



SHEPTON MALLET

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2014 - 2034

Regulation 16 Submission
SMNPlan.org.uk

With thanks to the following people,
who assisted with site visits, photographs, and
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Tadley Acres Residents Association
and the many previous members
of the Steering Group.

Richard Thomas
Chair, Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan
Steering Group.
June 2024

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1. SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document is the Neighbourhood Plan for Shepton Mallet, for the period 2014 to 2034. It relates to the parish of Shepton Mallet (the Neighbourhood Plan Area)¹.

1.2 Mendip District Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), designated the Shepton Mallet neighbourhood area in February 2014 to enable Shepton Mallet Town Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (SMNPSG) on behalf of Shepton Mallet Town Council. The Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (amended in 2015). The SMNPSG has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the neighbourhood area and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the plan period. The map in Figure 1 shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

1.3 The plan sets out a vision for the future of Shepton Mallet, and planning policies to realise this vision.

1.4 The vision that drives this plan has developed during the plan's preparation, and refined following the Regulation 14 consultation in 2023. The plan will help deliver much-needed housing. As well as housing provision, recent work on an Economic Regeneration Plan for the town by the Town Council and others has focused attention on the needs of the High Street, the importance of the Prison in the history of the town and the growth of tourism, and the need to better value and maintain our built and agricultural heritage. The closure of the town's leisure centre, coupled with greater awareness of the importance of health and well-being following the Covid Pandemic, has highlighted the longer-term need for a purpose-built leisure centre and indoor swimming pool. The plan has also highlighted the need to strengthen the availability of local health services for the area and the need for better transport infrastructure, particularly connecting with trains running from Castle Carey Station.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

1.5 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within Shepton Mallet, to help achieve this vision. Some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are general and apply throughout the plan area, whilst others are site or area-specific and apply only to the appropriate areas illustrated on the relevant map.

1.6 Once made, the plan forms part of the development plan for the area. It provides guidance to anyone wishing to submit a planning application in Shepton Mallet, and will be used by Somerset Council in making decisions on those applications. Development that accords with the development plan should be approved, and development that conflicts with the development should be refused, unless there are other material considerations that indicate otherwise.

1.7 The process of producing the plan has involved the community as widely as possible. The different topic areas reflect matters that are of considerable importance to Shepton Mallet, its residents, businesses, and community groups. As part of this process, a number of actions have been identified which do not specifically relate to land use matters and therefore sit outside the jurisdiction of a neighbourhood plan. These actions will be addressed by the Town Council outside of the neighbourhood plan process.

¹ As designated by Mendip District Council Cabinet, 10th February, 2014

ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKS

1.8 To ensure that the policies and proposals set out in the Neighbourhood Plan contribute to sustainable development, it has been tested to see how well it performs against economic, social, and environmental objectives, included specific assessments required by law..

1.9 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken alongside development of the Shepton Mallet NDP. This has considered the likely significant effects associated with implementing the plan, and has informed the plan's development. This has included a thorough assessment of alternatives for further housing provision.

1.10 A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) was also carried out, as development in this area has the potential to harm adversely affect internationally important wildlife sites, such as the Mells Valley and the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) sites. The assessment has considered the impacts of the plan against the conservation objectives of these sites, and examined whether the plan would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on their integrity.

POLICY CONTEXT

1.11 This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for Shepton Mallet neighbourhood area, to be read alongside the Local Plan for Mendip – more detail on the Local Plan is provided in Section 2.

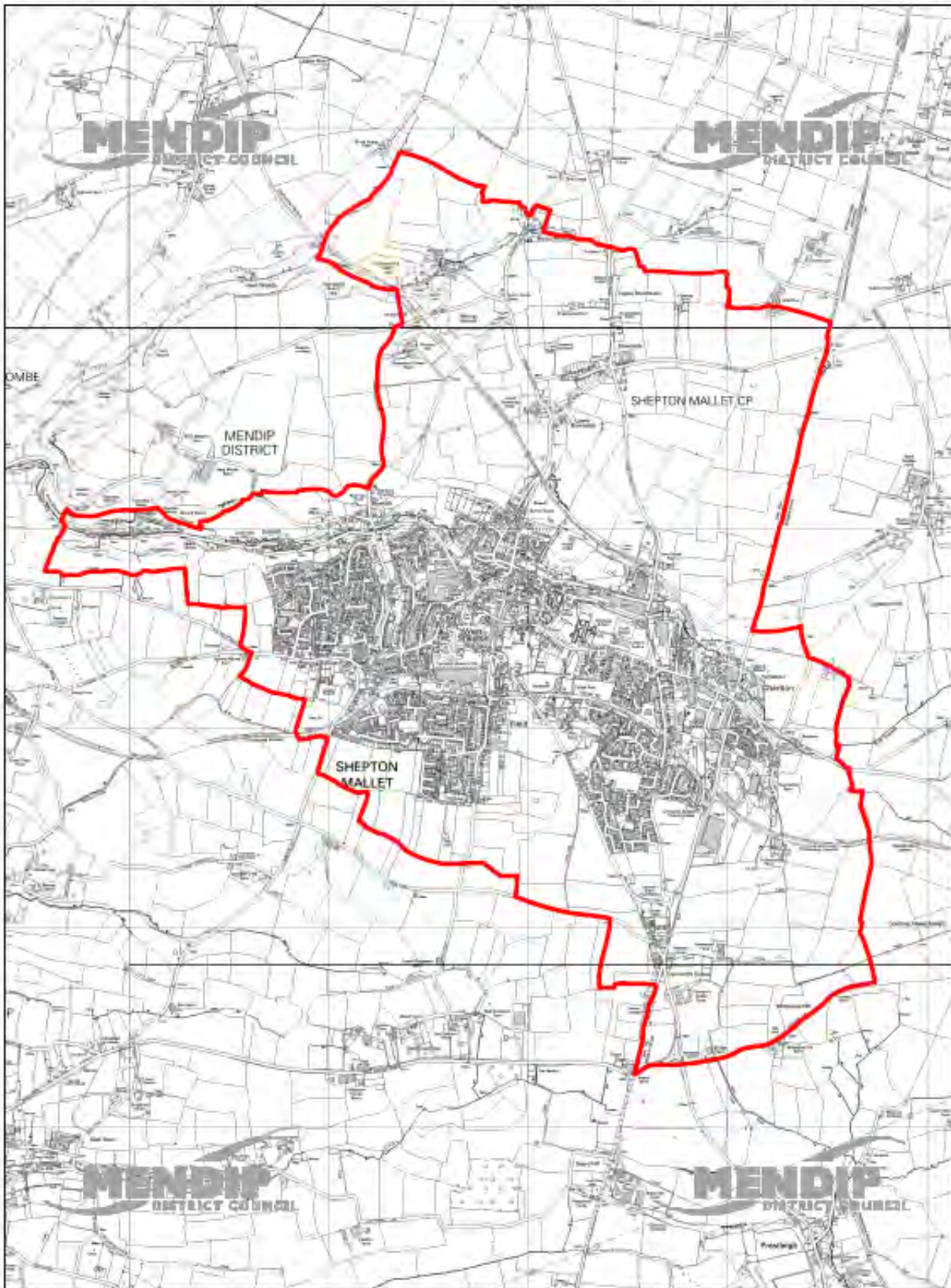
Shepton Mallet Parish Boundary

MENDIP
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Cannards Grave Rd
Shepton Mallet
Somerset BA4 5BT
Tel: 0300 303 8588
Fax: 01749 344050

Scale 1:27000

Notes:

Compiled by on 3 September 2013



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Aerial Imagery 2011 © GeoEye/GeoEye 2011

Map 1. Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Area

As approved by Mendip District Council on 10th February 2014. Somerset Council, 2024

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/neighbourhood-planning/>

About Shepton Mallet - History

1.12 Our history almost certainly starts with our river. With the Mendip Hills to the north and rising land to the south, the River Sheppey runs through the valley of the town and is at the heart of much of its rich history and economic development. The Sheppey provided waterpower for the mills producing wool, and later silk. And the presence of very good quality spring water at Darshill was used in brewing by the Anglo-Bavarian brewing company in the 1800s, when water was pumped from Darshill up the valley side to the brewery.

1.13 Neolithic burials, Iron age farms, a Roman village, medieval industry and buildings and England's first lager brewery all reflect the ancient history of this important Somerset trading centre. Today, that rich history needs to inform future planning and development of the town and its community life.

1.14 The Sheppey Valley has seen human activity since at least the neolithic period². Many artefacts have come from the rising ground south of the modern town, and the remains of iron age farmsteads have been found at Cannard's Grave, near Field Farm, and possibly underlying part of the Roman town. Evidence of prehistoric burials from both sides of the valley suggests that activity was widespread.

The Fosse Way, the principal Roman road into the southwest of England, runs through the town, and there is evidence of Roman settlement.

Recent archaeological investigations along Fosse Lane³ have revealed many details of the linear Roman roadside settlement, which survives well and is a find of great archaeological importance. But other finds, such as the early Roman kilns (possibly associated with early military activity) discovered during work on the 19th century Anglo- Bavarian brewery, remind us that much remains to be learnt about Roman activity in Shepton Mallet.

1.15 Shepton Mallet itself is first mentioned by name, as Sceptun (the sheep farm), in the Domesday Survey⁴, by which time there were already many sheep, a mill, and, one assumes, a village, at Shepton.

1.16 In the medieval period, Shepton Mallet was one of a number of small settlements along the Sheppey Valley: Charlton is recorded separately at Domesday as Cereletone and may have been deliberately developed as a commercial enterprise, either by Glastonbury Abbey or by the Mallet family who held the manor from the Abbey by the 14th century.

1.17 A market and fair charter were granted in 1235 and though this was subsequently suppressed

Key historic places and buildings in the town

Historic features that have been influential to the character of the town include:

- The Market Cross
- St Peter & St Paul's Church
- The Old Rectory
- The Shambles
- The Strode Alm's Houses
- H M Prison
- Leg Square & Cornhill Mill
- The former Anglo-Bavarian Brewery
- Kilver Court Mill & Gardens
- The Cenotaph
- The Charlton Viaduct
- Weavers' Cottages (Town Lane & Gaston Street)
- The former Charlton Mill and Old Brewery
- The Sheppey River Valley Mills including Bowlsh, Ham & Darshill
- 18th & 19th Century Non-Conformist Chapels - Baptist Chapel; Salvation Army; Friends Meeting Rooms; former Methodist Chapel (Paul St Community Centre)

² Gathercole C, An Archaeological Assessment of Shepton Mallet, English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey, Somerset County Council, 2003, page 3, para 6,

https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/downloads/eus/Somerset_EUS_Shepton_Mallet.pdf

³ Leach, P. J. (1991). The Roman site at Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet: an interim report of the 1990 archaeological investigations. <https://sanhs.org/proceedings-volume-134-1990/>

⁴ Sepetone / tona: Roger de Courseulles from Glastonbury Church. 2 mills (with Croscombe)

after objections by Wells, further market and fair grants were made in 1260 and 1318. A planned urban core may have been laid out, and though no borough was ever established, the amounts of tax which were raised from Shepton in the medieval period testify to its prosperity, which was firmly based on the woollen industry.

1.18 Shepton Mallet continued to thrive in the post-medieval period, and its continued significance was underlined by the placing of the county prison there in the early 17th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries the town expanded eastward along the river, where the mills on which its prosperity rested were built. Shepton itself, and the outlying settlements, became populous, industrialised settlements. Collinson (1791) describes an industry employing about four and a half thousand people in the valley. But the streets of Shepton Mallet, according to his account, were narrow and dirty.

1.19 By 1840, the woollen industry was already declining, and this trend continued in the early 19th century. However, other industries, such as silk manufacture, brewing and cheese making, were growing to take its place. Braggs' 1840 Directory was able to describe Shepton as a neat and clean market town, and the other 19th century directories also give a picture of a town in recovery from the economic threat imposed by the failure of the cloth industry.

1.20 The arrival of the railways from the 1850s onwards was a boost to the town's attempts to keep its head above water. The establishment of the Anglo-Bavarian brewery in 1864, the first lager-beer production in England, began a continued development of the brewing industry; today, the town is a major centre for the production of Cider. Shepton has a fine parish church and a considerable number of listed buildings including its prison, which was England's oldest prison still in use when it closed in March 2013.

1.21 All of this rich history and archaeology, needs to inform and colour future planning decisions. Historic buildings and ancient road layouts need careful consideration when new developments are discussed. And our river with its important ecology and tranquil views needs continued sensitive management⁵.

1.22 It is known by many as the birthplace in the fifties of the popular Perry drink "Baby Cham". It is identified as a "principal town" in the Mendip Local Plan, and is also the closest town to the site of the Glastonbury Festival, the largest music festival in Europe.

1.23 Shepton Mallet had a relatively small retail centre until recently with its offer largely restricted to meeting local needs. However, the recently completed Townsend Retail Park to the south of the town centre has resulted in significantly less people leaving the town for food shopping.

1.24 However, there is recognised need for improvement. The Mendip Local Plan Part I: Strategy and Policies 2006-2029 says the following: "Shepton Mallet, located in the heart of Mendip, is the second smallest town in the district. Despite its heritage and attractive appearance, the town's image remains poor with a number of prominent areas in need of significant investment."

Shepton Mallet Today

1.25 From this historic background, Shepton Mallet has emerged as a town and civil parish in the former Mendip District of Somerset, and has grown to a population of 11,167 (2021 census). Situated approximately 18 miles (29 km) south of Bristol and 5 miles (8.0 km) east of Wells, it lies in the north-west part of Somerset county.

1.26 Shepton Mallet's town centre is comparatively small compared to the nearby towns of Wells, Frome and Glastonbury, and it has been in decline for many years. The relocation of the town's main food store from a peripheral location on Fosse Lane to the Townsend Retail Park in 2007 was seen as a means to deliver regeneration to a derelict employment site and help to boost trade in the centre.

⁵ Source document, An Archaeological Assessment of Shepton Mallet, https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/downloads/eus/Somerset_EUS_Shepton_Mallet.pdf

The Retail Park has delivered large format retailing, which was absent in the town, as well as a large Tesco store offering a wide range of goods. This development improved the retention of spending in the town as a whole, but according to an assessment in 2010, but did not increase footfall on the high street. Whilst there has been investment in a number of high street properties, stimulated by the Townscape Heritage Initiative in 2008 - 2012, and supported by a weekly market, shop vacancy rates remain stubbornly high, especially around the Market Place.

1.27 Shepton Mallet contains the second largest concentration of employment land and premises in the north-west of the county. The land and premises available are of varying quality but the views of local businesses have suggested that a proportion of cheaper, lower quality premises would help support business formation and keep costs down. Current employment land is mainly concentrated to the east of the town, with significant transport and warehousing firms to the south. Job growth projections in the Local Plan point towards a good level of new employment in the town of 1,300-1,500 jobs in the Local Plan period to 2029. The former Mendip District Council promoted an innovative initiative, SHAPE Mendip, that saw its Cannards Grave Road site emerge as a public sector hub within which council services, police and other organisations could be concentrated.

Looking to the Future

1.28 Whilst not covered in this plan, there are a number of 'on the horizon' aspirations that were raised during consultation and should be mentioned both for completeness and for possible consideration in any future revision of this plan.

1.29 Of these, one of the most pressing is an improvement in regional and national transport links, and particularly the development of a regular bus link to Castle Carey station that connects with train times. An enclosed bus and taxi hub opposite the Cenotaph and near the eastern pedestrian entrance to Tesco was mentioned several times during consultation. The present arrangement is open to weather and is particularly wet and cold in the winter months. The need for reduction in car use because of the current climate emergency raises the need for greater investment in local public transport, and the possibility of a 'Shepton Shuttle' to serve the internal transport needs of the town and to reduce pressure on the town's car parks.

1.30 The closure of the town's leisure centre in early 2023, run by Whitstone School, has highlighted the need for a purpose-built leisure centre with a range of facilities (the leisure centre included a sports hall, health and fitness suite, synthetic turf pitches and squash courts) potentially expanded to include other facilities such as an enclosed all weather swimming pool. Policy 19 now includes the identification of a possible site for this in the West Shepton Playing Fields site, but further work needs to be done during the review phase of this plan to confirm deliverability.

1.31 Infrastructure limitations have been mentioned on a number of occasions during consultation. NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) have confirmed that the medical practices in the town are over-subscribed, and there is a clear local need to improve the access to primary care facilities within this area. Many roads in and around Shepton Mallet, and particularly in the medieval layout in the centre of town, are becoming increasingly congested.

1.32 Finally, the tourism aspirations of the town need to be considered in greater depth in the future. The town's prison, the lido, economic and social regeneration of the High Street, and greater accessibility to the River Sheppey all provide opportunities that might be considered in greater depth in the next review of this plan.

Community Profile

1.33 Shepton Mallet is a civil parish in the eastern area of the new Unitary Somerset Council, formed in April 2023.

Population

1.34 The civil parish of Shepton Mallet has a population of 10,596⁶, an increase of about 200 since the 2011 Census. The parish has 4,645 households (an increase from 4,377 - 2011 Census), the majority of whom live within the boundaries of the town's development area. The population is overwhelmingly white British at 96.7%, compared with Somerset 96.4% and the national average of 81%. 11.8% were born outside the UK (17.4% national average). Single family households (65.3%) and one person households (30.3%) closely match the national average.

Age Profile

1.35 The age profile of the population also roughly follows the national average, but with a few significant differences. There are about 10% fewer teenagers and young adults than the national average but roughly consistent with Somerset as a whole, a higher number in their late twenties / early thirties, and about 10% more adults aged 50 to 70 than the national average (but less than typical for Somerset overall).

Housing Needs

1.36 Over the lifetime of the neighbourhood plan, these demographics, coupled with other economic factors, are likely to have an impact on housing needs, with older adults 'trading down' and looking for single-storey retirement homes. The higher than average proportion of the population in their late twenties / early thirties is likely to boost the demand for starter homes, but with fewer young people coming through this demand could then fall.

1.37 This trend may change as the 600 home residential development on Cannards Grave Road is built and more employment land is brought forward, creating job opportunities and attracting workers to move here. House prices in Shepton Mallet have historically been lower than the surrounding towns, but economic viability for the proposed Canards Grave development may change that trend over the next ten years.

1.38 The most recent Strategic Housing Needs Assessment for Shepton Mallet was undertaken in 2016 and is already dated. It is unlikely to be updated as part of the Somerset Council local plan before 2025, but does

⁶ All data taken from the Office of National Statistics 2021 Census (ONS Census 2021) except where stated. Alternative data sources, such as Somerset Intelligence <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk>

Population

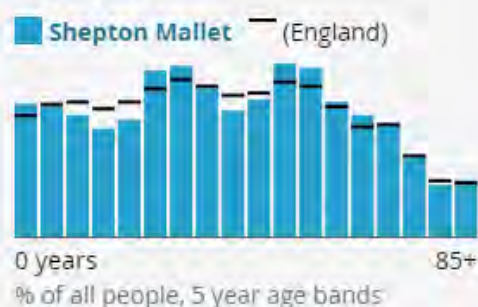
10,600

people

56,490,000 people in England

Rounded to the nearest 100 people

Age profile



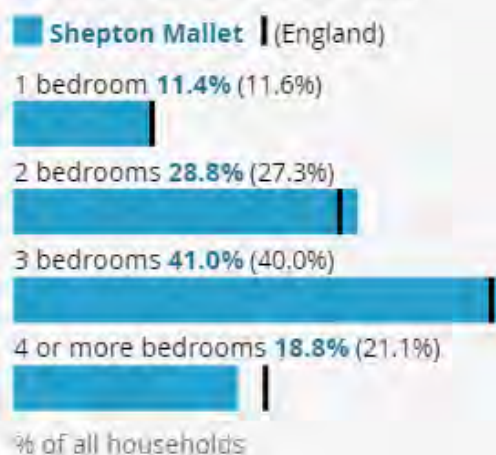
Country of birth



Household size



Number of bedrooms



provide a base line for housing need. A more recent assessment was carried out for the town in 2023.

Socio-economic classifications

1.39 The difference between the percentage of higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (nearly 6% lower than national average and 3% lower than North Somerset) and semi-routine and routine occupations (7% higher than national average and nearly 5% higher than North Somerset) is significant for all areas of planning. Lower income levels follow this difference, as do aspirations and expectations. House prices in Shepton Mallet have historically been lower than surrounding towns, and the town is often a local entry-point for people aspiring to own their own homes. Maintaining the towns niche as a lower cost entry point to local housing for our young people growing up and remaining in the town and also for those moving to the town for employment or seeking home ownership is important.

Geography and Transport

1.40 One of the significant features of the neighbourhood area is its geography and rural location. Poor public transport, narrow twisting roads both within and approaching the town, and steep hills leading up from the River Sheppey combine to create significant barriers to cycling and walking together with evidentially higher levels of car ownership. Cycling in particular is viewed by residents as a high-risk form of transport.

1.41 Significantly higher reliance than the national average on the car for personal and work transport is demonstrated in two specific findings which reflect both the geography of the town and its poor provision of public transport.

1.42 The first is the higher level of car ownership. The most recent data³ shows that overall car ownership is significantly higher for Shepton Mallet than the national average. 6% more households than the national average have two cars or vans and 3% have three or more.

1.43 The second is that 58.7% of the population drive to work, compared with the national average of 44.5%. That's a massive 14.2% increase above the national average. The other main method of getting to work is walking, at 13.1% compared with a national average of 7.6%.

1.44 Like many rural areas, the Town needs improved public

Socio-economic Classification (NS-SeC)

Shepton Mallet (England)

L1, L2 and L3: Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations **8.6%** (13.2%)

L4, L5 and L6: Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations **18.1%** (19.9%)

L7: Intermediate occupations **10.9%** (11.4%)

L8 and L9: Small employers and own account workers **11.3%** (10.6%)

L10 and L11: Lower supervisory and technical occupations **8.0%** (5.3%)

L12: Semi-routine occupations **14.3%** (11.3%)

L13: Routine occupations **18.7%** (12.0%)

L14.1 and L14.2: Never worked and long-term unemployed **5.7%** (8.5%)

L15: Full-time students **4.3%** (7.7%)

% of people aged 16 years and over

Method of travel to workplace

Shepton Mallet (England)

Work mainly at or from home **20.4%** (31.5%)

Underground, metro, light rail, tram **0.0%** (1.9%)

Train **0.0%** (2.0%)

Bus, minibus or coach **0.9%** (4.3%)

Taxi **0.0%** (0.7%)

Motorcycle, scooter or moped **0.4%** (0.5%)

Driving a car or van **58.7%** (44.5%)

Passenger in a car or van **4.5%** (3.9%)

Bicycle **1.0%** (2.1%)

On foot **13.1%** (7.6%)

Other method of travel to work **0.9%** (1.0%)

% of people aged 16 years and over in employment

Distance travelled to work

Shepton Mallet (England)

Less than 10km **39.2%** (35.4%)

10km to less than 20km **22.5%** (11.4%)

transport links, with a covered transport hub for buses and designated taxi spaces in Station Road.

