

## Green Infrastructure Strategy

Investing in a healthy, biodiverse,  
resilient and world class city region  
2022-2031



# Foreword



Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole is the UK's newest city region and it is brimming with prospects, positivity and pride. Our ambition is for the BCP area to be one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play.

Green infrastructure has a vital role to play in supporting this vision for the BCP region as a healthy, resilient, green and world class place. This new strategy underlines the case for continuing to invest in the long-term management and maintenance of our green infrastructure and natural capital.

Our diverse green network of parks, nature reserves, woodlands, beaches and rivers make a major contribution towards the health and well-being of our vibrant communities, and tackling the climate and ecological emergencies.

Looking after our green and blue spaces – from our urban parks to our wonderful countryside and spectacular coast – has never been more important.

The pandemic underlined the importance of spending time in our green and blue spaces, but also highlighted the barriers experienced by some people in accessing nature.

By promoting opportunities for more people to access nature, enhancing biodiversity and putting high quality green infrastructure at the heart of place-making, our ambitious Green Net proposals deliver the means to support the sustainable growth of the city region for current and future generations.

This inspirational strategy sets out a framework for green infrastructure planning and delivery by BCP Council and its partners over the next decade. It is important that we take action now to address future challenges. Some immediate priorities for action highlighted by the strategy include:

- Co-ordinating with delivery of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan, Seafront Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Encouraging more green roofs and walls
- Increasing wildflower planting, tree planting and lighter maintenance on council owned land to rewild urban green spaces
- Maintaining and enhancing the stock of urban trees
- Create, maintain and promote safe, enjoyable and accessible parks and green spaces

The delivery of this strategy is essential for our current greenspaces, the future communities that will rely on them and for the wildlife that lives there.

**Councillor Mark Anderson**  
**Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place**

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# Introduction

Our strategy sets out the council's ambitions for investing in green infrastructure across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole over the next ten years.

It reflects the council's objectives to support a sustainable environment, dynamic places, connected communities, brighter futures and fulfilled lives. The strategy also supports the council's ambition to be one of the best places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play.

Our aim is to make best use of our green infrastructure to:

- Help increase health and well-being outcomes for our communities and visitors, thereby reducing pressures on health and social services
- Reverse biodiversity loss and nature recovery
- Strengthen the resilience of people, places and nature to a changing climate
- Support high quality placemaking

## What is green infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is the 'network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity' (National Planning Policy Framework, 2021).

Connecting urban, countryside and coastal areas at a range of scales, our green infrastructure network includes not only parks, playing fields and other public open spaces, but also woodland, heathland and other wildlife habitats, street trees, allotments and private gardens. In addition, it embraces blue infrastructure assets such as rivers, streams and the sea. In urban areas the network also includes green engineering solutions, such as sustainable drainage systems, green roofs and living walls.



**Doorsteps**



**Streets**



**Neighbourhoods**



**Countryside**

The type, amount and quality of green infrastructure, and its proximity to where people live, determines the benefits that it can provide.

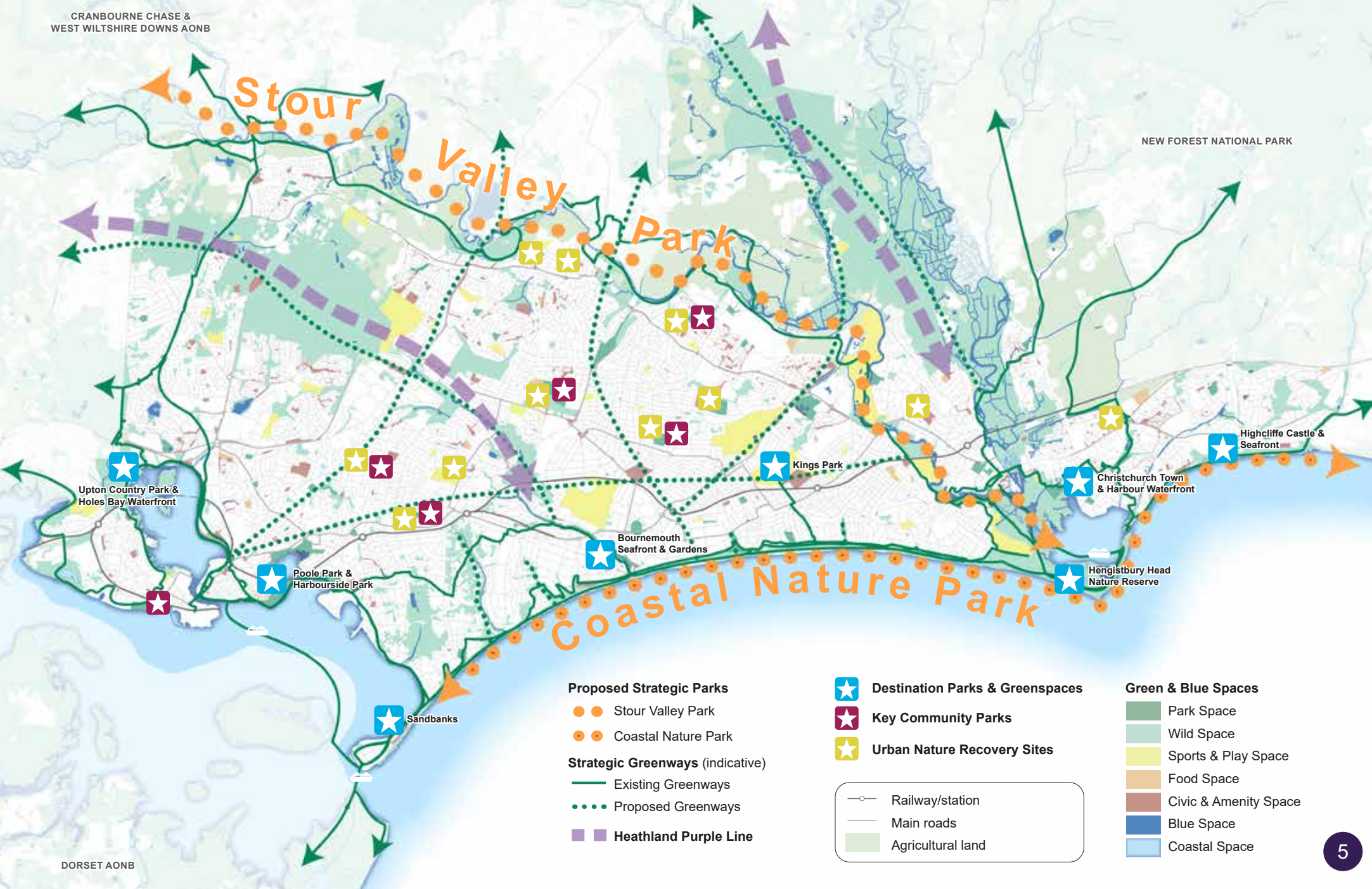
Our ambition is to create a multi-functional green infrastructure network for the city region, called the "Green Net". Suggested high level priorities and "bold moves" for creation of the Green Net are set out in the following Strategic Plan and Delivery Framework, which will be taken forward through development of a more detailed Delivery Action Plan.



