



Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan



2011 - 2027

Report produced by Cheddar Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

This version of the Neighbourhood Plan is the Draft Plan for submission to Sedgemoor District Council in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

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Context

1. Consultation February & March 2013.
2. About Cheddar.
3. Housing Needs and Preferred Sites.
4. 2nd Consultation November 2014.
5. Call for Sites Database.
6. Employment & Economy.
7. Habitat Regulations Assessment October 2016.
8. SDC 2nd consultation & Exit Poll.
9. SEA Screening Report.
10. Regulation 14 Report.
11. Equality Impact Statement.

Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan 2011 – 2027 (This Document)

CONTENTS

PAGE

	Foreword.	5
1.0	Strategy.	6
2.0	Introduction.	8
3.0	Overview of Consultations Undertaken.	12
4.0	Vision for Cheddar.	14
5.0	Cheddar in the Landscape and Natural Environment Context.	16
6.0	Cheddar in a Regional Context.	20
7.0	Growth of Cheddar.	23
8.0	Future Growth of Cheddar.	28
9.0	Built Environment Policies.	32
10.0	Employment and Economy.	50
11.0	Sport, Leisure and Wellbeing.	59
12.0	Roads, Transport and Access.	62
13.0	Landscape, Environment and History.	67
14.0	Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Checklist.	71
15.0	Policy Notes.	75

Foreword

This Neighbourhood Plan has been a long time in the making, almost 4 years since the original area designation letter was sent to Sedgemoor District Council (SDC). Having agreed to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, Cheddar Parish Council delegated the task to a Steering Group. The Steering Group consists of Councillors and members of the My Cheddar Group, all of whom have given freely of their time to bring the project to fruition. The Steering Group has consulted with the Parish Council at every major step of the way, and as a consequence this Plan is that of the Cheddar Parish Council.

A full list of the people and organisations that were consulted and therefore had input into the Plan can be found in the document entitled 'Consultation Statement'. The following persons and organisations are specifically acknowledged here for the efforts they have contributed:

Cheddar Parish Councillors:	Andrew Bosley, Christina Brown, Barry Carter, Peter Colton, David Comber, Lyn Goodfellow and Paul Fineran
Cheddar Parish Clerks:	Wendy Barritt and Tanya Cant
My Cheddar Group:	Mel Clinton, Keith Herring and Bill Storer
Sedgemoor District Council:	Duncan Harvey, Stuart Houlet, Stuart Martin and Nick Tait
URS Consultants:	Jesse Honey
AGT planning:	Amanda Goddard
Mendip Hills AONB:	Paul Bryan
Planning Aid England:	Joanna Widdecombe

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1.0 Strategy

1.1 It is the aim of this Neighbourhood Plan to arrive at a series of policies which will achieve and maintain our agreed Vision for the village which is:

“Cheddar will retain its identity as a village, within an attractive setting of surrounding rural landscape and hamlets. Its distinctive local character will be maintained and enhanced. Cheddar will be a sustainable place, providing an outstanding quality of life for current and future generations and will continue to be a visitor destination of regional, national, and wider significance.”

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Policies will be used to inform the future growth and development within the Parish of Cheddar until 2027. The policies are in alignment with the SDC Core Strategy and with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Neighbourhood Plan aims to address the planning issues identified through public consultation.

1.3 The Objectives of our Neighbourhood Plan are:

Deliver a housing strategy that meets the needs of Cheddar.

Any future development is to enhance the natural and built landscape, within the capacity of available infrastructure.

To strengthen and support economic growth and change that encourages a sustainable village.

Seek to improve the transport infrastructure roads, pavements and parking and investigate the possibility of a village bypass, and to address the issues associated with through traffic.

Prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of growth and change.

Protect green space, countryside and the natural environment.

Enhance the sports and recreational facilities to encourage sport and healthy living.

Seek improvements in digital connectivity and related communication infrastructure.

1.4 Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) implemented the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in April 2015. The rates shown below will be charged based on the gross internal floor area of all new dwellings and all other development exceeding 100sq m in size

Residential	£40 / square metre (Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge)
Residential	£80 / square metre (other areas)
Supermarkets and retail	£100 / square metre
Hotel	£10 / square metre
All other development	£0

1.5 SDC will be required to pass a ‘meaningful’ proportion of CIL receipts to parish councils for use on infrastructure identified as important by the local community. The Government indicated early in 2013 that this proportion would be set at 25% of the receipts within a community having an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, and 15% elsewhere, but capped at £100 per household.

1.6 The proceeds of CIL will be used to implement these Neighbourhood Planning policies and achieve the Parish Council’s objectives.

1.7 Provision for Section 106 Agreements (S106) will remain, but the ability to pool contributions from developers via S106 to deliver larger items of infrastructure will be substantially curtailed. Sedgemoor’s intention is that CIL will be used to deliver larger strategic items with S106 retained only for direct mitigation of site-specific impacts. Under Regulation 123, SDC has prepared an Infrastructure Delivery Strategy (June 2010). The listed projects connected to Cheddar are regional projects, specifically the provision of a second reservoir and new large diameter water main between Barrow Treatment Works and Cheddar Treatment Works. CIL cannot be used as well as S106 to deliver infrastructure contained on the Infrastructure List.

1.8 Cheddar Parish Council will seek to influence S106 Agreements on a site specific basis.

1.9 Some of the issues raised through consultation cannot be directly addressed through planning polices, and as a consequence this document mentions Parish Council objectives which aim to address those issues in the normal course of Parish Council business, especially in response to planning application responses.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan has been written in response to the Government's new approach to planning as laid out in the Localism Act 2012, which allows local people to have more say on development within their area. The Neighbourhood Plan concurs with the adopted Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) Local Development Plan (LDP), Core Strategy 2006 to 2027 and conforms with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). SDC is in the process of reviewing and updating its Local Development Plan. Sedgemoor's Scope and Approach Consultation document was released in October 2015 and there was an additional consultation ending August 8th 2016 to inform the basis of shaping the LDP until 2032; the results are not yet known.

2.2 Cheddar Parish Council chose to designate the whole parish as the Neighbourhood Plan area rather than just the village of Cheddar. This was done to recognise the value of the rural landscape that surrounds the village from a local perspective and also because part of the parish is in the nationally recognised Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) thus no planning document should ignore its significance as it contains Cheddar Gorge and Caves.

2.3 A Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted, is used in conjunction with District and County Council Plans to determine planning applications that are submitted for the area which the Neighbourhood Plan covers.

The process adopted to produce a Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:

Consult the neighbourhood to determine the planning issues the community wishes the plan to address.

Write the draft plan.

Consult residents on draft policies.

Consult statutory consultees.

Confirm that the plan is aligned with the District Council's Core Strategy and with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Confirm that the plan is aligned with Habitat Regulations and EU laws on Human Rights.

Confirm that the plan is sustainable.

Having undertaken the above tasks the Neighbourhood Plan is then:

Tested by an Independent Planning Inspector.

Voted on by residents.

Adopted, if the majority vote is in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.

As there have been many aspects to producing this Neighbourhood Plan there is a series of underlying evidence based documents supporting this document. These can be found online at:

www.cheddarplan.co.uk Paper copies can be made available from the Parish Office for viewing.