Parking Issues

1.45 Whilst parking availability in the town centre is good, the level of car ownership creates a significantly higher demand for residential parking spaces, particularly in the larger estates. Both census data and anecdotal evidence suggest that the larger than average number of households that own or run vans or commercial vehicles will inevitably park them on-street, causing increased parking difficulties for residents.

1.46 The issue is yet further compounded by the net influx of people travelling from outside Shepton Mallet to work in the town. Shepton Mallet has one of the highest percentages of employment in the former Mendip area, and a significantly higher percentage of people travel more than ten kilometres into the town for work. Given the poor provision of public transport most of this travel is by car, creating greater pressure on parking in the town, which cascades out to the residential areas.

Household Deprivation and Regeneration⁷

1.47 Since the 2015 index was published, there has been a general shift towards higher levels of household deprivation across Somerset. The latest data for deprivation comes from the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Whilst the overall level of deprivation in Shepton Mallet is not significantly high, some parts of the town are in the top 30% most deprived in the country, particularly relating to income deprivation affecting children, and to crime.

Town Centre Regeneration

1.48 Like many towns, the pattern of shopping in Shepton Mallet has changed significantly over recent years. The switch to online shopping, the development of the Townsend Retail Park - a large Tesco and Retail centre on the southern edge of the old High Street which offers extensive parking and a 'one-stop' shopping experience - combined with a lack of free parking and restricted retail offer in the High Street, has led to a significant drop in High Street footfall.

1.49 Comparatively high business rates and poor standards of maintenance and repair by landlords, has added to the gradual but significant decline of the high street, with a growing number of empty shops. The main growth area has been the significant influx of Polish and Eastern European retail.

1.50 The town centre plays host to a weekly charter market every Friday which dates back to 1318. The Town Council has plans to take responsibility for the market from Somerset

⁷ https://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html#



Council and develop the market to become a key tool in the town centre's regeneration. A local community interest company has also instigated occasional Sunday markets that provide a wider range of products and aims to be a catalyst in enhancing footfall into the town centre at weekends.

1.51 The Town Council have identified this town centre area as in need of regeneration, and are currently developing new initiatives to bring more life back into the High Street, but it is a difficult challenge for the town. The Town Council intends to prepare to be bid ready for any future funding schemes that may come forward from central government, which can boost investment in the high street and wider town in general.

1.52 Population growth will also help the town centre economy; the planned 600 home Cannards Grave development together with the housing proposed in this plan (Policy 2) should increase both the business opportunities and footfall in the High Street, but there is a long journey to travel.

Tourism

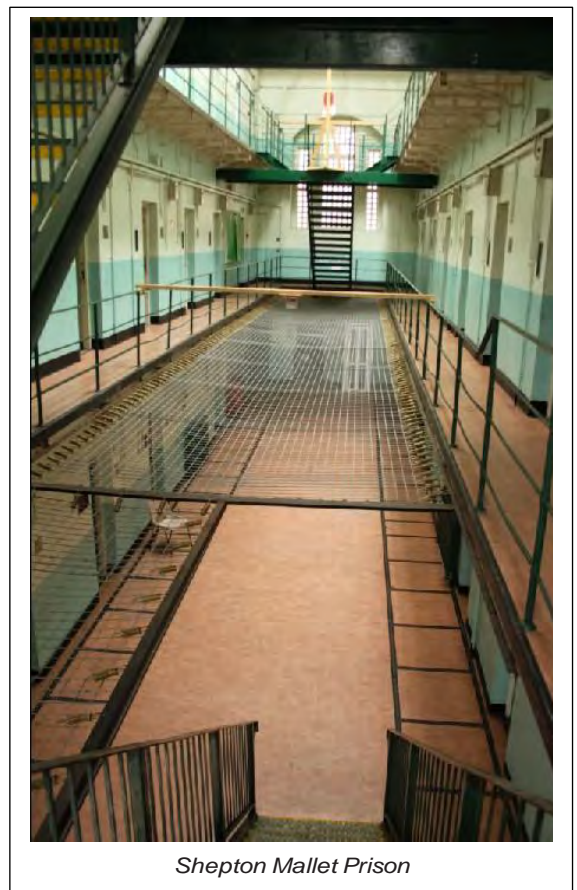
1.53 Tourism is seen as a key factor in economic regeneration, and opportunities for regeneration through tourism certainly exist, but economic decline has made tourism growth challenging. The Tourist Information Office closed in November 2021, but a new information centre is planned to open in the Town Library.

Shepton Mallet Prison

1.54 Shepton Mallet Prison housed its first prisoners in 1695, and remained a working prison until March 2013.

1.55 Despite proposals to turn it into housing⁸, the Prison has become one of the leading tourist attractions in this part of Somerset. We see the potential future development of the prison as a key driver for tourism growth and its link between the prison and the town centre. There may also be scope for multiple uses of the prison complex (in addition to tourism and housing) including as a location for film/ TV programme production.

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OS Shepton Mallet Town Council (0100051487)



Shepton Mallet Prison

⁸ Full planning permission was granted October 2016 reference 2016/2485/FUL for partial conversion (of the Listed Buildings) and partial redevelopment of the site (demolishing the unlisted buildings) to provide 146 dwellings, plus a community and heritage space, associated landscape and parking.

Brewing

1.56 The town is famous for its Cider production, and is the birthplace of the famous Showering's 'Babycham' drink. Brothers Cider is also based in Shepton Mallet, as are several small craft Cider breweries. The town is home to the 'Anglo- Bavarian Brewery' (1864), supposed by many to be the first lager beer production in England, but actually the producer of a renown 'Amber Ale'. A Cider Museum or 'Brewing Experience' is clearly one potential tourist draw.

The Historic River Sheppey

1.57 Perhaps less well-known is the role played by the River Sheppey. Long before Shepton Mallet became famous as a centre for brewing, it was known for its wool production and latterly woollen cloth in the 17th and 18th centuries. The historical importance of these industries has become more widely appreciated in the past few years, in part because of the Darshill and Bowlsh Heritage project and the series of historic walks it created through the town.

1.58 The riverside walks and historic buildings and remains (at least in part) represent a further long-term opportunity to provide a major attraction of the town.

Festivals

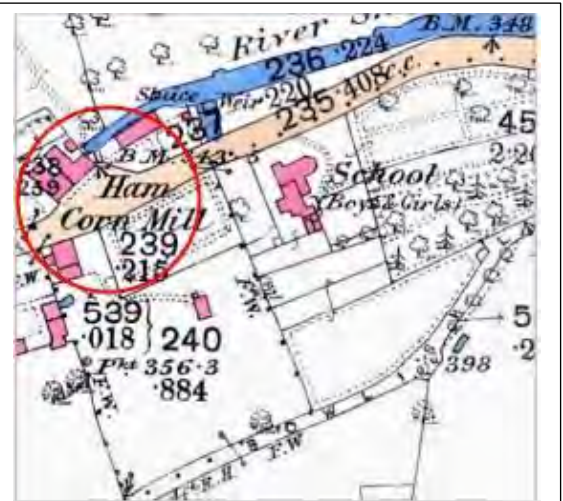
1.59 The town has developed a series of festivals in recent years. Thanks to the work of Shepton Mallet's 19th Century Horticulturalist James Allen, the town has become famous for producing the two most common varieties of Snowdrop in Britain.

1.60 The 'Snowdrop Festival' in early February, run by the town's Snowdrop Project CIC, is another potential tourism opportunity. The annual multi-day event highlights the contribution the snowdrop has made to the town via events, workshops and trails which bring many visitors to the town to experience the more than 500,000 snowdrops that have so far been planted in the town's environs to create an ever-expanding display of plants each year.

1.61 There is also a lantern festival held in December and most recently a walking festival in September that represent further opportunities for tourism development.



Shepton Mallet is the home of Babycham



1885 OS Map, Ham Mill and Mill House circled in red, river now culverted under the road



Snowdrop Festival 2023
<https://www.sheptonssnowdrops.org.uk/>

2. SECTION TWO

Policy Context

National Planning Policy and Guidance

2.1 National planning guidance comes primarily from the published National Planning Policy Framework⁹ (as revised December 2023), but can also include National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Ministerial Statements.

2.2 Para 16 of the NPPF makes clear that plans should:

- be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable;
- be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement;
- contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals;
- serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).

2.3 There is also topic-based advice, covering matters such as housing, economic development, town centres, community facilities, transport, design, climate change and flooding, and conserving and enhancing our natural and historic environment.

The Development Plan for the Neighbourhood Plan area

2.4 The Mendip Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) was adopted in 2014 and sets out the planning strategy for the former Mendip area for the period 2006 up to 2029. Part 2 (LPP2) was adopted in 2021, to provide specific site allocations and policies where appropriate.

2.5 LPP1 Core Policy 1 (Mendip Spatial Strategy) identifies Shepton Mallet as one of five principal settlements, where the majority of development will be directed. Core Policy 2 (Supporting the Provision of New Housing) identifies the housing target for Shepton Mallet as 60 dwellings per annum (1,300 new homes in total), and Core Policy 3 (Supporting Business Development and Growth) identifies a requirement for 14.4ha of employment land in the town, to help create around 1,300 new jobs.

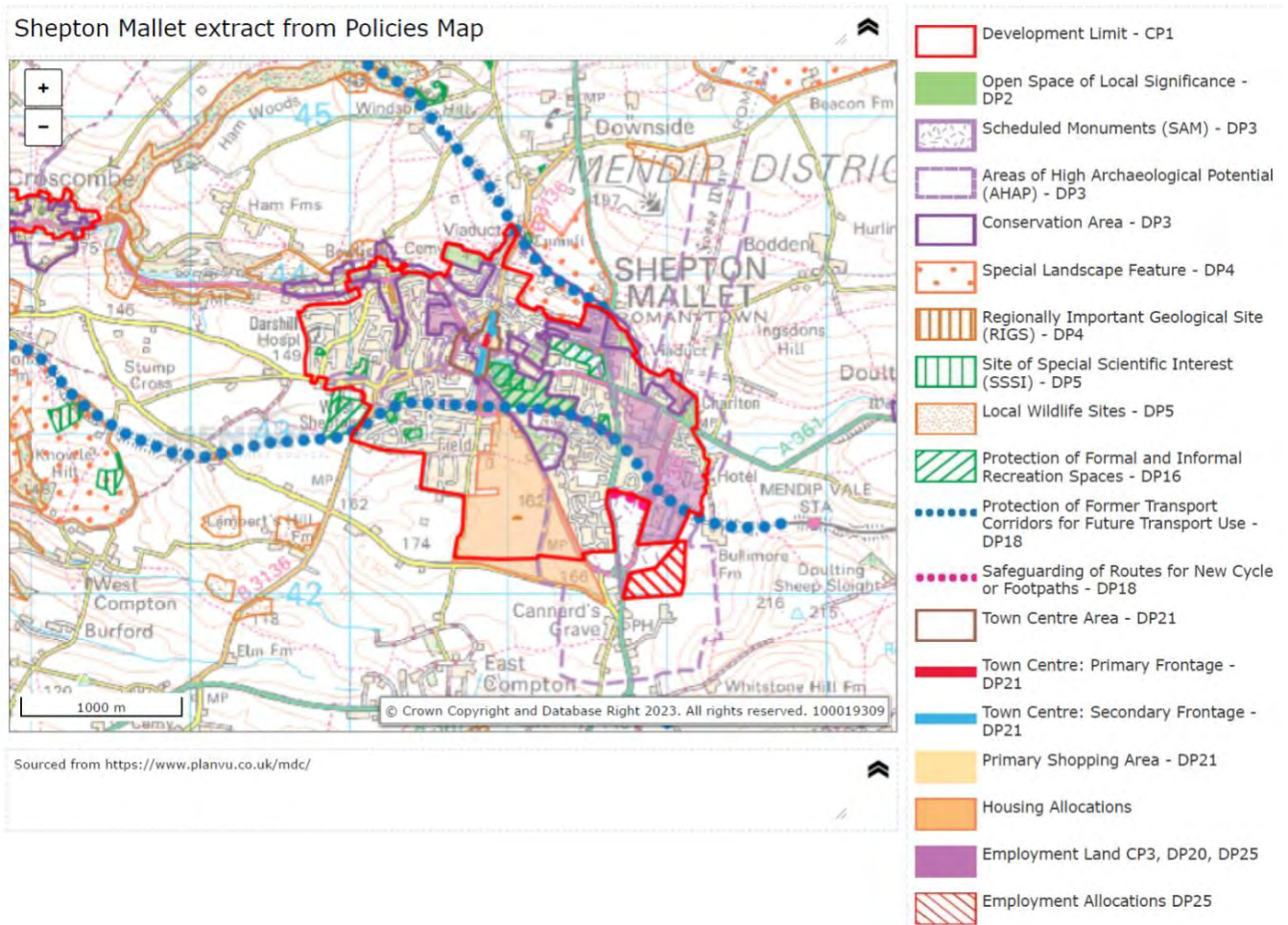
2.6 Core Policy 9 sets out in more detail the specific strategy for Shepton Mallet Town Strategy. This seeks to meet the housing and employment needs identified in Policies 2 and 3, and includes:

- the allocation of a strategic site adjacent to the western side of Cannard's Grave Road to deliver about 500 homes, substantial areas of open space and a new primary school;
- the potential for further land to provide additional housing to the west of this site, which could be released through Part 2 or through proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan that might be prepared;
- the allocation of 10 hectares of new employment land at the Bath and West Showground (just outside the neighbourhood area);

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

- the potential for further land to provide additional flexible modern workspace, which could be released through Part 2 or through proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan that might be prepared;
- the mixed-use regeneration of the town centre, potentially adding up to 5,000sqm of additional non-food retail floorspace, a similar amount of office/studio space, and public realm improvements;
- the requirement for around 6.5 hectares of new open space, to be secured from new development sites and other initiatives.

Map 2. Mendip Local Plan Policies Map – Shepton Mallet area



2.7 LPP2 did not propose the release of any further sites for development, noting that, with the expectation that the allocated land at Cannard's Grave Road would deliver in the region of 600 homes, and with consent having been granted for the refurbishment and redevelopment of the former Shepton Mallet Prison, housing needs were likely to be met.

2.8 The Minerals and Waste Plans for the area indicate that much of the NP area lies within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for Building Stone. This means that consideration will be given to whether this material could be quarried before development commences, if it would be worthwhile to do so.

The Emerging Local Plan

2.9 Work is now progressing on a new Somerset Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme, which sets the timetable for this, was published in October 2023. This does not anticipate the first draft of the plan to be available prior to April 2025, with adoption by March 2028. As such, it is not material to the consideration of this NP at this time.

Infrastructure Planning

2.10 The most recent Infrastructure Delivery Plan (May 2020) notes the following needs in relation to Shepton Mallet:

- the opening up of the former 'Strawberry Line' rail route between Cheddar, Wells and Shepton Mallet, and improved pedestrian and cycling links from the town centre to development on the outskirts of the town;
- mitigation works may be needed to manage surface water flows to reduce flood risks;
- a new primary school (as included as part of a masterplan for the Cannards Grave development), and funding for improvements at the town's secondary school;
- investment in the treatment centre and community hospital, with the possible relocation of the GP surgery (Grove House) to more modern premises on this site, subject to further feasibility testing;
- public realm improvements and additional open space including allotments
- the potential for further sport / leisure facilities (the latter had not been assessed at that time)

It suggests that additional infrastructure projects can be identified through the Neighbourhood Plan process. As the Mendip Infrastructure and Development Plan does not identify any transport issues specifically relating to Shepton Mallet, Shepton Mallet has undertaken its own Traffic and Transport report attached as an Appendix. Key recommendations from this are summarised in the section on Transport (see page 47).

2.11 In terms of flood-related infrastructure, the main responsibilities for managing flood risk falls between the Environment Agency and Somerset Council. The Environment Agency is responsible for flood risk management activities on main rivers (which includes the River Sheppey). Somerset Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), and takes the lead in managing local flood risks (i.e. risks of flooding from surface water, ground water and ordinary (smaller) watercourses). There are significant surface water flooding issues within parts of Shepton Mallet, and any development will need to identify appropriate mitigation measures in line with the Mendip Infrastructure Plan. It is important that developers work with these two agencies in terms of identifying possible risks and mitigation. Advice from Somerset Council to prospective developers is as follows:

- engage in pre-applications discussions to ensure that any mitigation can be incorporated into site design as early into the planning process as possible.
- ensure that surface water runoff rates are not increased beyond existing rates, and avoid developing in areas of existing flood risk.
- use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage rainfall runoff from the site. The design should address water quantity, water quality, biodiversity, and amenity. Where possible these features should be above ground and multifunctional, not only providing flood risk mitigation but also enhancing green infrastructure within the area. Please reference the West of England Sustainable Drainage Developer Guide¹⁰.
- any new development will also need to comply with the Land Drainage Act and an application will need to be made to Somerset Council for ordinary watercourse consent before making any changes to existing ordinary watercourses.

¹⁰ <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/sustainable-drainage-in-somerset/>

3. SECTION THREE

Vision and Objectives

Opportunities and Challenges for Shepton Mallet

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, both the opportunities and the challenges that face the community of Shepton Mallet. In summary these are:

- Ensuring strategic developments identified in the Mendip Local Plan and its planned revision are integrated into the existing community of Shepton Mallet so they do not function as separate from the existing developments.
- Ensuring that the strategic use of land enables the required housing, and particularly low-cost starter homes, to be provided within the timeframe of this plan.
- Ensuring the maximum possible use of sustainable energy through wind, ground source, and solar generation.
- Providing opportunities for sustainable custom self-build homes in new and existing developments.
- Re-imagining the High Street and Town Centre to create a vibrant mix of residential, retail, and commercial properties.
- Ensuring that the town's considerable building and agricultural heritage is valued, preserved, and used creatively to further the economic growth of the town.
- Developing the tourist offering of the town.
- Ensuring the strategic developments do not look and feel like 'bolt-ons' to the existing community by embracing the best examples of local design and layout.
- Recognising that alternatives to the private car as a means of travel need to be provided for, and their use encouraged, particularly in relation to walking and cycling.

Vision for Shepton Mallet

3.1 In consultation with the community, the Vision for Shepton Mallet in 14 years' time has sought to capture the community's views and aspirations for the Neighbourhood Area. It therefore forms the basis on which the strategic objectives and proposed policies have been formulated.

During the lifetime of our Neighbourhood Plan, Shepton Mallet is expected to grow considerably in size. It will have increased in energy and imagination and raised expectations in all sections of the community. Its economy will be strengthened through its contribution to the arts, through investment in tourism, food, and night- time economy, and through the proactive development of new business initiatives and improved training, skills, and employment offers. It continues to value its proximity to some of the most beautiful countryside in England, and good planning based on the opportunities and policies included in the Plan has meant that its rich character as one of Somerset's historic small market towns will have been firmly established.

Shepton Mallet will have successfully addressed the need for town centre regeneration. By re-purposing empty shops and buildings, we will have creatively re- imagined the high street as an exciting mix of residential, retail, and leisure activity, with a range of independent shops, businesses, and high-quality food outlets. The imaginative development of the Prison complex, with its emphasis on tourism, leisure, and the arts, along with the growth of a vibrant night-time economy, will have increased both footfall and the visual appeal of the town.

Sustainability through the use of solar, ground source, and wind power, together with ecological planning, has become a priority. Traffic management and pedestrian safety have improved. Greater

frequency of internal and external public transport, together with the development of walkways, cycle paths, and green routes into and around the town have encouraged people to leave their cars at home. This has reduced congestion and the pressure on the town's car parks and has improved the town centre as a place to stop and walk around. Its shops and businesses are thriving in both daytime and evening, increasing job opportunities for local people.

Access to the countryside and its many walking and cycling routes has been retained and improved, with both visitors and residents enjoying the high-quality environment and leisure activities. Local Green Spaces have been protected, and our biodiversity has been enhanced.

New health and leisure facilities have been developed, with more local recreational facilities and public meeting places being provided.

Some small-scale housing development will have taken place on infill sites, but following the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan it has matched the size, scale and character of the existing built environment and is meeting local housing needs. This has meant that neither younger nor older people need now to move away to find affordable or suitable housing.

A strong community spirit continues to exist, and new residents have successfully integrated into the town, giving everyone the opportunity to live a healthy, safe, and satisfying life.

OBJECTIVES FOR SHEPTON MALLET

Policies & Objectives Matrix

3.2 The vision statement is underpinned by a clear set of core objectives that seek to make a positive contribution to sustainable growth within the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Area, economically, environmentally, and socially.

3.3 The table below sets out the core objectives of the plan, and which of the Neighbourhood Plan's objectives will be supported by which of the plan's policies. There is some crossover between the objectives and the specific themed policy areas, and the Design Guide (DG):

Housing & Built Environment		Policy Ref
Objective Ref	Aim:	
	To support future growth whilst retaining the distinctive historic character of the town and maintaining the rural setting and views.	
	Objectives:	
	1 To allocate land for future development in Shepton Mallet to meet the identified needs of the community, including the provision of affordable homes	1 2 3
	2 To ensure new development is sustainable and helps to protect the distinctiveness, character and historic assets of Shepton Mallet	1 2 4 6 DG
	3 To ensure new houses are of high-quality design, in keeping with the established character of the area, and contain an appropriate mix of homes to meet local needs	4 5 DG
4 To provide affordable market homes and smaller houses/flats suited to those wishing to downsize, to secure their first home, or to live in the neighbourhood area because of local connections.	1 2 3	
5 To concentrate development within, or immediately adjacent to, existing	2 3	

settlement boundaries, and encouraging the re-use of suitable brownfield sites.

- 6** To provide appropriate levels of parking within new developments to ensure levels of road parking do not become a problem. **7 DG**

Transport

Aim:

To ensure that future growth mitigates for the increased traffic and vehicle usage by making provision for this within development design

Objectives:

- 7** To ensure new developments are planned to adoptable highways standards to minimise detrimental effects of poorly design roads **8**
- 8** To encourage walking and cycling by improving local transport links and public right of way routes within the neighbourhood area and to adjacent parishes, including off-road, green lanes to provide for safer travel and healthier lifestyles, and connecting to the Strawberry Line **9**
- 9** To improve the traffic management within the Town Centre to make it a more pleasant place for residents and visitors **9**
- 10** To help reduce carbon emissions by encouraging the use of public transport with improved services and facilities **9 10**
- 11** To provide adequate parking facilities are available for vehicles and cycles within residential developments **7**

Town Centre & Economy

Aim:

To regenerate and support the local economy by supporting businesses and encouraging expansion of local employment within settlements.

