Technical Document

May 2022

Green Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2031

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

BCP Council

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

Green Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2031

Technical Document

Project No:	111349
Version/Status:	V8
Approved:	
Project Director Name:	Dominic Watkins
Date:	26/05/2022

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 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 the 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
- Creating, maintaining and promoting 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

SUMMARY

Vision

There is increasing evidence that high quality and well connected green infrastructure can provide a range of biodiversity, economic, health and well-being, and climate change benefits for society.

The 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. This is called 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.

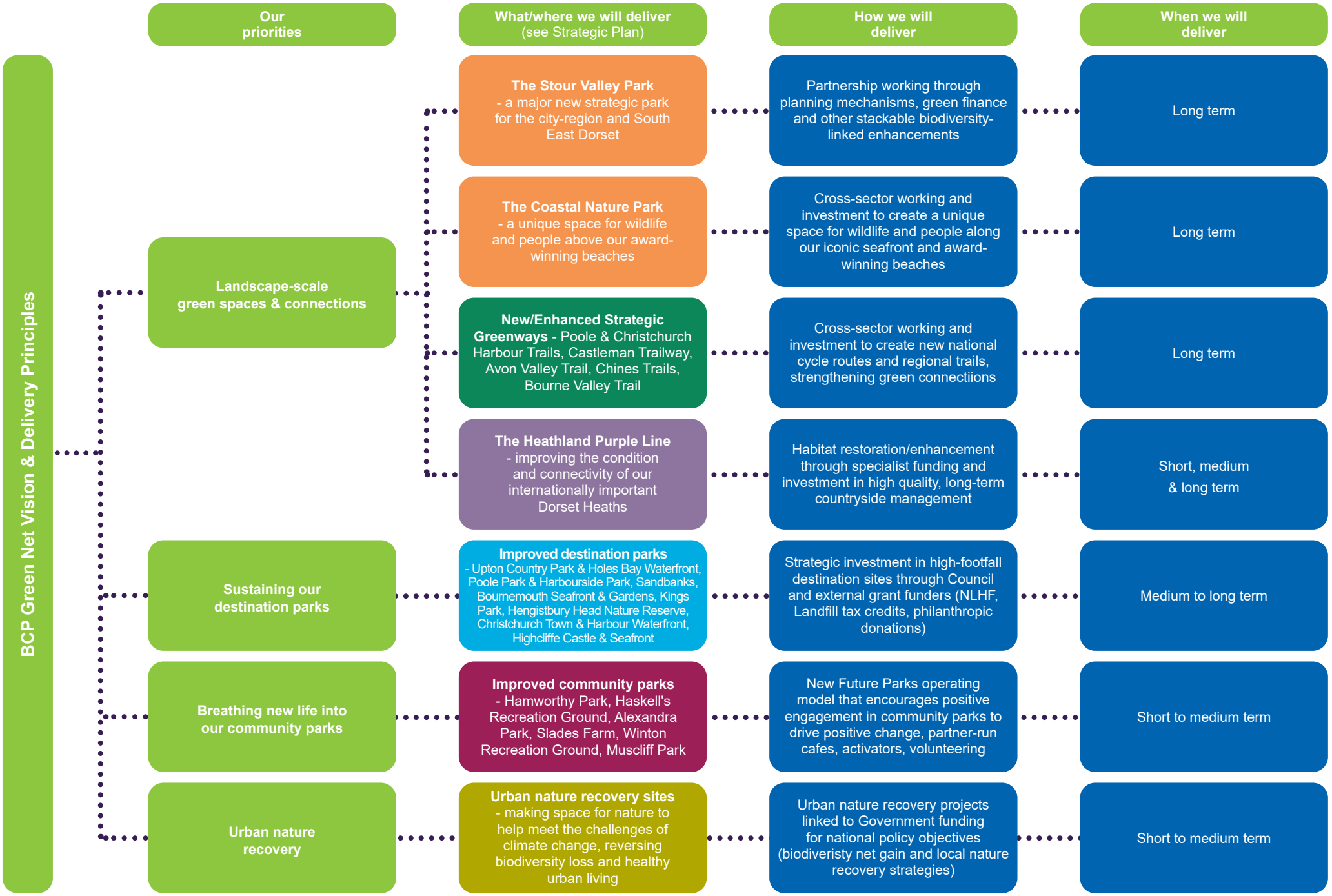
This aspirational vision is supported by four overarching, long-term strategic goals to:

- **Encourage healthy living and well-being**
- **Strengthen resilience to climate change**
- **Support nature recovery and biodiversity**
- **Support economic recovery, prosperity and placemaking**

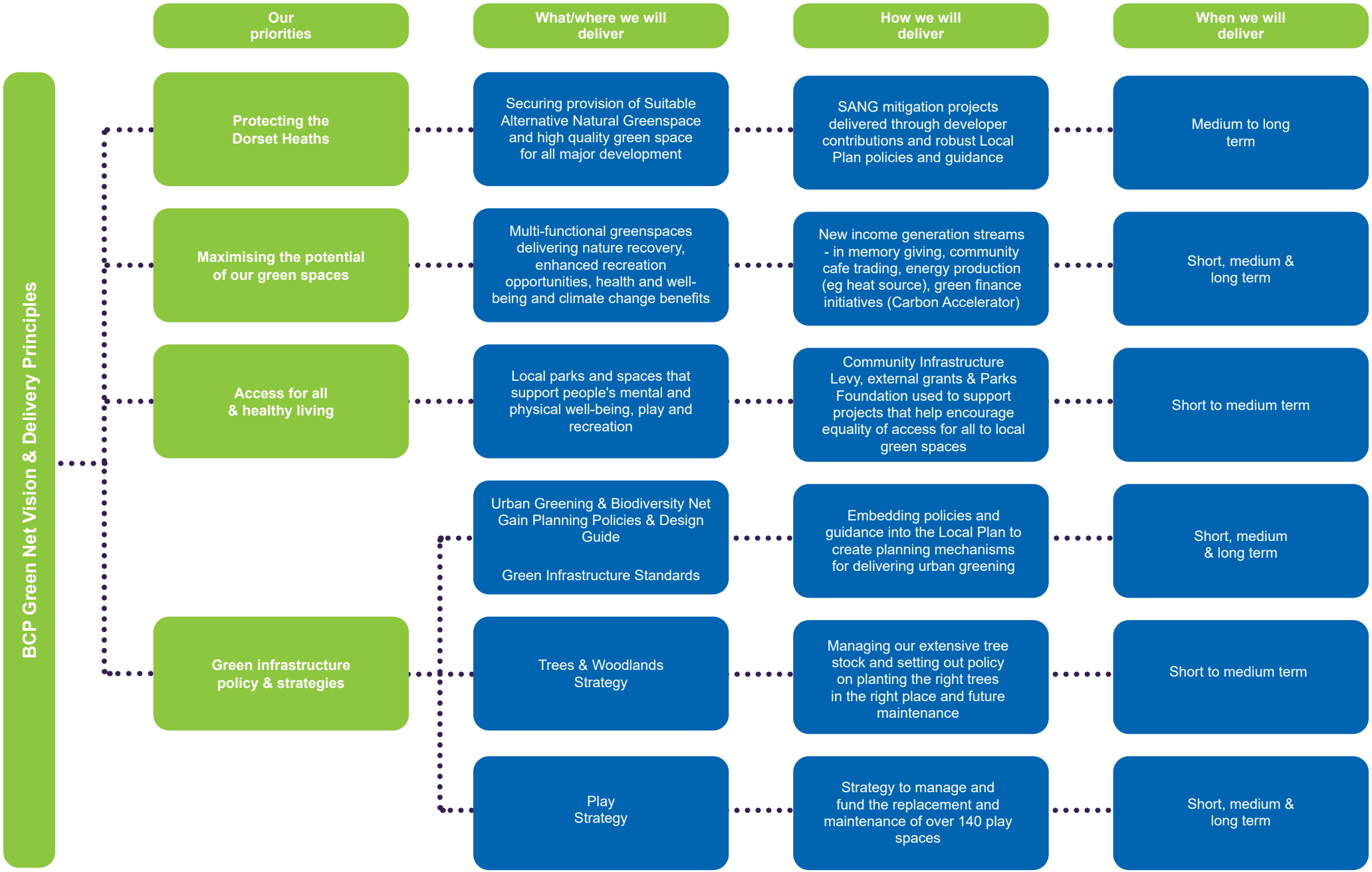
Suggested high level priorities and "bold moves" for creation of the Green Net are set out in the following Strategic Plan and Delivery Framework, which will be taken forward through development of a more detailed Delivery Action Plan.

BCP Green Net Strategic Plan

Green Net Delivery Framework (1/2)



Green Net Delivery Framework (2/2)



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.

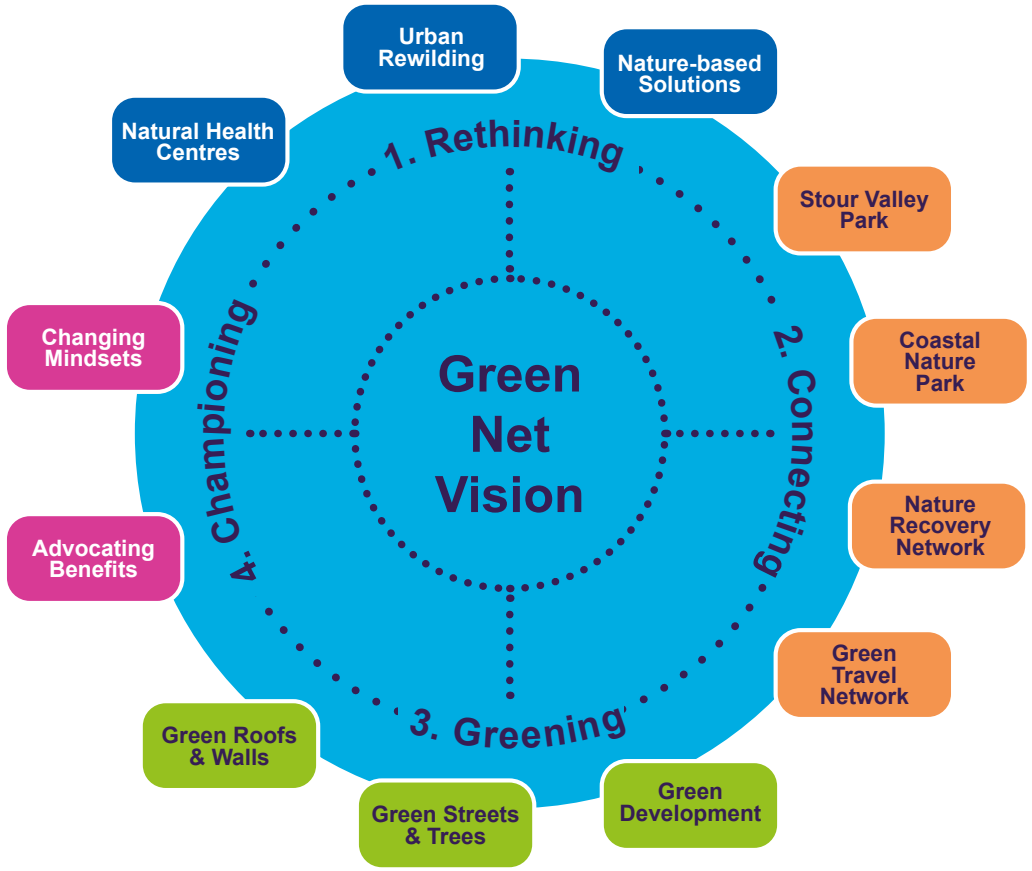
Our green infrastructure delivery principles:

1. **Rethinking the future of parks and green spaces** - increasing the functionality of spaces as 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



CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The aim of the strategy is to support the council's ambition to make best use of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's (BCP) green infrastructure to:

- Help increase health and well-being outcomes for 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

The strategy sets out the green infrastructure evidence base for the new BCP Local Plan. It will also help to shape the council's strategic future direction for parks and greenspace management.

As a cross-cutting approach, green infrastructure is not only about managing parks and open spaces for recreation. The strategy will also help shape new ways of working across BCP Council's services to optimise the benefits of green infrastructure. These include in particular:

- Parks and countryside
- Strategic planning and neighbourhood planning
- Flood and coastal erosion risk management
- Economic development
- Social care
- Housing
- Schools and learning
- Leisure, culture and heritage
- Roads and transport
- Minerals and waste
- Seafront
- Climate change

1.2 Developing the strategy

The Green Infrastructure strategy was prepared by CBA on behalf of BCP Council in collaboration with Natural Capital Solutions, supported by Urban Initiatives Studio, John Letherland, Fourth Street and the University of Sheffield's Department of Landscape.

The key steps in developing the draft strategy involved:

- **Creating an evidence base** – about the area's existing green infrastructure and natural capital assets, and the value and benefits that these provide, and opportunities and priority areas for action.
- **Shaping the vision** – developing a Green Infrastructure Prospectus to test ideas and options with internal BCP Council stakeholders and key external stakeholders.
- **Early public engagement** – seeking ideas for rethinking the future of the area's green spaces haveyoursay.bcpcouncil.gov.uk (see **Appendix 10** for details).
- **Developing the strategy** – stakeholder and resident engagement has contributed to setting out a Green Infrastructure strategy, highlighting the proposed vision, principles and delivery framework (this document).

Once adopted by the council, further engagement on next steps is anticipated.

1.3 What is green infrastructure?

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)

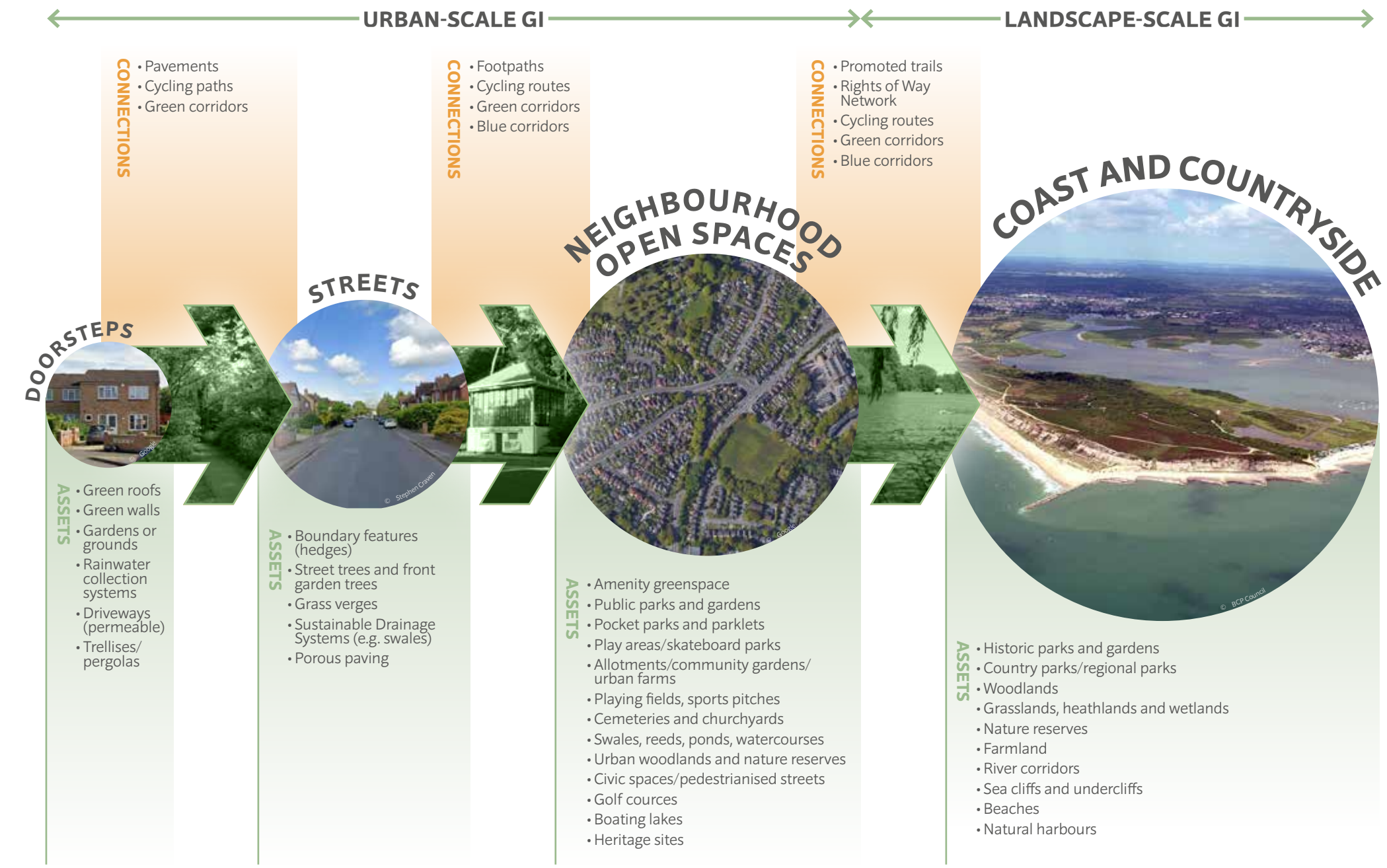
Connecting urban, countryside and coastal areas at a range of scales, the green infrastructure network includes not only parks, playing fields and other public open spaces, but also woodland, heathland and other wildlife habitats, street trees, allotments and private gardens. In addition, it embraces 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.

The term 'Green Infrastructure' (or GI) is used to refer to both green and blue infrastructure. A full glossary of terms can be found in **Annex A**.

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, this strategy promotes a strategic and integrated approach to the management and enhancement of the green infrastructure network, including working at a wider catchment or landscape-scale with partners across neighbouring areas.

Green Infrastructure Network Scales



Source: Adapted from GI Design and Placemaking (Scottish Government, 2011)

1.4 The green infrastructure evidence base

The supporting evidence base for the green infrastructure strategy can be found in the Appendices (separate document). These include:

- A review of the biodiversity, economic, health and well-being and climate change benefits of green infrastructure (**Appendix 1**).
- Green infrastructure case studies that illustrate how other cities in the UK and overseas are embracing green infrastructure solutions (**Appendix 2**).
- A review of the national and local policy context for green infrastructure (**Appendix 3**).
- An overview of the place context and key environmental and socio-economic issues that green infrastructure can help to address (**Appendix 4**).