The supporting documents are:

Document 1 Report of Community Consultation Events February and March 2013

Document 2 About Cheddar – background information and data

Document 3 Housing Need and Preferred Sites Report, (separately Document 5, Appendix 3 contains all the Call for Sites database)

Document 4 Second Consultation Event, November 2014

Document 5 Call for Sites Database

Document 6 Employment and Economy Report

Document 7 Habitat Regulations Assessment October 2016.

Document 8 SDC 2nd consultation & Exit Poll.

Document 9 SEA Screening Report.

Document 10 Regulation 14 Report.

Document 11 Equality Impact Statement.

2.4 This document sets out the vision and policies for Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan for the long term development of Cheddar. The SDC Core Strategy sets out the 20 year vision for the district and this Neighbourhood Plan follows that established pattern for the Parish of Cheddar. However this Neighbourhood Plan has been written with knowledge of the draft proposals consulted on in the SDC Scope and Approach Consultations ending in August 2016 which could become the LDP up until 2032.

2.5 The Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed every five years following adoption, reflecting the review frequency adopted by SDC for the Core Strategy.

2.6 The NPPF was published in 2012 to replace previous national planning policy statements. The key element of this is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which requires planning authorities to perform economic, social and environmental roles.

2.7 Section 28 of NPPF requires that planning policies 'support sustainable growth and expansion of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings'. This Neighbourhood Plan conforms with the NPPF and is aligned with the SDC Core Strategy.

2.8 The key SDC Core Strategy Objectives (SO) and the following specific (précised) policies and recommendations underpin our Neighbourhood Plan:

- SO1 To address the challenges of climate change and vulnerability to flood risk
- SO2 To deliver development that is high quality, sustainable, distinctive, inclusive, safe and respectful of its context
- SO3 To provide everyone with the opportunity to live in a decent home
- SO4 To create more sustainable communities
- SO5 To promote safe and sustainable transport options and manage congestion
- SO6 To ensure economic wellbeing
- SO8 To enjoy and conserve natural assets and heritage, including wildlife habitats, landscape character and the historic environment
- SO9 To improve health and well being

Habitats Regulations Recommendation 1 That the increased disturbance to birds & habitats from population growth & increased recreation be addressed by Policy D20

D20 Green infrastructure to be safeguarded, maintained, improved enhanced and added to saved Policy CNE4 saved into D20 but particularly referring to Green Wedges, Green Edges and Strategic Gaps.

RLT1 Protection of Recreational Open Space

P4 Development in Key Rural Settlements outside the development boundary

P6 Development in the countryside

2.9 Environmental impacts are a key aspect of the planning process and this Neighbourhood Plan is determined to take due regard to such impacts.

2.10 A sustainability checklist (the SDC 2015 model) has been used to test the policies which will be aligned with EU regulations.

3.0 Overview of Consultations undertaken

3.1 The Steering Group undertook a series of consultations (Full details are in the Consultation Statement) and meetings in order to arrive at the Vision and Policies in this Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan. The first were in 2013 and the full report can be found in Document 1.

3.2 Questions were posed on all aspects of village life that could form part of the Plan. Questions were asked about housing, roads, transport, leisure, tourism, the landscape and environment, business and the future. There was space to comment on any issues, not just those raised in the questionnaires.

3.3 The consultation was open to the public and the same questionnaire was used with all the students in the Kings of Wessex Academy (Upper School pupils aged 13 to 18). Pupils in Fairlands Middle School Year 5 were asked for their input on the same range of questions as the questionnaire covered, but this was done face to face.

3.4 The key and most significant issues derived from these consultations were used to begin to formulate ideas to explore as potential Plan policies.

3.5 In order to determine a housing target for Cheddar and following consultation with SDC, an external consultancy URS Consultants was commissioned by the Steering Group, via Planning Aid England, to produce an advice note that gave sound reasoning for arriving at a housing target for Cheddar of 200 to 300 homes. (Document 3)

3.6 A Housing Needs Assessment based on the SDC model was conducted throughout the BS27 postcode area (November 2013) in order to arrive at a housing target for how many local residents needed access to affordable housing in Cheddar. The outcome (November 2013) was that 10 Cheddar households stated they were in need of affordable housing.

3.7 The Steering Group undertook a Call for Sites exercise to discover which sites landowners would put forward for potential development. This, along with a desk top study of SDC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs), determined there were 39 potential development sites in and around Cheddar.

3.8 The sites were each assessed using the SDC pro forma from the authorities own Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). (Document 5 Call for Sites Database).

3.9 A second public consultation event was held in November 2014 to 'test out' the draft vision and to consult on the housing target and potential of outside development boundary sites. The housing target was consulted on by offering a range of housing numbers, with explanations of how the numbers had been derived. The range consulted upon was from 1 to 664 new homes. (Document 4)

3.10 The potential development sites were grouped into 5 zones. There were explanatory notes on why some sites had not been put forward for consultation as they had already been excluded on grounds of being within the AONB, in Flood Zone 3, or too small for consideration in this particular exercise. Inside the village development boundary sites were not consulted upon, some already had, or had in the past, planning permission.

3.11 The outcome was: that between 200 to 300 new homes was an acceptable range.

3.12 Since the preferred sites consultation, one of the rejected consultation options has been granted permission by SDC. Some 'new sites' have since appeared in the SDC consultations for the new LDP. The Steering Group had previously rejected these new sites, and had not consulted on them. The policies include sites for both housing and commercial expansion.

3.13 The Housing Need and Preferred Site report contains the results of desk top research regarding Habitats Regulations for each of the sites put forward. (Document 3)

3.14 Further consultation has fed into the Plan, from the business community within Cheddar. The Steering Group undertook a business survey as did the Chamber of Commerce which provided the Steering Group with a report specifically written to contribute to the Plan. This can be found in Document 6.

3.15 The business survey identified some issues that the general public consultations had not, notably about premises and staffing. These points have been carried through influencing the policies in this document.

3.16 Further consultations have been conducted with various groups apart from statutory consultees, discussions to inform this Plan have been conducted with representatives from the My Cheddar Group, Longleat Estates, Chamber of Commerce, National Trust, and Mendip Hills AONB. The Consultation Statement gives more detail on who was consulted.

4.0 Vision for Cheddar

4.1 The Vision for Cheddar and its underlying principles and objectives have been arrived at by undertaking wide consultation and our policies have been derived from this.

Our Vision is that:

‘Cheddar will retain its identity as a village, within an attractive setting of surrounding rural landscape and hamlets. Its distinctive local character will be maintained and enhanced. Cheddar will be a sustainable place, providing an outstanding quality of life for current and future generations and will continue to be a visitor destination of regional, national, and wider significance.’

4.2 The Principles behind this Vision are:

- That Cheddar continues to be compact and retains its village feel.
- The openness and beauty of the countryside around the village will be preserved whilst retaining Cheddar’s role in enabling a working rural economy.
- That the village functions as a varied retail, employment and service centre for its residents and nearest neighbours.
- That the village recognises the economic and employment value of Cheddar Gorge and Caves and the businesses associated with its unique location.
- That it provides safe routes for people by improving footpaths and cycle ways and controlling the impact of traffic.
- That it encourages an environment conducive to health and wellbeing by extending sports facilities and outdoor leisure pursuits.
- That it provides homes and services for residents at all stages of their lives, including affordable housing and homes designed to be adaptable.
- That it remains attractive to residents and visitors and provides an environment which enables interaction and community spirit.