Objectives:

- 12** To preserve and enhance the historic core of the town, re-purposing empty shops and buildings, and creatively re- imagine the high street as an exciting mix of residential, retail, and leisure activity, with a range of independent shops, businesses, and high-quality food outlets. **11**
- 13** To support and enhance existing facilities and built heritage, and support initiatives to attract visitors and tourists to the town. **11**
- 14** To retain and encourage new employment opportunities within and adjoining the town to support the growing population. **11 12**

Environment

Aim:

To protect and enhance our green spaces, the wildlife, diverse landscapes and important views in the neighbourhood area.

Objectives:

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---------------------|
| 15 | To have a thriving community which maintains its green areas as a haven for wildlife, and well-being | 13 14
15 |
| 16 | To allocate areas which are of importance to the community as Local Green Space | 13 15 |
| 17 | To preserve important views within the neighbourhood area | 14 |
| 18 | To support proposals that result in the retention of natural habitats and provide attractive green spaces in new developments | 13 15 |

Health & Community

Aim:

To ensure a satisfactory and diverse range of local facilities appropriate for an expanding town

Objectives:

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 19 | To ensure the provision of appropriate and adequate health services to meet the needs of a changing and growing population. | 16 |
| 20 | To retain, expand and enhance the provision of community recreation, leisure, and social / cultural facilities. | 17 |

4. SECTION FOUR

Policies

Approach to Sustainable Development

4.1 Shepton Mallet is designated in the Mendip District Local Plan as one of the five principal settlements. As such, staged development within Shepton Mallet will be supported, not least as this will help the settlement to continue to provide for the services and facilities required by a growing community.

4.2 Early consultation with the Town Council and other community organisations is highly recommended, especially where the scheme is a major application (sites of 10 or more homes, or an area of 0.5ha or more).

4.3 Where possible, applications which support community facilities, public open space and the provision of affordable housing will generally be supported and encouraged, as these are essential to ensuring a healthy and inclusive society. Applications should consider these opportunities at an early stage of preparing their planning application.

4.4 Whilst it is important to make efficient use of land, this should not be at the expense of good design. The scale, density and design of development should celebrate what is good about Shepton Mallet, and should not be incongruous or badly impact on its immediate neighbours and local amenity.

4.5 Wherever possible, contributions for open space, highways and transportation, and social housing should be spent locally unless there are no viable options to do so.

Monitoring and Review

4.6 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to guide development up to 2034. However, the Town Council and its partners have committed to an early review, and anticipate that this will start no later than the second half of 2027.

4.7 The need for an early review is primarily because Somerset Council is likely to refresh the strategy for Shepton Mallet through the emerging Local Plan. The first draft of the Local Plan is expected to be published in the Spring of 2025, updated following consultation in the latter part of 2026, and independently examined in 2027/28. As such, it makes sense to start work on a review as the Local Plan strategy and housing targets become clearer.

4.8 Other factors that would also suggest the need for an early review, include unexpected delays in housing or employment land delivery, further decline in the town centre, and changes to national planning policies that could impact on how this plan works. The possible introduction of national development management policies could make some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies obsolete.

4.9 In considering exactly when to progress the review of this plan, the Town Council will monitor:

- Progress on the emerging Local Plan, and the proposed strategy for the town;
- Housing and employment land delivery (published by Somerset Council as part of their Local Plan monitoring);
- The level of shop vacancies and footfall in the town centre; and
- Significant changes in National Planning Policy.

Overview of Policies

4.10 There are a total of 17 policies addressing five topic areas. The topics covered are:

- housing and the built environment
- transport
- town centre and economy
- the environment
- health and community.

4.11 Each of the five topic areas gives some local context, in terms of the problems, issues, concerns, objectives, and aspirations of the local community. The individual policies and supporting text then follow:

- the policy provides the wording which should be understood and followed by developers when proposing new development, and by decision-maker (Somerset Council, or the Planning Inspector on appeals) when considering proposals.
- the supporting text is intended to explain the reasons behind the policy, what the policy hopes to achieve, and how the policy is expected to be implemented.

4.12 Not all of the policies will be relevant to every type of development, but anyone proposing development in Shepton Mallet will be expected to ensure that they consider and address the policies that are relevant to their proposals, so that the plan is implemented successfully to achieve the local community's objectives.

Housing & Built Environment Policies

Aim:

To support future growth whilst retaining the distinctive historic character of the town and maintaining the rural setting and views.

Objectives:

To allocate land for future development in Shepton Mallet to meet the identified needs of the community, including the provision of affordable homes

To ensure new development is sustainable and helps to protect the distinctiveness, character and historic assets of Shepton Mallet

To ensure new houses are of high-quality design, in keeping with the established character of the area, and contain an appropriate mix of homes to meet local needs

To provide affordable market homes and smaller houses/flats suited to those wishing to downsize, to secure their first home, or to live in the neighbourhood area because of local connections.

To concentrate development within, or immediately adjacent to, existing settlement boundaries, and encouraging the re-use of suitable brownfield sites.

To provide appropriate levels of parking within new developments to ensure levels of road parking do not become a problem.

4.13 Our Community Profile in Section 1 of this plan includes information on the growth of the town between 2011 and 2021, with many more households forming than the associated population increase, suggesting a downwards trend in household size, and a market dominated by households of 1 or 2 people. The likely increase in older people (as people are living longer), means that the need for more suitable homes for older residents will continue. The number of younger residents needing starter homes is difficult to predict, as there are many factors impacting on this, such as the number of young people currently in education who wish to remain in the town, the number of jobs likely to be created that will attract workers to locate here, and national economic circumstances impacting on house prices and affordability.

4.14 The adopted Local Plan provides the basis for housing number in Shepton, and is set at a minimum of 1,300 homes during the Local Plan period (to 2029). There is no published housing target for the period beyond 2029, but this neighbourhood plan covers the period to 2034. The most recent published assessment of Local Housing Needs for the former Mendip area also suggests that there is a shortfall in the housing land supply across the area.

4.15 The largest development site, which was allocated through the Local Plan, is land off Cannards Grave Road. This has been subject to an application for outline planning permission dating back since 2018, but this stalled for a number of reasons, not least the need to address the nutrient neutrality issues impacts on development sites across the Somerset area. In early 2024 amended plans were submitted, confirming the developer's intent to progress this site and address the issues that had stalled the application. The proposals include a more detailed masterplan to demonstrate delivery of up to 620 residential units (of which 30% would be affordable housing types), together with a new care home, land for a new primary school, a new local centre and open space.

4.16 There are acknowledged benefits of bring forward further housing, such as the potential for this to attract more investment into the town centre, invest in our local infrastructure, and provide more opportunities for the delivery of affordable housing. Having more than one site allocated for

development also provides greater flexibility for housebuilders and better competition in the housing market to help keep house prices more affordable. The site to the west of the Cannards Grave Road, previously identified as an area of potential future growth in the Local Plan, has therefore been allocated for development.

- **Policy 1 deals with the amount and type of housing needed in our area** (housing mix was previously contained in Policy 5 of the pre-submission draft).
- **Policy 2 sets out the proposals for the new site allocation on land west of the Cannards Grave Road**, that is needed to help meet our housing requirements going forward, taking into account the issues and opportunities relevant to this site. It is acknowledged that further sites may need to be added through a future review, when the new Local Plan has been prepared.
- **Policy 3 then re-examines and adjusts the town's development limits** to formally recognise the proposed development areas as part of the town (this was previously covered in Policy 5 in the pre-submission draft)

4.17 The final policies in this section deal with matters of design (previously covered in policies 3, 4, 6 and 7). National planning policy makes it clear that neighbourhood plans can and should contain policies to ensure development is designed to a high quality and responds to the heritage and distinctive character of that area. These should be developed with the input of local residents and developers.

"Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development."

"Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents which use visual tools such as design guides and codes."

Quotes from NPPF paragraphs 132 and 139

4.18 National policy sets out some key principles for planning policies and decisions¹¹. It expects that our planning system should ensure development:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- is sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;
- helps to establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- makes the best use of a site and includes an appropriate mix of development (including green and other public space, local facilities and transport networks); and
- creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

4.19 One of the reasons that people are concerned about new development, is based on what has 'gone wrong' in the past, through poor design. The Design Guide, produced for the town as part of the neighbourhood plan process, has helped identify those features that reinforce the town's distinct character and identity. Other issues and concerns have fed into the policies, such as the quality of

¹¹ Paragraph 135, NPPF

private spaces such as gardens, and issues relating to parking.

4.20 The community of Shepton Mallet recognises the need to achieve balance; on one hand, the historic character and interest of the town (including those elements highlighted in the brief history of Shepton Mallet), that are reflected in the use of traditional materials and styles, and on the other hand, the need to innovate in order to address wider issues such as energy efficiency and resilience is also seen as vital to the community's future.

4.21 The design-related policies have been subdivided as follows:

- **Policy 4 sets out general principles of layout, scale, massing and density** (this was previously covered in Policies 3 and 4 in the pre-submission draft, together with the design guidance)
- **Policy 5 sets out general principles of built forms, architectural styles / detailing and use of materials** (this was previously covered in Policy 3 in the pre-submission draft, but primarily through reference to the design guidance)
- Policy 6 explains the importance of the Conservation Area and other historic buildings and features within the town (this was previously covered in Policies 3 and 6 in the pre-submission draft).

4.22 Matters relating to green spaces and pedestrian / cycle routes are covered in the sections on Environment and Transport.

Policy 1. Housing Requirement

- i. The housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan area is set at a minimum of 1,059 dwellings for the period 2014 to 2034. This is expected to be met through:
 - 223 dwellings completed in the period to 2023;
 - at least 600 dwellings on the strategic Local Plan allocation at Cannards Grave Road;
 - 32 dwellings on sites with planning permission as at 1 April 2023;
 - 25 dwellings through the redevelopment of the Gas Depot off Cowl Street and land at Shepton Mallet Football Club;
 - at least 150 dwellings on site SHEP092, Land West of Cannards Grave, as allocated through Policy 2
 - at least 29 additional dwellings through infill development opportunities on brownfield sites within the town
- ii. The release of further sites outside the settlement limits will be considered through an early review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- iii. The housing mix, in terms of size and tenure, should have regard to evidence of local need and the character and constraints relating to the site.
 - On major development sites (of 10 or more homes / greater than 0.5ha) the mix of housing should provide at least 30% of the homes as affordable housing, of which a third (10% of the total number of homes) should be for affordable home ownership, with preference given to First Homes. The size of affordable housing should seek to meet local needs with reference to the affordable housing register (based on those indicating a preference to live in the town). Open market housings should primarily deliver 2 and/or 3 bedroom homes, and should also include designs likely to appeal to older residents looking to down-size (and particularly where the sites are in easy reach of local facilities). Care home accommodation will also be supported to provide for the needs to the town, including 'step down' beds for short-term nursing care needs.
 - On minor development sites (of no more than 9 dwellings / 0.5ha) at least 50% of homes should be 2 and/or 3 bedroom homes, unless this would be incompatible with the character of the area or would mean that the development would not be viable.
- iv. Given the sensitivity of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar to elevated phosphorus loading and resulting eutrophication, all residential developments contributing to the total wastewater burden in the Neighbourhood Plan area must demonstrate phosphorus neutrality. Developments with an identified phosphorus surplus, will be required to provide appropriate mitigation measures (e.g., wetlands, reedbeds) in agreement with the Local Planning Authority and Natural England. The requirement for mitigation will be commensurate with the scale of development and might be achieved strategically, particularly in the case of smaller developments.

Reasoned Justification for Policy One

4.23 The housing requirement for the area 'carries forward' the equivalent rate of development that was agreed through the Local Plan Part 1, based on the assessment of housing need at that time. This is based on at least 1,300 dwellings over 23 years to 2029, the equivalent of 56.5 dwellings every year. Given the adopted Local Plan underestimates the level of housing need (when assessed against the Government's Standard Methodology for calculating housing need), it is quite likely that the housing requirement for the town will need to be higher, but until the Somerset Plan is further forward, it is unclear what the revised housing target will be as this depends on how it is apportioned across the county. On this basis, an early review is proposed, which is expected to start no later than the second quarter of 2027. This is because the Local Plan will have been submitted for examination by then, and will include an updated housing target for the area, as well as an updated strategy for the town.

4.24 The fact that the housing requirement included in this plan may need to be increased should not be a problem, and will be resolved through the review. The target is expressed as a 'minimum' not a 'ceiling', and there are other brownfield sites within the town that may still contribute to the supply. The assumption of the amount of development that will come forward on brownfield, infill sites relatively modest, and does not include the Commercial Road and Ostry car park (if the loss of parking would not harm the viability of the town centre), and potentially part of the Prison site (excluding those parts of the Prison that have proven to be a key attraction to tourists).

4.25 The site allocation contained in Policy 2 means that residents, landowners, housebuilders and service providers can have a greater degree of certainty about the areas where further development will be supported in the short term. It has been tested against alternative options as part of the environmental checks, and the landowner (the Duchy of Cornwall) has confirmed that they would be willing to work with the local community to bring it forward for development.

4.26 In terms of housing mix, in 2016 the former Mendip District Council, working jointly with other Somerset authorities, produced a Strategic Housing Market Assessment¹² (SHMA) that made a number of recommendations on the appropriate proportion of housing types and tenures, as shown in the following table:

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Open Market Housing	5 – 10%	30 – 35%	40 – 45%	15 – 20%
Social / Affordable Rented homes	35 – 40%	35 – 40%	20%	5%
Starter homes and other forms of affordable housing	15 – 20%	50 – 55%	25 – 30%	0 – 5%

4.27 More recent analysis undertaken by AECOM on behalf of the Town Council, as part of the work on the Neighbourhood Plan, broadly confirms the potential needs in terms of house sizes as follows:

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Housing sizes	17%	25%	45%	13%

4.28 Feedback from the community of Shepton Mallet has reinforced the message that the local need was very much for smaller properties, both for first-time buyers and for older downsizers. This is supported by the evidence from the Census, which shows that all-pensioner households now account for more than 21% of all households, and that the number of homes where there are families with only adult children living at home is just over 10%. Both of these figures have increased compared with the 2001 Census data. All of this evidence points towards the need to focus more efforts on the delivery of 2- and 3-bedroom homes, excepting that there is limited need for larger 4+ bedroom homes. There is a clear need for 1 bedroom homes, and it is expected that this will primarily be for affordable housing and to meet some of the needs for older person's accommodation (including the need for 'step-down' beds with nursing care, as noted in the section on Health and Wellbeing). Whilst large, modern apartment blocks (the typical solution for 1 bedroom properties) are not a good fit with the historic town of Shepton Mallet, there are examples of larger-scale historic buildings within the town that could form the basis of more appropriately designed apartment buildings.

4.29 In terms of what constitutes a home likely to appeal to older residents looking to down-size, local residents generally consider single storey homes (bungalows) to be most suited. Age-friendly housing should have a practical layout suited for people with limited mobility, including easy access for storage, the homes will normally have smaller or communal gardens that are easier to maintain, and should be well located in terms of access to social and community facilities that encourage and support health and well-being in old age. Higher standards in terms of wheelchair accessibility and options that allow greater flexibility for care provision can also increase the success of such schemes. Further guidance on appropriate design is provided in the HAPPI principles¹³, covering:

¹² https://legacy.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset_final_shma_oct2016_revised.pdf Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton Deane Strategic Housing Market Assessment, October 2016 J G Consulting.

¹³ <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

- Space and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings and bicycles
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'

4.30 For those that may be concerned about reducing the amount of larger homes built - the provision of starter home and smaller properties designed to be attractive to older residents looking to down-size, should free up larger family homes within the existing housing stock. Therefore building fewer family homes should not be a problem. In a Parish which has both primary and secondary schools, addressing the housing needs of families remains important.

4.31 The adopted Local Plan (Policy DP11) expects that 30% of homes should be in affordable tenures, with a tenure split of 80:20 between social rented housing and other forms of affordable housing. The more recent 2016 SHMA findings suggest that this was reasonable (noting that the provision of affordable rented as opposed to social rented homes may well need to be supplemented by housing benefit), and added that up to 20% of new homes could be provided as Starter Homes, using the suggested 20% discount to their open market value (in order to minimise possible viability issues on the delivery of other affordable tenures). A new version of this – called First Homes - was introduced by Government in 2021, and is based on a 30% discount (which is carried forward in subsequent sales), with the first sale of the home being capped at no higher than £250,000. The AECOM work suggests that there is likely to be more demand for affordable home ownership products than that for affordable rented accommodation, but that this 'need' is not perhaps as pressing given that many of these can afford and may well be in suitable rented accommodation. They calculate that a discount of 30% would be affordable for households on an average income purchasing an entry-level house, but those on a lower income (i.e. in the lower quartile of earners) would require a much higher level of discount to afford a First Home, which would adversely impact on viability.

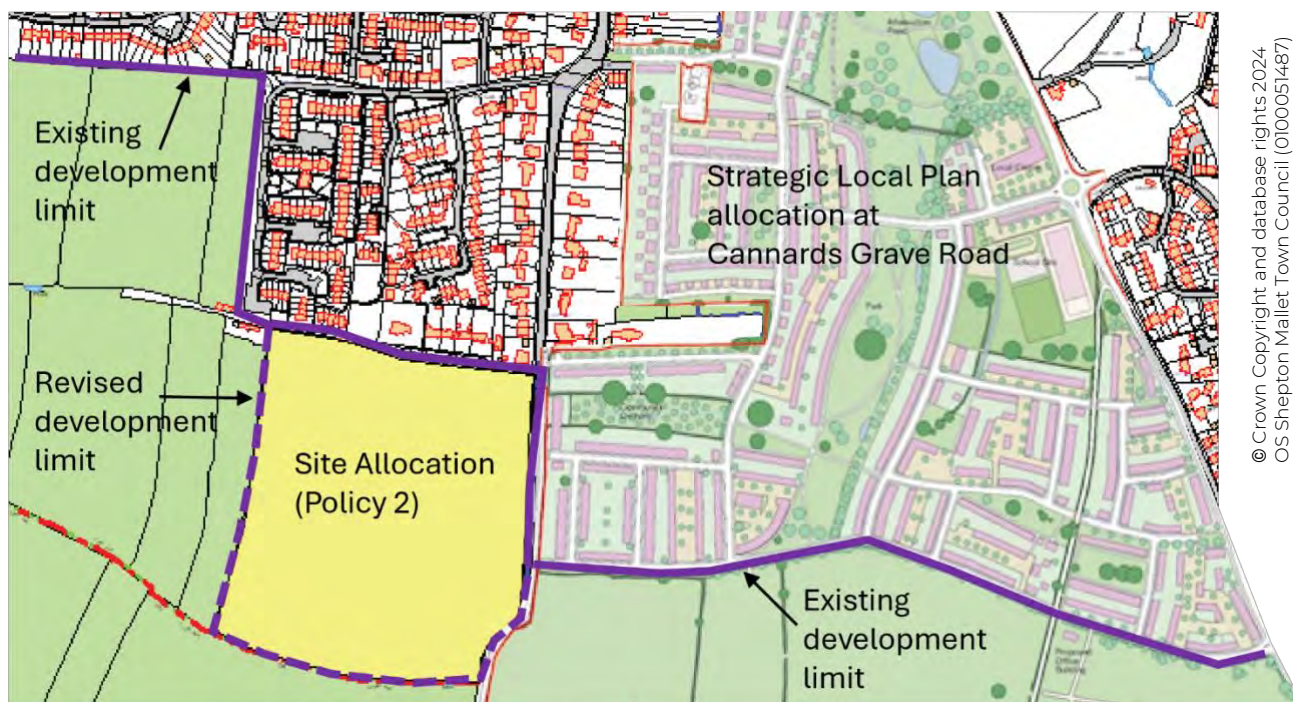
4.32 National planning policy specifically recognises the need for planning policies to cater for older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); as well as a broad range of affordable housing options. It expects that, in general, housing on major development should include at least 10% that of the total homes as affordable home ownership / starter homes, although there can be exceptions to this, such as on sites specifically delivering self-build homes, or specialist accommodation for a group of people with specific needs.

4.33 The final criterion of the policy relates to the recommendation from the Habitats Regulations Assessment. This clarifies that the requirement for residential developments to demonstrate phosphorus neutrality will apply, as without such mitigation further housing is unlikely to pass the stringent legal tests that protect our internationally important wildlife sites. The Government is continuing to work with a range of bodies to provide workable solutions that will address these needs in a simpler way, including substantial improvements to wastewater treatment plants.

4.34 Applicants for major housing development should also be aware of the requirement in Policy 16 to consult with the local healthcare providers (the NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board and Somerset Foundation Trust) in relation to the adequacy of the current healthcare facilities to meet the needs of a growing population. This may highlight the need for S106 funding where this is necessary to ensure that appropriate healthcare infrastructure is secured and provided in a timely fashion so as to avoid the existing services being overwhelmed.

Policy 2. Site Allocation

- i. Land west of Cannards Grave, measuring approximately 7.6ha (excluding the reservoir site) and shown on Map 3, is allocated for mixed use development to deliver:
 - at least 150 dwellings, in line with the housing mix requirements set out in Policy 1 of this Plan;
 - small scale workspace / flexible accommodation for business / community uses that would be compatible with residential areas;
 - about 2ha of public open greenspace and green corridors through the site, designed for a range of users of all ages and abilities to enjoy, as well as for flood risk, landscape and biodiversity benefits;
 - landscape buffers to the north and east boundaries, to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties, and within and on the outer limits of the development to ensure that the site .
- ii. The main vehicular access should avoid Middleton Road, Compton Road and Ridge Lane, and may be provided via the strategic Local Plan allocation at Cannards Grave Road to the west, and/or a new route connecting west, to the B3136. Temporary access (for a modest amount of housing at the start of the project) may be possible from the northeast corner via Compton Road, subject to agreement with Somerset Council as the Highways Authority, if required to assist in the timely delivery of this development.
- iii. Pedestrian and cycle access should be provided linking to existing routes into the town centre, and to local amenities and facilities including those proposed on the strategic Local Plan allocation at Cannards Grave Road.
- iv. A flood risk and drainage strategy will be required, to determine how surface water run-off will be managed so that it does not exceed greenfield run-off rates. This should include evidence of liaison with South West Water regarding any implications arising from the future retention and potential expansion needs of the covered reservoir.
- v. The design of this development should be in accordance with Policies 4 – 9 on design and transport, with further reference to the Design Codes Appendix of this Plan as appropriate.