- An audit of the existing green infrastructure network, mapping the type, amount and quality of green infrastructure, and its proximity to where people live, to inform the identification of deficiencies in provision (**Appendix 5**).
- A high level spatial analysis of opportunities and priority areas for strengthening the multi-functionality, connectivity and resilience of the green infrastructure network **(Appendix 6**).
- Proposed local standards for the planning, design and maintenance of green infrastructure (**Appendix 7**).
- Details of the GIS mapping data used in the evidence base (**Appendix 8**).
- A bespoke Natural Capital Assessment for the BCP area undertaken by Natural Capital Solutions to inform the strategy by modelling and mapping potential opportunities for enhancing the ecosystem services provided by the city region's green spaces and other natural capital assets (**Appendix 9**).
- The findings of the 2021 BCP Parks and Green Spaces Survey undertaken by BCP to inform the strategy (**Appendix 10**).
- A note of green infrastructure project ideas identified by BCP officers (**Appendix 11**).

Analysis of this evidence has informed the proposed goals, principles and high level priorities and actions for delivery of the green infrastructure strategy.

Signposts to the green infrastructure maps in Appendices 4, 5, 6 and 9 and other sources of evidence can be found in **Annex B**.

Given the multi-functional nature of green infrastructure, decision-making should consider all the maps alongside the spatial analysis provided in the evidence base.

The GIS mapping data is available from the council on request.

1.5 Responding to future challenges

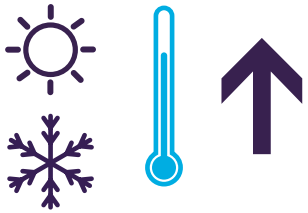
Climate and ecological emergency

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 the 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.

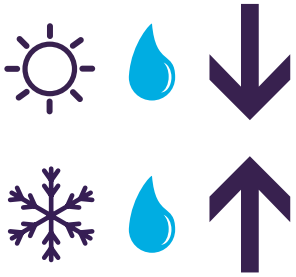
The council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan identifies various projects and actions to help in tackling this emergency.

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 land is managed, how landscapes are valued and adoption of more sustainable lifestyles.



UK summer temperatures could be up to 5.4°C hotter, while winters could be up to 4.2°C warmer by 2070[1]



Average UK summer rainfall could decrease by up to 47%, while there could be up to 35% more precipitation in winter by 2070[1]

[1] Source: UK Climate Projections 2018, www.gov.uk

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 urban 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, towns of tomorrow need to become more liveable and resilient by making them greener and healthier places.

45,400 people in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole live in an area that is amongst the 20% most deprived in England[2] (as shown on this map)

Communities in these areas may experience more limited health benefits due to lack of accessible green space

Parks and other accessible green spaces have long contributed to the wellbeing of urban communities in BCP. 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 parks and green spaces, and make the built environment and public realm greener, to tackle urban living challenges facing the area.

The farsighted Victorian public parks movement in the UK was critical to shaping much of the area's urban environment.

As we enter a new era of urbanism in the 21st Century driven by a vision of more sustainable, denser, smarter, electrified, less car-dependent towns and cities, new thinking around green infrastructure has emerged that draws on ecological-led landscape and urban design principles.

Green infrastructure is a way of reframing how we think about and value nature in towns and cities. It offers an integrated approach to optimising the benefits of green and blue space for urban communities.

By showing how investment in networks of parks, rivers, green roofs and street trees can underpin an area's economy and well-being, it can help reconcile the challenge of denser towns and limited access to green space.

National environmental goals

A **Green Future** published in 2018 sets out the Government's 25-year Plan to improve the environment in England, which includes support for embedding an environmental net gain principle into new development.

This principle is reflected in the 2021 Environment Act, which requires planning applications for certain types of development to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain. The Act also includes a new duty for local authorities to establish Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

The 25-year Environment Plan also indicates the Government's support for helping people connect with nature by providing green spaces close to where people live to improve health and well-being.

[2] Source: State of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Report June 2021, BCP Council

Benefits of green infrastructure investment

As with grey infrastructure that provides us with essential transport, water and power services, green infrastructure also needs to be upgraded and adapted to respond to changing needs.

Considered through the perspectives of health, transport, housing and climate change, as well as sport, recreation and conservation, the case for investment in green infrastructure is compelling.

There is potential to create better parks and green spaces by ensuring that investment decisions take fuller account of the wider social, economic and environmental value they provide - more connected and active communities; happier, healthier and more productive workforce; and lower costs for health and social care, nationally and locally.

As highlighted in **Appendix 1**, green infrastructure can provide a range of biodiversity, economic, health and well-being, and climate change benefits for society.

Biodiversity benefits

Green infrastructure plays an important role in helping to reduce biodiversity loss and support nature recovery.

Green infrastructure can help development deliver biodiversity gains by:

- Protecting designated sites and irreplaceable habitats from inappropriate development
- Safeguarding, enhancing, restoring and creating wildlife habitat within development sites
- Creation, restoration, connection and management of habitats to provide biodiversity net gain sites

Green infrastructure contributes to nature recovery by:

- Provision of ecological networks offering nature-rich habitats, corridors and stepping stones
- Provision of landscape-scale habitat creation, restoration, connection and management to reduce fragmentation and increase resilience of wildlife species to climate change

Green infrastructure boosts urban habitats for wildlife through:

- Provision of green roof spaces providing habitat for invertebrates, birds and plant species
- Provision of vegetated road verges supporting a variety of plants and insects
- Use of sustainable drainage systems that improve water quality and improve diversity of species downstream
- Protection and enhancement of linear green features to improve connectivity between urban habitats

Economic benefits

The benefits that high quality green infrastructure can bring to the national and local economy are increasingly recognised by policy makers.

Green infrastructure can boost property prices and quality of life through:

- Provision of green spaces in proximity to homes
- Provision of gardens, orchards and allotments
- Contribution to the visual attractiveness of a place
- Providing for community wellbeing

Green infrastructure can contribute to economic growth through:

- Natural heritage and attractive landscapes
- Creating green and attractive business premises
- Providing a healthy environment
- Supporting employee health/reducing sickness levels

Green infrastructure contributes to the visitor economy through:

- Natural heritage and attractive landscapes
- Encouraging healthy living behaviours
- Boosting visitor spend
- Specialist tourism (cultural events, food and drink festivals)

Green infrastructure supports the agricultural/rural economy through:

- Clean water and soils
- Protecting pollinators
- Provision of gardens, orchards and allotments

Green infrastructure can reduce business risks from climate change by:

- Use of natural flood alleviation solutions
- Mitigation of CO2 emissions through carbon storage

Health and well-being benefits

There is a strong link between the provision of accessible and good quality green spaces, and the health and well-being of residents.

Green infrastructure offers opportunities for increased physical activity, access to nature, and climate change resilience and mitigation, which can help to reduce levels of ill-health and increase the well-being of local residents.

Green infrastructure supports improved health and wellbeing through:

- Provision of accessible and quality green spaces
- Encouraging outdoor physical activity and play
- Supply of healthy, locally grown food
- Provision of communal spaces for people
- Ensuring a healthy environment

Green infrastructure can reduce health and social care costs through:

- Contributing to prevention of health problems
- Reducing money spent on treating illness

Climate change benefits

Investment in green infrastructure can help to increase resilience to climate change by supporting efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of a wetter and warmer climate.

Green infrastructure can provide climate adaptation cost-savings by:

- Minimising costs resulting from flooding
- Reducing costs of droughts to the local economy
- Reducing energy costs through urban cooling

Green infrastructure can mitigate the effects of climate change by:

- Improving air quality
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Providing urban cooling and shading
- Improving water quality and quantity

Value of parks and open spaces

Parks are the lungs of 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.

93% of residents use parks at least once in the last year[3]

BCP Council allocates £5.4m per annum on green space management[3]

Green spaces generate c.£4.5m revenue per annum[3]

Benefits of BCP's parks estimated at £231m per annum (30-40% higher if including beaches)[4]

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.

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 notional value of the social and environmental benefits provided by the council's parks to be estimated at £231m per annum. In relation to the cost of running the parks, the health and other benefits are a substantial return on investment.

BCP Natural Capital Account – key findings

- Of the £231m in gross calculable benefits per year, £209m (90%) are health and well-being benefits equating to £20 benefits per visit
- 60% of all benefits calculated are attributed to mental health at £136m per year
- Increasing frequency and duration of visits could unlock greater value for people's health and wellbeing
- Other benefits are attributed to local amenity value for residents (9%) and removing carbon through sequestration by trees (1%)

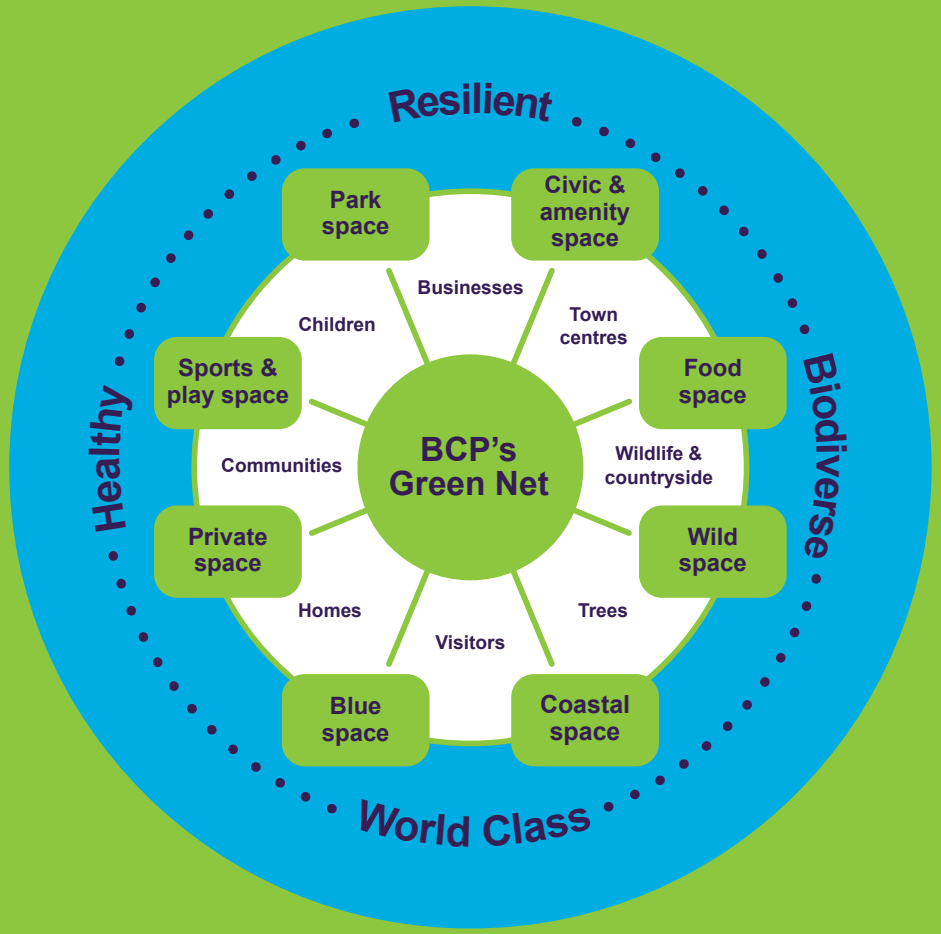
(BCP Natural Capital Account, Vivid Economics, 2020)

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

[3] Source: Future Parks Project Report to BCP Council Coporate Management Board, 20th April 2021
[4] Source: BCP Natural Capital Account, Vivid Economics, 2020

Green Net vision

The Green Net provides a natural health service and life support system for communities. 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.

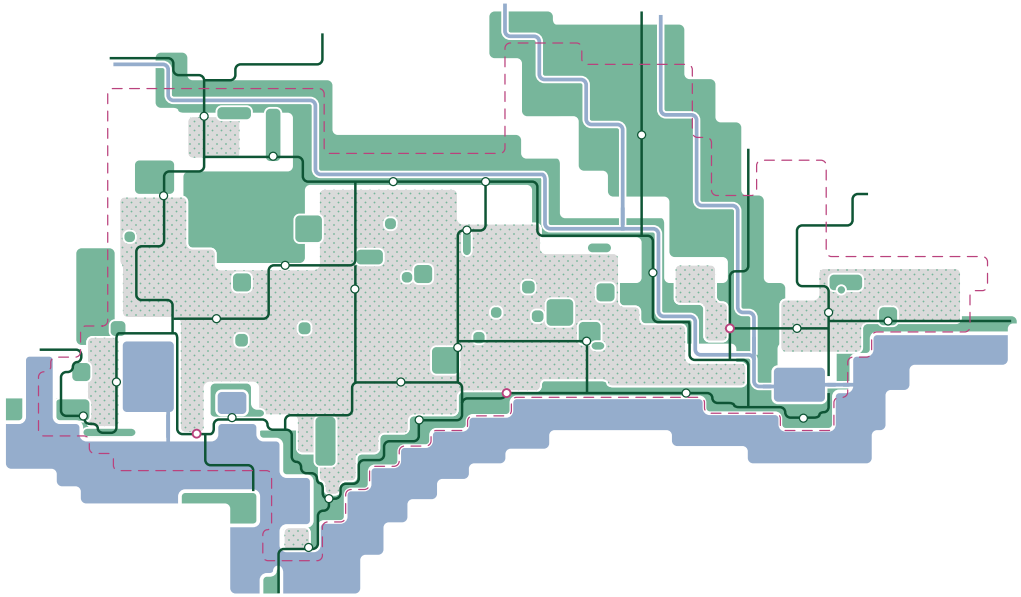


2.1 The Green Net vision

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

The ambition is to secure on-going investment in the delivery of a multi-functional green infrastructure network, weaving together and enriching green and blue spaces throughout the city region.

This is called the Green Net.



Inspired by the area's 'coastal garden town' legacy, the Green Net connects places where green buildings, leafy streets and diverse green spaces provide the backdrop to green journeys – from doorsteps to the seafront, harbours and the countryside...

Green Net journeys

Doorsteps to Seafront


doorstep


urban green street


urban green space (gardens)


green corridor (chines)


seafront

Doorsteps to Harbours


doorstep


urban green street


urban green space (parks)


green/blue corridor (rivers)


harbour

Doorsteps to Countryside


doorstep


urban green street (residential)


urban green street (schools)


countryside (river valley)


countryside (woodlands)

BCP Green Net Strategic Plan

2.2 Strategic goals

The aspirational vision is supported by four overarching, long-term strategic goals to:

1. **Encourage healthy living and well-being**
2. **Strengthen resilience to climate change**
3. **Support nature recovery and biodiversity**
4. **Support economic recovery, prosperity and placemaking**

Working with partners towards these goals can contribute to national policy priorities, and support many of the council's corporate objectives and local policies (see **Appendix 3**).

Goal 1: Encourage healthy living and wellbeing

'Everyday engagement with nature for everyone'

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 the council's Health and Well-Being Strategy.

It will 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 also includes adopting nature-based solutions for improving local air quality in line with the council's Clean Air Strategy, and reducing noise pollution.

Key needs

- Protecting and repurposing urban green spaces to provide greater health and well-being benefits for communities.
- Improving access to nature to spread well-being benefits more equally to areas of socio-economic and health deprivation.
- Enhancing the quality and connectivity of green and blue spaces, particularly in higher density urban areas.
- Meeting the specific needs of children and an ageing population for access to nature and open space.
- Effective community empowerment to engage people in the way parks and green spaces are managed, maintained and used.
- Increase vegetation cover through targeted planting and natural regeneration to help tackle air pollution.
- Providing and promoting the use of active travel routes along greenways for cycling and walking.

Goal 2: Strengthen resilience to climate change

'Natural solutions for a changing climate'

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. This goes beyond just planting more trees, bringing forward areas for natural regeneration, maintaining existing grasslands, scrub and saltmarsh for their carbon storage, and seeking innovative other solutions.

Key needs

- Maintaining urban tree cover and restoring habitats that can provide carbon storage and sequestration.
- Promoting use of green connections that encourage low carbon forms of travel.
- Supporting low carbon energy generation opportunities.
- Working with natural processes to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk, while delivering wider environmental benefits.
- Encouraging greater respect for nature in how water is used by addressing unsustainable levels of abstraction and use.

Goal 3: Support nature recovery and biodiversity

'Better, more and connected habitats for wildlife'

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.

Key needs

- Working at a landscape-scale with neighbouring areas to create a nature recovery network of high value, expanded and connected habitats, linking with urban wildlife corridors .
- Protecting and enhancing designated wildlife sites (terrestrial and marine) and priority habitats.
- Delivering biodiversity net gains from development at scale.
- Reintroducing native species where appropriate.
- Increasing nectar-rich grassland habitat for pollinators.
- Facilitating the delivery of wider benefits such as improved access to nature, water quality and flood risk management.
- Providing opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.
- Promoting strong biosecurity measures to control risks from pests, diseases and invasive non-native species.
- Encouraging the use of native planting and the enabling of natural regeneration of vegetation.

Goal 4: Support economic recovery, prosperity and placemaking

'Investing in natural capital for a greener economy'

It is widely acknowledged that having high quality green infrastructure promotes economic growth and investment, healthy lifestyles and community cohesion.

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

The Green Net can help 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.

Key needs

- Creating high quality urban and rural environments attractive to businesses, employees and investors.
- Promoting a distinctive green image and culture for the city region that encourages a strong sense of civic pride.
- Enabling productive businesses and workers.
- Enhancing tourism and the visitor economy.
- Greening of housing, the public realm and grey infrastructure.
- Supporting sustainable farming and the rural economy.