4.3 In more detail achieving Our Vision means:

- Acknowledging that whilst there will be future development in the village, it should be in keeping with the size and scale of the village. Development should not merge Cheddar with its neighbours (ribbon development). Walkability is important within the village. People should be able to access shops and services on foot.
- That the countryside be preserved for its own sake: any development should respect and complement this natural beauty. The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Cheddar Moors should be protected for their beauty and farmed landscape appearance.
- Cheddar must continue to offer excellent educational, health, retail and service choices to residents, neighbours and visitors. It should encourage festivities such as Christmas Festive Night, farmers' markets and other events.
- That the Lower Gorge should be an attractive place for visitors, and the Upper Gorge retain its natural beauty.
- That the attractiveness of both the natural and built environment should be at the heart of all planning decisions.
- That the Parish as a whole continues to develop sustainably and within its natural constraints.
- That we have an attractive and safe village centre.

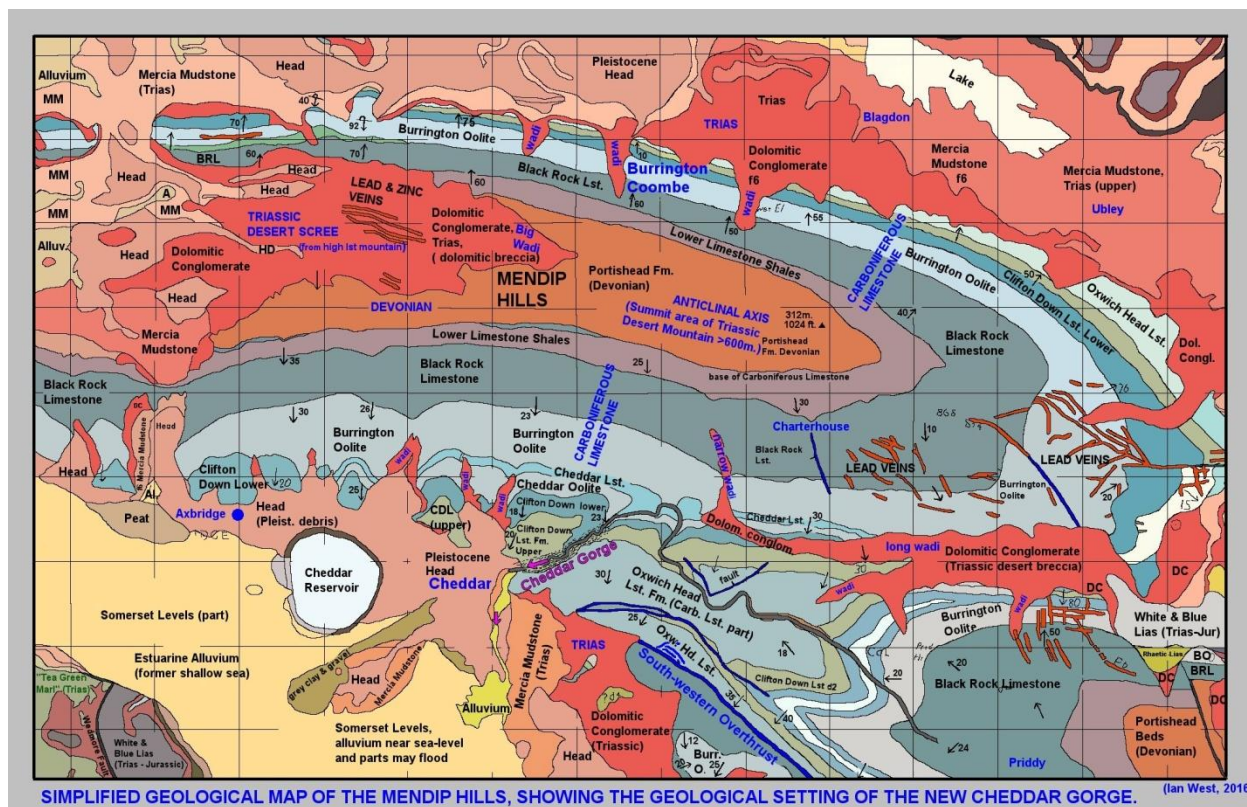
5.0 Cheddar in the Landscape and Natural Environment Context

(Full detail in Document 2, About Cheddar)

5.1 Cheddar Parish encompasses the limestone scarp slope and plateau of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The underlying rock here is carboniferous limestone which is most obviously seen in Cheddar Gorge. To the east of the area on the borders with Draycott, dolomitic conglomerate can be found which is predominately red in colour and known locally as Draycott stone. See Map 1.

5.2 The southern part of the parish consists of clay and alluvial deposits, much is in Flood Zone 3 on the Somerset Moors.

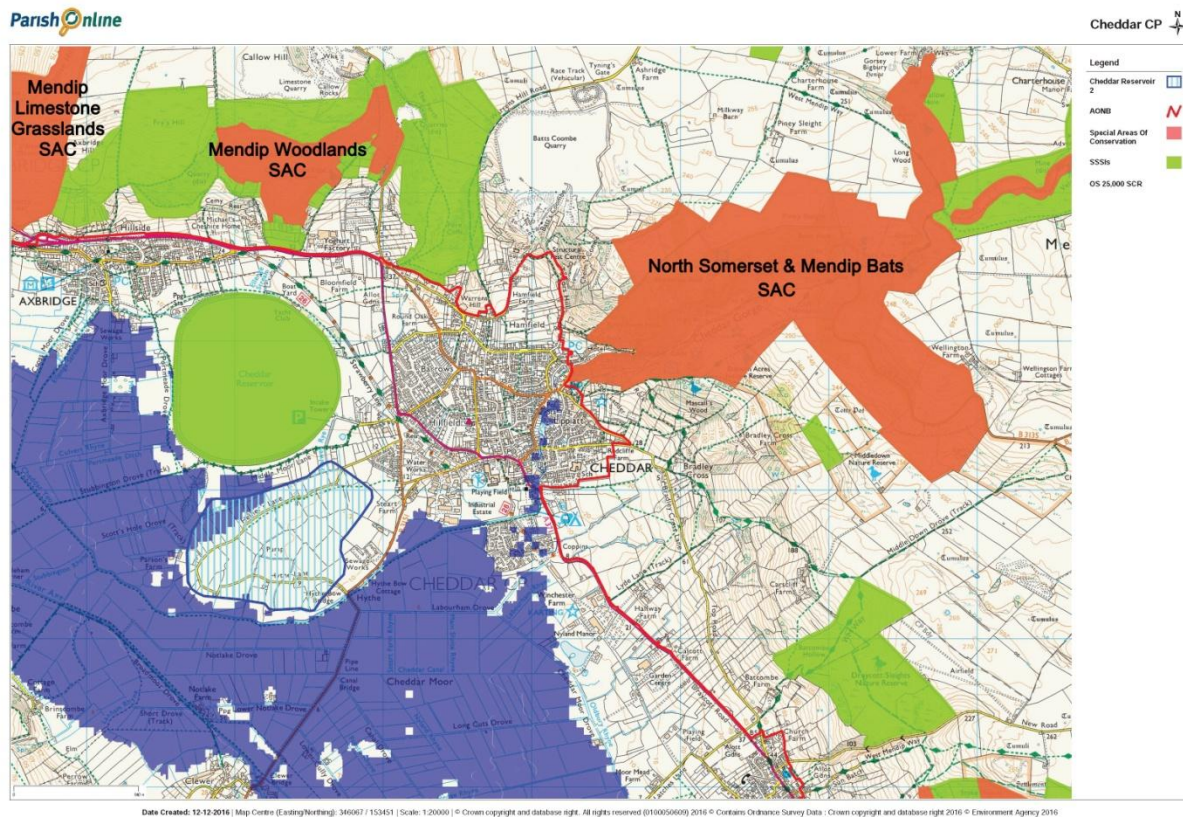
Geology of Cheddar Gorge. Source Southampton University Study