Map 3. Policy 2 site allocation and Policy 3 settlement boundary amendment
Showing potential to link through the Cannards Grave Road development (provisional masterplan shown)

Reasoned Justification for Policy Two

4.35 This site allocation is required to meet the housing needs of the town (now looking ahead to 2034), to complement and potentially be delivered alongside the larger strategic site at Cannard's Grave Road, whose start has been delayed. It is one of a number of options that were put forward through the call for sites that informed the adopted Local Plan. The original site included a separate parcel of land further to the west, which is not part of this allocation (and was not included in the proposed Future Growth Area originally identified in Part 1 of the Local Plan). Alternative sites were also considered through the Strategic Environmental Appraisal, with the alternative large sites (off Old Wells Road) likely to have a similar degree of impact (and therefore no more preferable). The site was chosen by the community as their preferred option, because:

- it is well-connected to adjoining developments and its location and links should ensure the least impact on traffic growth in the historic centre;
- it has the potential to satisfy the range of different housing needs identified in this plan;
- it can incorporate green corridors and open space to ensure that the site is visually and physically integrated with the wider countryside;
- it should avoid the potential flooding issues that are more likely to arise on more low-lying sites closer to the River Sheppey.

4.36 The main emphasis for this site is on the delivery of housing (given the provision of employment and community facilities elsewhere within the town), however the provision of some premises that can readily adapt to a range of community or workplace uses, compatible with a largely residential area, is also encouraged. This recognises that a mix of uses has the potential to create activity and opportunities for interaction that are part of daily life, supporting and enriching the community. This could include a community venue if such provision is not forthcoming on the strategic site as part of the planned local centre there.

4.37 At an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare, 150 dwellings can be readily achieved on the site, with a surplus of 2.6ha. This provides scope for some other uses, and a healthy supply of green space which can be utilised for a range of purposes: green corridors, open spaces, landscape buffers and flood mitigation. As a guide it is suggested that about 2ha of land should be used for this purpose, which together with adjoining land has the potential to deliver a local natural greenspace in line with Natural England suggested standards¹⁴, or a range of smaller, doorstep greenspaces.

4.38 One of the main concerns put forward by residents was the potential increase of vehicular traffic along existing roads that are unsuited to larger volumes, due to their narrow width (taking into account typical levels of on-street parking) and residential or rural character (such as Compton Road, Middleton Lane and Rigg Lane). Whilst pedestrian and cycle routes should connect reasonably directly into the town centre, it is proposed that an alternative vehicular access is created, with the obvious solution being via the strategic Local Plan allocation at Cannards Road to the west. The early review of this Plan is also likely to explore options for further development to the south side of the town, that may provide an eastward alternative access.

4.39 Flood risk is a concern to many residents, and whilst this site is some distance from the River Sheppey and areas known for surface water flooding, it is on a slight ridge and could potentially create run-off impacting properties to the north. It is possible to ensure that run-off rates are kept to existing levels (such as through the use of some of the green corridors and spaces for water attenuation), and the strategy for this therefore needs to be considered alongside the green space strategy for the site. The other factor is the future requirements for the covered reservoir that is situated within the centre of the site, and ensuring that this resource is not harmed by the surrounding development.

¹⁴ Appendix 2 - Accessible Greenspace Standards, Green Infrastructure Standards for England, January 2023 Version:1.1 <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Green%20Infrastructure%20Standards%20for%20England%20Summary%20v1.1.pdf>

Policy 3. Built Up Area Boundary

- i. The town's development limits, which define the area within which the growth of the town is expected to be contained, is updated to include the proposed site allocation, as shown in Map 3.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Three

4.40 LPP1 Core Policy 1, which sets out the spatial strategy for the Mendip area, explains the purpose of the settlement / development limits proposed through the Local Plan. These boundaries serve an important purpose, to define the town (in terms of how planning policies are applied), and in doing so ensure that the release of greenfield sites is managed carefully, so that appropriate previously developed sites within existing settlement limits is encouraged to come forward (as these tend to be the most sustainable locations for development).

4.41 The policy goes on to make clear that *"Any proposed development outside the development limits, will be strictly controlled and will only be permitted where it benefits economic activity or extends the range of facilities available to the local communities."*

4.42 It is therefore important to revise the boundary in order to take account of Policy 2, which allocates a site that is current on the edge (but outside) the limits. This will require a minor change of the boundary to include this parcel of land, as shown on Map 3. By controlling the built-up area boundary, the character of Shepton Mallet as a small market town should be maintained, as it should prevent the town from sprawling inadvertently into its rural surrounds.

Policy 4. Design Principles – layout, scale, massing and density

- i. All types of development are expected to contribute towards the local distinctiveness of the town through appropriate layout, scale, massing and density, that respect its character and the wider rural setting of the town.
- ii. The layout and orientation, scale and massing, and resulting density of development should respond to its local context, having regard to the character of adjacent buildings, spaces, connections and skyline, including:
 - how the site is approached (i.e. views from key junctions and the legibility of entrance points) – which should be clear and attractive;
 - the potential to create connections into nearby pedestrian / cycle routes – to maximise opportunities to create a joined-up network of safe and attractive routes,
 - the proximity and setting and nearby Listed Buildings and other heritage assets – as detailed in Policy 6,
 - importance of trees and landmarks on the skyline and along existing and potential view corridors, and how it will impact on wider views.
- iii. The height of new buildings should respond to the character of the area, taking into account the local topography, importance of views, interest / features on the skyline, and the scale of adjoining buildings. Building exceeding the equivalent of 3 storeys are rare, but buildings of up to 4 storeys may be supported if suitably designed and located add to the visual appeal of a development, for example as a focal point or landmark building punctuating a new neighbourhood centre, community facility or village centre/green.
- iv. The layout and resulting density of development should ensure the retention of important trees and hedgerows, and make provision for planting of new trees and shrubs that are indigenous and, where appropriate, likely to support local wildlife, with their scale and location taking into account how these can best impact on the street environment and skyline, and views towards the town from the wider countryside. The creation of barren streets where there is little or no planting maintained should be avoided.
- v. All dwellings are expected to have a rear garden or private amenity space, appropriate to the size and type of dwelling and the character of the area, and taking into account the topography and relationship with adjoining buildings to ensure that these areas receive sunlight and are not unduly overlooked.
- vi. Sufficient external amenity space should be provided for refuse and recycling storage, car and bicycle parking, to ensure a high quality and well managed street environment. In particular, dedicated off-street parking provision for residential properties should preferably be provided without the loss of existing front gardens.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Four

4.43 As part of the work underpinning this plan, the community has developed the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide. This identifies the design principles and issues that are important to the people of Shepton Mallet, and which should shape the approach to new design. Matters of layout, scale and massing, and resulting densities, are summarised over the following pages.

4.44 This policy does not seek to duplicate matters that are already covered in Building Regulations, or under policies in the adopted Local Plan. This includes the matters such as requirements for electric vehicle car charging points. Design guidance relating to open spaces / green corridors, route corridors and the wider public realm is contained in Policy 15.

Layout and density

4.45 The layout of any development influences the extent to which there are opportunities for planting and green spaces, the density of development and efficient use of land, and also how the site works in a practical sense – both in terms of finding your way around, and connecting to other areas. The layout, together with the scale and massing of buildings, can also impact on local views and the perceived relationship between buildings, and with the wider countryside. It is important that the layout and density of development responds to all of these factors. For development proposals where a Design and Access Statement is required, this analysis should be provided within that document.

4.46 As part of the consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan, some residents expressed concern over the density of recent housing development, saying that it was too high. A review of densities across the town (based on 200m grid square averages) suggests that these vary considerably, from about 20 dwellings per hectare (dph) in many of the outlying areas and older residential estates, around 30dph in areas to the west of the town centre (between St Peters Road and the Townsend Shopping Park) and other pockets (such as Allyn Saxon Drive and the southern end of the High Street), with just one part of Tadley Acres - around the central greenspace – together with outlying parts of the town centre and the area around Draycott Road / Meadow Rise achieving 40dph. The highest density (over 60dph) can be found in the area around Tipcote and Waterloo Road, north of the town centre. With such a range of densities, this plan does not seek to set specific density levels, but instead focus on the layout and scale of buildings and integration of green spaces (including those that could accommodate large trees) and gardens as key elements of design. In general, a density of 35 – 40dph should be achievable and make efficient use of land, but this will depend on the mix of dwellings, requirements for parking and green space.

4.47 To achieve good design, it is important that proposals retain a soft, landscaped edge around the town, in keeping with its 'rural' feel as a small, market town set within the surrounding countryside. Trees, hedges and vegetation should be incorporated to improve the street scene and keep the rural feel of the area.

4.48 All dwellings are expected to have a rear garden or private amenity space, as these are important for a whole host of reasons: health and well-being (opportunities to play, to grow your own food, and to get some fresh air and sunshine); wildlife (particular where wildlife-friendly features and boundaries are used, and where there is sufficient space for planting); microclimate (where planting can provide shade, and plant species can absorb air pollution); and because gardens are an important part of the character in the town. The amount of garden space will depend on the size and type of dwelling and the character of the area. For example, most of the larger homes in the town (with three stories) tend to be set in more substantial grounds, and as a result these do not dominate the street. As a rough rule of thumb, a rear garden length of around 7 - 10 metres should generally be appropriate in most cases, those matters such as topography, shadowing (from buildings and landscape features) and privacy will also have a bearing in relation to neighbouring developments.

4.49 The consultations identified the most popular street scenes within the town as being those that incorporate tree planting within both sides of the street, sometimes within grass verges, along with pavements wide enough for all purposes (walking and cycling etc). Front gardens should also be considered, and where possible and appropriate to the character of the area, they should be included within the designs. However there is a risk that these get paved over (sometimes for convenience, and sometimes to provide parking), which can result in a more barren street environment. Looking at places like Tadley Acres, shorter front gardens that are more suited to shrubs (and cannot readily be paved to accommodate a car) appear to be more successful.

4.50 In considering the layout of development and how buildings are positioned within the plot, consideration also needs to be given to the placement of:

- Bin stores and recycling facilities – so that these are readily accessible but, in the case of private facilities, these should not be too obvious in public views;
- Cycle stores / racks;

- Parking provision (this is covered in more detail in Policy 7).

Scale and Massing

4.51 The scale and massing of buildings will need to take account of the views into and out of the area, the nature of the street (and in particular adjoining buildings) as well as the skylines created and the importance of trees and other features that can be seen on the skyline. Given the gently undulating topography of Shepton Mallet, development needs to fit into the landscape without intruding on the views of the surrounding Mendip Hills.

4.52 In Shepton Mallet, houses are mainly 1 – 2½ storeys high, with a small minority of 2½ – 3 storey town houses and apartments. Where there are 3 storey detached buildings, this has generally been indicative of their 'higher status' historically, with such buildings set in generous grounds proportionate to the dwelling. As a general rule, new buildings should primarily be mainly 1 – 2½ storeys high, however buildings of up to 4 storeys may be accommodated, as taller, visually appealing buildings can act as a landmark or focal point in a development. Variation in the size and scale of buildings, from single storey to three storey townhouses, is encouraged to enhance local character by providing variety and difference as opposed to homogeneity. However, new development should take care to fit with the existing local scene and not dominate it.

4.53 Careful consideration will need to be given to the incorporation of 1-bedroom apartments within the design of developments, as the creation of large, modern apartment blocks would not be appropriate to the character of the town

Policy 5. Design Principles – built forms, styles, detailing, and use of materials

- i. All types of development are expected to contribute towards the local distinctiveness of the town, through the careful consideration of built forms, styles, detailing, and use of materials.
- ii. Development should:
 - Incorporate a variety of house and other building types and forms in keeping with the character of the town, with flexibility in design (that allows buildings to readily adapt to meet differing needs) encouraged;
 - Create a street frontage that is interesting and harmonious, through the composition and rhythm of frontages, building types and sizes and landscaping / boundary treatments;
 - Have roof forms reflecting the variety and typical range of pitch gradient relating to the materials and proposed use - solar roof panels should be incorporated on new built properties as standard where the orientation and built character as visible from the street allow;
 - Pay attention to the degree of overhang and decoration at the eaves, which should be appropriate to the character of the town and style / importance of the building within the street scene;
 - Incorporate and position chimneys appropriate to the building typology, designed to have a practical function where possible;
 - Reinforce the characteristic variation in architectural styles, have regard to the character of adjacent buildings and spaces, and importance of the building as a potential landmark / meeting point;
 - Avoid creating an obvious pastiche from a mix of previous styles;
 - Ensure doors and windows are suitably designed and recessed to reinforce local character, as well as contribute to the energy efficient use of the building (reducing potential for heat loss / overheating);
 - Carefully incorporate modern day living requirements (such as meter boxes and car charging points) to ensure that these do not clutter or distract from the architectural style of the building, and any lighting / signage are positioned and designed to be effective.
- iii. The choice of materials must be of a texture and hue that is appropriate to the area, and should also reflect the hierarchy / importance of the building and be compatible with its architectural style. The use of different materials within the building and street should highlight landmark / important buildings, and create visual interest without upsetting the overall harmony of the street scene. Regard will also be had to sustainability of the materials used, taking into account their local availability; production; environment performance and life span / durability.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Five

4.54 In addition to matters impacting on the layout of the site, more detailed issues on the type of built form, architectural styles and detailing, together with the choice and use of materials, also feature in the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide. These matters are summarised over the following pages.

4.55 This policy does not seek to duplicate matters that are already covered in Building Regulations, or under policies in the adopted Local Plan. This includes requirements for fibre-optic cable connectivity for broadband; accessibility standards making reasonable provision for people with disabilities and energy efficiency standards.

Built forms / types

4.56 Within the town, the form of houses tends to vary but is based on four main layouts, which appear to support the mix of building types typical of our area. These are:

- Narrow fronted houses – appropriate for more intensively developed areas, often found in terraces of varying length, or as paired houses, they generate relatively high densities of housing, with large windows and intelligent planning to make sure that the core of the building is occupied by services
- Wide fronted houses – generally {two storey}, typically detached (or short terrace) and have their main entrance in the centre generate lower densities. Give impression of less dense development but may be designed or converted as multiple occupancy dwellings (HMOs)
- L-shaped houses – often detached, but can also be made into a terrace, with a varying setback. They may also form the basis for the provision of bungalows.
- Courtyard housing, with communal gardens.

Please cross-refer to the design guidance for further detail / typical footprints and examples.

4.57 Having a variety of house and other building types creates a place which is attractive to different members of the community, to live and work, which is an important component of a successful and vibrant community. Taking this one step further, a modular approach to design is encouraged, to allow a flexible approach to meeting future needs without the need to demolish and re-build.

4.58 The composition of frontages, building types and sizes and landscaping / boundary treatments all need to be considered to create a street frontage that is interesting but harmonious, as opposed to a random collection of urban components that do not relate to each other, or too much (and too bland) uniformity. As part of this, the rhythm of the buildings and houses in the town, in terms of continuity of frontages and at a more detailed level, the ratio of solid (wall) to void (windows and door), should be used to inform the way in which elevations are handled within new development.

Roofs

4.59 There is also an eclectic mix of roof styles, but pitched roofs tend to be the dominant form. The pitch of the does vary, normally to suit the roof material used and usefulness of the roof void. Slate roofs, for example, are generally at a minimum of 22.5°, clay tile roofs at a minimum of 35°, with the roof pitch on most houses typically between 42.5° or 47.5°, although there are some examples of steeper, pitched mansard roofs at 54° to 70° degrees. The use of flat roofs (or portions of roof) should be limited, and restricted to terraces, balconies, or roof gardens. Parapet walls should be used when flat roofs are on the tops of buildings, designed with cornice and coping stone details to match the building style.

4.60 Eaves (the part of a roof that overhangs the walls of a building, usually covered with fascia and soffits beneath) should generally be simple in form and relatively small, with the exception of more formal buildings where deeper eaves or prominent cornices (decorative trim fitted under the eaves) can be used, subject to correct proportioning. Classically orientated houses may have parapet walls, classical cornice and hidden gutters, as this is a local precedent within our town.

4.61 Developers are encouraged to fit solar roof panels on new built properties as standard where the orientation and built character as visible from the street allow. Generally these should be placed on rear elevations, or in a manner that allows them to appear to be fully integrated if placed on the

Building Types

found in Shepton Mallet

(detailed in the Design Guide)

- Apartments (characterful)
- Small terraced houses-
- Medium terraced house (characterful)
- Medium terraced house (informal)
- Mews house
- Paired villa
- Detached house
- Civic and commercial buildings
- Commercial (informal)

street-facing roofs. The structural specifications of roof timbers, joists and struts should be sufficient in their load-bearing capacity to support solar or thermal systems on the roof.

4.62 Chimneys should be included in keeping with the building typology, and designed where possible to allow for a flue to be installed either at the time of initial construction or later on (or put to another use, such as accommodating bird / bat roosting facilities). Location of the chimney above the party wall, for semi-detached or terraced dwellings, and on the/a structural wall for detached dwellings and bungalows, is typical for this area.

Architectural styles and detailing

4.63 Shepton Mallet's historic character is rich and varied, particularly reflecting the incremental development of the area and the industrial past of our town. As a result, there is a diversity of architecture across a range of sizes of buildings. Civic and commercial buildings tend to be of greater architectural significance which, in turn, can give a place a strong sense of identity and community spirit, forming local landmark, and potentially becoming a meeting or gathering point. There should also be no discernible difference between the houses that are for open market sale and those which are for alternative tenures (this is often referred to as being 'tenure blind').

4.64 There is scope for variation and creativity in architectural style (through contemporary design) since there is precedent for this within the town. Individual architectural expression is expected and encouraged, provided that the design of buildings and space is harmonious and contributes to a cohesive local identity. Alternatively, if a traditional design is followed, it should aim to be appropriately proportioned and detailed to reflect local traditional buildings and avoid creating an obvious pastiche from a mix of previous styles.

4.65 As a general rule, garages / outbuildings should be designed to be consistent in architectural style and character of the house they serve.

4.66 The shape and design of windows and doorways need to reflect the styles used in these historic buildings. They often are quite deep set into walls - designed to give protection from the weather. As a rule of thumb, windows should have a vertical 'portrait' emphasis, with this vertical emphasis also reflected in the proportion of individual panes, with the principal floor, ground or first, typically has the largest windows, which diminish in size in upper storeys. Where wider openings are required, these should look to follow the vernacular precedents where most commonly this is under the eaves with vertical emphasis provided through dividing mullions. All windows (with the possible exception of some Listed buildings) are expected to minimise heat loss through the use of double or triple glazing.

4.67 Modern day living requirements often require the addition of elements that have the potential to clutter or distract from the architectural style of the building. This can be avoided through careful design, considering where these are placed as an integral part of the process. This should include consideration of:

- Meter boxes: tailored to fit in with the materials used for the remainder of the building. Positioning should be unobtrusive or be covered by the use of 'smart meters'.
- Lighting and signage: avoiding clutter, located for maximum benefit (to reduce the overall level of lighting and signage needed), and with consideration to minimising light spillage.
- Gutters and rainwater down pipes: reflecting the overall design approach to the building and intended visual impact.
- Flues and ventilation ducts: positioned to be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Electric vehicle charging points: positioned both for convenience and minimizing visual clutter

4.68 Wildlife-friendly features are also expected to be included within the design. This should include the use of bee bricks, bird bricks and bird and bat boxes within new buildings and in the design of extensions or alterations to existing buildings.

Materials

4.69 The choice of materials is important both in terms of maximizing the sustainability of new building (through the use of recycled or locally and sustainably sourced materials, and considering their longevity and energy / thermal efficiency), and in the character of the town, where the textures and hue reflect the historic use of local materials and have created the harmony that we see today despite the different building forms and styles.

4.70 The choice of material should also reflect the hierarchy / importance of the building: traditionally, larger / grander buildings typically have more formal materials (typically either dressed stone, traditional render or brick), with more modest building types typically brick, rubble stone, modern render, rough harling, or timber.

4.71 The use of different materials, particularly where there is an obvious difference in their texture or hue, can be a useful technique to highlight landmark / important buildings and to break up a streetscape. When a traditional design is followed, it should use historically-compatible materials, locally sourced where possible so that it does not undermine the overall historic character and form of the town. Any non-traditional materials should be selected with care to ensure they are of the type that will blend into their surroundings taking into account changes with age and weathering. Overall, the design of new development should achieve a richness in variety, within a palette that reflects the traditional local materials of the area.

4.72 Chimneys should generally match to the wall materials used on the main elevation / facade (street facing elevation).

4.73 The following lists provide a brief over-view of typical materials, with more detailed provided in the design guide:

Wall materials

- **Local building stone** – Mendip limestone is the primary building material, mainly locally quarried Forest Marble and Doultong Stone, sourced from local quarries. This is either dressed (typically using Doultong Stone) or coursed stone (typically Local Limestone but also shale/Limestone such as white and blue lias), and sometimes used as external cladding due to costs. Earlier houses in Shepton Mallet are mostly of random or coursed Forest Marble with plenty of mortar showing due to the unevenness of the stone.
- **Reconstituted cast stone** – can be used in traditional styles to match the vernacular of the area within the town at a more affordable cost, but needs to be of a similar colour, texture, variety of unit sizes and diminishing coursing as seen in the locally sourced natural stone.
- **Red brick** – limited use of red brick may be interspersed within new developments but should not predominate. Preference should be given to bricks manufactured with a handmade, sandcast appearance.
- **Render, either traditionally coloured or left to a natural finish** - both rough and smooth finishes can be considered, but traditional render (with a rough texture and typically painted in neutral colours) is generally preferred, particularly as the use of non-traditional renders can create bleeding and scarring, creating unsightly buildings.
- **Timber** – is found in the town (such as timber cladding) but is not particularly common and its use should be limited.

Roof materials

- **Natural clay red tiles** (sometimes with **black ridge tiles**) are the predominant roof materials
- **Natural stone tiles**
- Slate tiles.
- **Lead and zinc** - are uncommon, and should be limited to exceptional situations for shallow pitched roofs which may be incorporated within an overall design methodology.

- **Vegetated roofs (“green”, “brown” or “sedum” roofs)** - may be installed on flat or shallow pitched roofs on community and commercial buildings (e.g. office buildings, schools, health centres, shops, bin stores, cycle stores) and extensions/annex to existing buildings, but will require maintenance plans.