Case studies

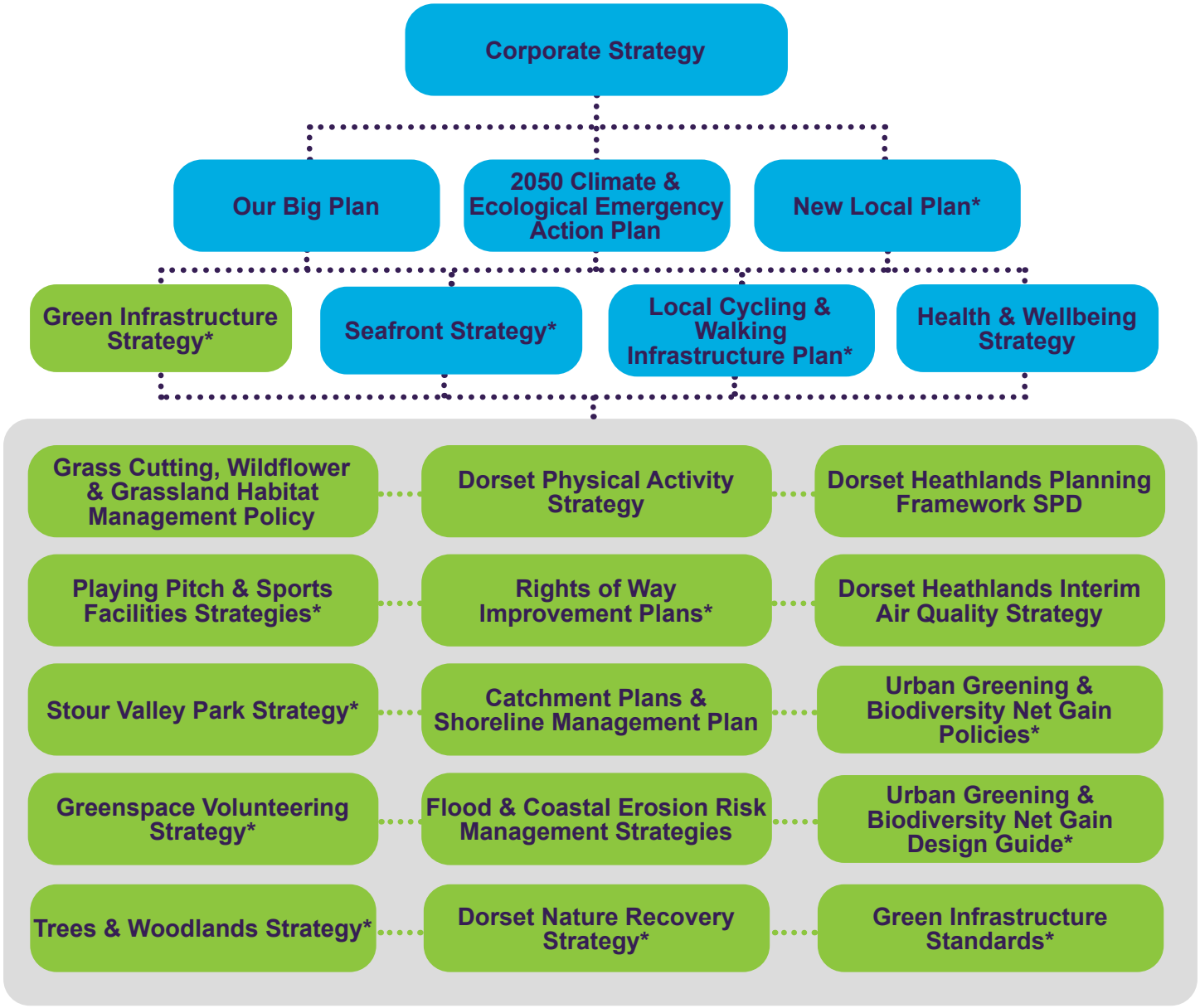
The case studies in **Appendix 2** illustrate how other cities in the UK and overseas are embracing green infrastructure solutions in support of bold and ambitious place-making projects.

While these examples highlight approaches that seek to help address the challenges of urban living in different ways, they all share common themes of what good green infrastructure looks like:

- Providing multiple functions and benefits for people and nature
- Varied types and sizes of green infrastructure
- Connected as a living network
- Providing physical and visual access to nature
- Responding to and reinforcing local character

Strategy hierarchy

The green infrastructure strategy will support a wide range of the council's other strategies and plans.



* To be adopted

3. KEY ISSUES

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Setting the scene

Formed in April 2019, BCP Council is one of the UK's newest city regions and the tenth-largest unitary local authority in England.

The city region is at the heart of a multi-centred conurbation on the south coast of Dorset. The main population centres are Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. There are a number of nearby towns and villages separated from the conurbation by countryside gaps.

The urbanised area spreads beyond the BCP boundary to the north into the Dorset unitary authority and east into the New Forest District within Hampshire. The South East Dorset conurbation is surrounded by a Green Belt.

3.2 Historic context

Bournemouth

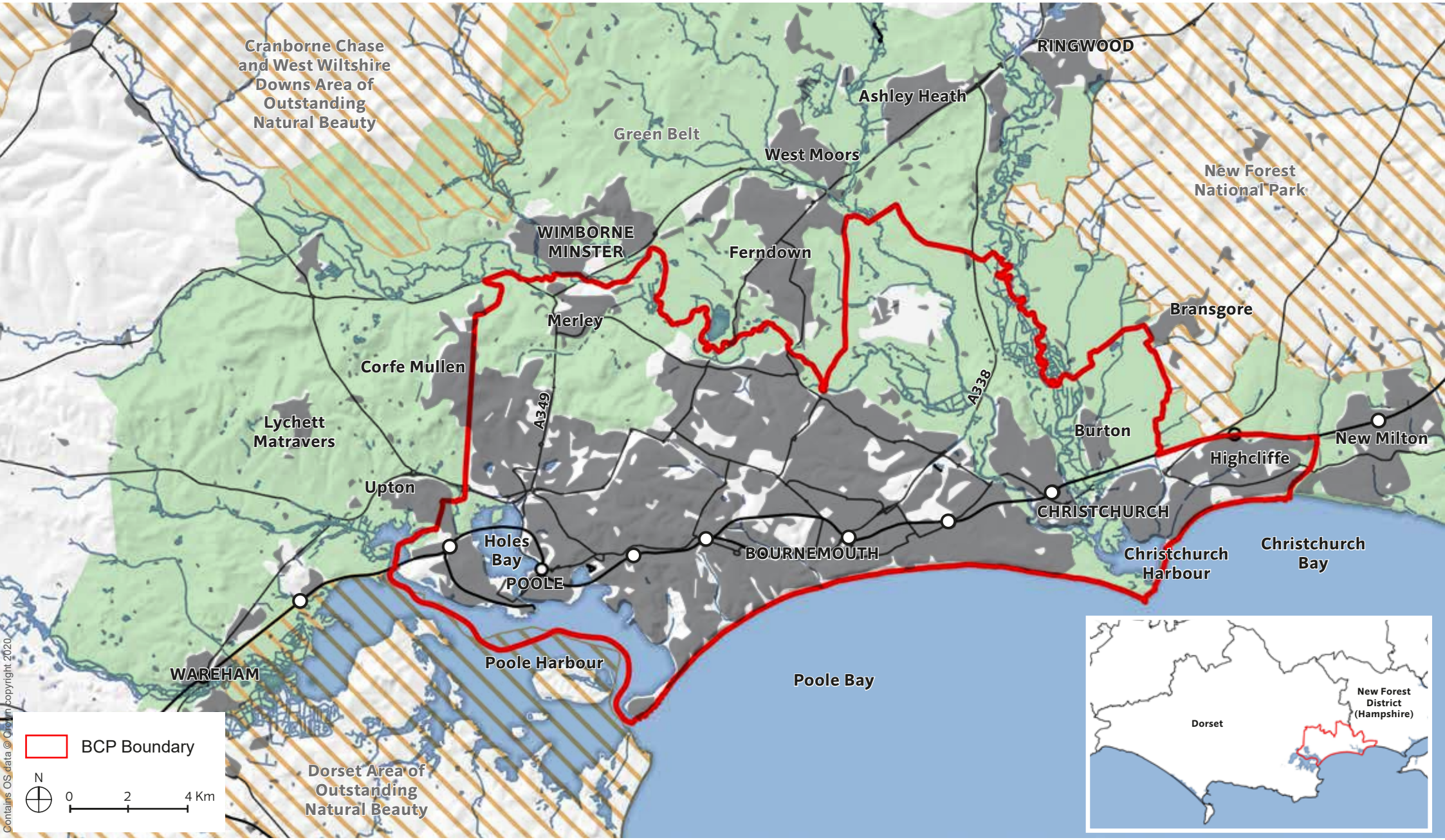
Bournemouth built its reputation as a garden town by the sea on a high quality natural environment, particularly in relation to its green, leafy character, public parks and gardens, and tree lined streets.

Most of the area was originally heathland, of little agricultural value and only sparsely settled by isolated cottages and villages until 1812. Bournemouth initially grew as an exclusive seaside health resort before the arrival of the railway in 1870, which opened up the town as a destination for a wider range of visitors.

Bournemouth became known as the forest city' for the vast numbers of pine and fir trees planted during the early 1880s. The beach, gardens and plantations of pine trees were key attractions.

The scent of pine trees and sea air were said to be good for the health. The former Bournemouth Council's motto 'beautiful and healthy' originates from when the town was founded as a healthy retreat from polluted towns and cities.

Many of the early parts of Bournemouth were planned with sweeping, tree lined avenues of villas. As the town grew, installation of a tram system enabled the growth of suburbs including Winton, Charminster and Southbourne with open spaces, front gardens for houses, and street trees.


Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Green Belt
West Moors
Ashley Heath
RINGWOOD
New Forest National Park
WIMBORNE MINSTER
Ferndown
Merley
Bransgore
Corfe Mullen
A349
A338
Lychett Matravers
Upton
Burton
Highcliffe
New Milton
CHRISTCHURCH
Holes Bay
POOLE
BOURNEMOUTH
Christchurch Harbour
Christchurch Bay
Poole Harbour
Poole Bay
WAREHAM
Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BCP Boundary
N
0
2
4 Km
Contains OS data © Crown copyright 2020
Dorset
New Forest District (Hampshire)

Christchurch

Christchurch has a distinctive historic character reflecting both its origins as a Saxon burh and its maritime associations.

Despite the rapid proliferation of housing estates from the late 19th century onwards, the original isolated position of the historic core means that it still retains the character of a small medieval town. This character is further distinguished by its maritime connection, including the harbour, salt marshes and sandy beaches of Christchurch bay.

The growth of modern marinas reinforce the significance that Christchurch harbour has played in the development of the town and the position of the Priory Church is such that it still dominates the harbour today much as it has done throughout the last millennium.

The coming of the railway heralded the start of the rapid modern expansion of the town. For many years, Christchurch has been a magnet for people in retirement. Modern development has taken the form of low or moderate density, low rise residential estates. With the earliest phases of development dating from the post war era, many areas now have a well-established and mature character.

Poole

Poole built its reputation as a trading centre for fishing and commerce around its natural harbour.

The town now known as Poole grew up from the quay on a small peninsula to the north of Poole Harbour as it became one of the South Coast's most important medieval ports trading with most of the maritime nations of Europe.

Parts of the Old Town date back to medieval times, which also has a rich heritage of Georgian mansions that were largely the product of the wealth created by the Newfoundland trade in salt cod.

The 19th century was a period of decline but gradually the town regained its prosperity. Trade and industry increased and residential suburbs spread beyond the Old Town.

After the Second World War, Poole gathered momentum as an industrial and commercial centre and developed its name as home to many cutting edge industries in the marine, banking, engineering and tourism sectors.

Since 2000, Poole has seen rapid development across the town with considerable investment by hotels, a new Boat Haven and RNLI College and boat building facilities.

Today, the town retains its strong maritime character focussed around the Quay and town centre including the Harbour and waterscapes. Poole also has expansive beaches, heathland and open spaces.

See **Appendix 4** for more details about area's historic context.

3.3 Environmental context

Today, the heart of the BCP area is intensely urban with around 60% of the land developed. This includes the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole town centres, surrounded by built up areas predominantly of residential character with a range of open spaces.

Bournemouth has retained its iconic Victorian architecture, public parks and gardens, seafront and beach. With a natural harbour and the beaches of Christchurch Bay, Christchurch has long been recognised for its coastal setting. The town of Poole has a magnificent natural setting situated on the northern shore of Poole Harbour. Pine trees continue to be a distinctive feature of Bournemouth's and Poole's urban landscapes.

The city region's outstanding natural environment and coastal landscapes are a large part of what makes the area such an attractive place to live, work and visit.

BCP is home to Poole Harbour, the second largest natural harbour in the world, and Christchurch Harbour.

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

Nature conservation designations include:

- Parts of the Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation
- Poole Harbour Special Protection Area
- River Avon Special Area of Conservation/Avon Valley Special Protection Area
- Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area
- 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- 25 Local Nature Reserves
- 65 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

See **Appendix 4** for more details about the environmental context.

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

3.4 Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure is closely related to the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services.

Natural capital assets (e.g. habitats, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, the air and the sea) provide a range of different functions, known as ecosystem services (e.g. fresh water, clean air and food, and green space for recreation).

The type, amount and quality of green infrastructure, and its proximity to where people live, will affect the benefits that these ecosystem services provide at different scales, as well as who benefits.

An audit of the existing green infrastructure network, together with spatial analysis of opportunities and priority areas for enhancing the functionality of the network, is set out in **Appendices 5 and 6**.

Appendix 9 of the evidence base includes a bespoke Natural Capital Assessment undertaken for the BCP area as part of this strategy. This maps opportunities for enhancing key ecosystem services provided by the city region's natural capital assets.

The Natural Capital Assessment GIS mapping data provides a useful decision-making tool for helping identify the potential of specific land parcels to provide different types of green infrastructure benefits.

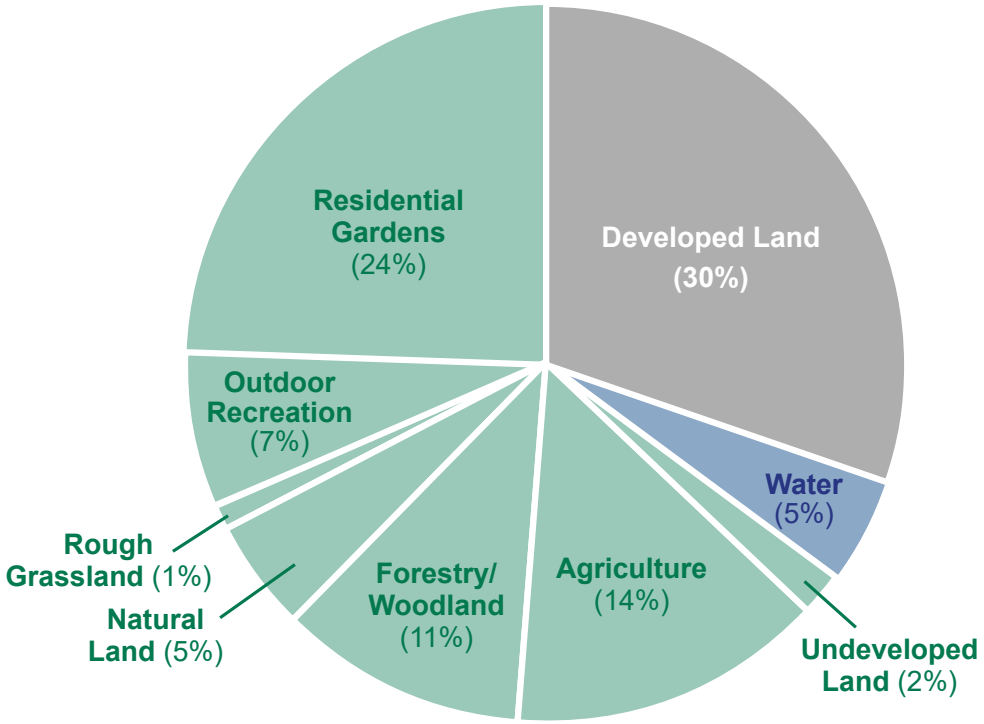
Overview

While 30% of the BCP area is developed, 70% is non-developed land comprising a range of uses, dominated by residential gardens, agriculture and forestry/woodland.

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.

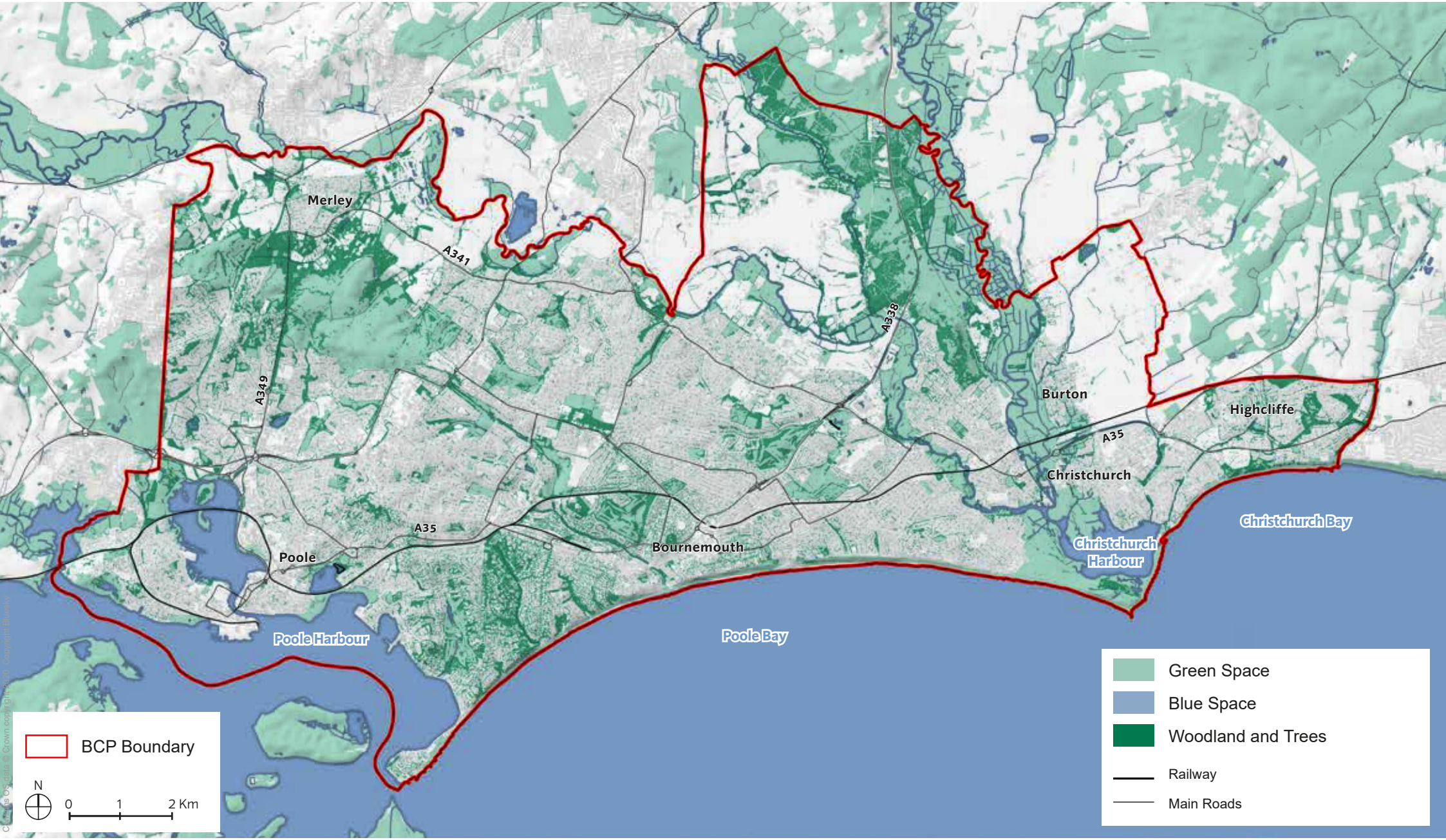
Blue space is also a major component of the Green Net, dominated by the coastal waters and harbours.