Map 1

5.3 The Mendips are very prominent as they rise directly off the Moors which are at sea level. Sympathetic development should be mindful of siting so as to take into account views from the AONB itself but also from further away looking towards Cheddar from Glastonbury Tor, the Bristol Channel and the Polden Hills.

5.4 Cheddar Moors are sparsely populated as the area is liable to winter flooding, and as a consequence the land is used almost exclusively for grazing. Farmhouses are clustered around the lower slopes of Nyland Hill, with very few buildings on the Moors themselves, and they are mostly in the form of barns and stores.



Map 2

5.5 Much of the unique karst scenery, caves and associated vegetation and wildlife of the southern Mendip Hills is protected as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There are three SAC areas, namely: Mendip Limestone Grasslands, North Somerset & Mendip Bats and Mendip Woodlands. These SACs are adjacent to six of the most important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). (Map 2 & 3) Between them these sites support:

Greater Horseshoe Bats, Lesser Horseshoe Bats, dormice, and two unique species of flora being the Cheddar Whitebeam, and the Cheddar Pink.

5.6 There are nine species of bats in the area and the sites include both maternity and hibernation sites. The limestone grasslands support a large variety of species grasses and orchids, whilst the caves are home to the bats.

5.7 The whole issue of development in and around Cheddar has to be sensitive to the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designation of most of the northern part of the parish. There are several SSSI's in the SAC areas of the hills and one, Cheddar Reservoir on the alluvial plain. There are eleven areas in and around the village designated as Local Wildlife Sites. These include areas of unimproved grassland, green lanes with nationally scarce flora, wet areas rich in aquatic flora and rare invertebrate species.



Map 3

5.8 Ove Arup & Partners Ltd in their SDC report 'Green Infrastructure Strategy 2011' proposed that the lower slopes of the Mendips should be considered by planners as a 'Themed Landscape', suggested name, 'The Strawberry Belt', and that the area should be given special consideration and protection in future plans.

5.9 The same report suggested that the Cheddar/Axbridge belt of the Mendips should be considered as part of the Green Lane initiative, as a key mechanism to establishing a strong network of green corridors in Sedgemoor linking together existing and proposed green infrastructure assets.

5.10 This Green Lane proposal also included a north south axis following the B3151 south to Wedmore.

5.11 Policies on protecting the countryside and the loss of agricultural land and the potential for local food production in the SDC Core Strategy are derived from these green principles and are essential for determining potential development sites and achieving our Vision for Cheddar.

5.12 Development in Cheddar will be constrained with the Mendip Hills AONB creating the northern boundary and Cheddar Moors creating a Flood Zone 3 southern boundary. The area contains three sensitive SAC areas and 11 SSSIs. A key consideration of this plan is that Cheddar should not develop as ribbon development on an east/west axis, using the lower slopes of the Mendips to overcome these constraints.

6.0 Cheddar in a Regional Context

6.1 Cheddar is a village located in the north eastern corner of the Sedgemoor District in Somerset. It is some 20 miles south of Bristol, 20 miles north of Bridgwater, and administrative centre for Sedgemoor District located 30 miles north of Taunton the county town of Somerset (Map 4).

6.2 The village lies under the scarp slope of the Mendip Hills. The A371 runs along the slope from the coast at Weston-Super-Mare east to Wells and then all points further inland to Wiltshire etc. The key road 'north-south' is the A38 which lies approximately 3 miles to the west. This connects Cheddar to Bristol and Bristol Airport to the north, and south to the other main towns mentioned above. The nearest M5 motorway junctions to Cheddar are over 10 miles north (Weston-super-Mare) and south (Burnham-on-Sea). The M5 gives access to Exeter and beyond southwards and to the Midlands and London (via the M4) northwards.

6.3 The nearest train stations are all about 10 miles away at Weston-Super-Mare, Worle, Yatton and Highbridge. Two bus services connect to Weston-Super-Mare and Wells. There is no direct public transport link to Bristol, Bridgwater, Taunton, Burnham-on-Sea or Highbridge.

6.4 Residents of Cheddar are quite likely to work, shop, and enjoy leisure time outside of Sedgemoor. Bristol offers a wide range of employment opportunities plus higher wages than the local average. People can commute from Cheddar to Wells, Weston-Super-Mare and Isleport Business Park at Highbridge, without having to access the motorways.

6.5 Bristol is also the major shopping centre for the whole of this part of the West Country and certainly for Cheddar, closely followed by Bath. They both offer the city shopping experience and Bristol has a large out of town shopping centre, Cribbs Causeway, close to the M5/M4 junction.

6.6 Weston-Super-Mare (North Somerset) is the next biggest retail destination, with a wide range of shops in the town, including a Marks & Spencer, and a wide range of out of town stores such as Sports Direct, The Range, Dunelm etc. Whilst Bridgwater has some of these stores, Weston-Super-Mare has more. Few people travel to Taunton for shopping. Clark's Village in Street is a well-known Outlet

shopping centre for clothing etc and attracts many Cheddar people, as well as visitors from a very wide geographical area.

6.7 Cheddar residents are as likely to attend Weston General Hospital or the ones at Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet as they are to go to Bridgwater, assuming they are not attending a specialist hospital in Bristol, Bath or Taunton.