Details

- **Window and door casements** - are typically Douling stone or wood with the joinery generally painted white or off white (unless in more modern styles of construction where black or dark coloured windows (and doors) can be used to enhance the architectural composition). Generally front doors closely match the materials relating to the main body of the house and the windows on the front elevation
- **Lintels** – are a reasonably common feature, and where used should be stone / brick where possible, and fit with overall design of the building.
- **Rainwater goods** - should be cast iron painted black or coloured to match the house joinery, with the use of “lead” type valleys.
- **Grilles, flues, etc** – should be of good quality and use materials that fit in with the approach to materials for the building as a whole.

Boundary treatments

- **Mendip limestone walls** - where possible the preference should be for stone walls using Mendip limestone laid in rubble courses with colour matching pointing (usually crushed stone). The pointing is either keyed or flush.
- **Brick and rendered walls** - may also be used sparingly perhaps where they match the surrounding building facades.
- **Black metal railings** – can be in cast iron, wrought iron, mild steel, or cast aluminium finished off in black gloss appearance / black, powder coating.
- **Timber railings** - can also be used, using either natural hardwood with a clear weatherproof finish or plain pressure treated joinery unfinished.
- **Native hedgerows** – should focus on indigenous species (many of which are deciduous), which are especially valuable for wildlife. Hedgerow species that would be appropriate to this area include Beech, Hornbeam, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Spindle, Holly, Wayfaring tree, Dogwood and Rowan.

4.74 Applicants are encouraged to provide sufficient detail as part of their submissions to convey how the proposed development will be seen within wider views. For larger developments, all proposals for new or replacement dwellings should ideally include three-dimensional drawings from at least two viewpoints. In terms of details, Illustrated elevations, clearly indicating the proposed palette of materials in the context of any adjoining buildings, should be provided, and details of how doors and window openings relate to the elevation (i.e. are they flush or set back etc.?), the treatment / use of lintels, depth of eaves, decorative cornices, banding etc should also be made clear.

4.75 With regard to sustainable building standards, applicants should note that Somerset Council include a requirement for a ‘climate emergency checklist’ in relation to planning applications, and there is further guidance on these requirements in the SPD on Design and Amenity of New Development; Guidance for interpretation of Local Plan Policy DP7 (adopted March 2022).

Policy 6. Reinforcing Shepton Mallet's heritage

- i. Development should respect and where possible reinforce the historic character of the town, taking account of the character and setting of the Conservation Area (as detailed in the Conservation Area Appraisal) and other heritage assets.
- ii. Development should:
 - respond to, and where possible enhance, the setting of buildings and spaces that of historic importance to the town (both designated and non-designated heritage assets);
 - consider the overall composition of the street, within and intervisible with the Conservation Area and historic buildings / features;
 - where possible, retain heritage features of local interest where these are present within the site;
 - where possible, include features to celebrate and raise awareness of the history and traditional industries of the area.

Reasoned justification for Policy Six

4.76 Shepton Mallet's rich history is set out in section one of this Neighbourhood Plan.

4.77 Shepton Mallet is identified by the quality of its architecture, use of local building stone, and townscape which provides its overall character and form and reflects how the town has developed over time, from its historical beginnings as a mill town. The town contains a large number of buildings and structures which are of special historic and / or architectural interest to warrant designation as listed buildings. These often have a distinct and valued local character and / or appearance that are worthy of retention and can form focal points as part of development proposals.

4.78 The former Mendip District Council produced an appraisal of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area in 2007¹⁵. This identified five distinctive character areas:

- Character Area One: Town Centre including Commercial Road and the Anglo Trading Estate
- Character Area Two: Sheppey Valley including Hill Lane, Pike Lane, Cowl Street and HM Prison
- Character Area Three: Waterloo Road, Princes Road and open space south of the former railway
- Character Area Four: Darshill and Bowlish
- Character Area Five: Charlton and the Charlton Viaduct

The Appraisal notes the various Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area, and other unlisted buildings and local features of interest (such as cast iron street signage, stone kerbs and steps, and traditional post boxes) that made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The character area maps are shown on the following page.

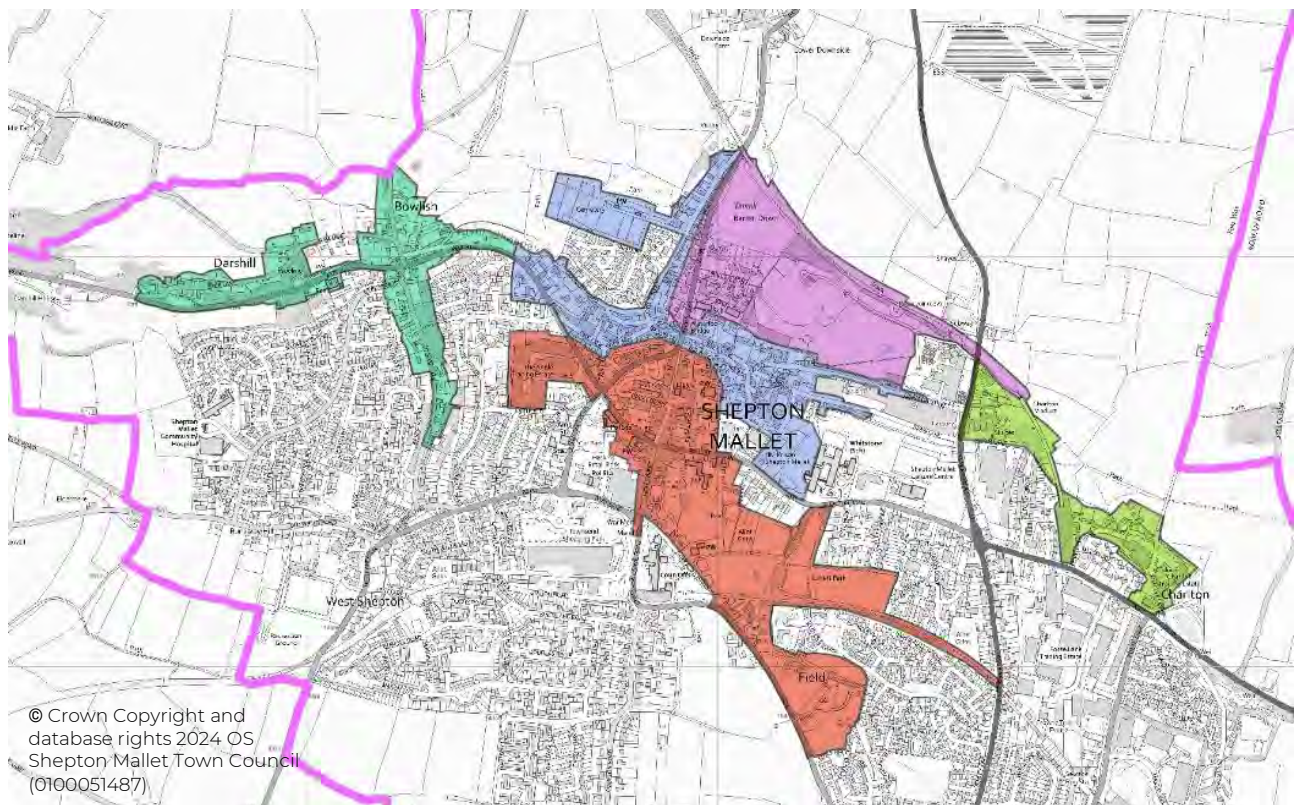
"The distinctive local identity of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area is enhanced by a number of features and historic elements that cumulatively help to give the conservation area a distinctive sense of place. They include, for instance, areas of historic paving (e.g. around the church and in Leg Square), stone walls, commonly with cock and hen coping (e.g. Coombe Lane), stonework embellished with datestones and ammonites, iron railings and smaller items such as footscrapers and street name signs.

Bridges are significant elements in the townscape notably bridges over the Sheppey, the two railway viaducts and the bridge over Cowl Street leading to the cemetery."

¹⁵ <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/heritage-and-landscape/conservation-areas/conservation-areas-maps-and-appraisals/?district=Mendip>

Map 4. Shepton Mallet Conservation Area – Character Areas

- Neighbourhood Plan Boundary
- Character Areas:**
- Charlton and the Charlton Viaduct
- Darshill and Bowlish
- Sheppey Valley including Hill Lane, Pike Lane, Cown Street and HM Prison
- Town Centre including Commercial Road and the Anglo Trading Estate
- Waterloo Road, Princes Road and open space south of the former railway



4.79 Just because an area is outside of the Conservation Area, does not mean that it is of no historic importance or that development there will not affect the character of adjoining areas. A prime example is the area around Cowl Street and Hillmead. Cowl Street and its environs form part of original mediaeval settlement and population along the banks of the river Sheppey. Cowl Street itself has many listed buildings on its eastern side, and is partly within the Conservation Area. This includes a former chapel, an historic bridge allowing vehicle entry to the town’s cemetery and high natural limestone walls on one side forming a unique streetscape. The Hillmead area includes much of the historic silk mill and weaving history of the town, with the Conservation Area boundary running along and to the south side of Draycott Road. The area was the site of the town’s hanging tree, historic convent and masonic hall. The Hillmead housing estate, built in the 1970s/80s, sits on a former gas works site, and was built at a time when there was limited appreciation of the historic character of this part of the town. Even during the 1990’s and 2000’s poor quality infill applications were approved for dwellings to be slotted into small spaces with little or no consideration of the street scene and damage to this historic area. These developments have highlighted how important it is to consider the impact of development close to but outside the Conservation Area, so as to not detract from the historic character of the town, but instead to celebrate and appreciate its rich history.

4.80 There is no need to replicate the general protection offered to Listed buildings and Conservation Areas that is contained within national planning policy. But this Neighbourhood Plan seeks highlight the need to also consider locally important features that contribute to the town’s historic character, the need to consider the whole street / area in which Listed and locally important buildings and spaces lie, and the importance of retaining and where possible reinforcing the historic character of the town by incorporating some of the more traditional features into new developments, ensuring that the town’s heritage is acknowledged in new designs.

4.81 The quality of many of its heritage assets are recognised through Listed building and Conservation Area designations. The most prominent heritage assets in the historic centre are The Market Cross, HM Prison, and the former Anglo Bavarian Brewery. Elsewhere in the neighbourhood area, outside of the Conservation Area, there are many older properties and developments, a high proportion of which are designated heritage assets, and include historic farmhouses and associated agricultural buildings dating to Shepton Mallet's agricultural heritage. Applicants are also encouraged to reference the Somerset Historic Environment Record¹⁶ which includes information on many non-designated heritage assets.

¹⁶ <https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/#>

Policy 7. Parking in Residential Development

- i. The amount and configuration of parking in residential areas should be designed to accommodate typical car and van ownership levels of 1.5 vehicles per household, with nearly 1 in 2 households having at least 2 cars. Garages should only count as a ½ parking space unless it can be shown that they are likely to remain available for parking needs.
- ii. The design and configuration of off-road parking spaces should ensure that these are convenient and accessible. Provision should be made to accommodate larger work vans where possible, and avoid layouts that effectively block in the second vehicle.
- iii. On-street parking (which is unallocated) should primarily be used for visitor / overflow parking, with the aim of providing at least 1 space per 2 dwellings.

Reasoned justification for Policy Seven

4.82 Experience from recent developments in Shepton Mallet has highlighted the problems caused when insufficient / poorly designed parking has resulted in many residents parking on the highway, sometimes blocking footways or hindering access for emergency vehicles. A recent fire behind Thorne Lane on the Tadley Acres Estate was inaccessible to the fire service because of parking congestion. Tadley Acres Residents Association are so concerned at the problems caused by the perceived lack of residential parking, that it has prioritised this as a major area of concern and have embarked on a community consultation to seek solutions.

Parking congestion in Tadley Acres. Locally known as 'Car Park Corner'.



4.83 Somerset's Parking Strategy was adopted in 2013¹⁷, based on three zones, with Shepton Mallet categorised as Zone B (an area with a population over 3,000 but less than 30,000). In general the standards suggest a requirement for between 1.5 and 3 spaces per property, plus visitor parking, although this may be waived if at least half of the parking spaces are unallocated. Given the issues in the town it is suggested that the amount of visitor parking overall is increased, ensuring that there are at least 2 off-road spaces per dwelling unless a lower level of parking can be justified.

Adopted Parking Standards for New Homes (space standards to be rounded up to the nearest whole number)

- 1 bedroom = 1.5 spaces
- 2 bedroom = 2 spaces
- 3 bedroom = 2.5 spaces
- 4+ bedroom = 3 spaces

Plus, visitor parking

4.84 Based on the 2021 Census data, it is estimated that the average household in Shepton Mallet owns or otherwise has use of 1.48 cars or vans¹⁸, which is broadly consistent with Somerset as a whole. Nearly half (44%) of households have 2 or more vehicles. This suggests that it is not necessarily the level of parking provision that is insufficient (if the parking standards are followed), but that the problem is more likely to relate to the poor configuration of the parking spaces provided,

¹⁷ <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/transport-strategy-policies-and-plans/>

¹⁸ The data only specifies the number of households with 0, 1, 2 or 3+ cars or vans, and therefore an exact average cannot be calculated. The estimate is based on the assumption that households with 3+ cars or vans will typically average 3.5 vehicles.

based on one or more of the following factors:

- inconveniently placed (significantly further away from an entrance point than the available highway – anecdotal observation suggests that parking at rear of properties is often less convenient than in parking on the street in front of the properties);
- inconveniently configured (such as tandem parking requiring the ‘two car shuffle’ to access the car behind);
- potential for the spaces (such as garages) to be repurposed for storage;
- overly narrow / restrictive bays, unsuitable for larger vehicles (bearing in mind that a typically works van is up to 6m long, 2½m wide and 3m high).

Design and Configuration of Parking Spaces

4.85 In-curtilage parking is preferred and should be placed at the front or side of the dwelling / building, designed to ensure that it does not dominate the street scene.

4.86 Visitor / overflow parking on-street should, where possible, be provided in discreet bays. This allows for street tree planting or other shrubs / planting to help soften the extent of potential hard surfacing.

4.87 Garages / car-ports, where used, should be within the curtilage, set back from the street frontage (behind the building line), and be of sufficient size to accommodate storage for waste bins / cycle parking that can be readily accessed in addition to a family-sized car (taking into account that a 5 - 7 seater family car can be up to 5m long and 2m wide, and will require space to the side and rear to open doors / boot). Whilst any driveway to the front may also be used for parking, this will reduce the likelihood that the garage will remain in active use (and may well revert to storage), unless it is configured as an open carport, and this should be taken into account in ensuring adequate provision.

4.88 Courtyard / mews parking, usually to the rear, is the least preferred option but if provided, will need careful design to ensure that these parking spaces are attractive and used in preference to parking on the highway. Core principles to achieve this, are that the parking areas are overlooked and well lit, have generous parking spaces / turning areas and direct access to the properties they serve. They should not be excessive in size (ideally not more than 10 spaces, and if larger will need to be ‘broken up’ by soft landscaping (tree / shrub planting, with ongoing upkeep secured through an agreed management plan).

Transport Policies

Aim:

To ensure that future growth mitigates for the increased traffic and vehicle usage by making provision for this within development design

Objectives:

To ensure new developments are planned to adoptable highways standards to minimise detrimental effects of poorly design roads

To encourage walking and cycling by improving local transport links and public right of way routes within the neighbourhood area and to adjacent parishes, including off-road, green lanes to provide for safer travel and healthier lifestyles, and connecting to the Strawberry Line

To improve the traffic management within the Town Centre to make it a more pleasant place for residents and visitors

To help reduce carbon emissions by encouraging the use of public transport with improved services and facilities

To provide adequate parking facilities are available for vehicles and cycles within residential developments

4.89 From the consultation and related work carried out to create this plan, it is very clear that the community are concerned about the level of traffic and potential congestion on routes through the town, suggestion the need for better traffic management. Whilst this largely falls outside of the scope of the plan, key findings have been included here.

4.90 Daily Annual Average Traffic (AADT) flows on the main roads in and around the town show that the busiest local road is the A37 to the east, south of the A371 junction with daily average flows of over 21,300 vehicles¹⁹. The A371 in the town has daily average flows of about 12,300 vehicles, and the A361 near the High Street has about half that amount (around 5,800 vehicles).



Map 5. Annual Average Traffic Flows 2019 AADT counts/estimates, <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/local-authorities/5>

4.91 Under national planning policy, developments that are likely to generate significant amounts of traffic should be accompanied by a transport statement or assessment, so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed. In this way, potential transport issues are considered at the earliest

¹⁹ 2021 Richard Hudson 'Transport Issues Report'

stage of developing proposals, looking at solutions that will limit the need to travel, and offer a genuine choice of transport modes.

4.92 In February 2021, a Transport Report was produced by HTP Consulting. This report was commissioned by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to consider the issues which have been highlighted during the consultation process in relation to traffic and transport in Shepton Mallet. It identifies a number of issues, some of which can be addressed through the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan, others have become community aspirations. These are summarised briefly below:

- Poor pedestrian / highway safety due to substandard footways, a legacy of the historic street pattern = where possible improve pedestrian footways, and investigate junctions with an accident record.
- Poor cycling facilities, and a challenging topography = include provision for cycle lanes / routes and covered secure cycle parking, particular where demand is likely to be highest
- Lack of rail station for the town = there is potential to improve bus services, including a better bus connection to the rail service at Castle Carey.
- Traffic flows and one system – in particular the one-way system currently makes it challenging for visitors gaining access to the north High Street area = potentially reversing the route (so that it runs south to north) and changing the A361/High Street junction could increase trade in the northern part of the town centre.
- Car parking charges may be dissuading visitors to the north end of town = the pricing could be reviewed to provide a competitive cost to the retail parks, with for example a free first hour.
- Understanding changing work patterns – given how Covid19 has increase the number of people working from home and reduced office space demand.
- School-related congestion - the four schools all have problems of access around the school gate = possible locations to introduce 20 mph zones, on the A361 at Bowlsh School and on Waterloo Road at Shepton Mallet Community School.
- Carbon emissions - encouraging the use of walking, cycling and public transport, and take-up of electric vehicles = provide more EV charging points in the town.

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Map 6. Alternate Direction of the One-Way System

4.93 The aspirations are included within the Appendix of the Traffic Report, and those agreed by the Town Council will be included in their strategic Town Plan.

4.94 The research also indicated that the roundabout on the A361 just west of the town centre was a particular accident blackspot, and that the A361 / High St junction may benefit from redesigning, due to the accident record in that particular location (although the number of accidents in recent years has fallen). The most recent data on road accident statistics can be found on the website²⁰.

²⁰ Please see casualty report dashboard, <https://somesetroadsafety.org/data-management/>

Policy 8. Adoptable Highways and Drainage

- i. Development proposals which require new estate roads to be constructed should ensure the highway meets the standards required by Somerset Council for their adoption. Their adoption is strongly encouraged, particularly where drainage networks are routed underneath. Where the lack of maintenance is likely to cause harm, their adoption or ongoing maintenance may need to be secured through the use of appropriate planning conditions.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Eight

4.95 A new estate road serving a new development can either be adopted by the highway authority, Somerset Council, or remain un-adopted, with its upkeep ultimately the responsibility lying with the property owners. Highway adoption is carried out under separate legislation (the 1980 Highways Act).

4.96 For a road to be adopted, it must meet certain Somerset Council standards - there is no obligation for Council to accept sub-standard highways at the point of adoption²¹.

4.97 There has been growing concern about the number of un-adopted roads in the town, because of the problems associated with their ongoing up-keep (or lack of). Whilst the upkeep remains the responsibility of the homeowners (or in some cases the original builder or a management company), some are unwilling or simply unable to bear the costs, and as a consequence the state of our roads declines. This not only impacts on the highways (making it hazardous to drive, walk or cycle), but can also impact on the drainage systems that run underneath the road which have also remained un-adopted. In an area of Somerset such as Shepton Mallet, where the risk of surface water flooding has been proven to be significant, it is particularly important that drainage solutions are maintained, and the best way to ensure this happens is for them to be adopted by Somerset Council.

²¹ Potential conditions regarding adoption that are likely to be acceptable are set out in Annex A of The Advice Note on Highways Adoption, August 2022 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62e7b821d3bf7f75b9121a6a/advice-note-highways-adoption.pdf>

Policy 9. Local Walking and Cycling Routes

- i. Where a transport assessment is required in line with national policy, this should set out proposed measures to promote opportunities for walking and cycling, focusing on the provision of safe and attractive routes connecting to the local schools, the town centre and other major employment / recreation areas around the town.
- ii. Where mitigation is required in relation to transport-related impacts, developer contributions may be sought to deliver the following improvements:
 - the Strawberry Line and Somerset Circle multi-user paths (and connections from the existing network into this route);
 - installation / improvement of dropped kerbs / tactile paving on the main walking routes (where these would be used by future occupants);
 - low-traffic alternative cycle routes (with sign-posting, cycle parking facilities and on-road improvements where necessary to resolve identified safety concerns), focusing on routes to schools, the town centre and other major employment / recreation areas around the town (where these would be used by future occupants).
- iii. New developments should provide publicly accessible pedestrian and cycle routes to the wider footpath / cycle network within the layout, where this is feasible and would promote opportunities for walking and cycling . The routes should be separated from the highway and incorporated within green / landscaped corridors where possible. The routes should be signposted, and incorporate street furniture as appropriate to encourage social interaction and enjoyment of the public realm;
- iv. Where pavements are proposed, these should wherever possible be of sufficient width to accommodate at least two persons walking abreast and designed to be suitable for wheelchair users, prams and pushchairs.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Nine

4.98 Not many people in Shepton Mallet choose to cycle as their main mode of transport. According to the 2021 Census, of those that commute to work, only 1.3% cycle (the average across Somerset was 3.3%). This is probably indicative of a range of factors:

- Lack of dedicated cycle routes / lanes;
- Hilliness of the area;
- Lack of good cycle parking facilities;
- Amount of traffic / perception of danger on the highway – exacerbated by the narrowness of the streets, making it difficult for cars to overtake cycles safely, and speed of traffic outside of the town limits.

4.99 Walking is slightly more popular (typically 16.5% of commuters walk to work), and the town is of a scale that should make movement by such modes a logical choice.

4.100 The ability to access the open countryside away from the town is also important, providing opportunities for recreation and improving health and well-being. There is a significant network of footpaths and, to a lesser extent, cycle paths serving the wider area. A number of these paths run along disused railway lines or Roman roads, providing scenic routes which encourage tourism to the town, and there are several long distance trails that run through the parish²².

Long Distance Trails through Shepton Mallet

East Mendip Way - runs through the town from Uphill near Weston Super Mare through to Frome

Fosse Way - runs from Exeter to Leicester

Mary Michael Pilgrims Way – runs from Cornwall to Avebury, and is proposed to extend to the Norfolk Coast

²² For more information on these, see <https://marymichaelpilgrimsway.org/route/>, and

4.101 Whilst most households have access to a car or van, data from the 2021 Census shows that 1 in 7 (14.4%) households do not, and are therefore reliant on other forms of transport to access shops and services. This is particular the case for elderly people living alone and lone parent households (where 39% and 21% of such households do not have a car).