Together, these green and blue spaces form the backbone of the Green Net.



Source: Land Use in England, 2018 (MHCLG)

Green infrastructure network



Woodland and trees

The urban tree canopy (including street trees, trees in public open spaces and private gardens, and urban woodlands) and woodlands, commercial forests and hedgerows are a significant component of the Green Net.

In particular, urban tree canopy has a vital role to play in making places where most people live and work more climate resilient, healthy and attractive. The presence of trees in the urban landscape helps reduce stress levels, provides habitats for wildlife and improves air quality.

Trees

Extent: Around 19% of the total BCP area has tree canopy cover. Urban tree canopy cover is around 20%. Outside of the urban areas, tree cover in countryside areas is around 20% with 11% in the coastal areas.

Benchmarks: Blackpool (4%); Portsmouth (10%); Southampton (18%); National Average for England (16%).

Green and blue space types

The Green Net includes a diverse range of green and blue space types.

What types of green space do people value most?

The 2021 Rethinking the Future of Parks and Green Spaces Survey told us that wild space (78%), coastal space (70%) and park space (62%) were the three most valued types of green space from across most equalities groups.

See **Appendix 10** for more details

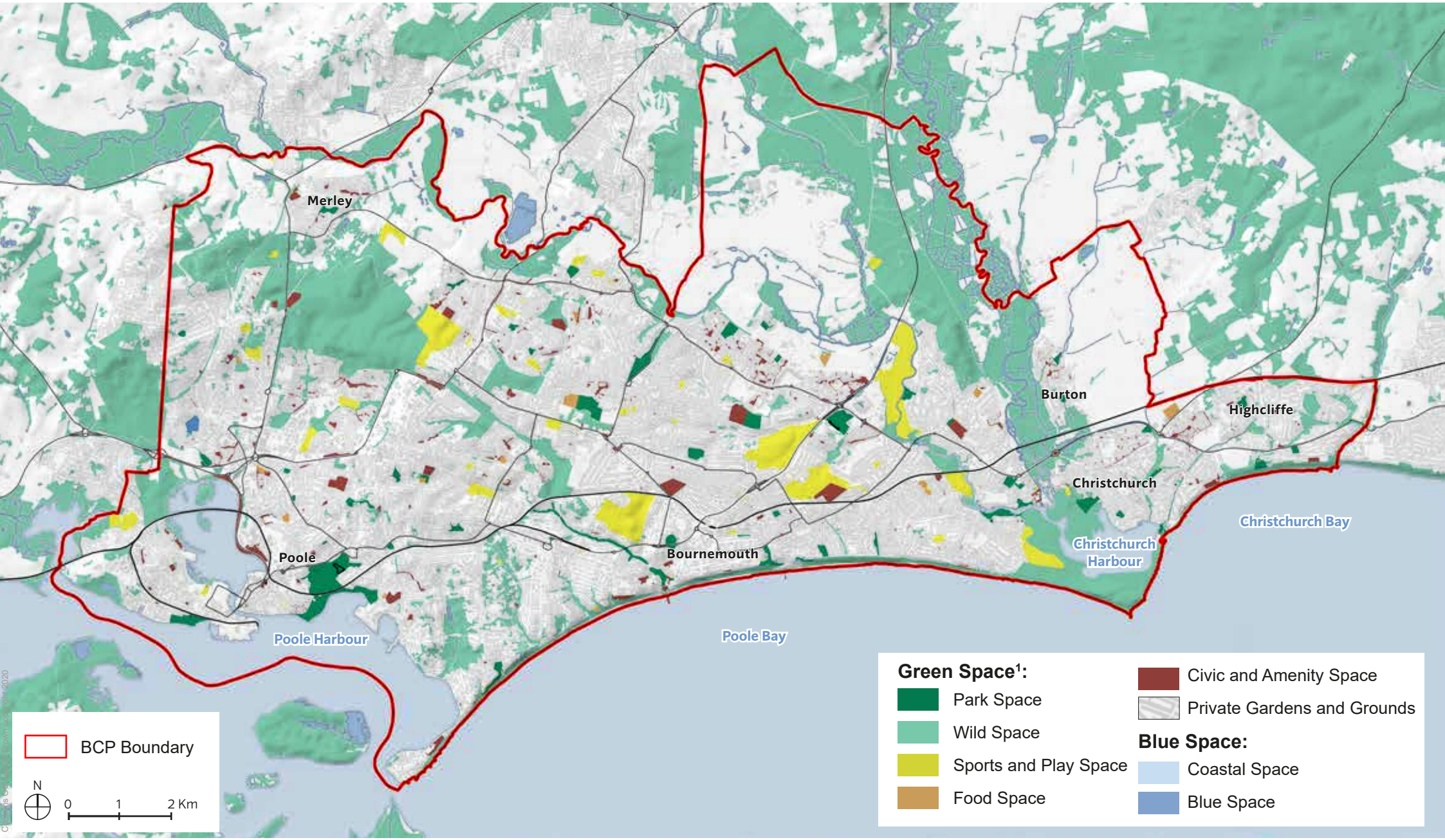
Much of the area's green (and some blue) space is publicly accessible, owned and managed by the council and charitable organisations for public benefit.

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. The green space typology has been dictated by the spaces' primary use.

In addition to green spaces that are publically accessible, there are also a considerable amount of private green space in the city region that makes a significant contribution to the Green Net.

While not offering the same range of functions and benefits as publically accessible spaces, private gardens and grounds can help make neighbourhoods more resilient to climate change, contribute to biodiversity and provide health and well-being benefits.

Green and blue space types



Park space

Definition: urban public parks and gardens providing landscaped green spaces primarily for informal recreation.

Extent: c.1.5% of the BCP area

Benchmarks: Plymouth (c.9%)

Sports and play space

Definition: green spaces providing outdoor facilities for formal sports, recreation and play including municipal golf courses, sports grounds and playing pitches, school grounds, children and young people play areas and equestrian centre grounds.

Extent: c.2.5% of the BCP area

Benchmarks: Plymouth (c.9%)

Wild space

Definition: natural and semi-natural green spaces and wildlife corridors comprising designated sites and priority habitats of nature conservation value.

Extent: c.20% of the BCP area

Benchmarks: Plymouth (c.47%)

Food space

Definition: green spaces for growing local food including allotments, community gardens, nurseries and horticulture and urban farms.

Extent: c.0.2% of the BCP area

Benchmarks: Plymouth (c.0.7%)

Civic and amenity space

Definition: urban public/semi-private realm spaces (including housing amenity greenspaces, civic squares, hospital grounds, business premises grounds, college campus, seafronts, promenades/piers, cemeteries, churchyards/religious grounds and village greens).

Extent: c.1.4% of the BCP area

Benchmarks: Plymouth (c.12%)

Coastal space

Definition: coastal blue spaces including the sea, bays and harbours.

Blue space

Definition: rivers, streams and ponds.

Private gardens and grounds

Definition: urban green spaces such as domestic gardens, grounds of large estates and other green space without public access (e.g. land owned by utility companies/private sports clubs).

Extent: c.17.6% of the BCP area

Benchmarks: Portsmouth (17.7%)

Green connections

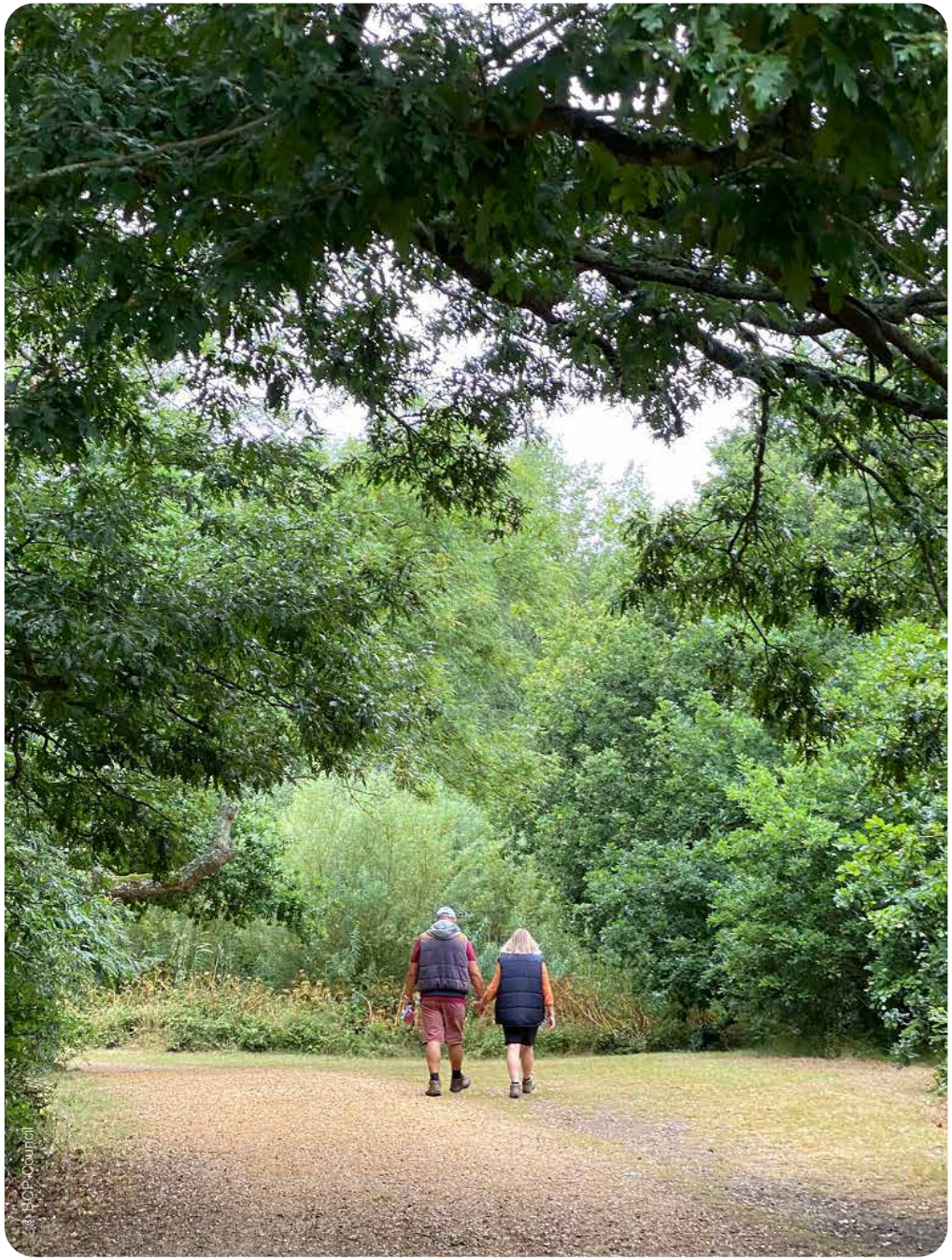
Green connections include cycle routes and trails that often follow green corridors linking accessible green space across the Green Net.

There are currently around 280km of green connections – comprising of cycle networks and public rights of way networks – that together form a major component of the Green Net.

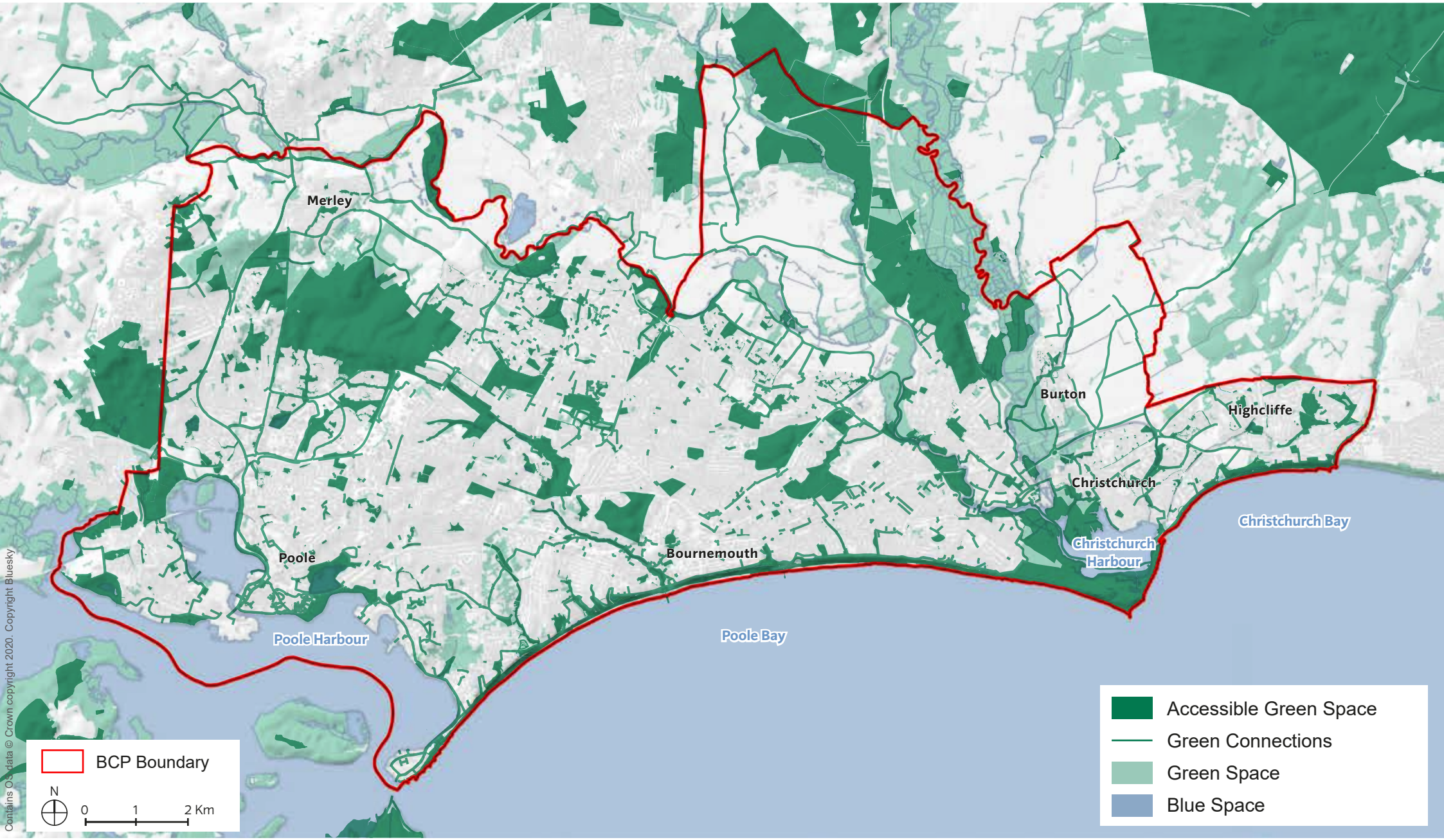
These green connections provide a network of largely off-road leisure/ recreation routes connecting the city region to destinations in the wider Dorset countryside and coast. The network also includes routes for walking and cycling along green corridors linking homes, schools, high streets and places of work with green and blue spaces across the city region.

The city region has extensive accessible green spaces of different sizes, which are distributed unevenly throughout the urban area, the wider countryside and along the coast.