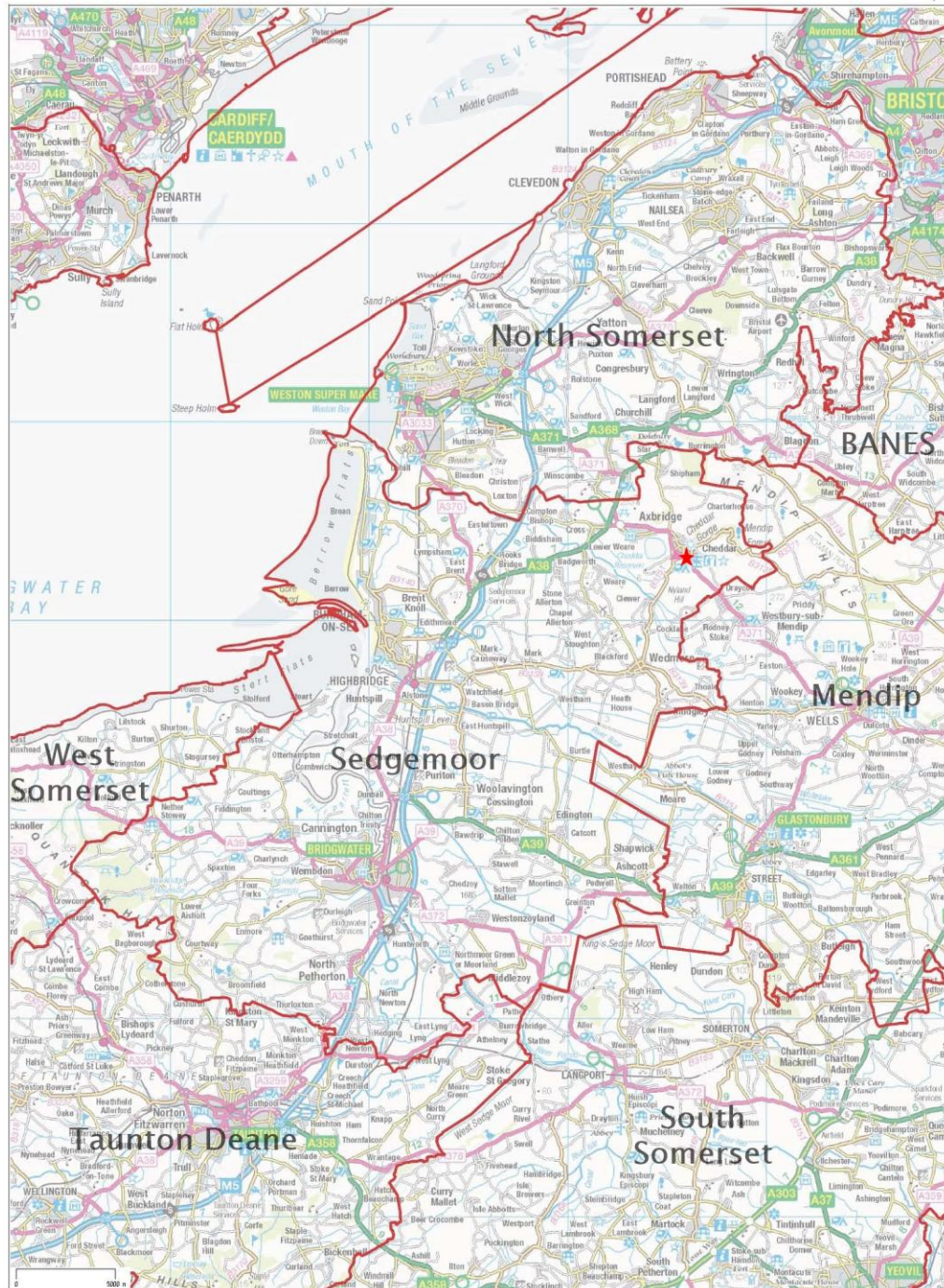
6.8 On the whole Cheddar is not strongly connected to Bridgwater or Taunton, as residents travel to Weston-Super-Mare, Wells, Glastonbury and Street, if not Bristol or Bath, for their bigger shopping items and entertainment, within about 10 miles and easy to reach by car - though not by public transport.

6.9 Cheddar itself has a wider selection of shops than its neighbouring villages, although Axbridge and Wedmore provide for their residents' day to day needs. Cheddar has two shopping areas, the village itself and the Gorge. The village offers a medium sized Sainsbury supermarket, and a Tesco Express plus a branch of a bakery chain. Most other shops, (except the chemist) are small independent shops catering mostly for non day-to-day needs.

6.10 Shops in the Gorge are nearly all gift shops and whilst some local people may use them occasionally, they do not provide for day-to-day needs and some are seasonal and not open all year.

6.11 Public houses and food outlets serve residents and tourists alike, and most remain open all year, but are not necessarily open every day. The seasonal nature of tourism has an impact on the economy and availability of local employment. Cheddar is still a rural village for much of the year, and with day trippers staying mostly within the Gorge, much of the village continues to function without their visible input other than the amount of increased traffic.

Cheddar in a regional context.



Date Created: 19-8-2016 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 335592 / 148560 | Scale: 1:250000 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (0100050609) 2016 © Contains Ordnance Survey Data : Crown copyright and database right 2016

Map 4

7.0 Growth of Cheddar

7.1 The history of Cheddar's occupation covers a significant period, with evidence of pre-historic cave dwellings, Roman occupation, numerous Saxon developments, medieval development and others up to the present day. Evidence of its manner of development is all around us.

7.2 The centre of the village is a designated conservation area based principally around the fact that there is a Roman villa in the old vicarage grounds by the Church of St Andrew and remains of a Saxon Palace in the grounds of the Kings of Wessex Academy.

7.3 The village centre is formed around the Market Cross, and runs from Hanham Manor, at one end, through to the Church of St Andrews and in the other direction towards the Gorge and Tweentown. There are 34 listed buildings within Cheddar, which radiate out from the centre and show the origins of the village.

7.4 Cheddar has always been an agricultural village. The Moors have been the centre of the dairy business since they were drained in medieval times. This in turn gave rise to the famous Cheddar Cheese which has become a worldwide style of hard cheese. Much of the parish is still rural with farm houses built on ground least likely to flood in winter, a normal historical occurrence aside from any consequence of climate change.

7.5 Many farmers have given up their dairy herds and only 1.3% of the population are now involved in agriculture, fishing and forestry. Many farmers have converted barns and moved into the property rental or holiday let business, ceasing farming altogether and letting their spare land to the few remaining stockmen.

7.6 Early industry was based around water mills sited along the River Yeo as it gushes from the Cheddar Caves. These were originally corn mills but eventually became the sites for other industries such as shirt making and one, Cox's Mill, was adapted into a hotel. The grist mill remains are still there.

7.7. The coming of the railway had a huge impact on the economic development of Cheddar. Not only did the tourist industry begin in earnest but the growing of strawberries became the horticultural business for every farmer and family with land on the warm fertile south facing slopes of the Mendips. Strawberries were sent by train to all major cities every day in the season. The railway has since closed.

7.8 Some of the long strip gardens associated with early cottages were used for strawberry growing, and a few houses still have stone built sheds at the front which were used for strawberry packing.

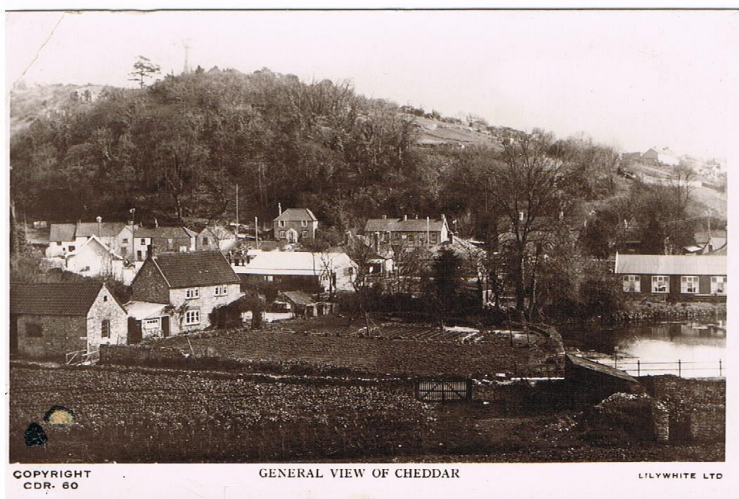
7.9 There is a much smaller but none the less significant strawberry business still in the parish, with a new grower coming into the business on a commercial scale in the last few years. Roadside sale of strawberries and other farm produce is a feature of the economic diversity of the village.