4.102 Government guidance on promoting sustainable transport is clear that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued²³. This requires considering how sites might incorporate new walking and cycling routes internally (of they are large enough and have the potential to create links to existing routes), and whether it would be reasonable for the development to contribute financially to the provision or improvement of routes elsewhere. Somerset Council does not operate the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in the former Mendip area, and therefore such contributions currently need to be secured through section 106 legal agreements²⁴.

4.103 The Local Plan has already identified and safeguards the two former railway lines within the parish (between Mendip Vale Station and the West Shepton recreation ground, and from the A37 to Windsor Hill), and would refuse development that would be prejudicial the re-use of railway, or other sustainable transport links and facilities. The southern line forms part of the proposed Strawberry Line, and the northern line part of the wider Somerset Circle (more on this later).

Map 7. Somerset Circle indicative route



4.104 Somerset Council are preparing a Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP), and the first draft for the Mendip area was produced in January 2023²⁵. This assessed the main cycle and walking routes around the town. The audit noted that:

https://ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?menu_type=S&path_name=Mendip+Way

²³ NPPF paragraph 108(c) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/9-promoting-sustainable-transport>

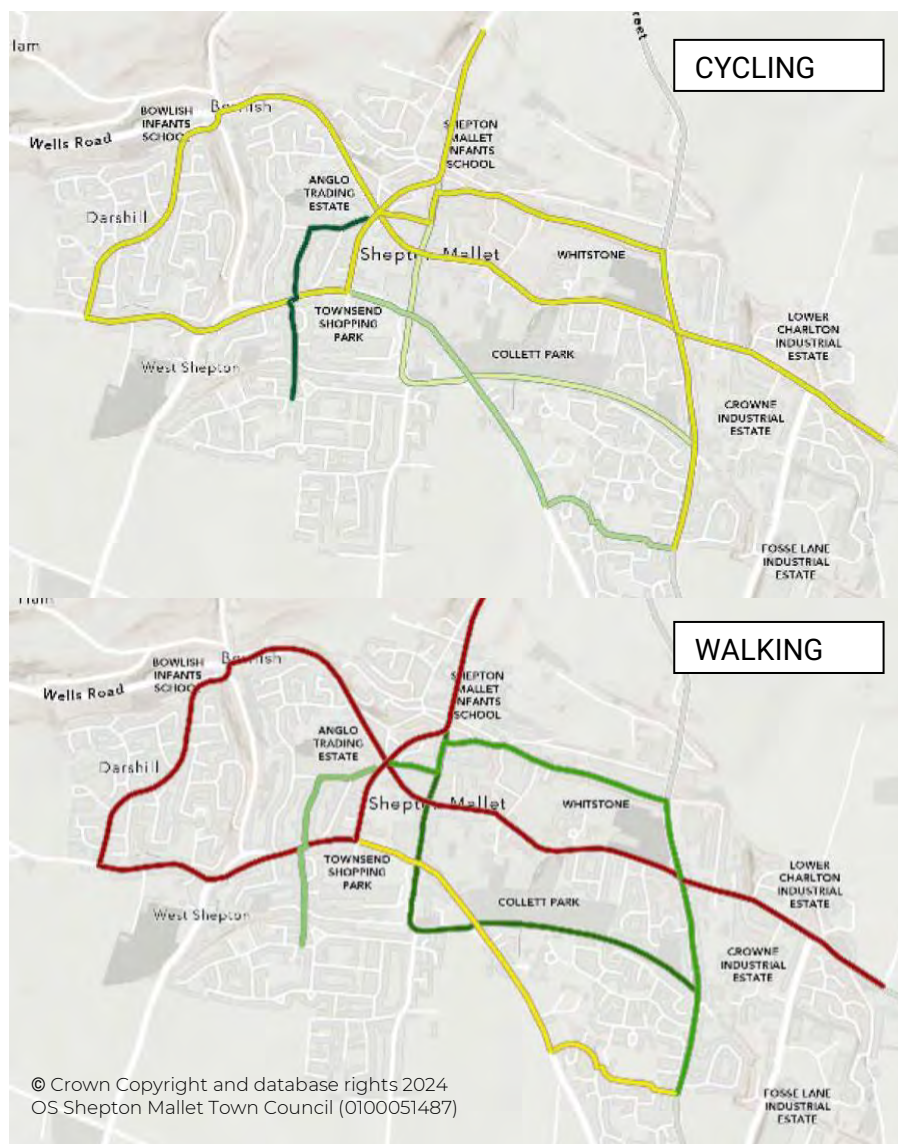
²⁴ Such contributions will only be appropriate where the infrastructure provided is necessary, directly relates to the development; and is at a level that is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

²⁵ <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans-lcwips/>

“A key strength of Shepton Mallet’s cycle network is the provision of off-road cycling routes through housing developments and open spaces, particularly in the east and south-east of the town. These routes provide important links which avoid using the main road network.”

Map 8. LCWIP Cycling and Walking Routes (darker green = higher useability score)

4.105 The Plan goes on to suggest that the most effective way to address the poor cycling conditions on the main roads will be through focusing on improvements to the low-traffic alternative routes. It also notes that for walkers, many routes were missing or had inadequate facilities for dropped kerbs / tactile paving – something that could be readily addressed subject to funding.



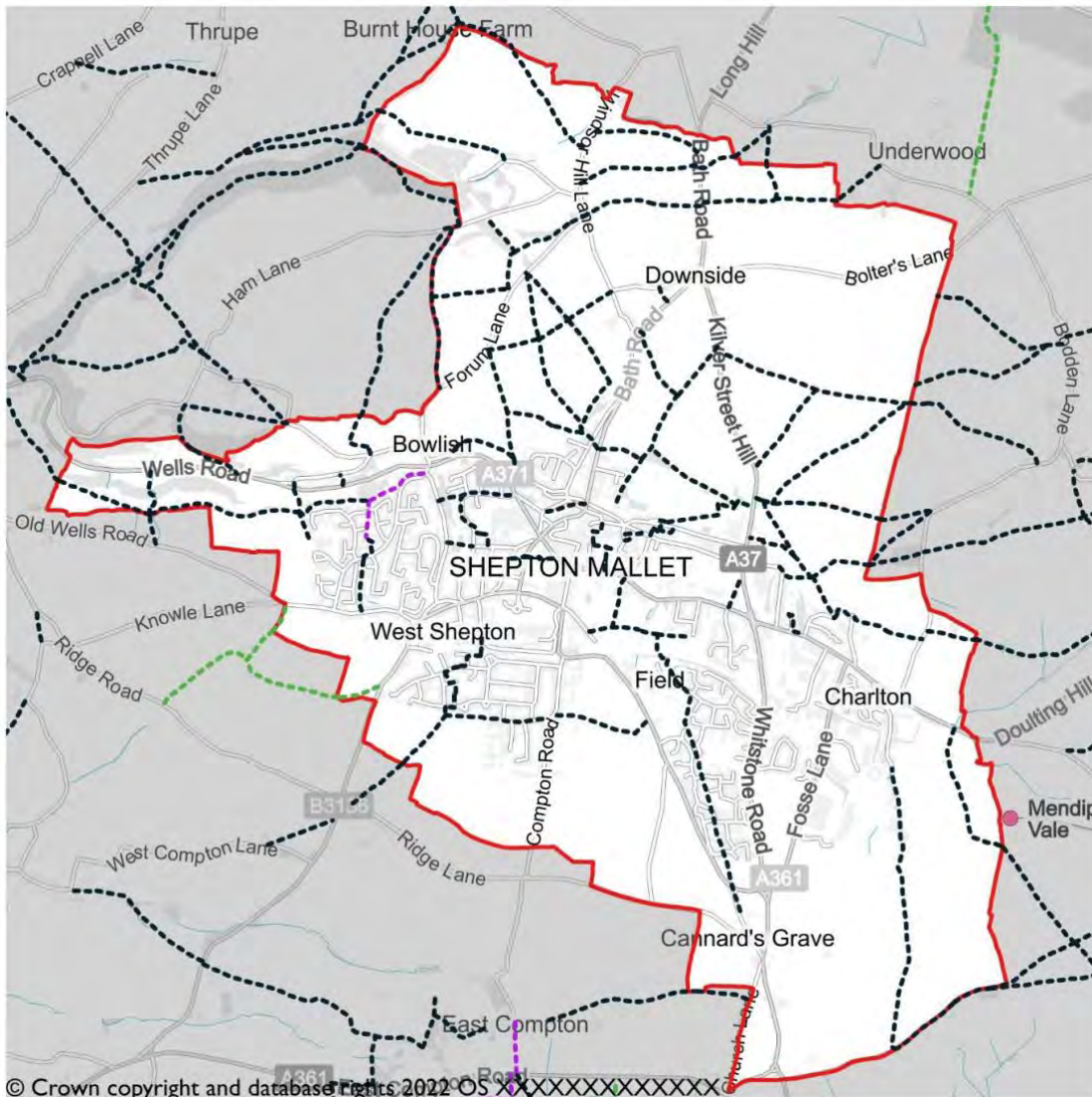
4.106 The following projects have therefore been identified to help promote walking and cycling within and beyond our area (and further projects may be identified through the LCWIP as it is developed):

- The completion of a multi-user path from Shepton Mallet to Wells (as referenced in Policy CP9 of the Local Plan) as part of the extension of the ‘Strawberry Line’, running along the route of the disused railway line where possible²⁶.
- The creation of a multi-user path from Shepton Mallet to Midsomer Norton, which would extend the ‘Strawberry Line’ further as part of ‘The Somerset Circle’, and link with Colliers Way which connects from Radstock to Frome.
- Installation / improvement of dropped kerbs / tactile paving on the main walking routes around the town.

²⁶ As at early 2024, there are small sections of this route open within the parish – one section runs from Ridge Lane (at the junction with Mill Lane) as far as the West Shepton Playing Fields west of the town, the other from the eastern edge of Townsend Retail Park, eastwards to Whitstone Road (the A37). More information on the Strawberry Line and progress of the project can be found here: <https://www.thestrawberryline.org.uk/>

- Identification and signposting of low-traffic alternative cycle routes (with on-road improvements where necessary to resolve identified safety concerns), particularly focusing on routes to schools, the town centre and other major employment / recreation areas around the town. Consultation on this Neighbourhood Plan has highlighted the need for better routes to the primary school at Cannards Grave from within its catchment areas (and the need for a safe crossing point on Cannards Grave Road) as well as routes to Whitstone school from Tadley Acres and Ridgeway estates.

Map 9. Distribution of footpaths and byways



4.107 It will be important to ensure that new development is designed carefully to promote opportunities walking and cycling, improving and extending the existing network of routes in and around the town.

Policy 10. Public Transport

- i. Where a transport assessment is required in line with national policy, this should set out proposed measures to promote opportunities for public transport use, focusing on the provision of frequent routes connecting to the town centre, healthcare services, community hubs and the major employment in the town, and connectivity with the train station at Castle Carey. Where appropriate, developer contributions will be used to improve the frequency of public transport provision, including real time passenger information.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Ten

4.108 Public transport services are particularly important for residents that do not have ready access to a car, and where walking or cycling isn't a viable option (depending on the nature of the trip and the person making the trip). With about 2 in 5 of our older residents that live alone not owning a car, it provides opportunities to travel to shops and services and social events beyond their local neighbourhood.

4.109 In Shepton Mallet, the main form of public transport is the local bus services. Whilst these can and do change over time, they provide a valuable link to residents wanting to access the town centre and other facilities, as well as nearby towns. In addition to the regular timetabled services, Mendip Community Transport provide subsidised dial a ride and pre-bookable hire services for older and more vulnerable residents. There is no local 'town' shuttle service (which would be more likely to suit many of the town's older residents). The nearest railway station is at Castle Cary, some 6 miles to the south along the A371.

4.110 The 2021 Census data indicates that only 1.1% of commuters use the bus, and there was virtual no-one using the train (compared to 1.7% and 0.4% across Somerset as a whole). The latter may well have been compounded by the fact that the two (bus and train) timetables are not integrated.

4.111 Somerset Council has produced its Bus Service Improvement Plan, and was awarded funding for this in 2022²⁷ However the funding is focused primarily on improvements at Taunton, Bridgwater and Somerton, with the hope that further funding can be secured to deliver scheme in other areas of the County. Should a development be of a scale to warrant a transport assessment, and mitigation measures are considered necessary, this can be secured through an appropriate section 106 legal agreement.

²⁷ <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/the-national-bus-strategy-bus-back-better/>

Town Centre & Economy Policies

Aim:

To regenerate and support the local economy by supporting businesses and encouraging expansion of local employment within settlements.

Objectives:

To preserve and enhance the historic core of the town, re-purposing empty shops and buildings, and creatively re- imagine the high street as an exciting mix of residential, retail, and leisure activity, with a range of independent shops, businesses, and high-quality food outlets.

To support and enhance existing facilities and built heritage, and support initiatives to attract visitors and tourists to the town.

To retain and encourage new employment opportunities within and adjoining the town to support the growing population.

4.112 As well as the many businesses located in the town centre, there are several business sites around the town, including Kilver Court on the A37, various Trading Estates and large-scale / bulk retail and distribution depots on the A361 / Charlton Road to the east side of the town, and the Anglo Trading Estate on Commercial Road to the west.

4.113 The adopted Local Plan sets out a strategy to diversify and strengthen the economy of Shepton Mallet through the delivery of suitable employment land and premises. As part of this strategy, a further 7.5ha of employment land was allocated on land off Fosse Lane, in addition to the potential re-use of the former Mendip District Council's office site at Cannards Grave Road for a wider range of Public and Voluntary sector users. Outside of the Town Council area, land at the Bath and West Showground (south of the Mendip School) has also been identified for employment. The intention was to promote a better balance of jobs and economically active people by providing a mixture of modern and flexible employment premises with an emphasis on supporting existing employment premises. Another part of the strategy was the regeneration of the town centre, through mixed use development (including retail and office / studio space) and public realm enhancements.

4.114 Economic pressures and changes in work patterns following the Covid 19 pandemic resulted in a number of businesses closing, and fewer visitors to the town. Facts and key statistics highlighted in the research undertaken in 2021²⁸ include:

- Shepton Mallet experienced a 7% decline in employment between 2015 and 2019;
- Over 30% of the workforce has no formal qualifications and 28% of jobs are of a manual or elementary nature;
- Employment is primarily concentrated largely in construction and service industries, with the traditional manufacturing industries of Shepton Mallet having significantly declined in the last 30 years;
- 5,200 residents commute out of Shepton Mallet to work, and 5,000 workers from outside of Shepton Mallet commute into the town to work.

4.115 However the town has a number of obvious strengths, not limited to:

- a reasonably healthy supply of employment areas
- a relatively young population compared to nearby towns

²⁸ Based on information from the Mendip District Local Plan Part 1, Business Register and Employment Survey, 2020 and research undertaken for the Heart of the South West LEP, 2021

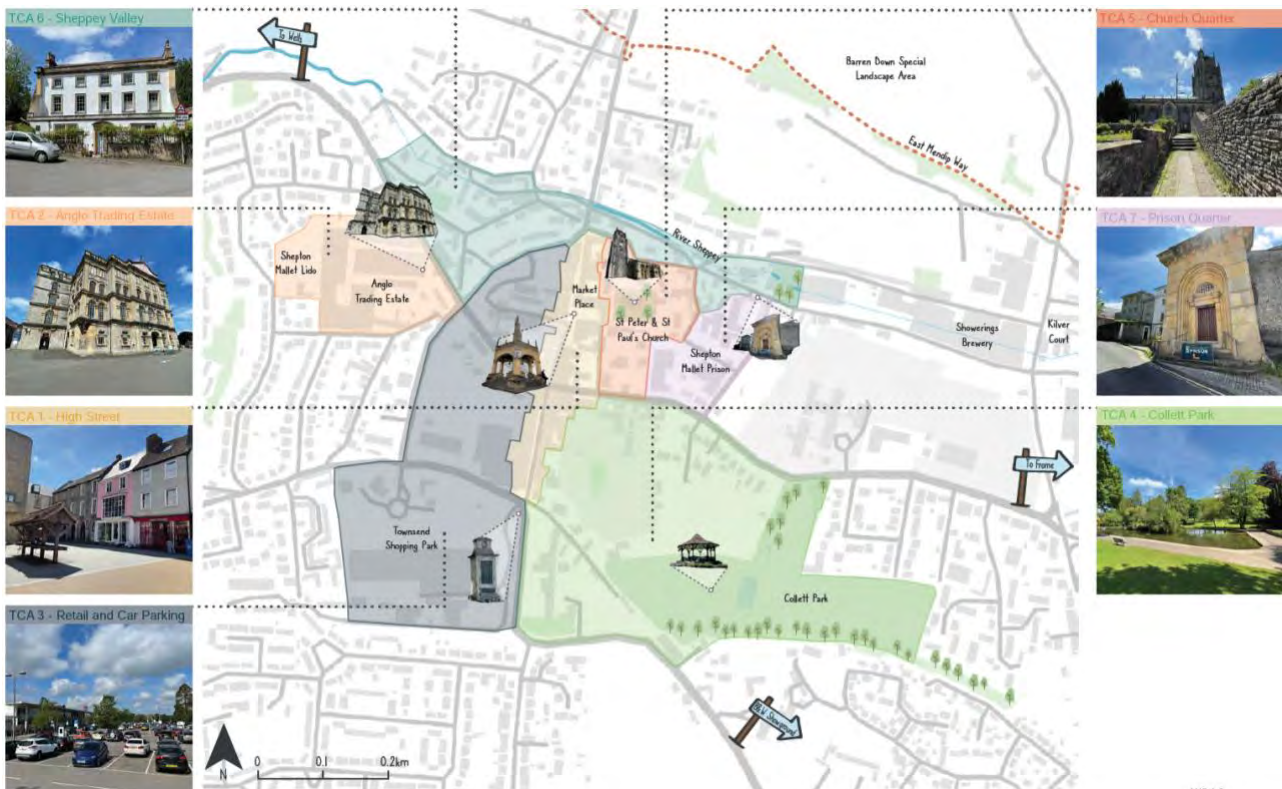
- a long-standing market
- a good range of small, independent businesses
- considerable heritage linked to the previously importance of the wool industry and trade, and more recently cider, brewing and cheese making, as well as being the home to ancient architectural gems such as St Peter & St Paul's Church, the Market Cross and England's oldest prison.

Policy 11. Improvements to Town Centre

- i. The regeneration of the town centre area should be delivered through:
 - Ensuring that there is broad range of commercial units for retail, hospitality and leisure activities, and the use of temporary / pop-up shops and markets, to maintain a strong, attractive and vibrant town centre;
 - Encouraging the maintenance and, where appropriate, replacement of shopfronts to enhance the character of the town that reflects its heritage and the use of local materials improvements
 - Retaining and improving tourist attractions within and in close proximity to the town centre;
 - Supporting improvements to the public car parks and public transport stops that will ensure that the town centre is readily accessible to visitors
 - Allowing residential uses within the town centre where this would not have a detrimental impact on the area's vitality (both within the town centre as a whole and within that street / locality);
 - Improving the public realm and pedestrian environment to create a safe and attractive environment for visitors to the town centre, the market, and clear and attractive links to the surrounding tourist, retail and leisure attractions.
- ii. Development within the town centre and related areas as defined in Figure 2.1 of the Shepton Mallet Masterplan should where possible contribute to the regeneration of the town centre, and not conflict with its delivery.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Eleven

Map 10. Townscape Character Areas within Shepton Mallet Town Centre
Extract Figure 1 from the Shepton Mallet Masterplan assessment

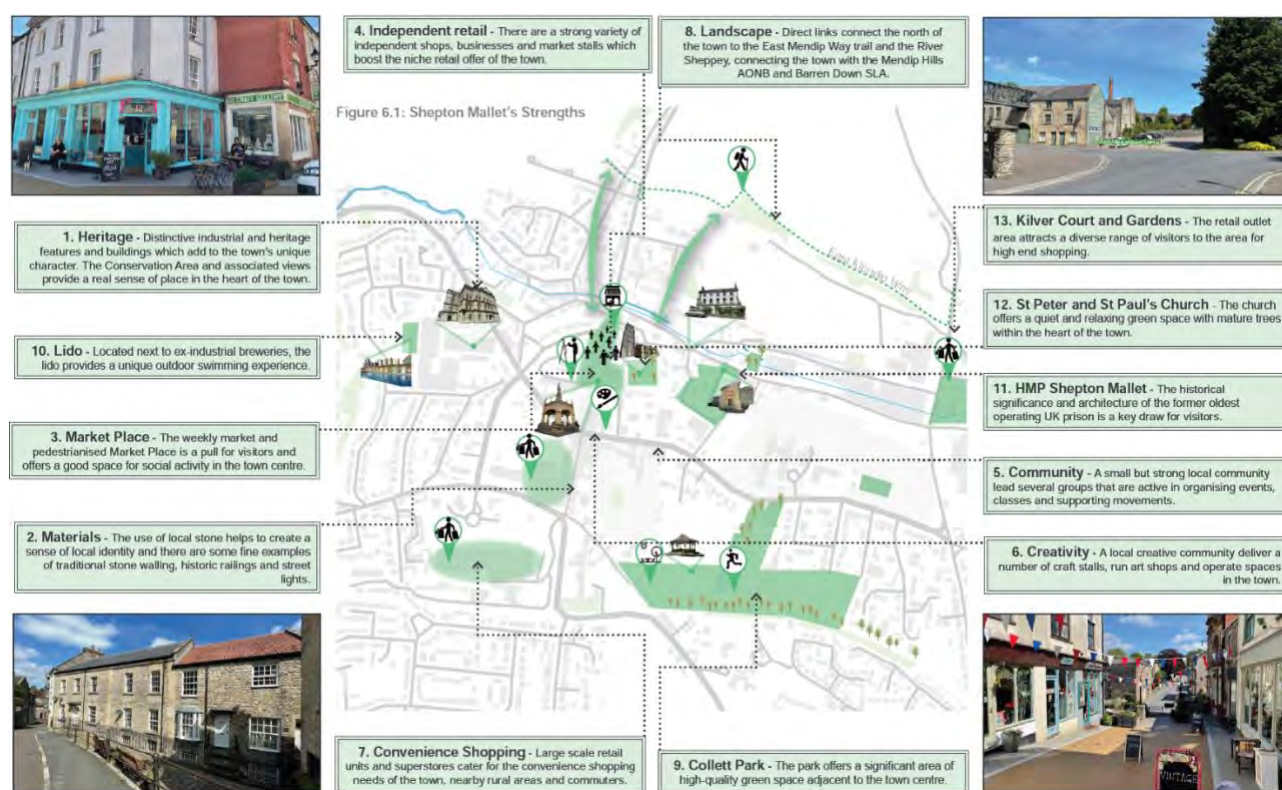


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4.116 The Town Centre is defined in the Local Plan as the area including the High Street (and the including the pedestrianized section of Town Street) as well as Haskins Retail Park, the Commercial Road and Regal Road car parks. However it also interacts with a wider area including the Townsend

Shopping Park, Collett Park, the Prison site, Sheppey Valley to the north and the Anglo Trading Estate and Shepton Mallet Lido, all of which are important to the vitality of the centre, as illustrated in the Shepton Mallet Masterplan assessment that was undertaken by LUC for Mendip District Council in 2020²⁹.