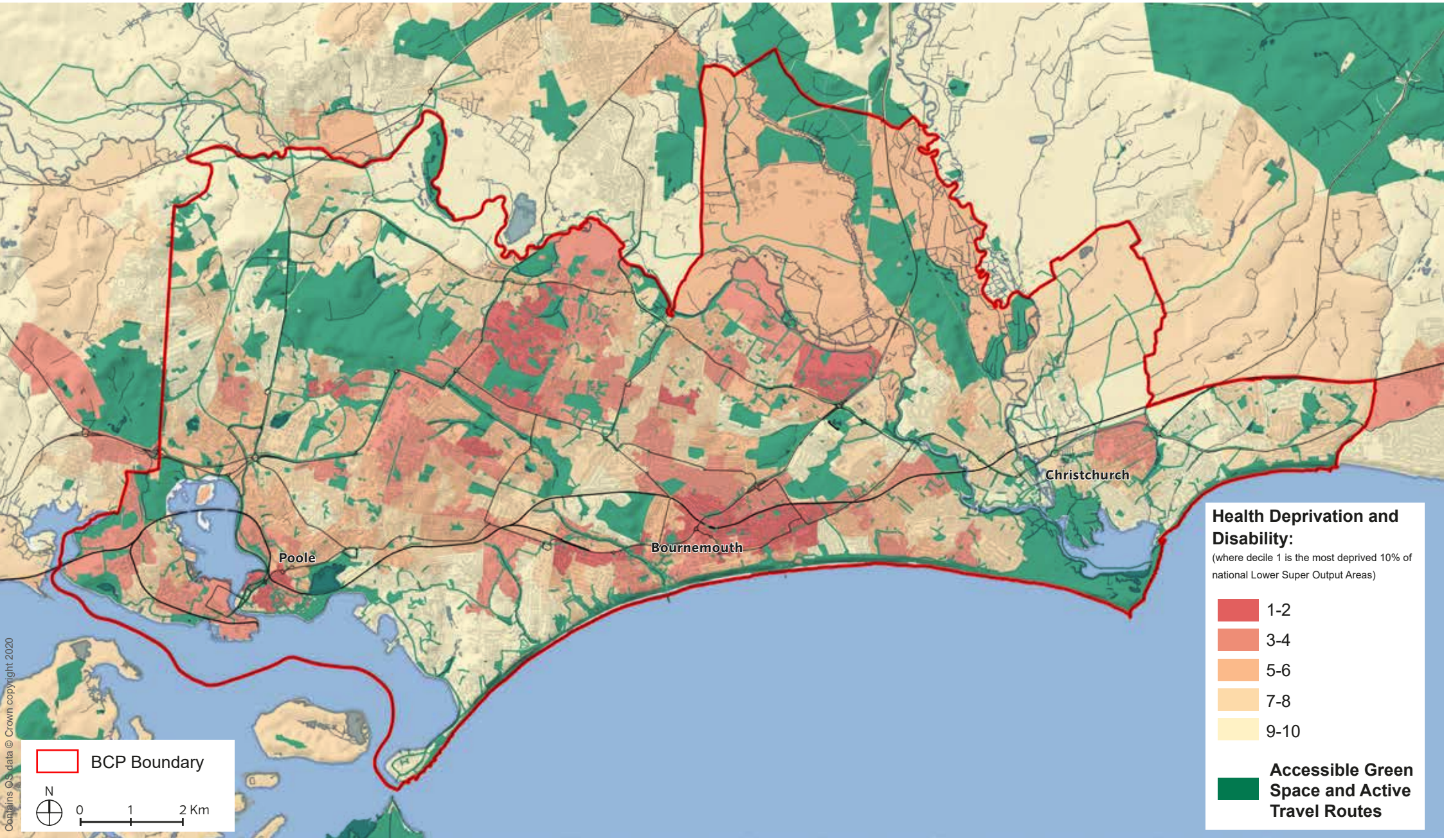
However, communities in the most deprived areas (see **Section 3.5**) may experience more limited opportunities for accessing nature due to deficiencies in provision of accessible green space. Investment and planning is needed to improve green connections between accessible green space in these areas.



Green connections and accessible green space



Accessible green space and health deprivation



Source: English Indices of Deprivation (2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)

State of BCP's parks

Parks and open spaces within the BCP area are generally in good condition. The authority achieved 24 Green Flag Awards in 2020. However, condition of buildings and built infrastructure is slowly declining and maintenance budgets are insufficient to meet repair and maintenance needs.

The delivery of a public parks service remains a non-statutory function for local authorities. Services include parks, gardens, nature reserves, playing fields, outdoor sports facilities, golf courses, playgrounds, allotments, amenity space and cemeteries. Some functions undertaken by the parks and countryside service are statutory requirements – such as managing Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Local authority revenue budgets are under stress from increasing demands for statutory services (such as social care), which often leads to a greater pressure for savings or budget reductions within non-statutory services. Over the last decade revenue budgets for parks services have reduced by over 50%.

Capital improvements for parks can still be accessed but are often targeted - e.g. grants may be directed at heritage parks, deprived wards, accessibility improvements or wards with significant housing development (through the Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 developer contributions); whilst welcome, a lack of unrestricted capital budgets can lead to some space being very difficult to achieve investment into.

In 2015 Bournemouth Borough Council worked with Nesta and the Heritage Fund to establish the Bournemouth Parks Foundation as an innovation project to generate public philanthropy towards public parks. Bournemouth Parks Foundation has now become a new BCP-wide charity called The Parks Foundation.

The council can generate income or grants to contribute to improvements in destination parks and countryside sites.

Countryside sites are generally not labour intensive to maintain and can generate income from parking charges, cafes, environmental stewardship grants and habitat regulations (such as heathland mitigation), whilst volunteer assistance is commonplace.

Destination parks are more costly to maintain, but can generate income through leases, concessions, trading and events, and they can also benefit from a wide Community Infrastructure Levy catchment.

Community parks and recreation grounds, which are the most common parks, tend to struggle to generate income. Footfall is often too low to warrant viable year-round cafés and concessions, car parking is generally free (to avoid pressure on neighbouring streets) and events tend to be community focussed and not aimed at raising revenue. These parks can lack profile and therefore miss out on grants and local investment.

Community parks and recreation grounds serve every neighbourhood. They are the most important spaces for the most deprived and underrepresented people within communities. These are the spaces that hold untapped potential for social good.

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.

However, as evidenced by Natural England's People and Nature Survey 2020, socio-economic status is related to access to natural spaces – people are less likely to have visited a natural space if they live in an area of high deprivation, have a low income, have a low level of education, or are not working. Older people, people from minority ethnic groups and those with a long-term illness or condition were less likely to have visited a natural space.

There is a risk that a decline in quality of public parks will lead to lower levels of usage, increasing levels of anti-social behaviour and increased maintenance bills. Lower levels of usage will impact those on the lowest incomes to the highest degree, whilst wealthier residents are more likely to travel further or pay to access leisure and recreation facilities.

Community and local parks are essential assets providing socio-economic benefits for local residents; the use of these spaces for wildlife, recreation, relaxation, volunteering and informal amenity should be optimised wherever possible. Continued investment in and support of these green spaces is vital to ensure they remain vibrant, well used and loved by local communities.

3.5 Socio-economic context

Comprising the towns of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, the BCP area is home to over 397,000 residents.

As highlighted by the State of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Report 2021, the city region has areas of contrast, including some of the most affluent and also most deprived areas in the country.

A snapshot of BCP's communities in 2021

- A large resident population of around 397,000.
- A growing population predicted to be 403,600 by 2028
- An ageing population with 24% aged 65+ by 2028
- A diverse community with 12% non-'White British'
- An area with significant contrasts in deprivation
- A healthy population with good life expectancy
- A thriving economy with high levels of employment
- Over four out of five businesses are micro
- Higher house prices than the national average
- Wages slightly below national average
- 176,600 households across BCP in 2018
- Good educational achievement
- A quarter of residents qualified to degree level
- A university region by the sea with over 21,500 students
- 15m visitors each year spending £800 million locally
- Award winning open spaces
- High levels of satisfaction with the area as a place to live
- 78% of households with access to a car

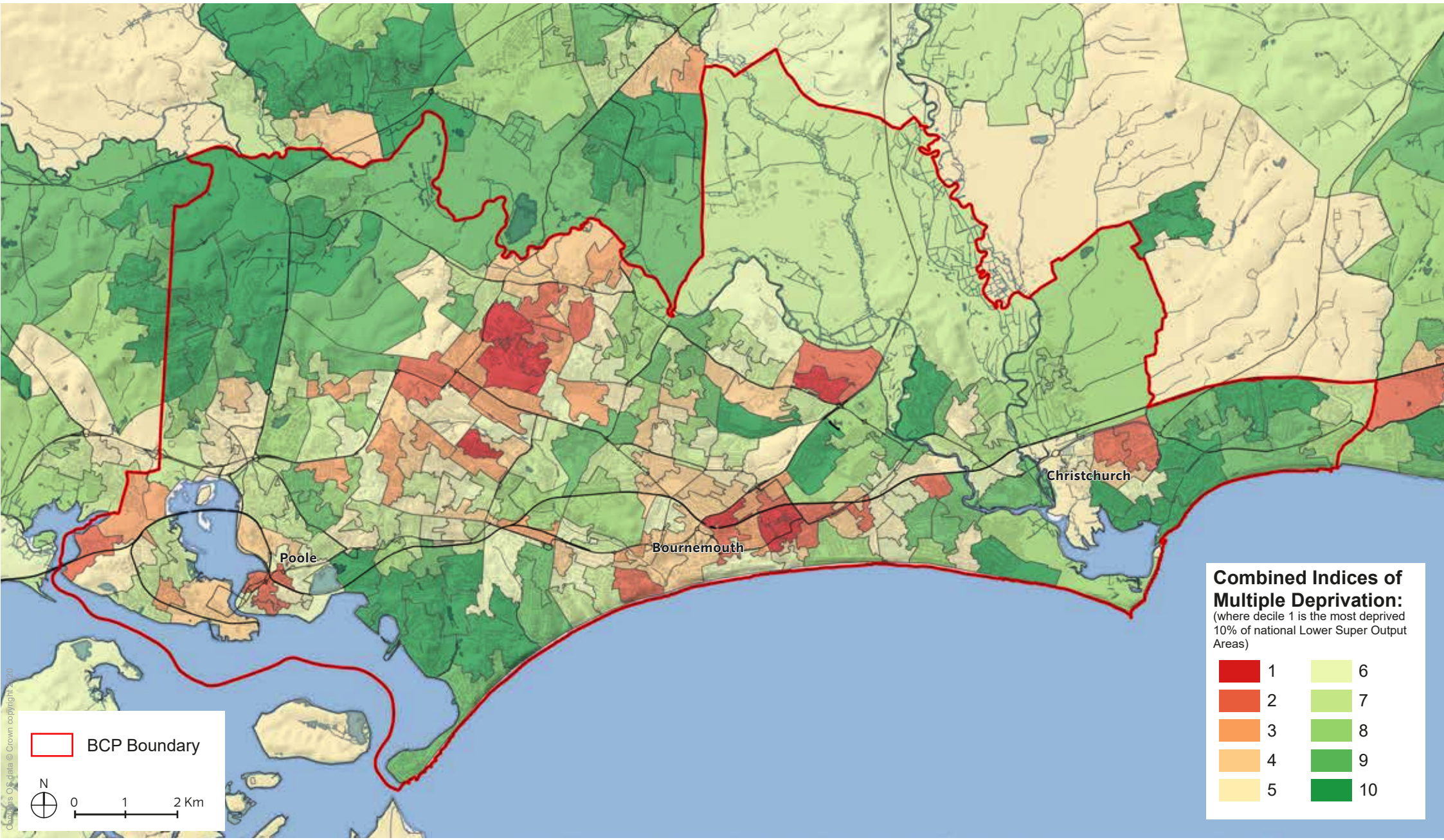
Population

Understanding where there are concentrations of younger and older residents is key for BCP Council when considering provision of services across the conurbation.

Within BCP, there are some wards that have a higher number of 0-15 year olds: these are Muscliff and Strouden Park and Moordown. Others have a higher number of over 65-year olds; Highcliffe and Walkford, Canford Cliffs, and Mudeford, Stanpit and West Highcliffe.

The predicted changing age distribution, and particularly the increase in the number of older and young people, will impact on demand for council services over the next decade.

Areas of deprivation



Source: English Indices of Deprivation (2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)

Deprivation

Within the BCP area, there are areas considered to be amongst the most and least deprived in the country. Understanding where these areas are, and the types of deprivation that affects them most, is important for service planning and delivery by BCP Council and its partners.

82,800 people live in an area that is amongst the 20% least deprived in England, including 12,700 0-16 year olds and 26,000 over 65 year olds.

In contrast 45,400 people live in an area that is amongst the 20% most deprived in England, including 8,900 0-16 year olds and 6,200 over 65 year olds.

BCP has nine areas in the most deprived 10% in England where 16,000 residents live. The greatest levels of deprivation are in Boscombe West, Kinson, East Cliff and Springbourne, Alderney and Bourne Valley and Muscliff and Strouden Park.

8,823 children are in absolute low income in BCP (less than 60% of median income). This is 10% of those aged 0-19 and 13% of those aged under 16. Children from poorer backgrounds have a lower life expectancy.

Transport

There are 813 miles of roads across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole including 12.6 miles of dual carriageway.

BCP is an expanding area, dependent upon sustainable transport alternatives to reduce car use across the conurbation. Reducing traffic congestion in the local area was the top priority for improvement in all three areas' latest residents survey.

78% of households within the BCP area have access to a car. Residents living in Bournemouth Central Ward and Boscombe West Ward are less likely to have access to a car, at 46% and 44% respectively.

In a recent travel survey, respondents were asked what factors prevent them walking, cycling and using public transport. Aside from factors such as the weather or distance of journey; the suitability and location of transport routes, cost of public transport, personal safety and busy roads were frequently cited as reasons for not choosing a more sustainable method of transport.

Housing

Of the estimated 176,600 dwellings across BCP in 2018, 64% are houses, 35% are flats and 2% are other dwelling types. Within the conurbation, the wards with the highest numbers of flats are found in East Cliff and Springbourne Ward and Bournemouth Central Ward.

Economy

BCP contributed approximately £10.3 billion to the UK economy (Gross Value Added) in 2019. Real estate activities, financial and insurance activities and the wholesale and retail trade contribute around 41% of total GVA in BCP.

The construction, professional, scientific, technical, wholesale and retail sectors collectively account for 47% of all businesses within BCP. BCP Council is one of the largest employers in the area.

There are more than 15 million visitors to the area each year, spending over £800 million locally. Tourism supports approximately 19,000 jobs.

Health and well-being

Overall health and wellbeing in the BCP area are generally as good as or better than the national average, with 81% of adults reporting they are in good or very good health.

Life expectancy in BCP is higher, for males and females, than the regional and national figure. There is a difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas, with males and females in the least deprived areas expected to live longer than in the most deprived areas; 9.4 years and 7.6 years respectively.

While healthy life expectancy in BCP is better for both males and females compared to nationally, the difference between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy shows people may live between 16-18 years in ill-health.

While population health has been improving both nationally and across the BCP area, since 2011 the rate of improvement has slowed. This highlights the need for continuing emphasis on improving behavioural risk factors for poor health outcomes, including a lack of physical activity and obesity. Provision of high quality, accessible green spaces can help address these issues.

Remaining active in older age is important for maintaining health and the ability to live independently. The level of physical activity among adults (70% reaching the recommended threshold of 150 minutes of activity a week in 2018/19) is significantly higher than nationally (67%).

Obesity is a key public health issue. It has a significant impact on health and social care costs, as well as economic and societal impacts. Although levels of obesity in BCP are slightly less when compared with national levels, rates are high with over half of adults across the BCP area classified as overweight or obese (60.6% in 2018/19, compared to 62.3% for England).

Mental health and wellbeing is a key issue for working age adults and is an important indicator of workforce health. In 2019/20, the prevalence of depression in BCP was 11.5% (national rate is 11.6%).

Cancer remains the biggest killer among those aged under 75, with 1,313 early deaths in the three years 2017-19. This is followed by cardiovascular disease (626 deaths), respiratory disease (330 deaths), and liver disease (210 deaths). Rates for all are similar or better than the national average.

Around 48% of these early deaths (1,189) are considered preventable by public health interventions in the broadest sense.

In 2019 it was estimated that 4.3% of mortality in the BCP area could be attributed to air pollution.

See **Appendix 4** for more details.

3.6 Planning context

The new Local Plan for BCP will provide 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.

It has a key role to play in supporting delivery of key priorities set out in the BCP Council Corporate Strategy.

The Local Plan will aim 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.

The Plan will also seek to address the need for new homes, employment opportunities and other supporting development whilst also ensuring the protection and enhancement of important heathland, harbour and coastal habitats, green spaces and unique heritage assets.

During 2019, the council consulted residents, businesses and community groups on the issues that the new Local Plan will need to address.

This green infrastructure strategy will feed into the new Local Plan, supported by a range of related strategies, plans and guidance (as outlined on the strategy hierarchy diagram in **Section 2.2**).

The key strategic planning issues that green infrastructure can help to address are highlighted below.

Key issues for the new Local Plan

- Increase opportunities for active, eco-friendly travel choices
- Improve access to parks and open spaces
- Protect and enhance the natural environment
- Tackle the challenges posed by climate change
- Revitalise town and local centres
- Deliver new homes that retain local character
- Meet the needs of the ageing population
- Support and develop the tourism sector
- Shape growth to ensure that the individual identities of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are retained
- Ensure delivery of high quality and attractive urban environments
- Protect and enhance the historic environment
- Plan for safe, mixed and socially inclusive communities
- Ensure essential services and community facilities are easily accessible to everyone
- Provide accessible, well connected, high quality urban environments and public open spaces
- Provide opportunities for people to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Improve air quality by reducing reliance on fossil fuel transport

4. DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

4. DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

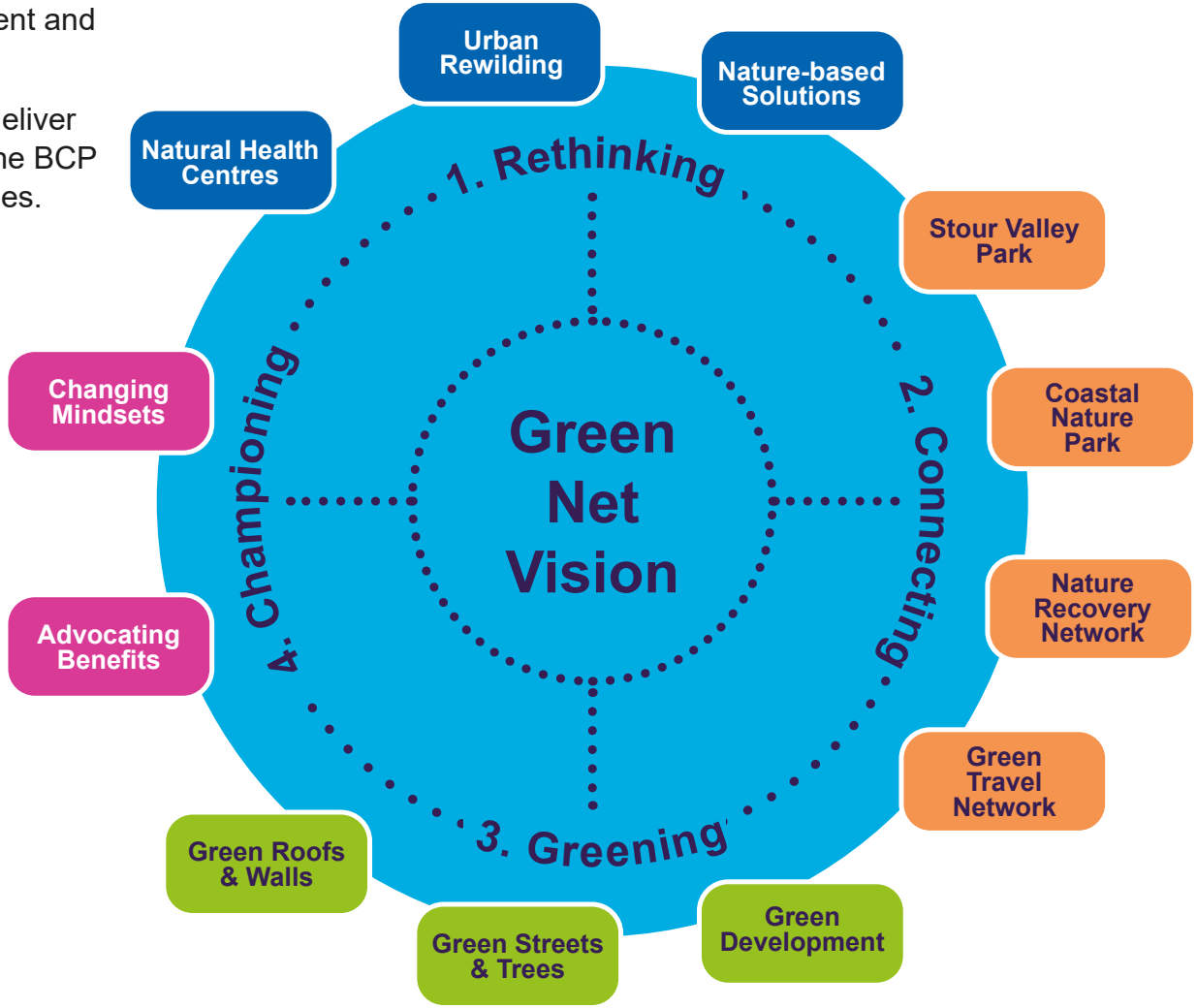
4.1 Overview

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 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.