BCP Green Net Strategic Plan

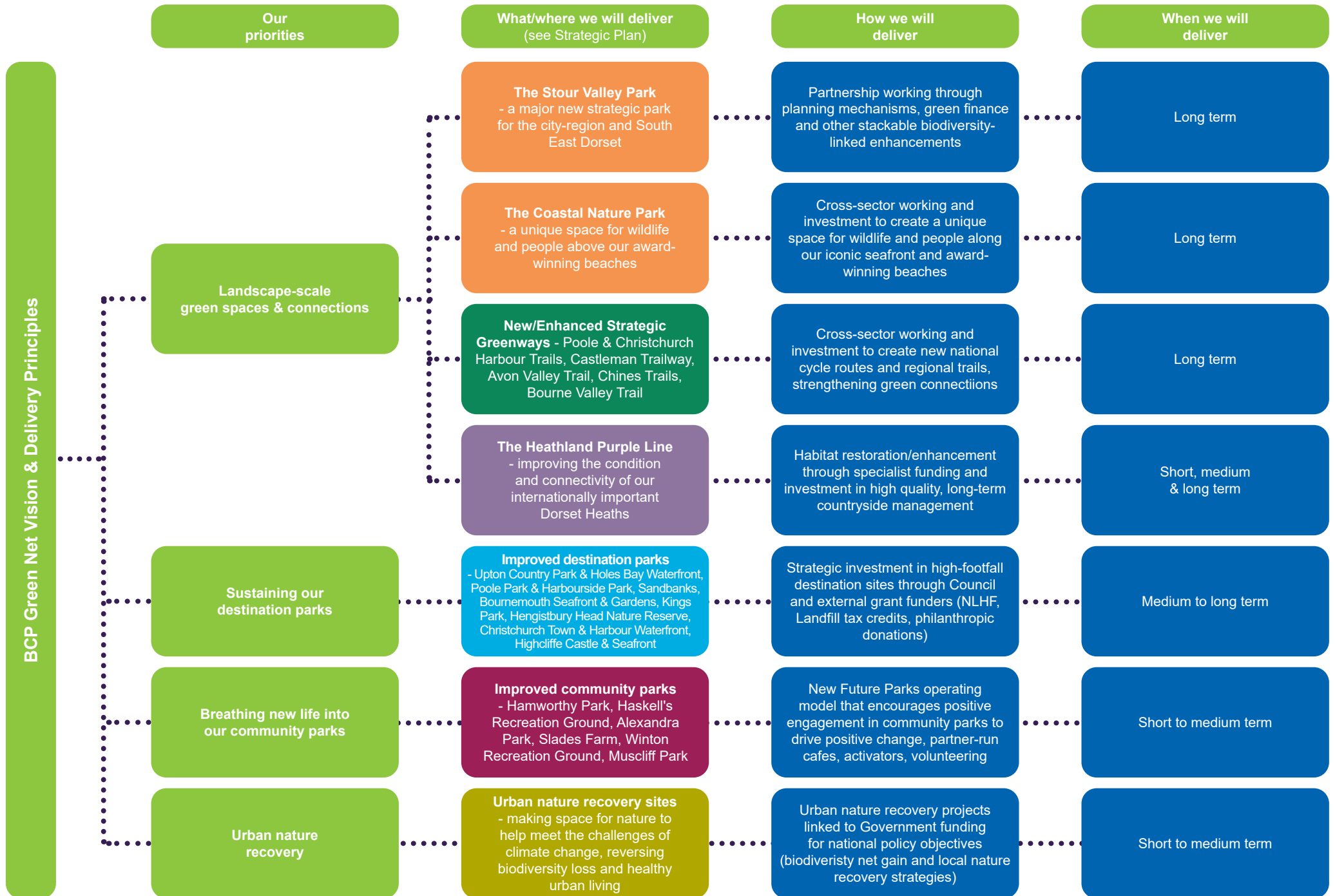
CRANBOURNE CHASE &  
WEST WILTSHIRE DOWNS AONB

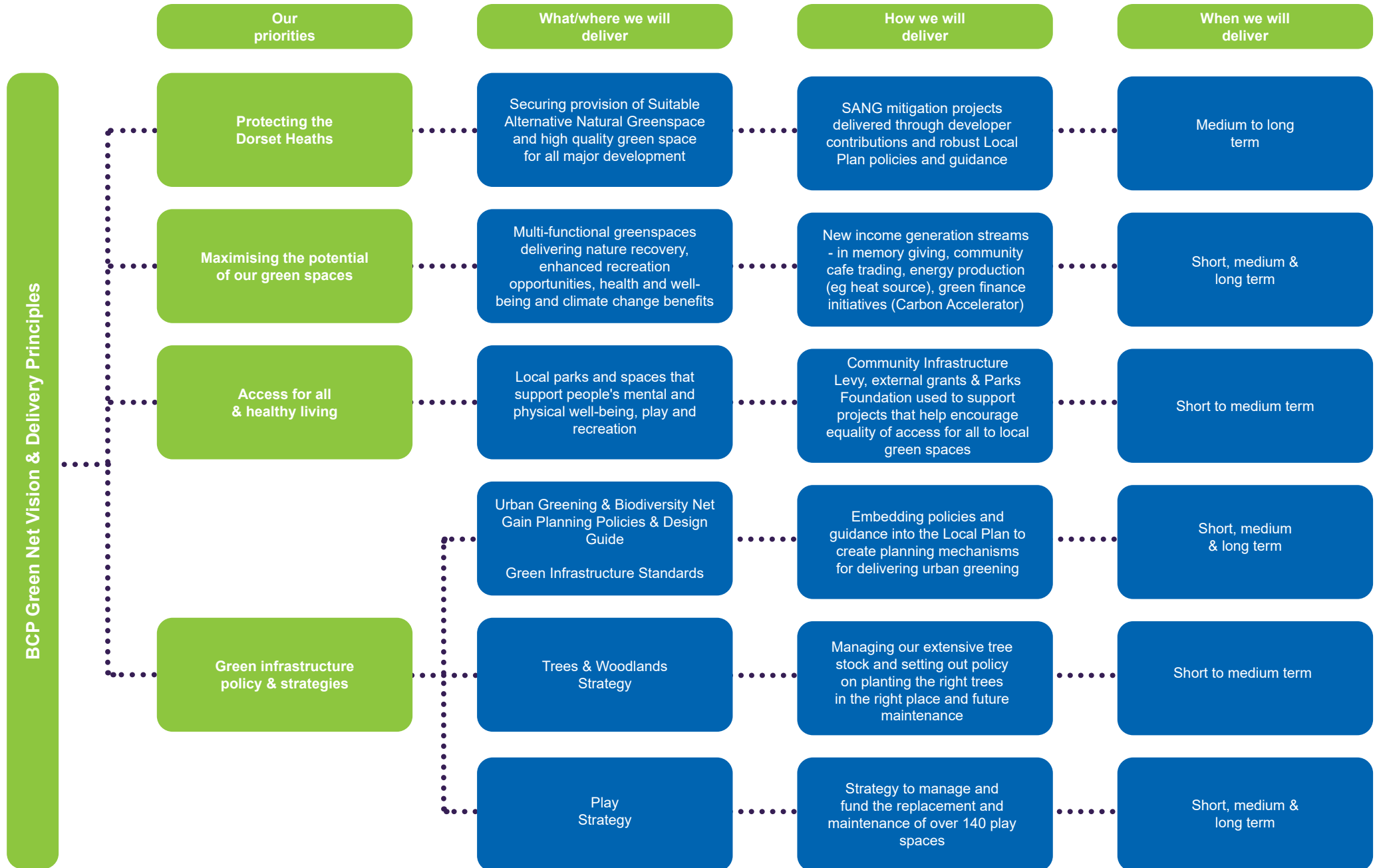
NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK



DORSET AONB

## Green Net Delivery Framework (1/2)





# Our challenges

## Climate and ecological emergency

In July 2019, BCP Council passed a motion to formally declare a climate and ecological emergency. This motion declares that climate change and biodiversity loss are serious risks to the future of our area; that the council and all its operations will be carbon neutral by 2030; and that BCP Council will work with the wider community towards making the whole conurbation carbon neutral before the UK target of 2050.

The council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan identifies various projects and actions to help in tackling this emergency.

In addition to being carbon neutral, there is also a vital need to start changing practice, funding and attitudes towards recognising the value of multi-functional green infrastructure in providing nature-based solutions to help us adapt to a changing climate.

Nature recovery action needs to be holistic and targeted across all of the council's green and blue spaces, not just designated sites, alongside influencing private landowners and residents to help make a difference through changing behaviours towards how we manage land, value our landscapes and adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

## Tackling health inequalities

In the context of the challenges from health inequalities, investment in the provision of high quality, biodiverse and accessible green and blue infrastructure has never been more vital.

For many communities, the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns have changed their relationship with green spaces, both highlighting their value and introducing more people to their benefits.

In response to these challenges, our towns of tomorrow need to become more liveable and resilient by making them greener and healthier places.

Parks and other accessible green spaces have long contributed to the wellbeing of urban communities. Within the conurbation, the scope for creating new large green spaces is generally limited by existing development. There is also a need to embed green infrastructure into any brownfield regeneration sites and any greenfield urban extensions.

As a result, there is a need to think more imaginatively about how we repurpose and connect our parks and green spaces, and make our built environment and public realm greener, to tackle urban living challenges facing the area.



# Value of our green spaces

Parks are the lungs of our towns. They provide space for us to escape, explore, rest, relax and play. They keep us healthy, soften hard urban landscapes, help to clean the air and provide crucial homes for wildlife.

Parks are one of the most well used services the council provides, with usage by approximately 93% of residents at least once in the last year and satisfaction levels in that group at around 85%.

The council allocates £5.4m per annum, or 2.5% of its net annual budget, on green space management, which accounts for around 20% of the land area of the conurbation. Additionally, green space generates approximately £4.5m from rents, concessions, grants and trading, which contributes to the council's medium term financial planning and can be spent on wider service provision.

Conversely, the council spends around 73% of its budget on adult and children's social care services, whilst central government spends 50% of its budget (approx. £395bn) on health and social care.

The pressure on these services increases where people become socially isolated and physically inactive.

**93% of residents use parks at least once in the last year<sup>3</sup>**



**BCP Council allocates £5.4m per annum on green space management<sup>3</sup>**

**Green spaces generate c.£4.5m revenue per annum<sup>3</sup>**



**Benefits of BCP's parks estimated at £231m per annum (30-40% higher including beaches)<sup>4</sup>**

Numerous recent studies have connected access to good quality green space with better outcomes for communities, indicating lower levels of both mental and physical health conditions. Natural England's People and Nature Survey 2020 found that almost nine in 10 adults in England report that being in nature made them very happy.

BCP Council's parks and other public open spaces receive around 9.7 million recreational visits per year from residents. A recent Natural Capital Account has revealed the value of the social and environmental benefits provided by the council's parks to be £231m per annum. In relation to the cost of running the parks, the health and other benefits are a substantial return on investment.

It makes sense to make the best use of our parks as assets to realise their optimum value. In doing so, it is important that we begin to think in a different way – not only about the way in which we place a value on our parks, but also on how we design and manage those spaces to meet community needs.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Future Parks Project Report to BCP Council Corporate Management Board, 20th April 2021