4.117 The High Street provides a primary route for pedestrians through the town centre as they travel north to south, and the strong independent shopping scene and a weekly market are key strengths. Narrow and discreet footpaths and alleys branch off the main street, connecting east to west. The Shepton Mallet Masterplan identifies a number of key design considerations for this area, including potential improvements to the public realm to provide a greener, less cluttered and more pedestrian-friendly environment focused on the Market Place and War Memorial. It also stresses the importance of building uses that provide active street frontage – noting how aspects such as the markets, and also the cafes that spill out onto the Market Place when markets are not on, contributed to the liveliness of the High Street. It notes that the attractiveness of the town centre is diminished where the car dominates the public realm (to the south), where design has paid little heed to the character of the town and where there are clusters of vacant premises³⁰.



Map 11. Shepton Mallet's Strengths
Extract Figure 6.1 from the Shepton Mallet Masterplan assessment

4.118 The area immediately to the west includes the main town centre car parks and some larger, modern retail units. This area, including Townsend Shopping Park to the south, is dominated by the car, and detracts from the town's historic and unique character, although the variety of shops and services found here (in particular the national retailers, large supermarket, bulky goods and some comparison shopping) are clearly important to the town's economy and would not be readily accommodated in a more traditional and historic town centre.

4.119 There is a need to improve the appearance of the centre, its identity as a destination to visit, and linked to this the potential for tourist attractions and a broader range of hospitality and retail offers. There are a number of local festivals and events which have potential to grow (such as the Snowdrop

²⁹ Shepton Mallet Masterplan: Detailed Assessment, July 2021, prepared by LUC for Mendip District Council <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/significant-planning-projects/shepton-mallet-masterplan/>

³⁰ The June 2021 baseline assessment to support the masterplan cites a Future of Towns report, prepared for the Heart of the South West LEP (2021), giving evidence that vacancy rates at that time were around double the national average

Festival, Lantern festival, and Carnival), as well as opportunities for improved connections (such as the Strawberry Line and Somerset multi-user paths). Comments from earlier consultations highlighted the lack of a focal point / venue in the town where productions, events, music can be held and people can congregate – this was previously achieved through the Amulet Theatre before its closure in 2012. However, there are plans to regain ownership of the Amulet and develop a vibrant event centre linked to a thriving evening and social economy.

4.120 The latest Town Council Economic Strategy³¹ seeks to:

- improve and expand the market culture, by ensuring devolvement of the Friday market to the Town Council; developing the Market Place infrastructure; gaining premises license to support markets and events; and promoting a range of markets throughout the year.
- support a wider, reliable and more varied retail offer, including pop-up shops in vacant premises and exploring options to improve parking in town with the aim of increasing footfall in the town centre
- develop a thriving night and social economy in a clean and safe environment.
- instigate the creation of a Cider Museum to give visitors a reason to access the town centre, and consider what other local industries or assets can be capitalised on.
- support and develop Prison tours.
- developing the network of cycleways and footpaths that connect established visitor attractions such Collett Park and the Mid Somerset Showground.

4.121 To help deliver these aspirations, a Town Board is being explored, that could bring together representatives from different sectors across the town.

³¹ Economic Regeneration: A Town Council Strategy for 2024, adopted June 2023, <https://sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Appendix-1-Economic-Regeneration-Strategy.pdf>

Policy 12. Local Employment

- i. Development that would retain, expand and where possible broadening employment opportunities within the town, including sustainable sites adjoining the settlement limits, is encouraged, in particular where this will either:
 - Provide ongoing opportunities for business-related apprenticeships, training or mentoring; or
 - Support the growth of business start-ups, such as through the provision of local community hubs / incubator units.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Twelve

4.122 The adopted Local Plan aims to support business development and growth in the area. As part of its strategy, the update to the Local Plan made provision for 7.5ha of employment land off Fosse Lane. The Local Plan also supports the retention of the established employment areas³², and any proposals that would result in use of such sites to alternative uses that would not provide comparable levels of employment has to meet with the stringent tests set out in the Marketing and Business Evidence to Support Planning Applications SPD (March 2017) which includes the requirement for viability evidence and appropriate marketing of at least 10 – 12 months.

4.123 Given that the adopted Local Plan does not look at employment needs beyond 2029, further sites may need to be identified through a future review of this plan – and in the interim a flexible approach to support further employment opportunities has been adopted, reflecting national planning policy and the principles towards employment growth references in the adopted plan, i.e. the development would:

- maximise the re-use of appropriate previously developed sites and other land within existing settlement limits, or sequentially on the most sustainable locations on the edge of the town;
- encourage a diverse, robust, thriving and resilient local economy;
- enhance the image of the area as a business location;
- limit the growth in demand for private transport and would be accessible by sustainable transport modes;
- offer higher quality job opportunities to local people or improve the skills of the resident work force, and where possible use local contractors and supply chains in the construction and subsequent running of the enterprise.

4.124 There is no need to replicate these requirements through the Neighbourhood Plan – and therefore this policy focuses on the nature of business development that would be considered particularly beneficial to the town. The sense of community in Shepton Mallet is strong, and this is enhanced by the ability for the town to foster opportunities for employment and enterprise. The current lack of a sixth-form college in the town means that many young adults travel to Street or further afield for higher education, and therefore businesses with apprenticeship and training opportunities, working closely with education providers, could provide a particular local benefit by enabling more young adults to access the bulk of their training in the town and test out new business opportunities. The latest Town Council Strategy³³ also notes the potential for the Anglo Trading Estate to rebrand as a Small Business Hub, and the potential benefits of support the development of a co-working space in town.

4.125 Where larger business or commercial premises are proposed, it is important that their design does not overpower surrounding homes both visually and structurally, and this should be achieved in

³² This includes the Anglo Trading Estate, Centurion Business Park, Charlton Trading Estate, Crowne Trading Estate, Fosse Way Trading Estate, Kilver Court, Shape Mendip Hub, and the Station Road Estate

³³ Economic Regeneration: A Town Council Strategy for 2024, adopted June 2023, <https://sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Appendix-1-Economic-Regeneration-Strategy.pdf>

respect of Policy 5. In such cases where the nature of the building is influenced by the business requirements, landscaping along the site boundaries can be used to help assimilate the building in a manner that is sensitive to its surroundings.

Environment Policies

Aim:

To protect and enhance our green spaces, the wildlife, diverse landscapes and important views in the neighbourhood area.

Objectives:

To have a thriving community which maintains its green areas as a haven for wildlife, and well-being

To allocate areas which are of importance to the community as Local Green Space

To preserve important views within the neighbourhood area

To support proposals that result in the retention of natural habitats and provide attractive green spaces in new developments

4.126 Within the boundaries of Shepton Mallet Parish there is considerable rural countryside with many coppices and woodlands with footpaths, bridleways and by-ways. Together with the various landscapes and types of trees, hedgerows, ponds and wildlife that flourish in these areas they contribute to the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. All of this landscape is enclosed by the Mendip Hills which characterise the county of Somerset in which Shepton Mallet lies.

4.127 The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to protect this natural environment of Shepton Mallet, including open spaces and ensure that natural resources are used prudently. The aim will be to ensure that Shepton Mallet remains an attractive rural environmentally healthy and sustainable place.

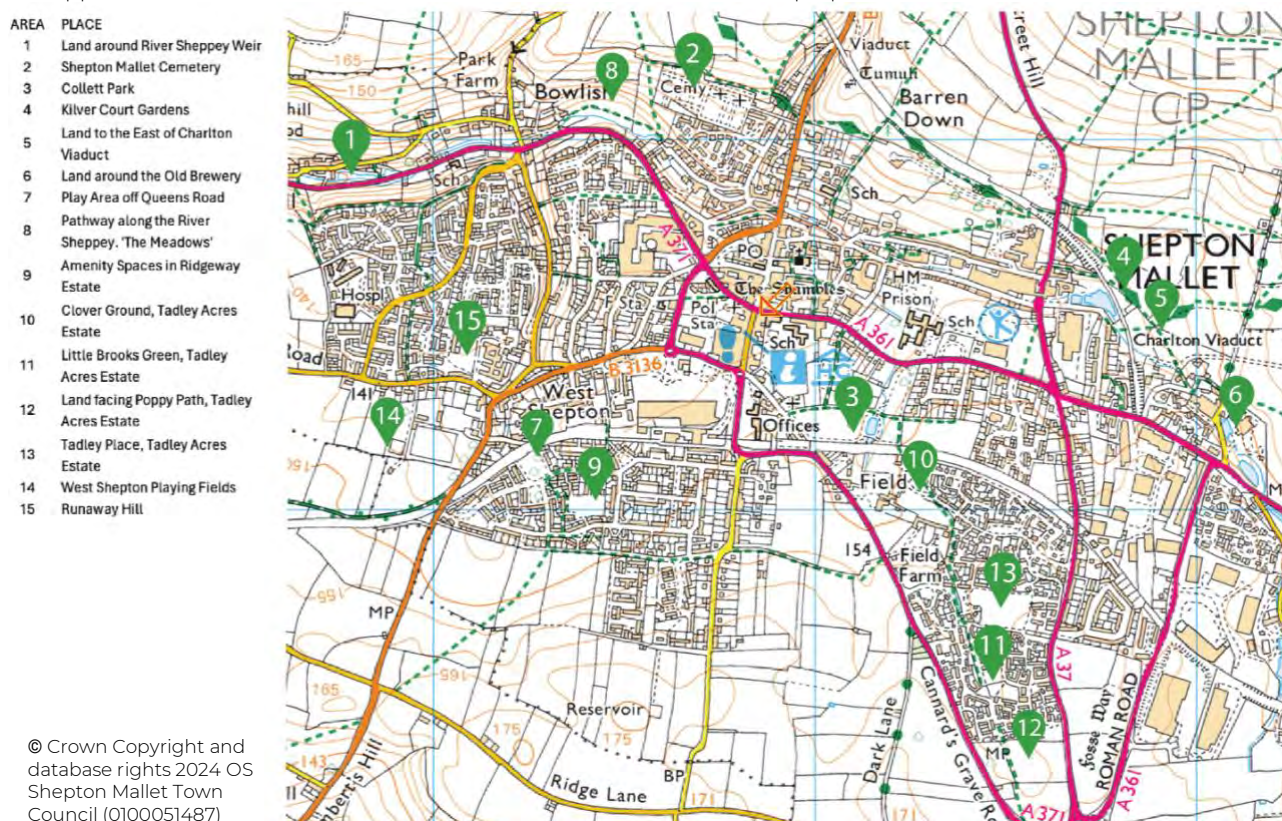
4.128 The policies within this Neighbourhood Plan are designed to conserve and enhance the local distinctiveness and sense of place that is key to the character of Shepton Mallet.

Policy 13. Local Green Spaces

- i. In recognition of their importance to the local community, the following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces, and other than in very special circumstances, no inappropriate development will be permitted within them that would harm their green character and reason for designation:
- Land surrounding River Sheppey Weir
 - Shepton Mallet Cemetery
 - Collett Park
 - Kilver Court Gardens
 - Land to the east of Charlton Viaduct
 - Land around the Old Brewery
 - Play area off Queen’s Road
 - Site along the Sheppey, ‘The Meadows’
 - Amenity Spaces in Ridgeway Estate (Mason Way / Springfield court, Sports Field / Play Area)
 - Clover Ground, Tadley Acres Estate
 - Little Brooks Green, Tadley Acres
 - Poppy Path, Tadley Acres
 - Tadley Place, Tadley Acres
 - West Shepton Playing Fields and Skate Park
 - Runaway Hill

Map 12. Shepton Mallet Local Green Spaces

See appendix to this document for detailed information about each of the proposed sites.



Reasoned Justification for Policy Thirteen

4.129 Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces for special protection where these are of particular importance to the local community and meet the other criteria for designation set out in

national planning policy³⁴. The designation is intended to give protection similar to that of Green Belt designation, and like Green Belts are intended to last well beyond the Neighbourhood Plan period.

4.130 To qualify as a Local Green Space, these spaces must be:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

4.131 The areas identified by the community as being of value to them and in need of the additional protection are included in Appendix One of this document together with a description of their reason for designation.

4.132 Most Local Green Space tend to be in public ownership, but the designation can be applied to privately owned land, and landowners are consulted as part of the process of designation. The designation does not alter or set any requirements for how a space is managed (as this is not 'development') nor does it convey any additional public rights of access to these areas.

4.133 The policy refers to very special circumstances and inappropriate development – an example of the former would be where there is a clear need for utilities infrastructure and there are no reasonable alternative sites available. Appropriate development would be a new building or facilities to support the continued use of the site underpinning its reason for designation – such as public toilets, information / visitor centre or parking. In such circumstances the design of the proposed development should be in keeping with the characteristics of the site.

³⁴ NPPF paragraphs 105 – 107 provide guidance on the designation of Local Green Spaces
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-and-safe-communities>

Policy 14. Important Views

- i. Any development should preserve and where possible enhance the following iconic views as shown on Map 13:
 - Views of the Viaduct from public footpaths east of the A37
 - Views across Kilver Court Gardens towards the Viaduct from Kidds Lane

Reasoned Justification for Policy Fourteen

4.134 Set in the rolling Somerset Hills, Shepton Mallet is surrounded by beautiful countryside. This is one of the main reasons for the thriving tourist industry which has grown up in and around the town. There are two views in particular that are iconic and are of great significance to Shepton Mallet's character, that include the ancient viaduct. These are described below, and protected through Policy fourteen.

Views of the Viaduct from public footpaths east of the A37

4.135 Land between the A37 and the old Roman Road, Fosse Way includes a number of public footpaths (SM21/24, 21/25, 21/26 and 21/65) from which views of the iconic 27 arches of the Grade II* Listed Charlton Viaduct can be clearly seen, in addition to the views from Fosse Way itself where there is a permissive path. The viaduct was built in the 1870's to cross Shepton Mallet's historic River Sheppey. The photographs below show several of these views.

4.136 There is also the potential to glimpse views of the viaduct from the A37, but this is largely obscured by the buildings at Ivey House Farm. Should this site be redeveloped, consideration should be given to how the views of the viaduct could be improved.





Views across Kilver Court Gardens towards the Viaduct from Kidds Lane

4.137 There are glimpsed views of Kilver Court Gardens and the Viaduct when viewed from Kidds Lane, as well as from within Kilver Court Gardens itself (the gardens are open to visitors most days of the week subject to an access fee / RHS membership)

Map 13. Map showing location of Important Views



Policy 15. Green Infrastructure

- i. Where feasible, development should incorporate landscaped areas that are comprehensively designed to:
 - Connect into and enhance the ecological networks running through the town (in particular those identified in Map 14);
 - Reduce flood risk as part of any sustainable drainage systems;
 - Provide opportunities for informal recreation; and
 - Encourage walking and cycling through the provision of suitable routes (as required under Policy 9)
- ii. Development that negatively affects the green infrastructure network as shown on Map 14 will not be supported unless appropriate mitigation is incorporated of equal or greater biodiversity value.
- iii. Development proposals should result in a net gain for biodiversity. Where off-site biodiversity offsetting is required to ensure that a net gain for biodiversity is achieved, priority should be given to offsetting schemes that will strengthen and extend the green infrastructure network as shown on Map 14 .

Reasoned Justification for Policy Fifteen

4.138 The network of green spaces within the town (the green infrastructure network) includes the larger green spaces such as Collett Park and the allotments, the river corridor, and linkages provided by the smaller green spaces, gardens, roadside verges, trees and hedgerows. This network is subject to a range of pressures, including those from development which can further fragment the network through loss or degradation of the spaces and linkages, and introduction of barriers such as impervious walls, artificial lighting (impacting on nocturnal animals), and culverted watercourses. The intent of this policy is to ensure that such harm does not occur, and that proposals where possible enhance the green infrastructure network through well-designed landscaping and compensatory measures.

4.139 The green infrastructure network performs a range of functions, including water / flood management, wildlife habitats and corridors, recreational spaces and routes for our health and wellbeing, and helps reduce the impacts of climate change. The strategy for the town, as set out in the Local Plan, looks to secure a further 6.5 hectares of new open space from new development sites and other initiatives, including public open spaces and accessible natural green spaces, new cycleways and footpaths and better flood management. The housing allocation at Cannard's Grave Road is anticipated to deliver some 7.2ha of public open space (including a small community orchard), primarily running north-south through the centre of the site.

4.140 National Planning Policy³⁵ requires that “planning policies and decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ...minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.” It further states that plans should identify, map and safeguard components of the local ecological network and opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. The requirement to achieve a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% for most developments³⁶ may result in the requirement for off-site compensatory measures for some applications, and Neighbourhood Plans are encouraged to include policies which support appropriate local offsite biodiversity sites.

4.141 Within the town, Collett Park forms a key part of our green infrastructure network, and an

³⁵ NPPF paragraphs 180 and 185 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/15-conserving-and-enhancing-the-natural-environment>

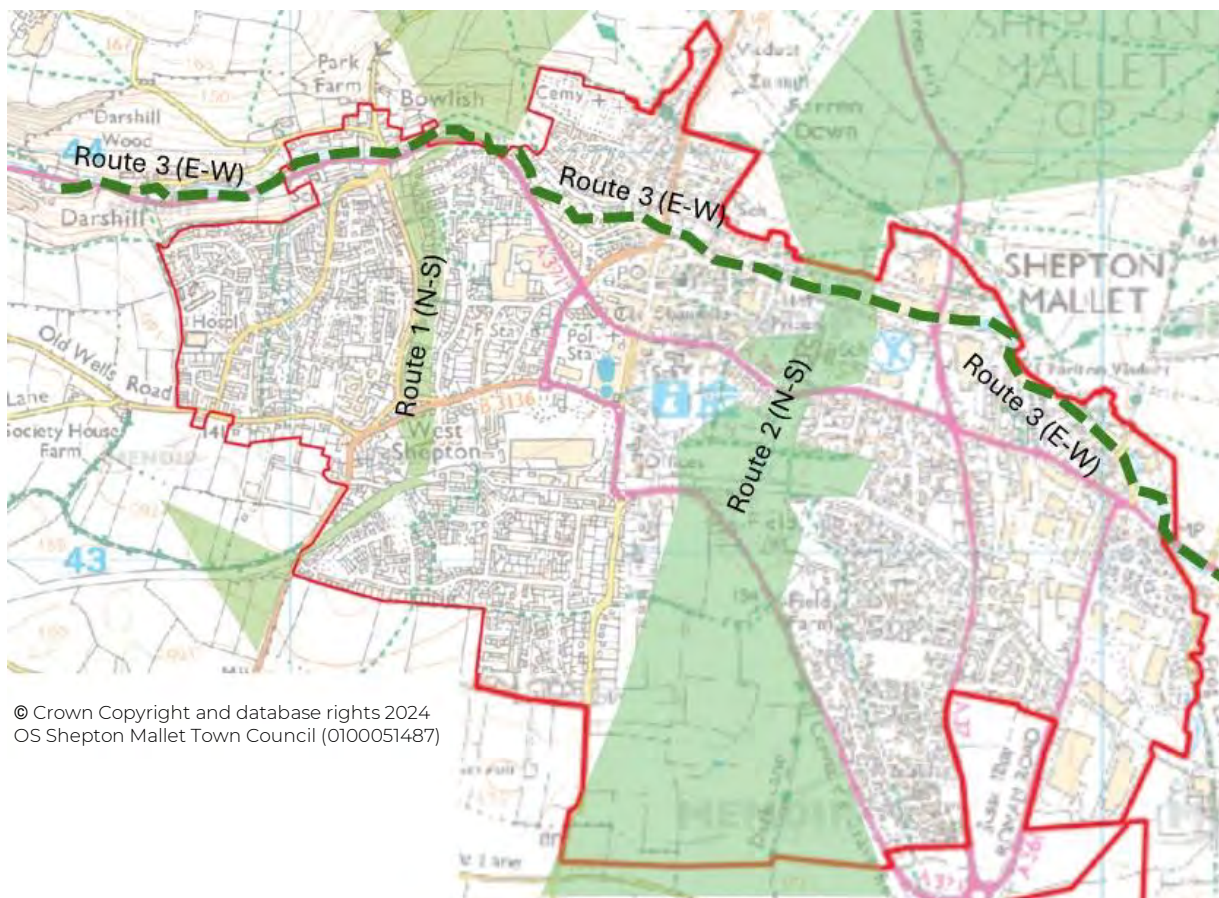
³⁶ Some smaller schemes including householder applications are exempt – for more information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain#about-biodiversity-gain>

ecology report for the park from 2020³⁷ provides basic data on the park's ecology and identified potential measures (i.e. changes to land and water management etc.) to promote its biodiversity. Linked to this, there are two key corridors that run north-south, and one more fragmented east-west route:

- Route 1 (N-S): running from north of the Meadows at Bowlish, through the Meadows themselves, along the wooded sides of Combe Lane and fragmented green spaces around Kent, before linking to the wider countryside to the south.
- Route 2 (N-S): running along the Fosseyway between Beacon Hill Woods and the town, through the open ground north of Garston street, through Whitstone school surrounds, Collett park and through the planned open space included within the Cannard's Grave Road development to the countryside beyond.
- Route 3 (E-W): follows the River Sheppey corridor entering the east side of the town at the Old Brewery trading estate, where it flows through two large mill ponds (and intersects with Route 2), then on via a short culvert re-emerging at the Lower Charlton field and on through Kilver Court site. West of Kilver Court the river is culverted again but emerges briefly at the small park between Garston Street and Town Lane and then again on Lower Lane. Another section of culverting conceals the river until it emerges at the end of Draycott Road, where it connects through the Meadows (and intersects with Route 1) and continues westward in either side of Wells Road until it exits the town. Because parts of the river corridor have been culverted, the corridor is more fragmented and vulnerable.