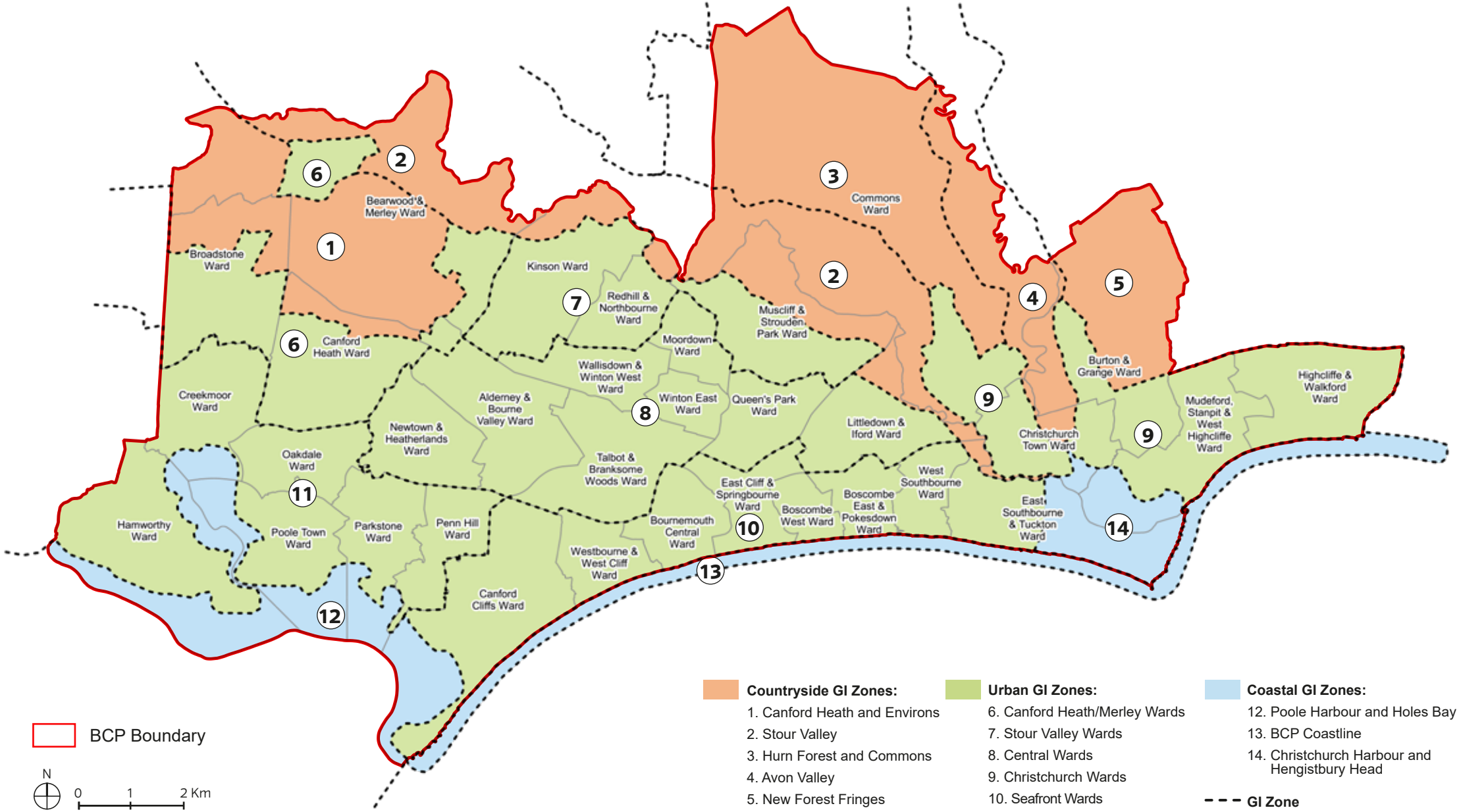


See **Appendix 6** for details of Green Infrastructure Zone Opportunities. These highlight green infrastructure interventions for supporting place-making in priority areas with the greatest need and potential for green infrastructure.

The delivery principles and key opportunities outlined below provide a starting point for developing actions to take forward the strategy over time, building on and complementing current green infrastructure projects being delivered across the city region (some of which are highlighted here).

Principles	Key opportunities
1. Rethinking the future of parks and green spaces	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
2. Connecting the Green Net	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 the green travel network by building on the new cycleways delivered through the Transforming Cities Fund
3. Greening the urban environment	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
4. Championing green infrastructure	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

Green infrastructure zones



4.2 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.

BCP Future Parks Project

The Future Parks Accelerator programme is a collaboration between the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the National Trust and the former Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) to build a sustainable future for the UK's urban parks and green spaces. BCP Council is one of nine places in the UK awarded funding under the programme.

The BCP Future Parks project is managed by the council in partnership with The Parks Foundation (the new BCP-wide charity formerly called the Bournemouth Parks Foundation).

The project is trialling new and innovative ways of operating community parks, including engaging and working with volunteers to maximise community input; increasing grants and philanthropy to invest in better facilities and improve the spaces for nature; and creating presence, activation and events within parks to increase social cohesion, physical activity and reduce anti-social behaviour.

The project's strands include:

- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Stour Valley Park Strategy
- Pilot Parks
- Greenspace Volunteering Strategy
- Greenspace Commercial Assets review
- Natural Capital Account
- Growing the Parks Foundation
- The Parks Foundation Partnership Agreement

Together, these strands will inform the council's approach to managing and funding greenspace in a more sustainable way. The project is also developing an approach to managing community parks that brings together volunteering, improved trading and park activation through master-planning and delivery of nature activities that will ensure the creation of brilliant spaces.

Opportunity 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

Evidence from recent research on improving wellbeing through urban nature highlights the public health benefits of access to green and blue space.

Encouraging more people, from all backgrounds and abilities, to spend more time undertaking outdoor activities in inspiring and safe green spaces can have positive outcomes for physical health and mental wellbeing throughout their lives – from childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, to working-age adulthood, older adulthood and end of life.

There is potential to support the council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy by re-imagining future parks as 'natural health centres'.

Well-loved local green spaces at the heart of people's everyday lives offer opportunities to engage in healthy, fun and rewarding outdoor play, sports and community activities.

For example, 'green prescription' services, such as Natural Choices, aim to support or improve physical health and mental well-being through engagement in activities set within the natural environment – such as nature walks, outdoor mindfulness, practical conservation volunteering, gardening and Park Yoga for example.

Community food growing initiatives in green spaces can also encourage healthy eating, reconnecting urban communities with the land.

For many people in urban communities, lockdown restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic have highlighted the value of green and blue spaces for interaction and exercise – particularly amongst the many young adults, families and households without access to a private garden.

There is also potential for re-imagining future parks as 'green living rooms' providing vibrant spaces for outdoor performances (such as music, plays, films, talks and festivals etc); community cafés offering locally produced healthy food and free wi-fi; and inspirational outdoor classrooms and natural play trails for children.

Greater use of parks in the evenings can also help to encourage a vibrant outdoor culture.

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.

See **Appendix 10** for more details.

The council will seek opportunities to increase the functionality of green spaces, particularly within the priority areas highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

BCP Pilot Parks – rethinking community parks

Three community parks in BCP have been selected to pilot new and innovative ways of managing community parks to increase usage, quality, volunteer participation, social cohesion, income generation, satisfaction, education and biodiversity.

Winton Recreation Ground, Alexandra Park and Watermans Park have been chosen as small urban spaces of average quality, where interventions can be tested to optimise the value of the space to the community, whilst finding ways of increasing alternative sources of financial and labour inputs.

The Parks Foundation are working in partnership with BCP Council to deliver this project. BCP Council's Greenspace Team has developed three park masterplans outlining short term and longer-term aspirations to optimise the value of these spaces.

Plans have been developed in consultation with local communities. Two parks activators have been employed by The Parks Foundation to promote volunteering, community engagement and assist in the delivery of short-term goals for the sites.

The project is trialling wi-fi sensors to count wi-fi enabled devices as a proxy for visitor numbers to better understand which interventions result in increased visits.

The initiative will gather data on social enterprise-based café operations, community events and groups, visitor numbers and satisfaction and biodiversity improvements.

Findings from the pilot parks project will be considered when reviewing other similar parks and how to activate and improve them.

Parks in Mind – a therapeutic parks programme

Parks in Mind provides fun nature conservation and other outdoor activities in beautiful parks and open spaces to help improve people's health and wellbeing

The project creates free volunteering opportunities suitable for anyone looking to improve their health, meet new people and learn new skills. The emphasis is on providing a relaxed and friendly atmosphere while taking part in practical and sociable outdoor activities to improve the environment.

With a focus on nature conservation, green exercise and other activities, the project aims to enhance wellbeing while making improvements to local parks for people and wildlife. It also includes elements of nature study, art in the environment, relaxation and confidence building workshops.

Sessions currently take place in Churchill Gardens, Horseshoe Common, Knyveton Gardens, Shelley Park, Woodland Walk and Boscombe Overcliff Nature Reserve. The aim is to expand the project within the wider conurbation in the longer term.

The Parks in Mind project is delivered through fundraising by The Parks Foundation.

Slades Farm Community Garden – engaging local communities in urban wildlife gardening

Slades Farm Community Garden grows fruits and vegetables and other useful plants within part of Slades Farm, a large urban recreation space in north Bournemouth.

Started by Transition Bournemouth in 2012, the garden aims to be a long-term community-led project to develop an organic and sustainable garden that supports wildlife as well as people, increasing the biodiversity of the site, operating inclusively and accessible to all.

The intention was to create a low-carbon learning resource for local people to encourage more backyard food-growing, the consumption of more local and seasonal produce, healthy outdoor exercise, and community resilience

The garden is developed and maintained by volunteers with support from the council's parks department. There are usually a couple of public volunteering sessions each month where anyone can turn up and help with a range of gardening and conservation tasks and projects

Opportunity 1b. Targeted rewilding of urban green spaces to increase biodiversity and bring people closer to nature


Rewilding green space

There is potential for increased 'rewilding' of urban green and blue spaces through a shift away from traditional maintenance-intensive monoculture, towards more wildlife-friendly and less-intensive management of amenity grassland and vegetation.

This approach offers benefits for encouraging pollinators such as birds, bats, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, small mammals, and most importantly, bees particularly in urban areas.

Bringing people closer to nature in urban green spaces, in particular within community parks, can help inspire interest in biodiversity issues. It can also help build people's confidence in accessing, experiencing and enjoying nature in the wider countryside and coast."

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.

See **Appendix 10** for more details.

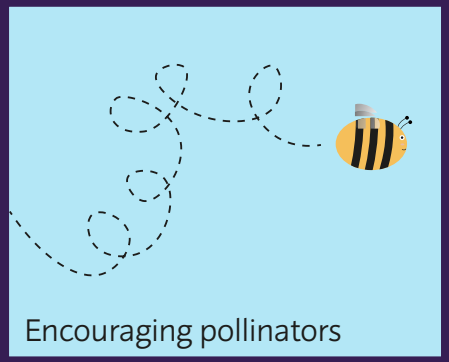
The council will seek opportunities to rewild urban green spaces, particularly within the priority areas highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

Testing a more sustainable approach to grassland maintenance

In response to the council's Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan, the council has developed a policy that introduces a new sustainable approach to grass cutting, wildflower meadow creation and grassland habitat management for open spaces.

Establishing grass meadows within amenity grass areas and highway verges is a nature based solution that can provide a wider range of functions and benefits such as:

- Increase in biodiversity – by supporting a range of plants and wildlife, in particular pollinators
- Carbon sequestration – by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil
- Reduction in atmospheric pollution – by trapping harmful airborne particulates


Encouraging pollinators

The council is conducting trials in selected areas to test the feasibility and public acceptance of changes to grass cutting regime intensity – including testing rewilding options involving leaving some areas uncut to regenerate naturally.

The results of these trials will inform the council's decisions around potentially rolling out larger-scale changes to the management of amenity grass areas and highway verges across the wider BCP area in the longer term.

Nature Recovery in Urban Parks Project

In partnership with The Parks Foundation, BCP Council has been awarded a grant from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund to help deliver the Nature Recovery in Urban Parks project. The project aims to tackle the climate and ecological emergency and connect more people to nature.

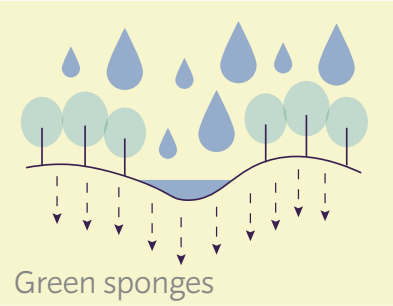
The project will transform some of the area's 'green deserts' into wildlife-rich sites, creating habitat and species resilience by linking existing biodiverse sites to a wider network. This will be achieved by working closely with residents, empowering communities to care for their parks, reconnecting them with nature and educating them about the environment.

The project will enhance the ecological potential of eight selected parks within the council's most densely populated and deprived wards, by making physical improvements to the green spaces, delivering engagement activities to educate and inspire residents into nature, empowering communities by creating new volunteering opportunities and employing more staff within the environment sector.

The eight parks are Branksome Recreation Ground, Haskells Recreation Ground, Jumpers Common, Kinson Manor Playing Fields, Muscliff Park, Pelhams Park, Slades Farm and Strouden Park. These parks have the highest potential for improvement to help to create a nature recovery network across the conurbation.

Opportunity 1c. Reinforcing green spaces as green sponges and as air conditioning for the city region to help adapt to a changing climate

Climate change is creating warmer, drier summers and wetter, milder winters in the UK, which increases the urban heat island effect and potential for flooding.

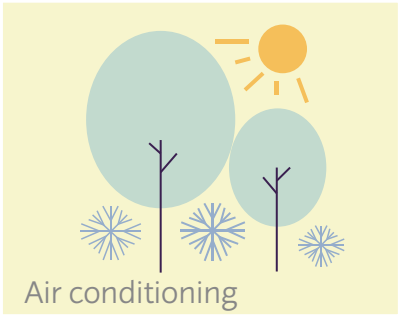

Green sponges

There is considerable scope to strengthen the resilience of the city region's communities and businesses to a changing climate by re-imagining green and blue spaces as 'green sponges' for managing flood risk, and as 'air conditioning' for keeping urban areas cool and the air clean.

Green infrastructure interventions are widely recognised as playing an important role in reducing the risk of flooding by absorbing, storing or dispersing floodwater. River restoration can create opportunities for upstream flood storage, in addition to providing landscape and wildlife benefits.

Sustainable urban drainage solutions, such as swales, rain gardens and green roofs, can help to slow down discharge of rainwater run-off into the drainage network.

Green and blue spaces also play an important role as places to seek respite from high summer temperatures, and large canopied street trees can significantly reduce temperatures at street level by providing shade.


Air conditioning

Increasing canopy cover and extent of green roofs helps reduce the amount of solar radiation absorbed by artificial materials, cooling air through evapo-transpiration.

The council will seek opportunities for urban green spaces to help strengthen resilience to climatic changes, particularly within the priority areas highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

Hengistbury Head visitor centre – an exemplar of green building design and construction

Opened in 2014, the visitor centre helps explain the special history, wildlife, archaeology and geology of Hengistbury Head to visitors.

Built as an extension to the existing thatched barn that contains the main exhibition space, the new building includes solar photo-voltaic panels that save about £1,000 a year on electricity. Other energy-saving features include a green roof to absorb rainfall and provide insulation, a ground source heat pump and timber-framed walls insulated with straw bales.

The £1m visitor centre was funded with £300,000 from developer contributions, £432,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £300,000 from landfill tax.