<sup>4</sup> Source: BCP Natural Capital Account, Vivid Economics, 2020



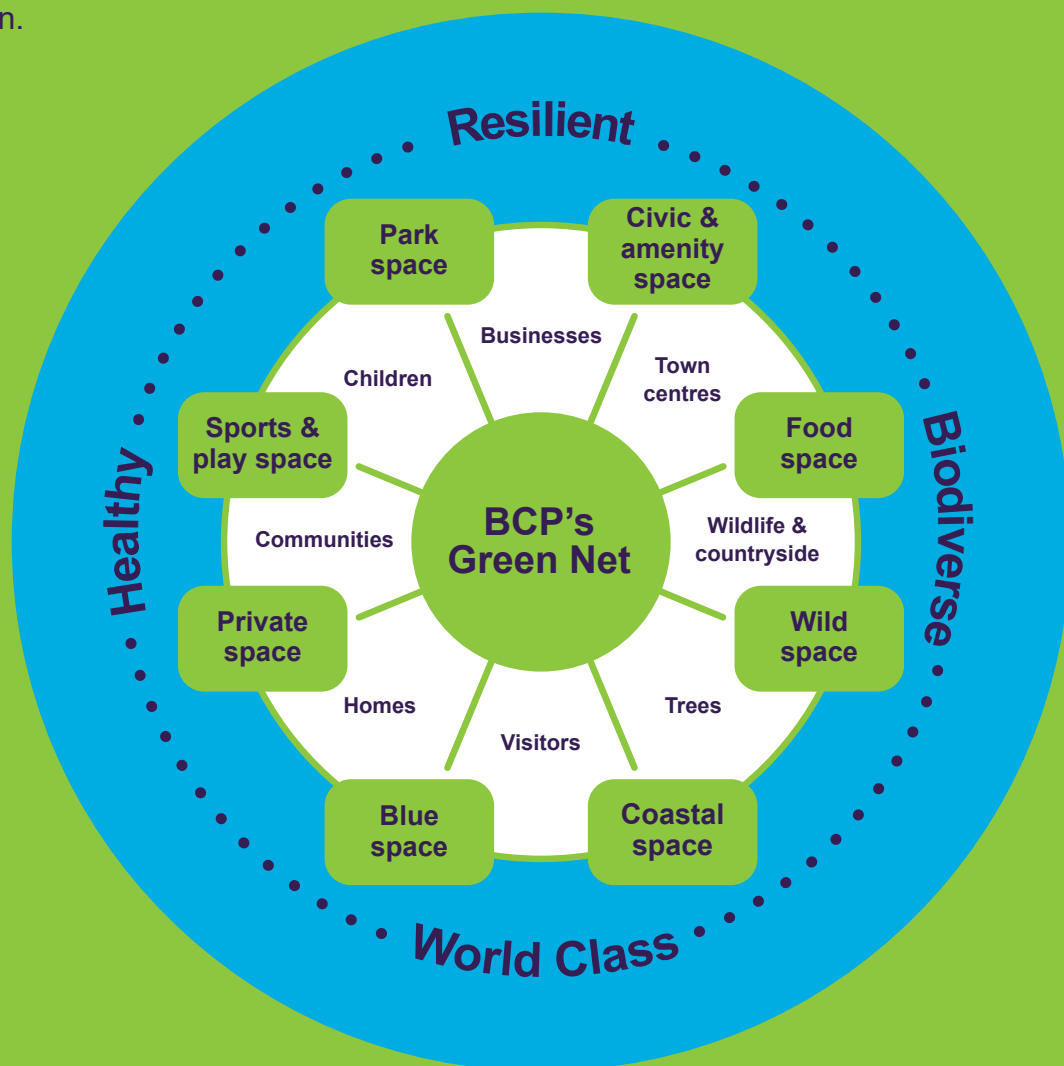
# Our vision

There is increasing evidence that high quality and well connected green infrastructure can provide a range of benefits for people, places and nature.

Our ambition is to secure investment in the delivery of a multi-functional green infrastructure network, weaving together and enriching green and blue spaces throughout the city region. We call this the Green Net.

## Green Net vision

The Green Net provides a natural health service and life support system for our communities throughout Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. Providing the backdrop to peoples' everyday lives, the Green Net reinforces the green image of the city region as a healthy, biodiverse, resilient and world class place to live, work, study, visit and invest in.



Our aspirational vision is supported by four overarching, long-term strategic goals.

## Goal 1. Encourage healthy living and well-being

This goal is about building happy, connected and healthy communities, and supporting active lifestyles and well-being, across the city region through investment in green infrastructure to address health inequalities in line with our Health and Well-Being Strategy.

We want to inspire more people, from all backgrounds, ages and abilities, to engage with nature and spend more time in green and blue spaces in their everyday lives for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening. This goal is also about adopting nature-based solutions for improving local air quality in line with our Clean Air Strategy, and reducing noise pollution.

**‘Everyday engagement with nature for everyone’**

## Goal 2. Strengthen resilience to climate change

This goal will support delivery of the council’s pledges within the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan by strengthening resilience to climate change through natural solutions.

It is about keeping the conurbation cool, its air clean and protecting water quality and areas vulnerable to flooding. The goal also includes mitigating climate change through natural approaches to carbon storage and sequestration, and supporting low carbon travel.

**‘Natural solutions for a changing climate’**





### **Goal 3. Support nature recovery and biodiversity**

This goal is about supporting nature recovery and biodiversity to tackle the ecological emergency, by creating space for nature through targeted habitat restoration, creation and expansion to strengthen ecological connectivity and improve species recovery. Informing and supporting private landowners through best practice is also a key aim of this goal.

**‘Better, more and connected habitats for wildlife’**

### **Goal 4. Support economic recovery, prosperity and placemaking**

Investment in green infrastructure has a fundamental role to play in delivering the council's vision for the future.

The Green Net can underpin the Big Plan's ambitious projects for helping the city region bounce back bigger, bolder and better from the pandemic. High quality parks, green spaces and public realm are critical to the area's iconic cityscape and seafront, and shaping the rejuvenation of Poole town centre. Embedding green infrastructure into new development and transport infrastructure can also support the council's ambitions.

**‘Investing in our natural capital for a greener economy’**



# Our evidence

## The green infrastructure strategy

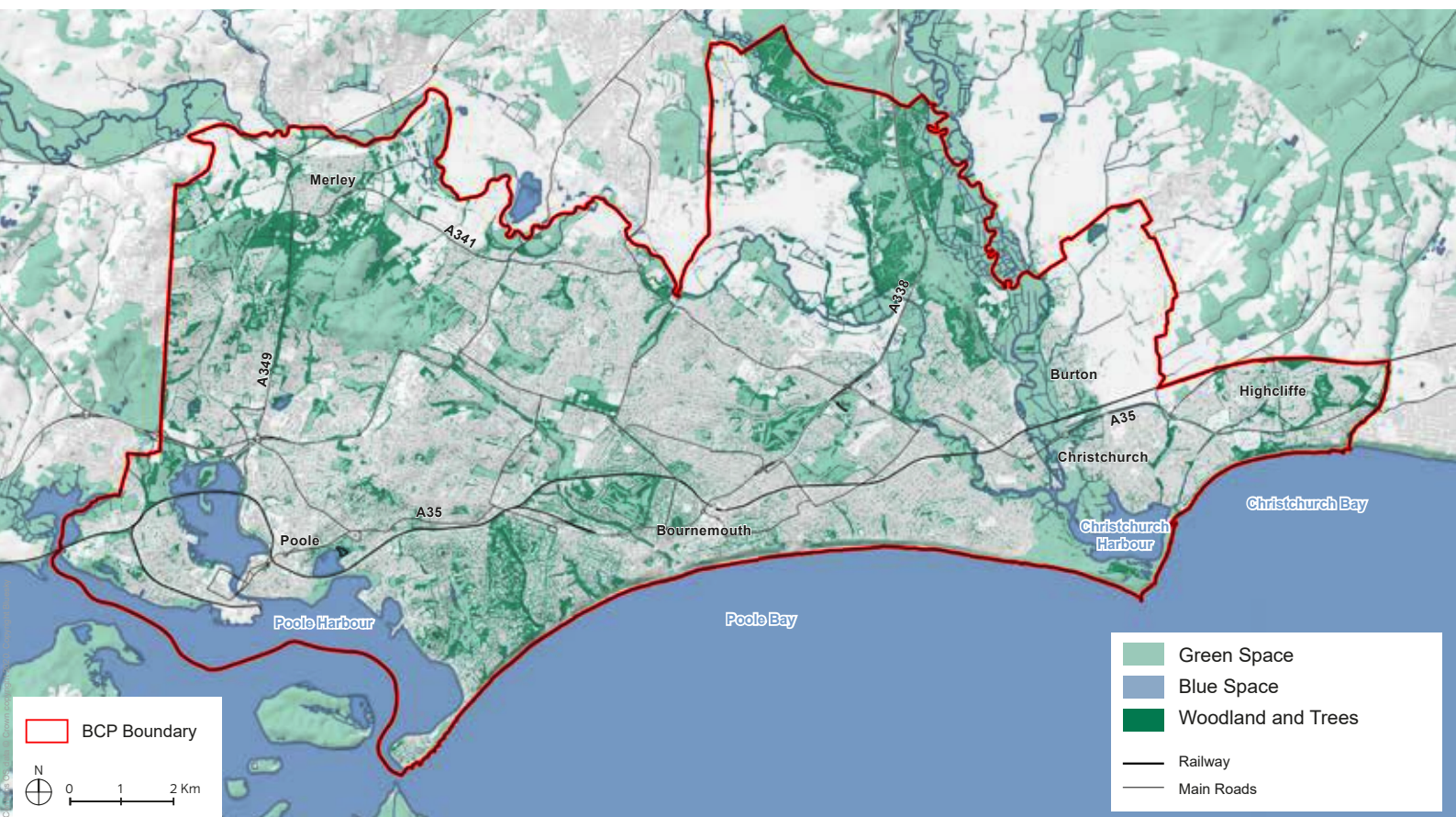
The strategy will help to shape the council's strategic future direction for parks and greenspace management. It will also inform the council's approach to the provision of green infrastructure through land use planning. The main technical document sets out the green infrastructure evidence base to inform the new Local Plan for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

The technical document includes detailed information about the area's existing green infrastructure and natural capital assets, and the value and benefits that these provide. It also identifies opportunities and priority areas for action, and outlines a high level delivery framework for green infrastructure investment.