Early photograph of the Lower Gorge. Nearest building still stands and is a teashop now.



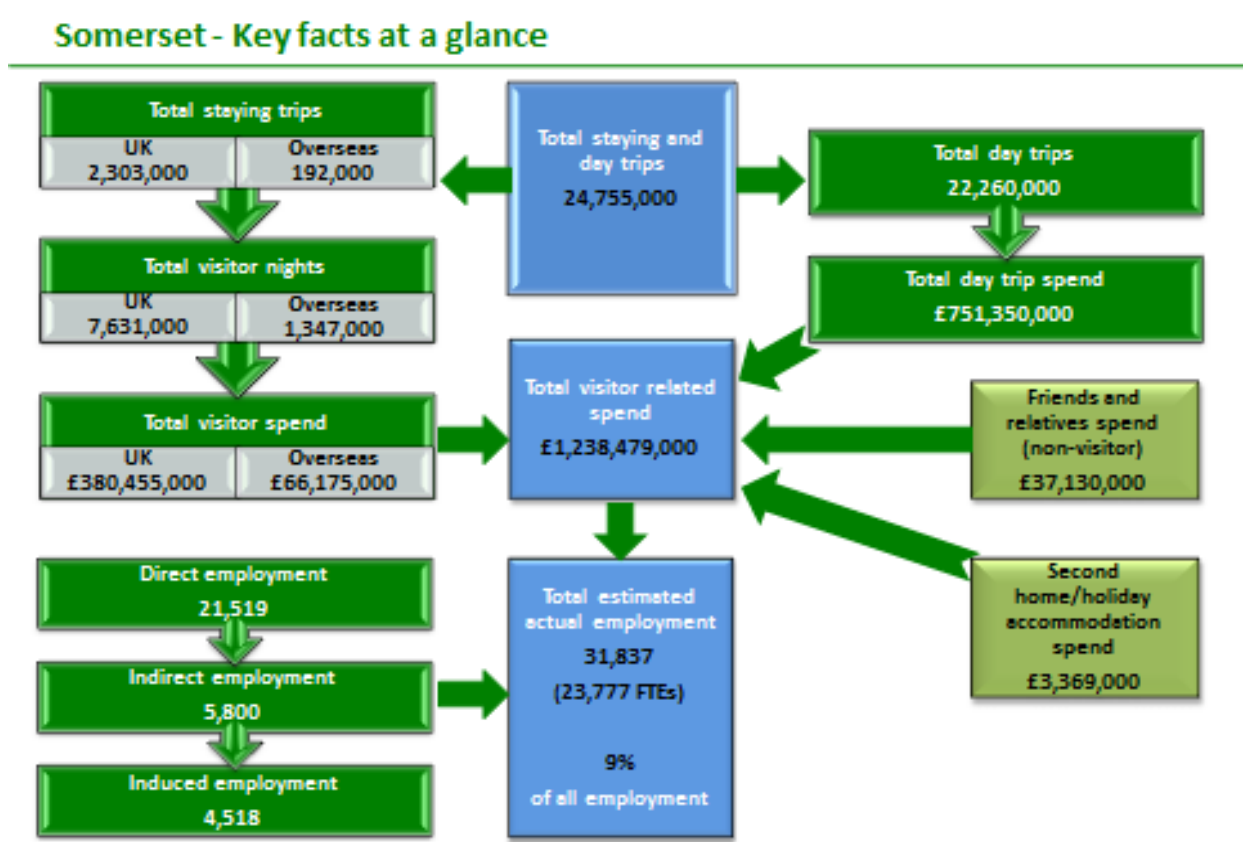
Early photograph of Bath Street, now A371 and main shopping road in the village. With the Market Cross in the far centre of the road.



Lower Gorge, view across Bays Pond.

7.10 Some 400,000 visitors come to Cheddar each year. They come principally to visit the Gorge and caves but also the surrounding area. These visitors are key to the hospitality and holiday businesses in and around the village. In recent years there has been a huge change in the variety of accommodation offered to tourists. Whilst facilities for camping and caravanning still exist, established businesses and new ones, now concentrate on offering lodge style, self-contained units on sites with more facilities than were previously available.

Table 1



(Source Visit Somerset 2014)

7.11 There are no figures available for the exact economic value of tourism for Cheddar but the above Table 1 shows the value to Somerset as a whole and as a key tourist destination Cheddar is well placed to take a significant part of the total tourist spend and impact on the local economy. Accommodation and food services account for the employment of 6.7% of the population of Cheddar compared to 5.6% nationally (census 2011), this is indicative of the tourism in Cheddar but also shows the village is not dependent on tourism alone to provide local employment.

7.12 There are two main industrial areas in Cheddar. Winchester Farm, which has evolved haphazardly into a ‘business park’ over the years and Cheddar Business Park with newer purpose built units, mostly of a warehouse type design.

7.13 The 2011 census shows that of the 2802 actively employed people in the village, 437 went to work by walking or by bicycle, indicating that there is local employment within easy walking distance whilst 262 people worked from home. (Document 6)

7.14 Whilst 16.7% of people work in wholesale, retail and motor repair, education, human health and manufacturing are the next highest percentage of employment.

7.15 With Cheddar serving local, neighbouring and tourist retail needs, it is likely that the retail element of the above category is one of the two largest, the other being education with three schools in the village, including an academy with over 1300 pupils in attendance.

7.16 The village centre has undergone a 'make over' in the last two years following the recession with the Bath Arms Hotel, right in the centre of the village re-opening after a two year closure. Some new businesses have moved into previously empty shops and many owners have redecorated the exterior of their premises.

7.17 The Mendip Hills have two large active limestone quarries (Callow Rock and Shipham) which no longer produce cut limestone for building. However these will be crucial to the future building of the new Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, as a key supplier of raw materials. The impact on road traffic of the biggest infrastructure project in Europe will be very significant. As a consequence it is hoped that the Hinkley Point Community Impact Mitigation Fund, Transport element, will provide funds to improve the A371/Axbridge/Ship Hill junction, known locally as 'the Magic Roundabout'. This junction is used by all quarry lorries whatever their route. Batts Combe Quarry has a current planning application to extend its working life by 38 years, with 1200 extra lorry movements per day predicted.

7.18 Unemployment in the village is lower than the national average and the work force is particularly skilful. However our business survey uncovered an issue that some businesses are having difficulty attracting some specific skill sets, and are recruiting from as far away as Bristol.

7.19 Further background information about Cheddar's landscape, history, development, economy etc can be found in Document 2 of the supporting documents which form the evidence base for this Neighbourhood Plan.