4.3 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 are a to create green corridors to bigger spaces

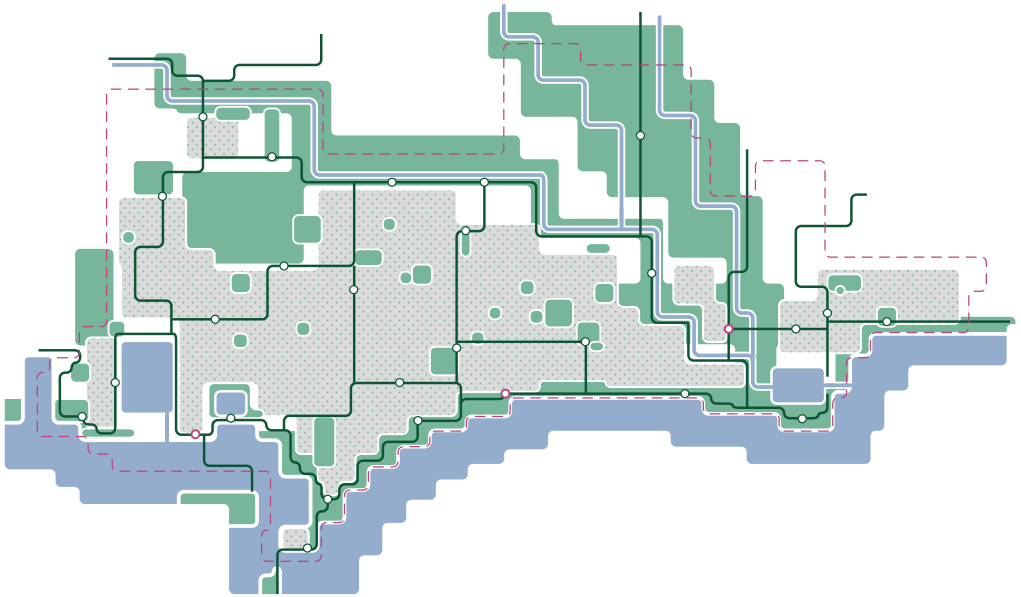
See **Appendix 10** for more details.

Green Net journeys: doorsteps to countryside

Opportunity 2a. Supporting multi-functional strategic green corridors

The Stour Valley, the Avon Valley and the Coast and Harbours are identified as strategic green corridors linking green spaces and places at a landscape-scale within the Green Net.

These corridors have potential to become more multi-functional through optimising opportunities to enhance and create new areas of open space and recreation routes, restore wetland/coastal habitats and strengthen their function as wildlife corridors, and for natural flood management.



In addition to the proposed Stour Valley Park (see **Action 2b**), the potential for creating a linear coastal nature park connecting the coast's cliffs and chines, beaches and harbours between Poole and Christchurch will be explored.

Striking a balance between enhanced access and conservation of sensitive coastal habitats will be a key consideration for a coastal nature park, as will providing sustainable transport options to the coast.

Opportunity 2b. Advancing the ongoing development of the regionally significant Stour Valley Park

The council is a key partner in the project to establish a peri-urban regional park along the Stour Valley straddling the boundary between BCP Council and Dorset Council.

The proposed park is 3,947ha in size, extending for 25km along the lower River Stour between the Kingston Lacy estate and Hengistbury Head on the coast.

The proposed Stour Valley Park would create a major new landscape-scale green infrastructure asset for the Green Net, with the potential to provide significant health and well-being, biodiversity, climate change and economic benefits.

A long-term strategy for delivery of the Stour Valley Park has been developed by a partnership led by BCP Council. It provides a shared vision, highlights investment priorities and sets out an agreed framework for implementing the park.

The Stour Valley Park will have an important role to play in the provision of 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace'.

Over the next ten years, BCP Council's ambition is to work with its partners in the Stour Valley Partnership to advance the development of the Park, including its integration into the new Local Plan.

Stour Valley Park Strategy

The aims of the Stour Valley Park Strategy are to:

- Establish a world class landscape of interconnected accessible spaces
- Enable the conditions for wildlife to thrive
- Support the well-being of the local and wider community
- Reflect the essence and uniqueness of place
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change and restore ecosystem health
- Embody a regenerative project contributing to society, environment and economy
- Work to a 10-year time frame for delivery

Opportunity 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

The Green Net encompasses an ecological network of biodiverse green and blue corridors linking urban habitats with woodlands and wetlands, heaths and harbours, and meadows and marshes.

It is expected that the Dorset Local Nature Partnership will support development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy required by the 2021 Environment Act, which is likely to cover the BCP Council and Dorset Council areas.

It will complement and connect the best wildlife sites, providing landscape-scale opportunities to restore and expand woodland, heathland and wetland habitats to support species conservation and the reintroduction of native species.

Informed by the Dorset Ecological Network mapping study, it is anticipated that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy would identify opportunities and actions for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation to support delivery of the local nature recovery network, particularly within the priority areas highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

Green Net journeys: doorsteps to harbours

Upton Country Park SANG – protecting internationally important nature sites

As part of a 5-year project to create additional open space for visitors to enjoy, 25 acres of new meadows called 'Upton Fields' were recently added to the 160 acre Upton Country Park's shoreline and woodlands.

The Poole Local Plan identified that a major new 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (SANG) should be created to ensure new homes do not have an adverse impact on existing internationally important nature sites.

The main purpose of the new public open space at Upton Country Park is to provide areas for recreation and walking. Specifically, it is aimed to provide a place where dog walkers are able to let their dogs off the lead as an alternative to using Upton Heath and other important protected heathland sites. Increased use of these sites can have a negative impact on the fragile habitat and species that live on the heathland.

The project was delivered by BCP Council's Environmental Development Team.

Opportunity 2d. Enhancing a green travel network that builds on the work of the Transforming Cities Fund and the new cycleways delivered by this project

The Green Net aims to connect places where people live, work, learn and play to nature and green space throughout the city region and beyond.

In partnership with Dorset Council and other partners, the council will work towards developing a well-connected green travel network as an integral component of the Green Net to promote cycling and walking over less sustainable transport modes, and encourage active travel.

Sport England physical activity surveys

Walking for leisure (21.2 million), cycling for leisure and sport (7.2 million) and outdoor running/jogging (7.5 million) were the most popular physical activities for adults in England between March 2019 and May 2020 (Sport England Active Lives Adult Survey, October 2020).


Promoting active lifestyles

Active play and informal activity (61%), walking to get to school and other places (50%) and going on a walk for leisure (36%) were the 1st, 3rd and 5th respectively of the ten most popular physical activities for 5 to 16 year olds in England between September 2019 and July 2020 (Sport England Active Lives Children and Young People Survey, January 2021).

The councils will seek to capitalise on the forthcoming Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to enhance north-south links between the conurbation, the countryside to the north and coast to the south. Close liaison will be needed across BCP to ensure the Plan is aligned with this strategy, including alignment of future infrastructure funding and strategic work in order to maximise their collective benefits.

Opportunities for investment in the green travel network are focussed on two strategic priorities:

- Maintaining the network of largely off-road leisure/recreation routes connecting the city region to destinations in the wider Dorset countryside and coast – such as the South West Coast Path, Poole Harbour Trail, Stour Valley Way, Avon Valley Path and the Castleman Trailway – and beyond to Bath and Bristol via the National Cycle Network
- Exploring the creation of a network of active travel routes for walking and cycling along 'greenways' – green corridors linking the main urban commuting destinations across the city region, including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole town centres and the major employment areas at Bournemouth Airport and Ferndown

Transforming Travel – towards a sustainable travel network for the city region

Transforming Travel is the council's overarching initiative that aims to revolutionise how people move about by providing safe, environmentally friendly travel alternatives to the car. With its emphasis on sustainability, tackling air quality and the new focus on walking and cycling, Transforming Travel supports BCP Council's climate emergency ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is an important way of enabling a significant increase in the number of journeys people choose to make by cycle or on foot and help reduce emissions and congestion. The improvements will be designed to be accessible and inclusive, catering for young and old and people with mobility impairments and other disabilities.

The Plan will identify the strategic cycle routes, key walking routes and core zones where investment will be targeted, supported by a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment.

Green Net journeys: doorsteps to seafront

The active travel network can help bring people closer to nature by providing green corridors linking homes, schools, high streets, places of work and green and blue spaces. These corridors can incorporate green features such as sustainable drainage systems.

There is also the potential to incorporate opportunities for children to engage in natural active play on the way to school, and to provide community food growing spaces, within these corridors.

The council will seek opportunities to strengthen the green travel network, particularly within the priority areas highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

4.4 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.

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.

See **Appendix 10** for more details.

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.

There are a range of green surface cover types that can contribute to the greening of urban environments dominated by hard-surfaces. Some examples of green surfaces with the potential to provide the greatest range of functions and benefits (such as habitats for wildlife, sustainable drainage and urban cooling) are highlighted below.

Urban greening surface types

- **Semi-natural vegetation** – related to local priority habitats (e.g. trees, woodland, heathland, species-rich grassland)
- **Wetland or open water** – potentially as part of a sustainable drainage system)
- **Green roofs** – designed to mimic flower-rich habitats to attract pollinator insects and birds
- **Green walls** – providing nesting or roosting sites for birds and pollinator-friendly planting on facades of buildings
- **Street trees** – using native species planted in the right places to maximise benefits
- **Flower-rich perennial planting** – using pollinator-friendly species to attract invertebrates and birds
- **Rain gardens and vegetated swales** (as part of sustainable drainage systems)
- **Hedges** – using native species planted in the right places to maximise benefits
- **Native wildflower planting on amenity grassland** – increasing the biodiversity value of species-poor lawns/highway verges

The council will seek to promote urban greening through the new Local Plan and supporting documents, such as an Urban Design Code and Green Infrastructure Standards Supplementary Planning Document, particularly within the priority areas highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

Opportunity 3a. Embedding urban greening and statutory biodiversity net gain into local plan policy

To meet the challenges of a growing city region and the climate and ecological emergency, there needs to be a step change in the relationship between development and nature.

The overriding purpose of the planning system is to deliver sustainable development and environmental net gains. This often requires planning policy and decision-making to make trade-offs between environmental losses and gains.

As well as continuing to protect the most valuable green spaces, new development also needs to make a contribution to strengthening the Green Net's ecological networks by making space for nature in built-up areas.

To facilitate this, the new Local Plan will include:

- **An Urban Greening Policy** – setting out requirements for development to embed urban greening solutions as a fundamental element of building and landscape designs (supported by an 'urban greening factor tool' for assessing green infrastructure provision in planning applications).
- **A Biodiversity Net Gain Policy** – ensuring that a development leaves nature in a better state than before it happened by delivering a net gain for biodiversity (in accordance with the minimum requirements set by the 2021 Environment Act as measured by Defra's Metric).

Opportunity 3b. Developing an urban greening and biodiversity net gain design guide

To support implementation of the policies under Action 3a, the council will develop a design guide on urban greening and biodiversity net gain.

The guide will help inspire designers on ways that new development can contribute to making the city region greener, and encourage an interdisciplinary approach to Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering.

It will aim to show how this can be achieved through good design, whilst also creating engaging, healthy and resilient places, helping to reduce communities' exposure to air pollution and enabling the city region to adapt to climate change.

It will provide simple design considerations for different types of urban greening features that can help make space for nature in built environments.

There is considerable potential to embed green infrastructure into renewal of the public realm in areas planned for major urban regeneration – such as Poole town centre and the Bournemouth Arc.

The connectivity and greenness of the street network can be a significant influence on their use; for example, streets with a higher density of trees are typically associated with higher rates of walking and cycling.

In response to the potential increased demand for home-working, residential streets where pedestrians and people have priority over vehicles ('Home Zones') offer potential to be re-imagined as greener and safer areas of public realm.

Green infrastructure features such as sustainable drainage, new footways/cycle routes and enhanced habitats can help blur the boundaries between the urban public realm and green space.

Urban greening solutions can be used to revitalise incidental green space and underused parts of the public realm such as by establishing rain gardens, pocket parks and urban orchards.

Creating accessible roof gardens may also be an option for some existing and new buildings, particularly in urban areas that may become denser in the future.

Reflecting the principles of the National Design Guide, the guide would include guidance on how urban greening and biodiversity net gain solutions can be embedded into the public realm.

National Design Guide: nature and public spaces

Well-designed places:

- Integrate existing and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place, biodiversity and water management, and addresses climate change mitigation and resilience.
- Prioritise nature so that diverse ecosystems can flourish to ensure a healthy natural environment that supports and enhances biodiversity.
- Provide attractive open spaces in locations that are easy to access, with activities for all to enjoy, such as play, food production, recreation and sport, to encourage physical activity and health, well-being and social inclusion.
- Include well-located public spaces that support a wide variety of activities and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and civic inclusion.
- Have a hierarchy of spaces from large and strategic to small and local spaces, including parks, squares, greens and pocket parks.
- Have trees and other planting within public spaces for people to enjoy, whilst also providing shading, and air quality and climate change mitigation.

Source: National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (MHCLG, 2021)

Opportunity 3c. Developing a trees and woodland strategy

Trees and woodlands are an important component of the Green Net. The urban tree canopy comprises trees along linear transport corridors, streets and watercourses, in amenity spaces, public parks and gardens, and urban woodlands, and in domestic gardens and the grounds of institutions.

In addition to providing habitat for wildlife, urban trees help cool the air naturally, reduce pollution and tackle climate change. Urban woodlands provide green places for relaxation and enjoyment, and help bring communities together. Street trees are beneficial for residential property values.

The council will work with partners and local communities to identify opportunities to plant the right trees in the right places. To facilitate this, the council will develop a strategy for the planting, management and maintenance of trees and woodlands.

BCP tree planting programme

The council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan includes actions looking at potential tree planting schemes, sites and community planting programmes.

Trees provide vital ecosystem services such as:

- Absorbing carbon dioxide
- Providing natural habitats for wildlife
- Improving air quality
- Enhancing biodiversity
- Filtering pollution

The council has a duty to maintain and care for trees to ensure they can grow and mature over many years. Trees may be planted by the council in a variety of locations across the BCP area – including parks and open spaces, woodland areas, local neighbourhoods, roads, pavements and streets, coastal environments and memorial locations.

Trees that are removed because they have become unsafe, a high risk or are diseased or dead are replaced with suitable species. The council also replaces trees within parks and open spaces that have been removed as part of projects to improve open spaces.

Opportunity 3d. Encouraging home owners to create wildlife-friendly homes and gardens

Due to the built-up nature of the city region, private gardens cover a significant proportion of the urban area (c.17.6% of the BCP area). Gardens, and some domestic properties, can provide valuable habitats and corridors for maximising safe wildlife movement through the urban environment as an integral part of the wider Green Net.

Encouraging home owners to consider how wildlife-friendly approaches to gardening can help biodiversity through simple wildlife gardening measures, through education programmes delivered in community parks.

Examples of wildlife gardening measures

- Integrated bird, bat and bug boxes in walls and rooves
- Green roofs and garden walls
- Promotion of wildlife-friendly gardening benefits
- Nectar-rich planting to provide food for birds and pollinators
- Native wildflower mixes as alternative to manicured lawns
- Wildlife ponds with stone/log piles refuges for amphibians
- Provision of 'hedgehog holes' in garden boundaries

Dorset Wildlife Trust Wildlife Gardening Champions Scheme

There are 15 million domestic gardens in the UK totalling an acreage greater than all National Nature Reserves put together.

Large or small, private gardens can provide a vital stepping stone for wildlife and be part of the patchwork of wildlife friendly areas linking towns and the countryside.

Dorset Wildlife Trust's 'Wildlife Gardening Champions Scheme' seeks to inspire more people to encourage wildlife into their gardens.

In addition to promoting awards to showcase ideas, the scheme provides advice about the many small ways gardens can be made wildlife friendly – from planting plants that pollinators love to making a hedgehog doorway in garden fences.

4.5 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.

Opportunity 4a. Nominating senior leadership and councillors to be advocates for green infrastructure – to be a 'green infrastructure figurehead' to champion the Green Net vision, ensuring the value of green infrastructure to the economy is fully appreciated by businesses and decision makers

Opportunity 4b. Strengthening green infrastructure partnership working – promoting the benefits of broad-based partnerships for delivering green infrastructure projects at different scales, will be facilitated by:

- Establishment of a BCP Green Infrastructure and Climate Action Forum to bring together key delivery partners and stakeholders, and to empower communities.
- Allocation of a BCP officer to support the Forum and coordinate partnership delivery of green infrastructure projects
- Continued support for working with the Dorset Local Nature Partnership

Opportunity 4c. Mainstreaming green infrastructure goals – the council's and partner organisations' policies, plans and operational practices will be aligned with the Green Infrastructure strategy's goals and principles

Opportunity 4d. Celebrating green infrastructure added value – the council will showcase examples of successful green infrastructure projects, measure benefits and share learning from outcomes

Opportunity 4e. Changing mindsets for a greener future – the council will undertake community engagement programmes to challenge existing mindsets towards how people think about, engage with and work with nature in the context of the climate and ecological emergency

5. DELIVERING THE VISION

5.1 Overview

This 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 working in partnership to deliver investment in green infrastructure that will help keep the city region healthy, resilient, green and world class.

Although the strategy will need to be flexible and evolve as things change over time, some immediate priorities for action have been identified.

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.