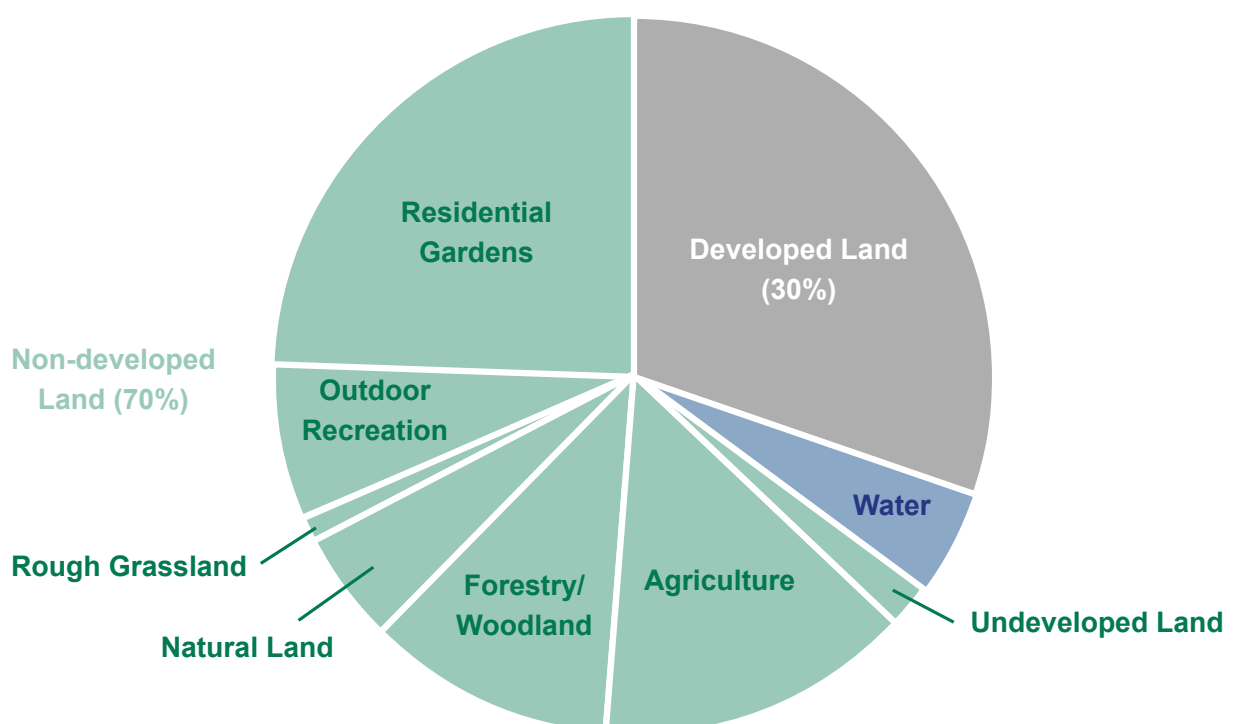
### **The technical document includes the following supporting evidence:**

- Green infrastructure benefits (Appendix 1).
- Green infrastructure case studies (Appendix 2).
- Green infrastructure policy context (Appendix 3).
- Place context and key issues (Appendix 4).
- Green infrastructure network (Appendix 5).
- Green infrastructure zone opportunities (Appendix 6).
- Green infrastructure standards (Appendix 7).
- GIS datasets (Appendix 8).
- Natural capital assessment (Appendix 9).
- Parks and green spaces survey (Appendix 10).
- Green infrastructure projects (Appendix 11).

Analysis of this evidence has informed the goals, principles and high level priorities for delivery of the Green Infrastructure strategy.