8.0 Future Growth of Cheddar

(Full information on housing numbers and preferred sites can be found in Document 3)

8.1 Through consultation the following criteria were identified as being the underlying ones concerning the growth of Cheddar that a Neighbourhood Plan could and should address:

- That Cheddar remains an attractive place to live and to visit.
- That development protects the environment.
- That new development respects the countryside, the AONB and avoids flood plains.
- New housing and other development should be designed to reduce energy consumption and waste.
- We should ensure new houses are well integrated in the village.
- New housing needs to be matched by investment in infrastructure and facilities.
- We should encourage sympathetic quality design in the built environment.

8.2 The above objectives are closely aligned with the Core Strategy objectives for living sustainably and addressing the challenges of climate change and vulnerability to flood risk. Within the Parish of Cheddar specific flood risks are associated with flooding on the Cheddar Moors and the River Yeo breaching its banks. Added to this, with an expected increase in rainfall, as a consequence of climate change there could be further flooding with water running off the hillside. Policies on the built environment are designed to ensure that future development within the village does not increase flooding risk and is aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change.

8.3 We would encourage developers where possible to include measures to assist in the creation of low carbon to zero carbon homes, with any carbon offset mitigation provided as an 'on-site' offering, rather than placed 'off-site' in a different location.

8.4 There are specific sites put forward within this document as being preferred sites for possible future development, each of them is outside of the AONB and the flood plain, thereby meeting key objectives to protect the environment.

8.5 The adopted SDC Core Strategy does not give a housing growth target for Cheddar. It states that the 17 Key Rural Settlements (KRS), which include Cheddar, should take 1,260 houses in the period 2011 to 2027 based on land availability and projected housing need. The Core Strategy does not allocate sites for the growth of Cheddar.

8.6 A key aspect of any future development is that the village becomes a more sustainable settlement. As a consequence the number of new houses proposed for the village has to be in proportion to the infrastructure, services and facilities available. This includes education and health facilities. To achieve sustainability, development must be balanced with local employment opportunities and there has to be consideration given to the supply of new employment facilities. This Neighbourhood Plan identifies new economic opportunity sites to address this requirement and increase sustainability.

8.7 A housing target for Cheddar has been difficult to define. SDC's strategy is that market housing proposals need to have 30% affordable housing (on sites of 10+ units) to meet local need. Policy P4 concerned with exception sites have a 40% affordable housing proportion. The timescale that available sites within the development boundary will come forward is uncertain, therefore two sites have been allocated for future development; both of these sites would be Policy P4 exception sites.

8.8 To date (August 2016) 100 affordable homes have been built in Cheddar since 2011. These have been built on two estates at Helliers Lane and Sharpham Road. Both these estates were built using SDC's Policy D7 exception site which allows development outside but adjacent to the development boundary for 100% affordable homes. The Helliers Lane estate, (Hythe Wood), is not particularly well integrated into the village, consisting only of affordable housing and is regarded as a separate estate. It would be preferred that in future affordable housing is fully integrated within housing developments and is tenure blind. This would be achievable on the Neighbourhood Plan allocated sites at Sharpham Road / Helliers Lane and Round Oak Farm utilising Policy P4 exception site criteria.

8.9 The Steering Group undertook its own research to determine housing need, including commissioning URS Consultants and undertaking its own Housing Needs Assessment. The full results of both pieces of research can be found in the separate document 'Housing Needs and Preferred Sites Report' (Document 3).

8.10 The outcome of the Steering Group's Housing Needs Assessment undertaken in 2013 was that 10 eligible Cheddar households were looking for affordable housing in Cheddar. In July 2014 the SDC Affordable Housing Team reported to the Steering Group that there were 155 eligible applicants on the 'Choice Based Lettings' waiting list for affordable housing in Cheddar.

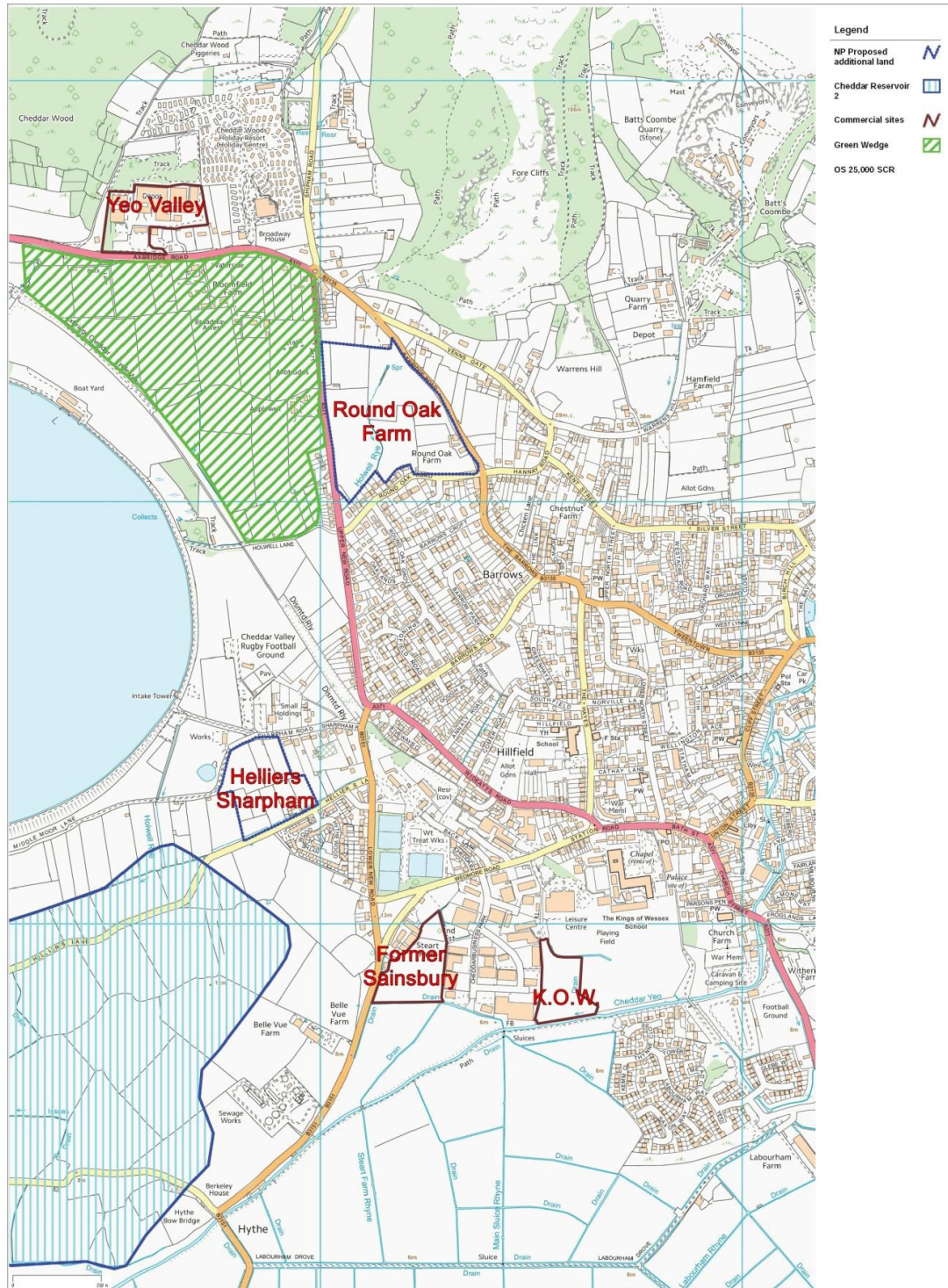
8.11 The report from URS indicated that those on the housing waiting list in the 'bronze' band of priority could be viewed as non priority and potentially some of them would never come forward and could be discounted from the 155 total on the list as per standard practice. This gave a net total of 58 households in need at the time of the report.