4.142 The focus of improvements to our green infrastructure network would therefore be most effective if they look to link into, strengthen and enhance these areas.

Map 14. Green Infrastructure Network



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³⁷ Collett Park, Shepton Mallet : Ecological assessment and enhancement. prepared by Kevin Rylands (RSPB conservation adviser) August 2020 - <https://sheptonmallet-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Item-6.7-Ecology-Survey.pdf>

Health & Community Policies

Aim:

To ensure a satisfactory and diverse range of local facilities appropriate for an expanding town

Objectives:

To ensure the provision of appropriate and adequate health services to meet the needs of a changing and growing population.

To retain, expand and enhance the provision of community recreation, leisure, and social / cultural facilities.

4.143 A key aim of the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan is to create a strong, vibrant and healthy community, able to access local services which reflect the specific needs of the residents of Shepton Mallet. To achieve this, it is important for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify, retain where appropriate support the expansion and enhancement of appropriate community facilities.

4.144 This ties in with Section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which highlights the importance of enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles through a broad range of measures – promoting recreation, creating places with easy access – ideally on foot - to local facilities and opportunities for social interaction, and retaining vital services, allowing them to modernise and adapt as required.

4.145 The town benefits from the following key community facilities:

Culture / arts / recreation

- Market Place, Market Cross (home to the town's open air markets)
- Mid-Somerset Showground (home to the Bath and West Show)
- Shepton Mallet Library, Market Cross
- Shepton Mallet Prison
- The Amulet Community Theatre, Market Square (currently closed)
- The Art Bank, 13 High Street

Education and Training (excluding nursery / pre-school provision)

- Bowlish Infants School, Wells Road
- Shepton Mallet Community Infant's School, Waterloo Road
- St Paul's CofE VC Junior School
- U3A/Old Police Station
- Whitstone School, Charlton Road

Healthcare

- Grove House Surgery
- Practice Plus Group Hospital
- The Park Medical Practice

Social / Meeting places

- Paul Street Community Centre, 26 Paul Street
- Peter Street Meeting Rooms, 10 Peter Street

- SHAPE Building & former Town Council Offices
- Shepton Army & Air Cadets Centre
- Shepton Mallet Scout Hut
- The Club Lounge Mtg Rooms, 29 High Street
- Public Houses (The Thatched Cottage, The Charlton Inn, The Victoria Inn, The King Williams Inn, The Bell, The Swan Inn and The Horseshoe Inn)

Places of Worship and Burial Grounds

- Baptist Church, Commercial Road
- Salvation Army Church/Community Centre
- Shepton Mallet Cemetery, Meadow Rise
- St Michael's RC Church, Park Road
- St Peter & St Paul's CofE Church

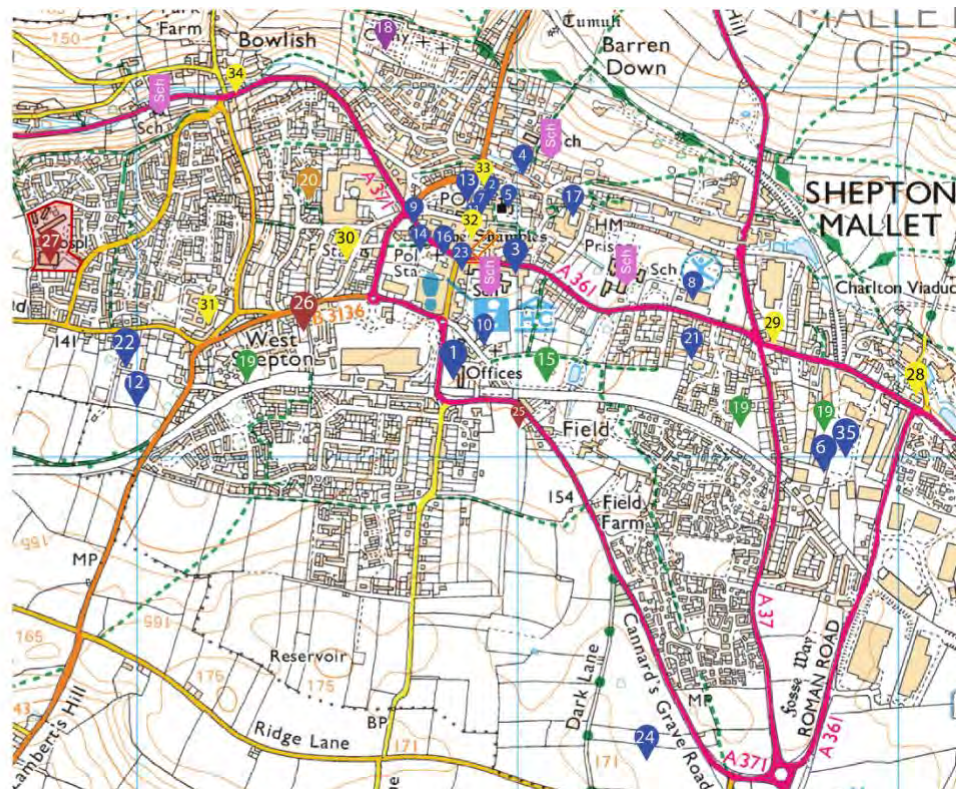
Sports and Leisure

- Collett Park
- Leisure Centre, 11 Charlton Road (currently closed to public use)
- Shepton Allotments (3 sites: Hitchen Lane Allotments, Allyn Saxon Drive Allotments and Whitstone Road Allotments)
- Shepton Mallet Bowls Club
- Shepton Mallet Football Club
- Shepton Mallet Lido
- Shepton Mallet Tennis Club

Map 15. Shepton Mallet Community Facilities

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OS Shepton Mallet Town Council (0100051487)

- 1 SHAPE bldg & Town Council Offices
- 2 The Amulet Community Theatre - Market Square
- 3 Paul Street Community Centre - 26 Paul St
- 4 Peter Street Meeting Rooms - 10 Peter St
- 5 St Peter & St Paul's CofE Church
- 6 Shepton Mallet Bowls Club
- 7 Shepton Mallet Library - Market Cross
- 8 Leisure Centre - 11 Charlton Rd
- 9 Salvation Army Church/Community Centre
- 10 St Michael's RC Church - Park Rd
- 11 The Art Bank - 13 High St
- 12 Shepton Mallet Football Club
- 13 Market Place - Market Cross
- 14 USA/Old Police Station
- 15 Collett Park
- 16 Baptist Church - Commercial Rd
- 17 Shepton Mallet Prison
- 18 Shepton Mallet Cemetery - 6 Meadow Rise
- 19 Shepton Allotments
- 20 Shepton Mallet Lido
- 21 Shepton Army & Air Cadets Centre - Drill Hall Lane
- 22 Shepton Mallet Scout Hut
- 23 The Club Lounge Mtg Rms - 29 High St
- 24 Mid-Somerset Showground
- 25 The Park Medical Practice
- 26 Grove House Surgery
- 27 West Shepton Healthcare Site
- 28 The Thatched Cottage
- 29 The Charlton Inn
- 30 The Victoria Inn
- 31 The King William Inn
- 32 The Bell
- 33 The Swan Inn
- 34 The Horseshoe Inn
- 35 Shepton Mallet Tennis Club



Policy 16. Health & Wellbeing Hub

- i. The site in West Shepton as shown on Map 15 is an essential facility for the ongoing delivery of health and wellbeing related services for the town and broader Mendip locality, and proposals that would enhance this offer should be supported.
- ii. Any proposals that would reduce the space available for the continuation of provision of appropriate health services (including incidental needs for patient and staff parking / access) will be strongly opposed unless it is demonstrated that alternative provision will ensure the needs of the growing population will be met or improved upon. Such provision should be within or adjoining the town, and must not compromise ease of access to these facilities, including by public transport and the need for patient and staff parking.

Reasoned justification for Policy Sixteen

Healthcare Services in Shepton Mallet

4.146 As well as two general practice (GP) surgeries - Grove House Surgery and Park Medical Practice - Shepton Mallet is served by a range of healthcare services, most of which are located on a single site in West Shepton. The town also has two high street dental practices; an optician that also provides hearing services; an osteopath and a chiropractor. The West Shepton site includes the community hospital, the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), outpatient and diagnostic facilities, and accommodation for healthcare professionals. These services are run by the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust³⁸. There is also an independent sector hospital on the site, dealing with elective services in support of NHS Patient Choice, run by Practice Plus Group at the present time.

4.147 With the exception of the UTC, services at the West Shepton site are accessed through GP referrals. Most of these come from the two local GP practices (where some 15,900 patients were registered in 2021) as well as those from other Mendip GP practices – in total the site serves an estimated population of 22,000.

4.148 It is important to retain a range of health services locally if people of different needs and abilities within this area are going to benefit from ready access to healthcare. Public transport links to and from the town are limited, which means that travelling to the closest alternative hospitals - Royal United Hospital Bath or Yeovil Hospital – is difficult, costly and prohibitive for some low income groups of people.

Capacity Issues

4.149 Underlying population growth combined with demographic change are exacerbating GP practice capacity pressures.

4.150 Somerset's Clinical Commissioning Group (now NHS Somerset³⁹) has raised concerns about the impact of further housing growth in and around the town. The town's two GP practices (Grove House Surgery and Park Medical Practice) were already over capacity in 2021⁴⁰, and unable to readily accommodate additional patients within their existing footprints.

4.151 According to a recent audit of the Mendip Primary Care Network estate, by 2032, approximately

³⁸ Somerset NHS Foundation Trust runs acute hospital services, community services, mental health and learning disability services and a quarter of Somerset's GP practices. It runs services from two acute hospitals – Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, Yeovil Hospital in Yeovil – services in the community and services from the 13 community hospitals in the county, a range of mental health and learning disability services and Symphony Healthcare Services runs a quarter of GP practices in the county.

³⁹ NHS Somerset, the public name of NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB), is the statutory NHS organisation responsible for strategic planning and delivery of local health and care services.

⁴⁰ At the time, the combined lists were over capacity by 770 patients, with a further 1286 patients predicted to arise from the proposed Cannard's Grave Road development (ref source).

120sqm additional practice space is likely to be needed in Shepton Mallet.

Challenges for the West Shepton Site

4.152 There are a number of challenges facing current and future health service provision in the town, as well as potential opportunities for improvement. These include:

- The community hospital is in a poor state of repair and significant investment needs to be put into either the existing site or an alternative location in order to maintain services.
- With the shift towards care in the home, there is a need for 'step down' beds in a nursing home in town.
- Staff shortages over the last couple of years have resulted in the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) operating under reduced opening hours. It means that Shepton Mallet has been poorly served and people, particularly children, are being forced to travel to UTCs or Emergency Departments in neighbouring towns. UTCs should be open 7-days a week, at least 12-hours a day, with senior clinical leadership and access to investigative and diagnostic equipment on site. The X-ray equipment that supports the UTC also has a limited range and is in urgent need of replacement.
- The independent sector hospital provides elective care across a range of specialities, the vast majority of which is funded by the NHS in support of Patient Choice. The current contract for this provision on the site is due to end in 2025, although there is an option to extend the current contract by a further 2 years. Whilst it is anticipated that such provision will continue (subject to the appropriate re-procurement processes) this may have implications for the future use of the site.
- The West Shepton site has approximately 120 public parking spaces and around 40 for staff vehicles, though at times this is insufficient, and visitors resort to on-street parking on neighbouring roads, which can cause issues for local residents.
- Under the One Public Estate (OPE) national initiative⁴¹, Somerset Council is working with the NHS to consider shared estate including buildings that could repurposed for healthcare services, such as the Shape Mendip building at the top of the High Street. There are already a number of relevant services housed on the Shape Mendip site, and it is a modern building that is Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) compliant. It also sits very close to a public transport hub and has on-site parking.

Health & Wellbeing Hub

4.153 Working with partners and communities, there is an opportunity to have a more joined up approach to improving health and outcomes and develop local solutions for the people in and around Shepton Mallet. The increasing population, changing demographics and advancements in technology and practices all require changes.

4.154 The original 2016 plans for a 'health campus' on the West Shepton site did not materialise, but there is still a lot of traction for the concept of 'health and wellbeing hub'. Much of the original vision – working closely with the town's GP practices, and with space for a range of Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector services supporting self-help and illness prevention – is still relevant and consistent with the strategic aims of the Somerset Integrated Care System⁴²

⁴¹ <https://lga.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s40060/7.%20OPE%20Update%2011B%20July%202022.pdf>

⁴² <https://nhssomerset.nhs.uk/our-somerset-strategy/>

Policy 17. Community Facilities

- i. The locally important community buildings and associated land, as identified in Map 15, should be retained and allowed to modernise and adapt to enable the community facilities they provide to meet the community's needs (either in their current location or through suitable alternative provision in the Neighbourhood Plan area). The loss of these facilities, or any significant reduction which would impact on their viability, will be strongly resisted, particularly where there are no buildings or land providing similar services that are conveniently located and have demonstrable capacity to serve that community.
- ii. The provision of additional community facilities will be supported, in particular where:
 - this will increase accessibility by providing services within easy walking distance of the intended catchment population
 - the proposals seek to address an existing shortfall in local provision.
- iii. The Canards Grave strategic site is expected to deliver:
 - a community play park, aimed at a wide range of ages and abilities;
 - a community building with meeting rooms, social and health facilities – this may be provided as part of or adjoining the 'local centre' and should be designed to benefit from potential links / dual use with adjoining community facilities and open space provision;
 - allotments and community garden space to at least provide for the anticipated needs arising from within the development, with additional provision to address the existing shortage of such spaces across the town strongly supported.
- iv. In order to retain a purpose-built leisure centre within the town, land at the West Shepton playing fields site may be considered for this purpose, provided that it does not reduce the area currently given to the football fields.
- v. The community use of the historic Prison Site will be supported, which may include its promotion as a tourist attraction as well as education / training facilities.

Reasoned Justification for Policy Seventeen

4.155 Policy DP17 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that guard against the loss of sites or premises currently or last used for local facilities and services unless suitable alternative provision is being made in the local area, or the facility is giving rise to significant problems (such as having a major impact on amenity or highway safety), or if there is no likelihood of its continued use being viable.

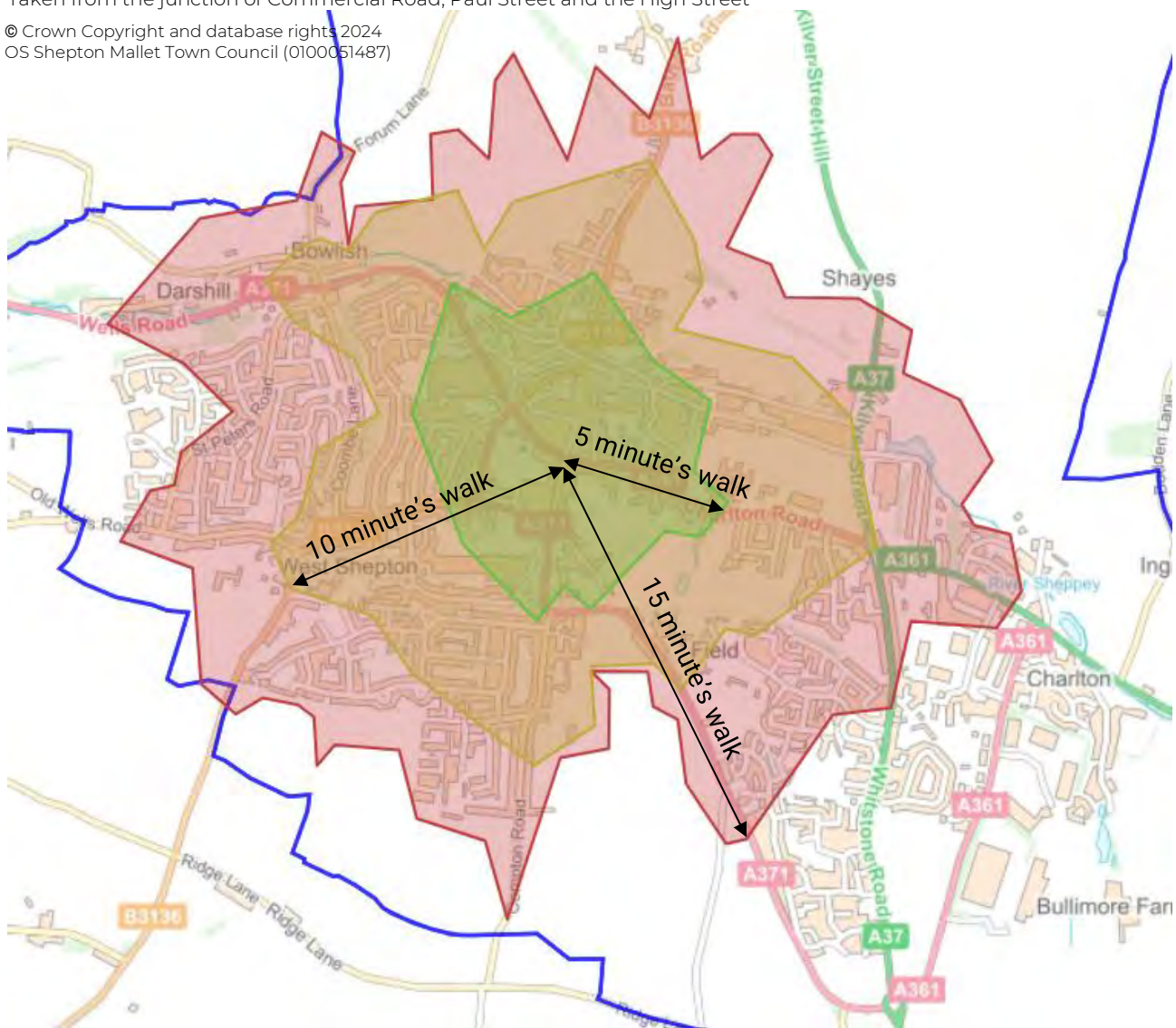
4.156 Somerset Council have also set out clear requirements for public open spaces and associated green spaces in the Mendip Greenspace SPD⁴³ (adopted February 2023). This includes standards on the amount and distance to different types of space, based on the "Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the six Acre Standard" published by Fields in Trust. This may be reviewed further in light of the Natural England guidance on green space provision.

4.157 As set out in the introduction to this section, Shepton Mallett has a range of community facilities that provides for its general needs, in terms culture and arts, social / meeting places, places of worship, education and training, healthcare, sports, leisure and recreation. Many of these are found within the town centre, but a reasonable number are outside of the centre. Given the compact nature of the town, those within the town centre are generally within an easy walking distance of the majority of the town's population.

⁴³ <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/supplementary-planning-documents/mendip-greenspace-spd/>

Map 16. Walking distances to the Town Centre
 Taken from the junction of Commercial Road, Paul Street and the High Street

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4.158 It is important that we don't take these facilities for granted, and the Neighbourhood Plan can help highlight the need to retain and where necessary add to the facilities on offer, taking into account the likely population growth and ease of access to the facilities we enjoy. However the Neighbourhood Plan cannot always protect all of the facilities we enjoy – no-one, for example, foresaw the precipitate closure of the town's leisure centre by Whitstone School in January 2023. Where facilities are commercially run, if they are no longer viable then there is little prospect of that facility continuing. It is therefore equally important to ensure that facilities can adapt to better meet future needs, which should help their continuing viability.

4.159 With the southward expansion of the town, there is an opportunity to provide a better range of social, recreation, and meeting places to residents that live in that part of the town, which is somewhat lacking in facilities at present. The plans for the Cannards Grave strategic site include land for a new primary school, a new local centre, and public open space, and these will become more detailed as the plans are progressed. The additional site identified to the west can also include community uses as part of its development. The West Shepton playing fields provide the town's major sports field and recreational area (and are proposed as a Local Green Space), but there is a need for a dedicated and reserved sports field area. There is also a need for more allotments / community growing spaces in this area – as whilst there are three allotment sites in Shepton Mallet (small community garden in Phase 7 of Tadley Place), there is a growing waiting list for allotment space. Proposals for an increase in allotments and community gardens within the development site or elsewhere across the town will be strongly supported.

4.160 . As noted in relation to local employment, whilst the town is reasonably well-served for school places, and there are several nursery / pre-school facilities, the town does lack a sixth-form college (and many young adults travel to Street or further afield for higher education). There are no plans at present to provide a higher education college in the town, but there may be potential within the existing secondary school site to provide a complementary base working in partnership with the current provision in Street, or as part of an apprenticeship and training hub in conjunction with local businesses.

4.161 Shepton Mallet is unusual in that it has The Lido. This is an historic icon in Shepton Mallet, having begun its life as a cooling pond for the brewery next door. When youngsters from the town continued to use its warm water for swimming, it was turned into the Lido and became an open-air swimming facility for the community and remains so today. The Lido made use of a heat exchanger that used the excess heat from the brewery to pre-heat the pool, and this extremely effective system led to the Lido winning an award as the “greenest pool in the country”. The Lido is still used and is popular for both local residents and visitors offering special events such as midnight swims and dog swims at the end of the pool opening season. It is therefore considered essential to preserve this historic institution as both a cultural icon as well as a great leisure and recreation facility.

4.162 Turning to the Leisure Centre – this included both indoor facilities (gym, squash courts, training rooms) as well as playing fields. Whilst public access to the indoor facilities stopped in 2023, the playing fields remained available for public use. It is understood that the closure is being investigated and it is hoped that full public use may be possible in the future. However if not, then alternative provision will be very much needed for the town’s residents.

4.163 The Prison is also included in the list of facilities, and since its closure has been operated as an educational tourist attraction – to raise awareness of the history of prisons (Shepton Mallett being a fine example of a) as well as being used occasionally by film makers and having rooms for hire by the community. It is accepted that there is planning permission for residential development on the site, but this has not been taken forward and as such provides an opportunity to look again at the future use of this site.

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Appendices

The following appendices can be found on or linked from the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan Website <https://SMNPlan.org.uk>

- Local Green Spaces Assessment
- Shepton Mallet Design Guide

List of Supporting Documents

The following supporting documents can be found on or linked from the Shepton Mallet Neighbourhood Plan Website <https://SMNPlan.org.uk>

- An Archaeological Assessment of Shepton Mallet
- Community Aspirations Log
- Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals Shepton Mallet
- Economic Regeneration: A Town Council Strategy for 2024
- Habitats Regulation Assessment
- Mendip District Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
- Mendip District Council Shepton Mallet Masterplan Detailed Assessment
- Mendip District Local Plan 2006-2029 (Parts I and II)
- Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton Deane Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Shepton Mallet Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)
- Somerset County Council Transport Policies – Parking Strategy
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Transport Report by HTP Consulting

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