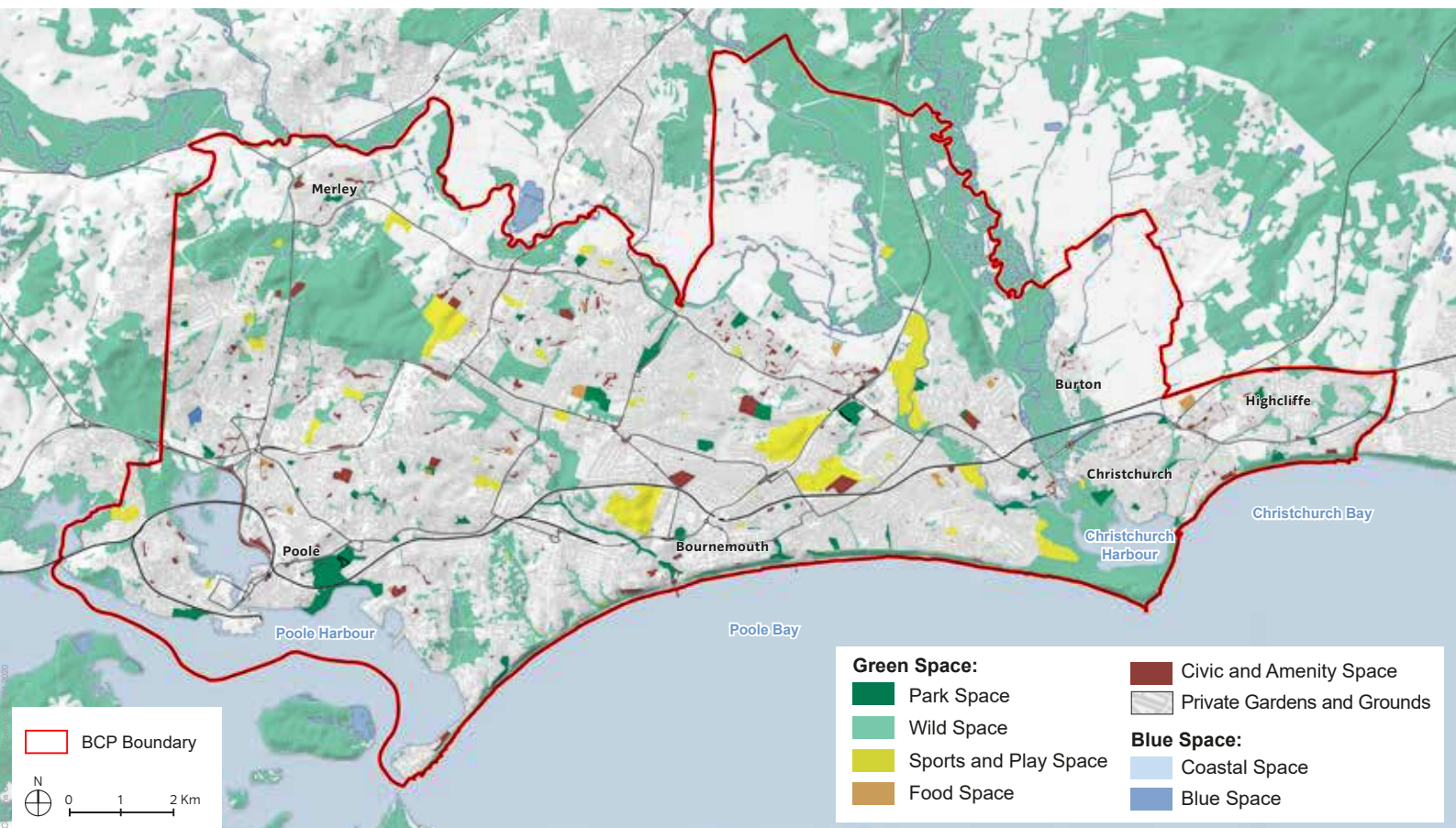


The city region has an extensive network of green space (non-developed land both publicly accessible and non-accessible) interspersed throughout the urban area, the wider countryside and along the coast in the BCP area. Blue space is also a major component of the Green Net, dominated by the coastal waters and harbours. Together, these green and blue spaces form the backbone of the area's Green Net.





## BCP's green and blue space types



Much of the area's green space is publicly accessible, owned and managed by the council and charitable organisations for public benefit. Many of these public open spaces are multi-functional and have overlapping typologies – such as park space that can include sports and play space, and coastal or blue spaces that are also wild spaces. Private gardens and grounds can also help make neighbourhoods more resilient to climate change, contribute to biodiversity and provide health and well-being benefits.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole has **40 miles** of coastline including **15 Blue Flag** and **14 Seaside Award** beaches



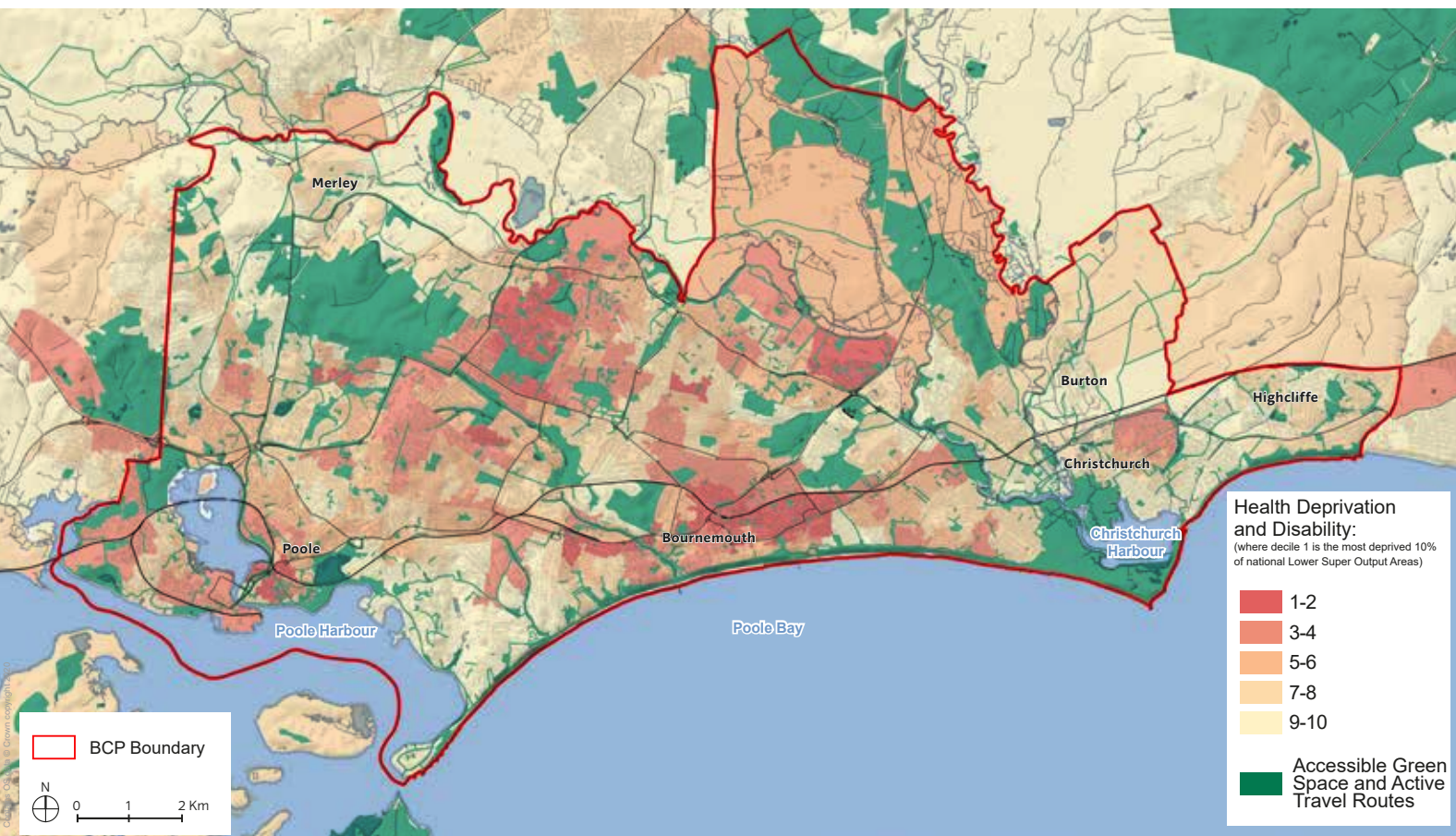
BCP Council manages **c.2,500ha** of green space. **23** of its **parks and green spaces** have been awarded **Green Flag** status and it maintains **129 playgrounds**

Around **20%** of the BCP area is designated for its **nature conservation value**





## Accessible green space and health deprivation



Cycle routes and public rights of way often follow green corridors connecting to the extensive network of accessible green spaces. However, communities in the most deprived areas may experience more limited opportunities for accessing nature due to deficiencies in provision of accessible green space. Investment and planning is needed to improve green connections between accessible green space in these areas.