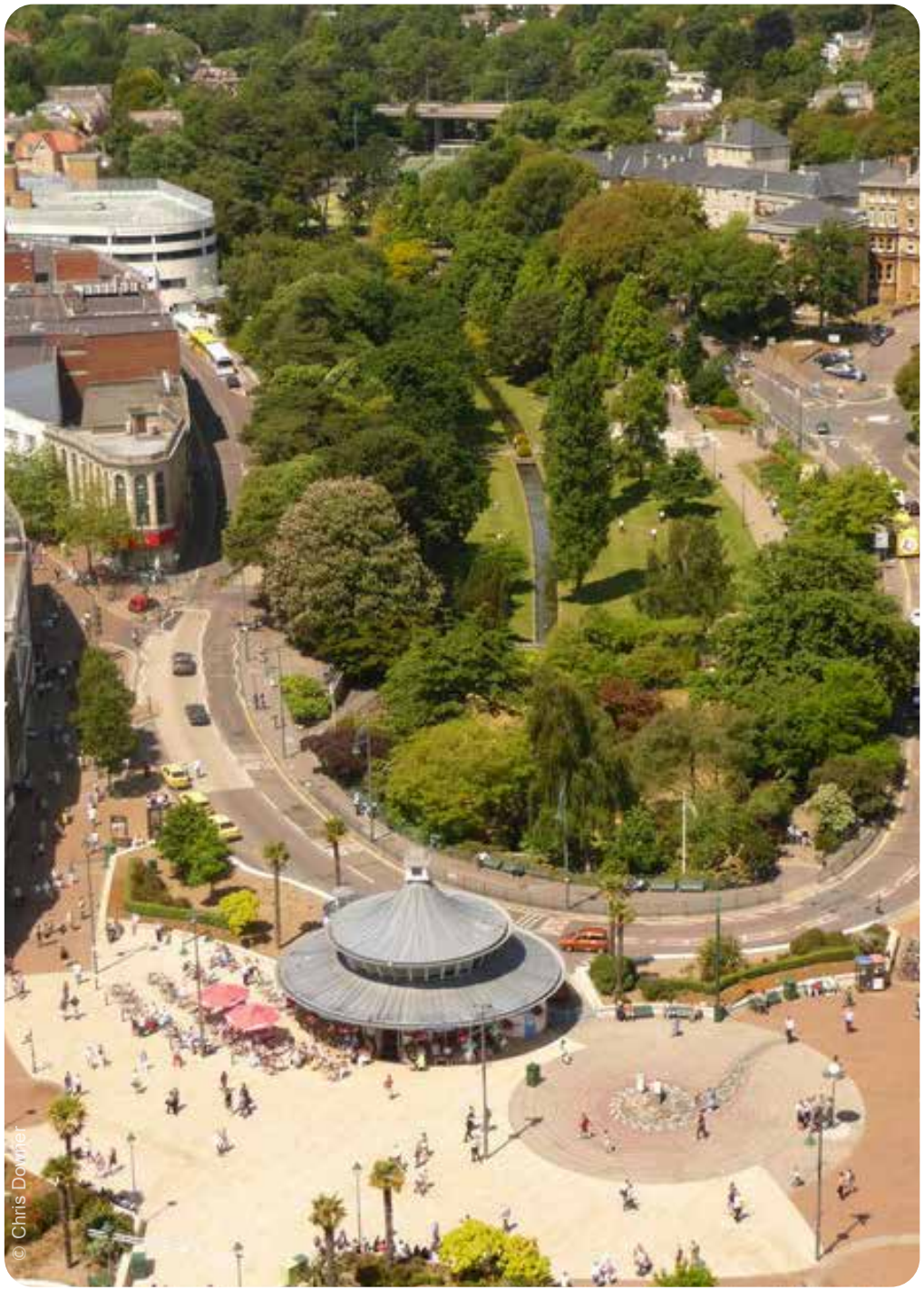
We have developed a Delivery Framework that sets out suggested high level priorities for delivery of our ambitious Green Net vision for the city-region. As illustrated on the BCP Green Net Strategic Plan (see **Section 2.1**), our priorities include a number of “bold moves”:

- Landscape-scale green spaces and connections
- Sustaining our destination parks
- Breathing new life into our community parks
- Urban nature recovery

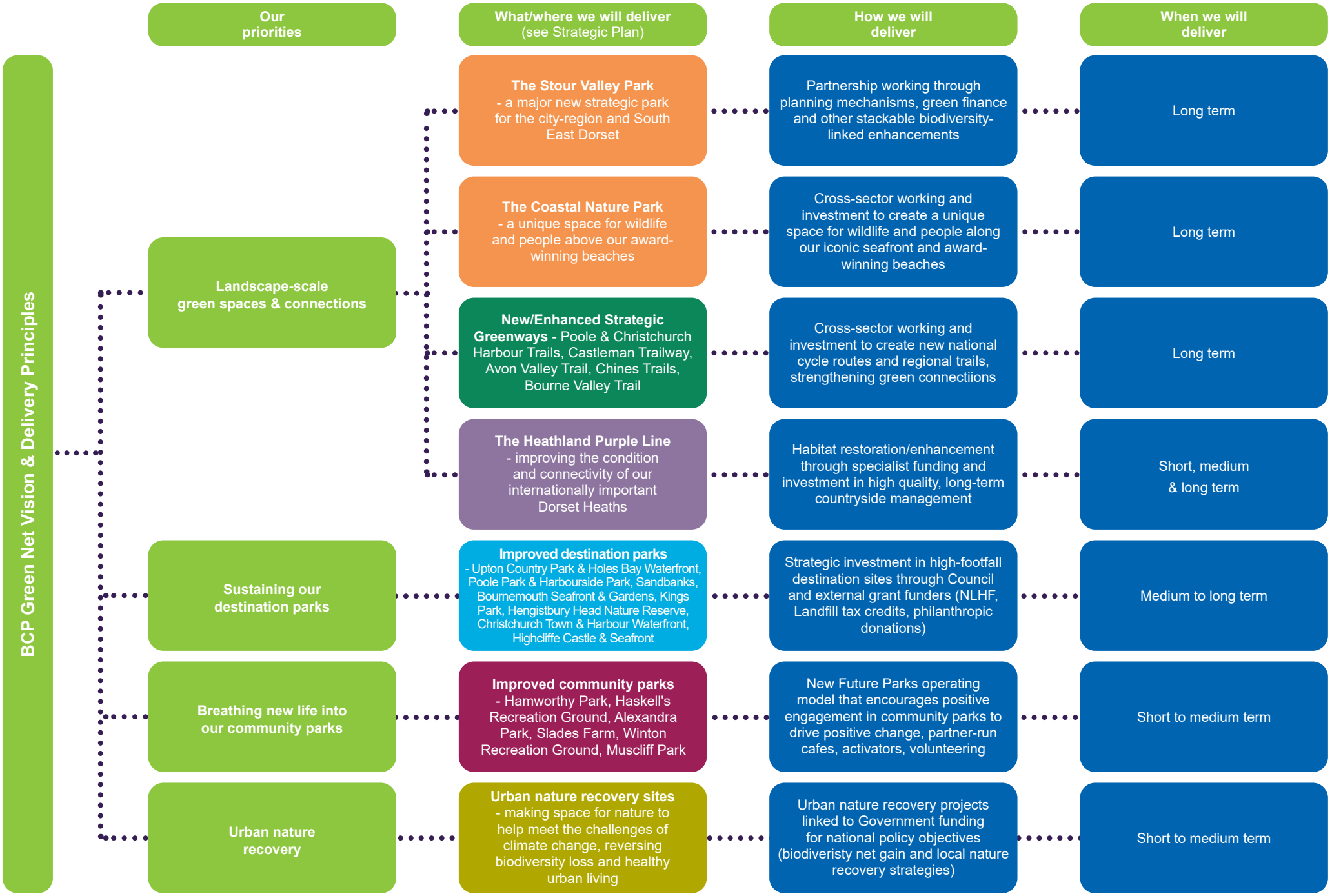
Our priorities for delivering the Green Net vision also include:

- Protecting the Dorset Heaths
- Maximising the potential of our green spaces
- Access for all and healthy living
- Green infrastructure policy and strategies

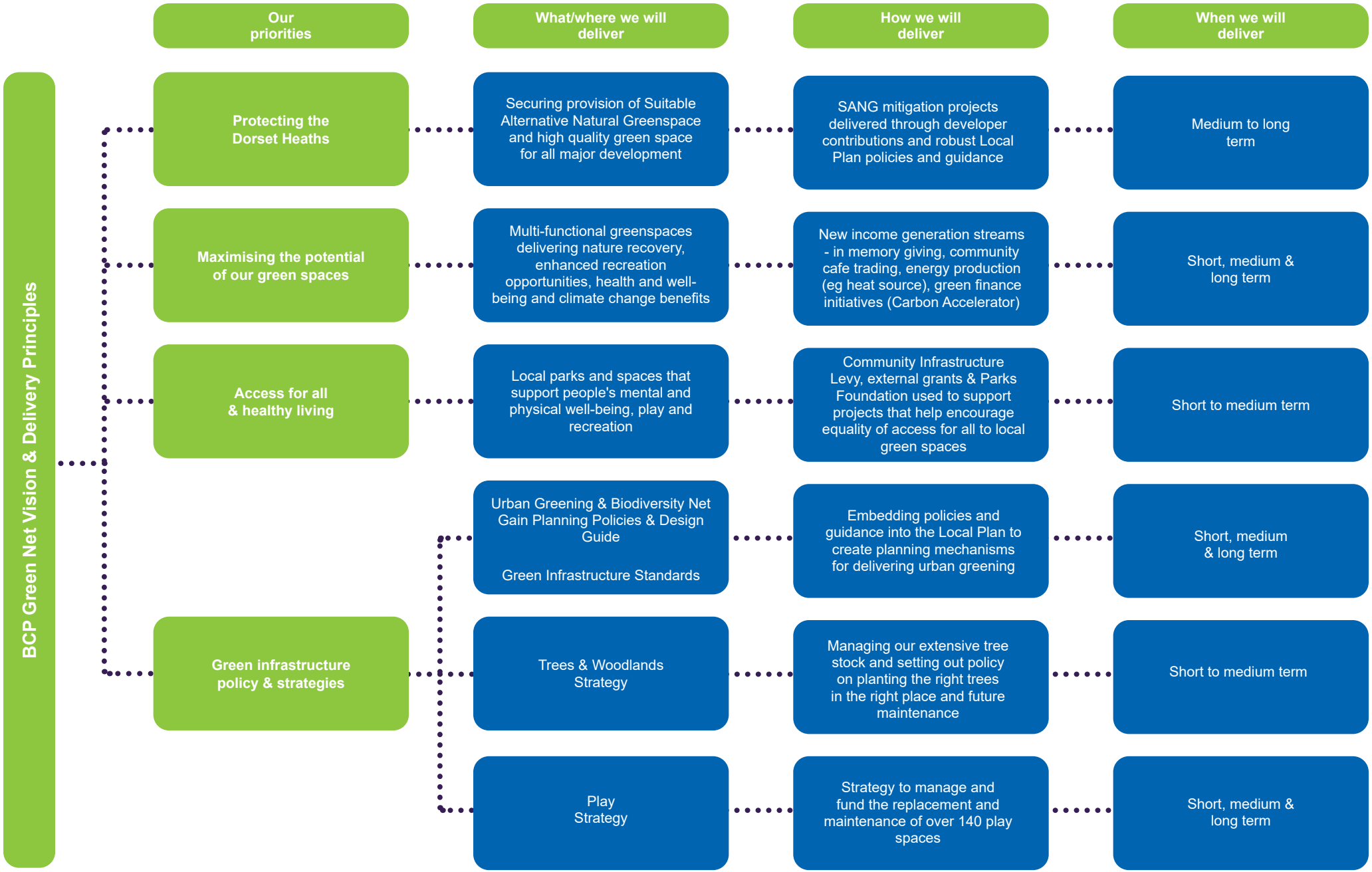
The following Delivery Framework outlines what/where we will deliver, how we will deliver and when we will deliver against these priorities.



Green Net Delivery Framework (1/2)



Green Net Delivery Framework (2/2)



5.2 Partnerships

The strategy will be delivered by the council working in partnership with local communities, businesses, developers, landowners, schools, healthcare and infrastructure providers through the following key routes:

- **The planning system** – embedding green infrastructure into planning policy, development management and place-making
- **Public sector programmes** – safeguarding and enhancing publically-owned green infrastructure assets for public benefits
- **Funding opportunities** – securing external funding, site-based income generating initiatives and funding through Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives from local businesses to support delivery of green infrastructure projects on public land
- **Infrastructure investments** – combining green infrastructure with grey infrastructure (water, transport and power)
- **Private landowners** – enhancing privately-owned green infrastructure assets to maximise their ecosystem services

Some of the existing key partnerships for delivering the Green Infrastructure strategy are outlined below.

Key partnerships

Goal 1: Encourage healthy living and well-being

- Public Health Dorset
- Active Dorset
- The Parks Foundation
- Stour Valley Partnership
- Transition Town Poole
- Transition Bournemouth
- Transition Town Christchurch

Goal 2: Strengthen resilience to climate change

- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Wessex Water
- Dorset Catchment Partnership
- Stour Catchment Partnership
- Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership
- Poole Harbour Catchment Initiative

Goal 3: Support nature recovery and biodiversity

- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Urban Heaths Partnership
- Stour Valley Partnership

Goal 4: Support economic recovery, prosperity and placemaking

- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Visit Dorset
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- The Parks Foundation

5.3 Stewardship and governance

Strong governance and innovative approaches to funding are needed if the potential of green infrastructure to support vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities is to be fully realised.

BCP Council has a key role to play as a shaper, steward and manager of the city region's green and blue spaces. The council will take the lead in promoting the green infrastructure approach by promoting new ways of inter-disciplinary working across the nature, enterprise and health sectors.

5.4 Funding

Countryside sites are highly designated and under environmental stewardship agreements that help to fund them, and the council's destination sites are capable of gaining significant capital investment, event and concession income. However, local community parks and recreation grounds are suffering from neglect due to lack of funding.

A new approach to the funding, development and management of community parks has been developed through the Future Parks project. The Parks Foundation or similar organisation with compatible goals, fundraising skills and a community led focus could have a role here.

THE PARKS FOUNDATION

5.5 Empowering communities

Empowering and inspiring local community residents and user groups of all ages and abilities to take an active role in caring for their local green and blue spaces is a key element of this strategy.

Effective community engagement is needed that leads to genuine community empowerment.

This is critical to ensuring that more people from a more diverse range of backgrounds have a stake in what happens in their local area, particularly for communities in deprived areas who may experience more limited opportunities for accessing and being close to nature.

This means putting more emphasis on how voluntary organisations, such as volunteering and friends groups for individual green spaces, are supported so that they become more resilient and better able to diversify their membership base. It also means supporting young people to get their voice heard as park users and to engage them as future guardians of the natural environment.

The new BCP Greenspace Volunteering Strategy, being delivered in partnership with The Parks Foundation, identifies opportunities for empowering communities across the city region to become more involved in caring for their local green spaces.

The strategy aims to ensure that the greenspace volunteering offer is harmonised across the conurbation, best practice is shared, volunteers are fully recognised, volunteering is for all, and that it is developed consistently across both parks and countryside.

It seeks to reach younger and more diverse audiences, encouraging a wider type of volunteer to support green spaces by volunteering in a café, surveying for wildlife and running community events for example.

5.6 Green infrastructure planning principles

Eight high level principles for the planning of green infrastructure within BCP have been identified, which embody the integrated approach to green infrastructure delivery advocated by this strategy.

The council will use these principles to support decision-making with regards to:

- Embedding green infrastructure into the masterplanning of greenfield and brownfield development
- Enhancement of existing green infrastructure assets and the creation of new assets
- Retrofitting of green infrastructure solutions into the existing urban fabric

Green infrastructure planning principles

1. Optimise the multi-functionality, connectivity and resilience of existing and new green infrastructure
2. Positively respond to the climate and ecological emergencies by maximising environmental net gains from development
3. Adopt a context driven approach that meets local needs and opportunities for green infrastructure
4. Create and sustain beautiful places through positive place-making that responds to local character
5. Ensure sustainability of green infrastructure through effective long-term management and place-keeping
6. Maximise well-being benefits by bringing nature closer to people, ensuring green spaces are accessible to all
7. Incorporate climate resilient water management into green infrastructure assets supporting development
8. Deliver wildlife enhancement and biodiversity net gains that can make a meaningful difference to nature recovery

5.7 Setting green infrastructure standards

An evidence review of the benefits of green infrastructure published by Natural England in 2019 suggests that the type/amount, proximity and quality of green infrastructure are key factors in setting local standards with respect to maximising the well-being benefits of access to nature for people. The key findings of Natural England's review are:

- Green infrastructure type/amount: provision needs to contain a mix of green infrastructure types/sizes reflecting the local context (e.g. accessible green space such as parks and nature reserves, domestic and shared gardens, green routes and street trees).
- Green infrastructure proximity: green spaces should be close to homes and workplaces (although accessibility is dependent on more than just physical closeness and perception of proximity is as important).
- Green infrastructure quality: Better quality and well-maintained green infrastructure is associated with better health and wellbeing outcomes (although what people think of as 'quality' can vary).

An assessment of the type/amount, proximity and quality of green infrastructure for the BCP area in relation to meeting the existing and future needs of local communities is set out in **Appendices 5 and 6**.

Based on these assessments, proposed local standards for the planning, design and maintenance of green infrastructure have been identified for potential inclusion in the new Local Plan (see **Appendix 7** for details).

In addition to supporting the green infrastructure principles, the proposed local standards reflect best practice as advocated by the emerging National Green Infrastructure Standards Framework, expected to be published by Natural England in Summer 2022.

5.8 Developing a green infrastructure delivery action plan

Delivering high quality green infrastructure has a vital role to play in supporting the vision of a healthy, biodiverse, resilient and world class Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

The delivery principles and key opportunities outlined in **Section 4.0** provide an important starting point towards achieving the strategy's goals for green infrastructure.

While these include areas where commitments may already be in place between partners, further specific actions will also need to be developed to take forward the strategy.

The council will work with partners to develop a detailed Action Plan for the phased delivery of green infrastructure to support future sustainable growth.

It is envisaged that the Action Plan would include consideration of both strategic green infrastructure projects identified in the high level Green Net Delivery Framework outlined in **Section 5.1**, 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 the Green Net where delivered in line with the principles highlighted by this Green Infrastructure strategy.

The Action Plan will be informed by the opportunities and priority areas for green infrastructure interventions identified in Appendix 6, taking into account the ideas for potential green infrastructure projects identified by BCP officers included as **Appendix 11**.

Prepared by

in collaboration with Natural Capital Solutions

& supported by
Urban Initiatives Studio, John Letherland, Fourth Street
& the University of Sheffield

Midlands Office Third Floor The Birkin Building 2 Broadway Nottingham NG1 1PS T +44 (0)115 8386737 E mail@cbastudios.com W www.cbastudios.com
South East Office Cannon Wharf, Unit CF.305, Pell Street, London, SE8 5EN
Directors D Watkins BSc MSc MRTPI FRGS • A Croft BA MA MCIfA

CBA is the trading name of Chris Blandford Associates Ltd Registered in England No 03741865. Registered Office: Third Floor The Birkin Building 2 Broadway Nottingham NG1 1PS