ORGANISED CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE IN HIGHWORTH

Monday Fun	Evening WI
Breastmates	Wednesday Club
Little Ladybirds	Sisterhood
Busybugs	Job Club
Bumps 2 Crawlers	Swindon Carers Group
Shake Rattle and Roll	Western Front Association
Toddler Trampolining	Highworth Junior Football
Junior Trampolining	Highworth Town Football Club
Toddler Splash	Brownies
Tiny Tots Football	Rainbows
Walking Club	Guides
Walking Football 50's	Cubs
Gymnastics	Scouts
Tea Dance	Adventure Scouts
Play Rangers	Woodcraft
Highworth Day Care Club	Highworth Freemasons
878 Squadron ATC – Newburgh Place	Highworth Songsters
Rhyme Time under 3's	Vorda Nursery and Playgroup
Storytime under 5's	Highworth Swimming Club
Craft and Story Time	Highworth Diving Club
Little Treasures Toddler Group	Highworth Canoe Club
Pilates over 60's	Fishing Club
Line Dancing	Highworth Film Society
Zumba	U3A Petanque group
Community Arts	St John's Ambulance
Jam Club	Highworth Community Partnership Group
Choral Society	Nexus Project Youth Café
Craft Group	Highworth Youth Club
Highworth Songsters	Senior Citizens' Luncheon Club
Family Drop In	Bang to Rites
Whitehorse Folk Club	Pagan Moot
Badminton Club	U3A Tai Chi Group
Running Club	Music Alive – musical experience for people with disabilities
Tennis Club – Junior and adult	
Highworth Amateur Dramatic Society	
Wrag Barn Choir	
Golden Oldies Sing Song	
Silver Band	
Highworth Flower Club	
Scribblers Writing Group	
Weight Watchers	
Slimming World	
Highworth Historical Society	
Royal British Legion	
Highworth and District Lions	
Gardening Club	
District Probus Club	
Family History Group	
Camera Club	
Wine and Beer Circle	
Expert Patient Programme	
Afternoon WI	

Appendix 4: Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026: Policies SD2 and RA1

Policy SD2: The Sustainable Development Strategy

- a. Recognising its role and function in the wider area development in the Borough will be concentrated at Swindon through a combination of:
 - realising development opportunities within Swindon's urban area; and
 - allocated strategic sites at; Wichelstowe, Commonhead, Tadpole Farm, Kingsdown (east of the A419) and the proposed New Eastern Villages, Rowborough and expanded South Marston, as defined on the Key Diagram
- b. The Swindon Central Area, as defined on the Key Diagram and at Figure 6, will be the main focus and first preference for the location of built civic, cultural, further education, office, retail, leisure and regional sports facilities.
- c. Outside Swindon :
 - rural development will be located primarily at Highworth and Wroughton, which (of the rural settlements) are the most accessible and maintain the largest range of facilities;
 - South Marston will be extended as part of the allocated strategic sites in part a. above;
 - at the other villages in the Borough, proportional to their size and function, development will be supported within the rural settlement boundaries as shown on the Policies map, or on land allocated in a Neighbourhood Plan or Site Allocations DPD as detailed in Policy LN1 where it delivers (at least) the quantum of development identified in the Plan and responds positively to address local needs; and,
 - development proposals in rural and countryside locations outside the rural settlement boundaries as shown on the Policies Map will be permitted where:
 - local needs have been identified and allocated through a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order; and /or
 - it supports the expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in a rural service centre; or
 - it is in accordance with other policies in this Plan permitting specific development in the countryside.

- d. Sustainable economic and housing growth will be delivered in Swindon Borough during the plan period through the provision of:**
- **119.5 hectares of employment land (B-use class) through:**
 - **77.5 hectares of additional employment land¹; and,**
 - **42 hectares with extant permission and existing allocations carried forward (see Table 2)**
 - **About, but not less than, 22,000 dwellings between 2011 and 2026, phased as follows:**
 - **1,150 average per annum between 2011 and 2016; and,**
 - **1,625 average per annum between 2016 and 2026.**
 - **The strategy shall be reviewed by 2016 at the latest, to assess future levels of need for new homes and employment land over the period to 2031, to provide an appropriate basis for employment land and infrastructure provision.**
- e. This quantum of employment land and dwelling numbers for the period 2011-26 will be distributed as set out below:**

¹ Including land with permission at Wichelstowe, Tadpole Farm and Commonhead

Table 1. Housing and Employment Land Distribution

	Dwellings	Additional Employment Land² & Floorspace
Swindon's Central Area	about 1,000	90,000 m² office
Remainder Swindon's existing urban area	about 3,500	
Northern Development Area	589	
Wichelstowe	4,064	12.5 hectares
Commonhead	890	15 hectares
Tadpole Farm	1,695	5 hectares
New Eastern Villages	about 6,000	about 40 hectares
Rowborough	about 1,500	
South Marston Village:		
Greenfield	500	
Brownfield	about 140	
Kingsdown (east of the A419)	about 1,650	
Highworth	at least 200	5 hectares
Wroughton	at least 150	
Other Villages (in total)	at least 100	

The Northern Development Area, Wichelstowe, Commonhead and Tadpole Farm have existing permissions. The number of dwellings and employment land for these areas shown above are per the existing permissions (excluding completions prior to April 1st 2011).

² Including land with permission at Wichelstowe, Tadpole Farm and Commonhead

Policy RA1: Highworth

a. Development at Highworth shall be in accordance with Policies SD1 and SD2 and should support the following local priorities:

- **maintain the separate identity of Highworth as a hill top market town and respect its landscape setting;**
- **rejuvenation of Highworth Town Centre to create a lively, thriving and attractive focus for the town by:**
 - **maintaining and enhancing the character and function of Highworth Town Centre;**
 - **seeking that appropriate development contributes towards the improvement and unification of Highworth Town Centre and points of access to it;**
 - **preventing the loss of existing shops, services and facilities from Highworth Town Centre;**
 - **focusing shops, services and facilities at Highworth Town Centre in accordance with Policy SD2; and**
 - **improving the accessibility of Highworth by means of public transport, walking and cycling, and providing links to Swindon Borough's existing cycle infrastructure**
- **Support a sustainable market town economy for Highworth by:**
 - **supporting the expansion of existing business and encouraging economic development opportunities in accordance with Policy EC1;**
 - **realising tourist potential, in the form of appropriate attractions and accommodation, as a historic market town and gateway to the Cotswolds; and**
 - **improving the visual and physical appearance of the key points of access into the town.**
- **Prevention of significant adverse environmental impact.**
- **Provision of a range of social and recreational facilities.**
- **Protection and enhancement of the role of Pentylands Park, as defined on the Policies Map, as a place to visit for recreational purposes and related activities; and**

Land north of Blackworth Industrial Estate, as shown on the Policies Map, is allocated for B- Use Class employment use, with no more than 50% of it being used for B8-Use Class