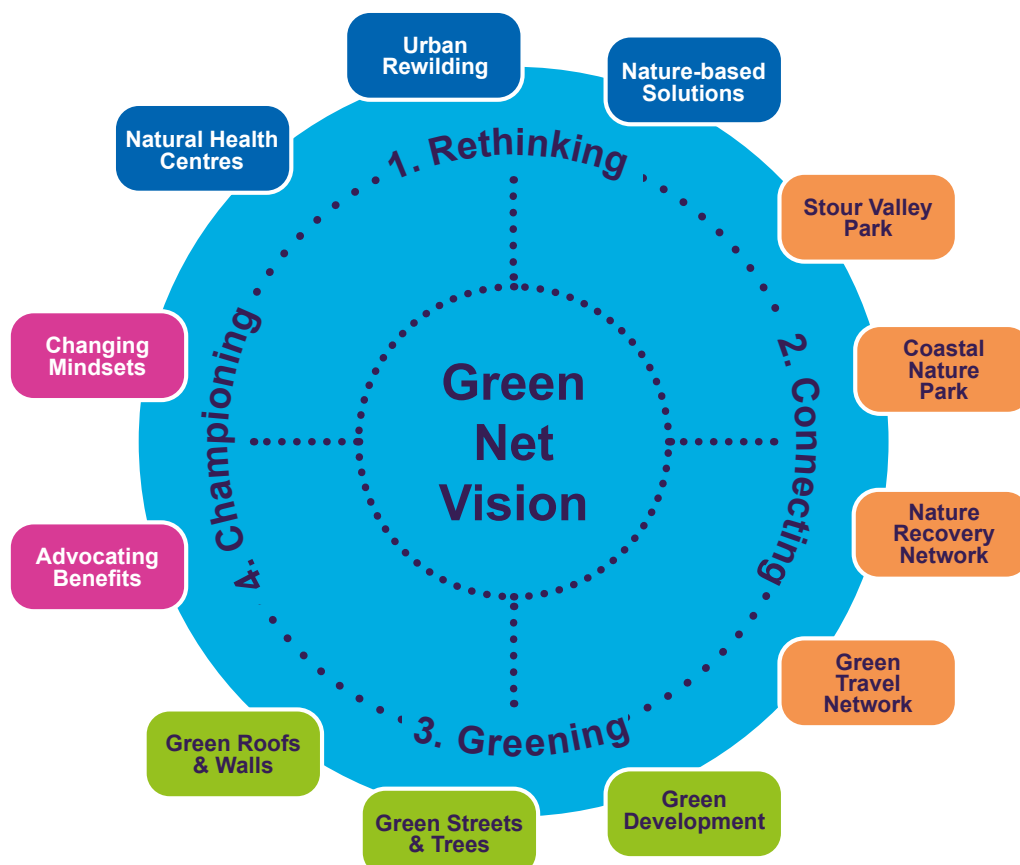
# Our principles

By promoting opportunities for more people to access nature, enhancing biodiversity and putting high quality green infrastructure at the heart of place-making, the strategy aims to underpin the sustainable development and growth of the city region for current and future generations.

We have identified four key principles for guiding how we will deliver green infrastructure benefits for people, places and nature in the BCP area, and help address climate, ecological and health challenges.

## Our green infrastructure delivery principles:

1. **Rethinking the future of parks and green spaces** - increasing the functionality of spaces as as natural health centres and green living rooms, rewilding urban green spaces and promoting nature-based solutions to help adapt to a changing climate
2. **Connecting the Green Net** - strengthening nature recovery and green travel networks, and creating two new landscape-scale countryside and coastal parks
3. **Greening the urban environment** - incorporating green roofs/walls, greener streets/ public realm and celebrating trees, and embedding green infrastructure into new housing and regeneration areas
4. **Championing green infrastructure** - advocating green infrastructure benefits and changing mindsets for a greener future



## Principle 1 – Rethinking the future of parks and green spaces

Just as other forms of infrastructure need to be regularly upgraded, extended or modified, the functions of parks and green spaces (and the network as a whole) need to be reconsidered to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet future community need.

In the face of contemporary and future urban living challenges, there is a clear need to consider rethinking the primary purpose of some parks and green spaces to become more multi-functional green infrastructure assets – such as increasing community access to public golf courses and school playing fields, and re-wilding amenity spaces.

Building on the legacy of the area's enlightened founders and benefactors, rethinking parks and green spaces as multi-functional green infrastructure assets can help address contemporary and future urban living challenges.

### What changes to green spaces would people like to see?

The 2021 Rethinking the Future of Parks & Green Spaces Survey told us that some of our key spaces, such as Poole Park, Queens Park, Harbourside Park, the Stour Valley and Kings park could be improved by:

- Reducing the impact of traffic and vehicles
- Rewilding through allowing more areas of meadow, creating more wild space and protecting existing wildlife
- Improve public access and facilities, such as play spaces, toilets and lighting and specific interventions such as the Poole Park railway

Dogs, seating, cafes and maintenance were also other common themes mentioned across all green spaces.

### What benefits would people like to see more of?

The 2021 Rethinking the Future of Parks and Green Spaces Survey told us that rewilding (80%) was the most popular benefit of green spaces that people from across most equalities groups would like to see more of.

### Key opportunities for rethinking the future of our parks and green spaces include:

- 1a. Increasing the functionality of green spaces as natural health centres and green living rooms to provide increased opportunities for improving people's well-being.
- 1b. Targeted rewilding of urban green spaces to increase biodiversity and bring people closer to nature.
- 1c. Reinforcing green spaces as green sponges and as air conditioning for the city region to help adapt to a changing climate.

See **Section 4.2** of the main technical document for further details.



## Principle 2 – Connecting the Green Net

Strengthening the connectivity of people, places and nature across the city region and beyond through expansion of green space at a landscape-scale is a key priority for the Green Net vision. There is potential to develop strategic green corridor initiatives with partners across the south east of Dorset to help reinforce links within the BCP conurbation and connecting it regionally.



### Public support for connecting the Green Net

The 2021 Rethinking the Future of Parks and Green Spaces Survey told us that connecting spaces for nature and green travel were important to many people:

- 92% agreed that to combat nature loss, we need to connect spaces and manage them for nature
- 86% agreed that more clean, green, connected spaces will encourage more people to walk and cycle around the conurbation
- 79% agreed that we should link the Green Net to bigger spaces outside the BCP area
- 74% agreed that the council should acquire land on the edge of the BCP area to create green corridors to bigger spaces

### Key opportunities for connecting the Green Net include:

- 2a. Supporting multi-functional strategic green corridors
- 2b. Advancing the ongoing development of the regionally significant Stour Valley Park
- 2c. Developing a local nature recovery network to enhance wildlife habitats and help achieve wider environmental goals, such as carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change
- 2d. Enhancing a green travel network that builds on the work of the Transforming Cities Fund and the new cycleways delivered by this project

See **Section 4.3** of the main technical document for further details.



### Principle 3 – Greening the urban environment

Greening streets, civic and amenity spaces and buildings – within residential areas, town centres and the seafront for example – is an integral part of the Green Net.

There are considerable place-making benefits of incorporating green engineering solutions infrastructure into buildings, streets and civic spaces. For example, promoting a strong sense of place and green image for the conurbation can help attract and retain inward investment, and strengthening the area's status as a key tourist destination.

As the potential for creating new large areas of green space are limited, the greening of buildings and the public realm provides a way of bringing people in urban areas closer to nature.

The continued provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace is important for mitigating the impacts of increased recreation from residential development on the designated wildlife habitats of the Dorset Heathlands.

#### What benefits would people like to see more of?

The 2021 Rethinking the Future of Parks and Green Spaces Survey told us that greening streets (74%) was the second most popular benefit that people from across most equalities groups would like to see more of in the BCP area.



#### Key opportunities for greening the urban environment include:

- 3a. Embedding urban greening and statutory biodiversity net gain into local plan policy
- 3b. Developing an urban greening and biodiversity net gain design guide
- 3c. Developing a trees and woodland strategy
- 3d. Encouraging home owners to create wildlife-friendly homes and gardens

See **Section 4.4** of the main technical document for further details.



## Principle 4 – Championing green infrastructure

Given the multi-functional nature of green infrastructure, there is a need to promote and champion new ways of inter-disciplinary working across the local nature, health and enterprise sectors. This is vital if the beneficial outcomes of adopting an integrated green infrastructure approach are to be fully optimised.



### Key opportunities for championing green infrastructure include:

- 4a. Nominating senior leadership and councillors to be advocates for green infrastructure
- 4b. Strengthening green infrastructure partnership working
- 4c. Mainstreaming green infrastructure goals
- 4d. Celebrating green infrastructure added value
- 4e. Changing mindsets for a greener future

See **Section 4.5** of the main technical document for further details.



# Delivering our vision

The strategy provides a framework for the council, landowners businesses, investors, communities and residents to work together in delivering the shared vision for the BCP Green Net. It heralds a new way of more integrated partnership working to deliver investment in green infrastructure that will help keep our city region healthy, resilient, green and world class.

Although the strategy will need to be flexible and evolve as things change over time, we have identified some immediate priorities for action. Above all, any actions undertaken by delivery partners should contribute to a high-quality, well-connected and multi-functional green infrastructure network that optimises benefits for people, place and nature.

The delivery principles and key opportunities outlined in the strategy provide an important starting point towards achieving our goals. While these include areas where commitments may already be in place, further specific actions will also need to be developed to take forward the strategy.

## **Developing a Green Infrastructure Delivery Action Plan**

The council will work with our partners to develop an investment programme for the phased delivery of green infrastructure to support future sustainable growth.

It is envisaged that the Delivery Action Plan would include consideration of strategic green infrastructure initiatives identified in the strategy, and also place-specific projects shaped through ongoing engagement with local communities and partners.

With appropriate funding, these projects can offer considerable potential to strengthen our Green Net where delivered in line with the principles highlighted in the Green Infrastructure strategy.

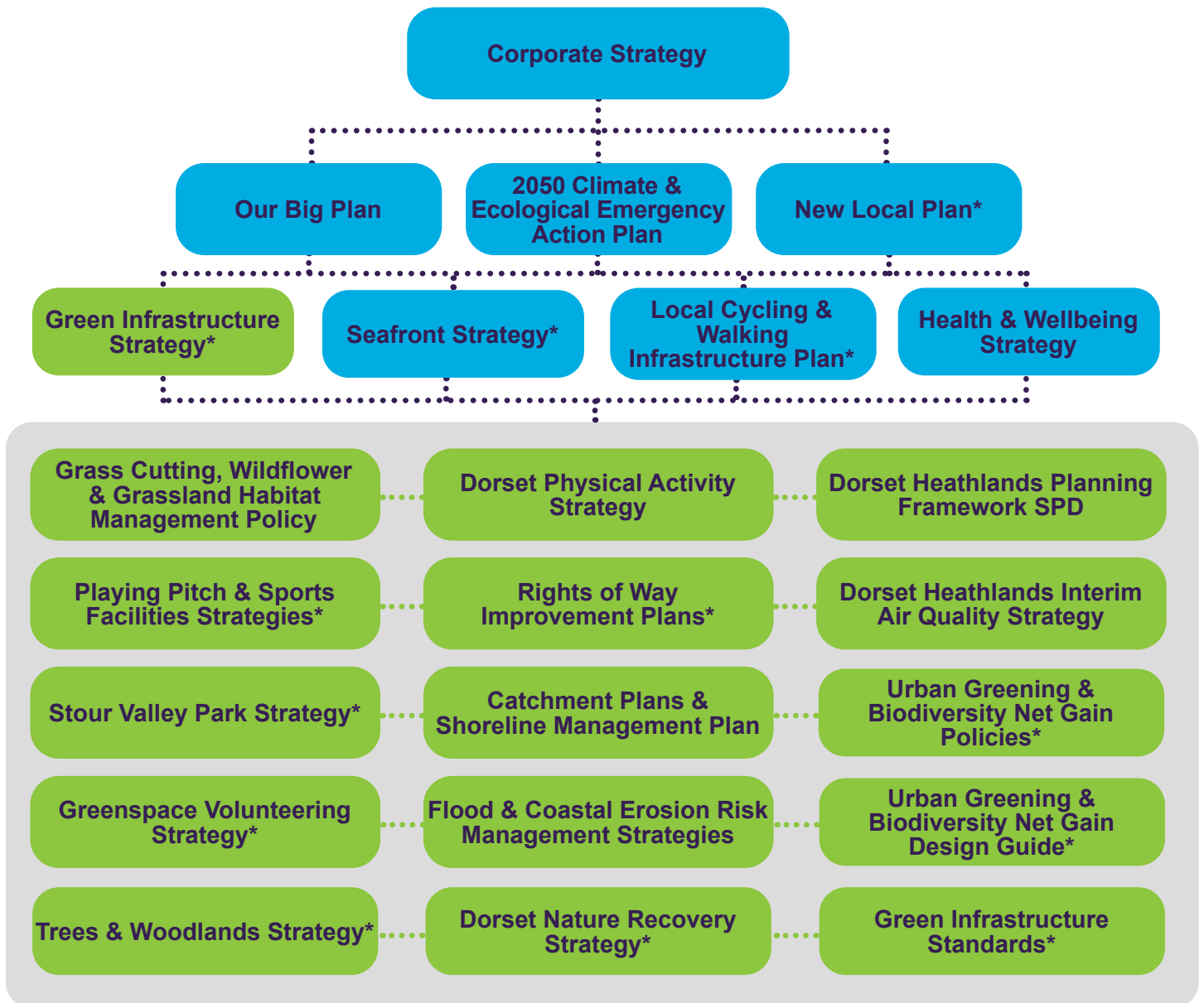
Importantly, the strategy will inform and support the new Local Plan in providing a framework of policies and site allocations for guiding development to 2038 to meet identified needs for new homes, jobs and other supporting services and infrastructure within the BCP area.

In doing so, it will help the Local Plan to ensure that development of the area can be achieved in a sustainable way that maintains and improves the health and well-being of local people; while carefully balancing the need for new homes, employment opportunities and other supporting development with the protection of our important heathland, harbour and coastal habitats, green spaces and unique heritage assets.

The green infrastructure strategy will also inform and support development of the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which is a requirement of the 2021 Environment Act.

# Appendix

## Strategy hierarchy



\* To be adopted

## Links

[Corporate Strategy](#)  
[Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)  
[Our Big Plan](#)



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