8.12 In January 2015 the Affordable Housing Team indicated that there was an outstanding need for 41 affordable homes plus another 10 required within 18 months. This figure ignored the 23 homes that were being constructed but were not then occupied at Sharpham Road. These homes were occupied in December 2015 potentially reducing the SDC affordable housing target to 28. However since affordable housing need is merely a 'snapshot in time' and no specific housing needs survey (other than the Neighbourhood Plan survey conducted in 2013) has ever been undertaken, these figures are possibly questionable.

8.13 The URS report used various methods to determine an overall housing target for Cheddar. The lowest figure based on a proportion of the 1,260 overall target for the 17 KRSs was for 59 homes. Simply arrived at by dividing 1260 by 17. The maximum was 644 (source SDC). The 644 figure was arrived at using the hypothesis that all of the un-built proportion of the total KRS target was built in Cheddar rather than across all the KRSs. Taking a more robust view, and considering future population growth projections and NPPF Guidance, the report concluded that 208 additional households should be planned for Cheddar up to 2027.

8.14 In November 2014 the Steering Group consulted Cheddar residents on the housing number they would be prepared to accept up to 2027. The range of options offered was from 1 to over 644 and the majority opted for 200 – 300 houses to be built.

8.15 The housing and site policies take into account the URS report, the public consultation and the SDC policy that 40% of new housing should be affordable in any development over 10+ houses on Policy P4 exception sites.



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Map 5

9.0 Built Environment Policies

9.1 This plan is aligned with the SDC Core Strategy and NPPF guidance and as a result the requirement to create sustainable communities was foremost in the policy making decisions. Part of that has to be to consider the effects of climate change and plan to mitigate wherever possible. These principles can be to our local benefit in so far as reducing flood risk from wetter winters, and improving the visual aspect of the village by encouraging more tree planting to increase areas of shade during longer, hotter summers.

9.2 It is the aim of this Plan to minimise new homes being built in Flood Zone 3, nevertheless there could be local floods created by excessive rainfall coming off the hills or the River Yeo rising and flooding a wide low lying area not previously regarded as vulnerable. With this in mind the first built environment policy aims to have builders consider designs which reduce the damage inflicted by water ingress.

9.3 Although plans for a second reservoir are 'on hold' there is extant permission. The demands of an increasing population and more new development in the region will almost inevitably lead to the building by Bristol Water of Cheddar Reservoir 2.

9.4 New build should consider climate change and from the early design stage measures should be included to mitigate its impact.

9.5 Policy BE1 aims to encourage developers to produce buildings which are energy efficient. Using new technologies to create buildings which are desirable to be in, yet reduce waste and the use of non-renewable resources.

Built Environment Policy 1 (BE1)

‘Developers of new buildings should identify in Design and Access Statements appropriate measures that will be taken to help mitigate the effects of Climate Change and increase sustainability. These may include, but are not limited to:

- The design of buildings to resist flooding, when located in Flood Zone 3.
- The orientation of buildings to maximise solar benefits, and the fitting of solar water heating panels, with consideration given to photovoltaic panels, ground or air source heat pumps and other technologies as they evolve .
- The use of form, materials, layout and landscaping to minimise non-renewable energy requirements, help mitigate the effects of longer, drier summers and wetter winters, and where appropriate achieve sustainable urban drainage.
- The use of grey water systems to help conserve water.

Where no such measures are proposed, an explanation should be provided in the Design and Access Statement of why this has not been possible.’

9.6 Consultation has identified that the public desire our Neighbourhood Plan should have built environment policies that meet the following housing requirements:

- Delivers a housing strategy that meets the needs of Cheddar.
- Is built within the capacity of the available infrastructure.
- That the Parish as a whole continues to develop only as far as it is sustainable.
- That new homes are well integrated into the village.
- That new housing is built to a good design, using materials and styles that reflect the vernacular and give Cheddar its character, at an appropriate housing density to the surrounding area.
- New housing needs to be flexible to meet changing needs e.g. enabling people to work from home and suit residents at all stages of their lives.

9.7 Cheddar has grown fairly steadily over the years; however residents are concerned that the village will grow ‘too large’. The response to the business survey, (Document 6), also concluded that Cheddar should not grow very much, despite the fact that many respondents had businesses reliant on local trade. The main residents’ concern is that a large amount of new housing would destroy Cheddar’s identity as a village. As tourism is a key economic driver, businesses too are concerned that the village and Gorge remain attractive enough to bring visitors here.

9.8 In consultation with residents and with URS Consultants a new homes target was derived. The target is that the village should increase by 200 - 300 new homes in the period up to 2027 (the current Core Strategy timescale).

9.9 How the housing target was arrived at is dealt with in more detail in Document 3.

9.10 Consultees were concerned that the Plan delivered a housing strategy to meet the needs of Cheddar and that included the need for more affordable housing. Since 2011 there have been 100 affordable new homes built in Cheddar on outside boundary 'exception sites'. The evidence is that there is an unmet need for Cheddar residents of between 10 and 28 new affordable homes. Sedgemoor has a policy that all new development should contribute affordable housing. Developments of 10+ dwellings should include 30% affordable housing. The unmet demand could be met with the building of 70 new homes.

9.11 Two housing development sites are currently in the planning system. South of Holwell Lane (Bloor Homes) is for 90 dwellings and this has been given approval. A second application for outline planning permission is for up to 110 homes at Round Oak Farm. The Call for Sites report (Document 5) and policies further on cover this in more detail.

9.12 In an effort to retain the character of the village and allow existing properties to be represented to their best within the environment we propose policies on housing density and new build quality.

9.13 One of the key principles of the Vision for Cheddar is that it provides homes and services for residents at all stages of their lives, including affordable housing and homes designed to be adaptable.

Built Environment Policy 2 (BE2)

Cheddar will allow for development of 200 - 300 new homes within the Parish between 2011 and 2027, to include affordable housing at a proportion of 40% (Policy P4 Exception sites, or 30% for other sites) of the total new build.

Appropriate housing density for a new development site will be determined from the density within adjacent existing development, with a preference for housing density of 25 dwellings net per hectare on new developments. (This is comparable with the recent Helliars Lane / Hythe Wood award winning affordable housing development, which has a gross density of 26 dwellings per Ha and is perceived as being a well designed site).

Where possible homes should be designed with 'whole life' principles in mind (Building for Life) allowing homes to be adaptable to suit changing families, their needs, and working from home, rather than forcing people to move whenever their lifestyle changes.

9.14 The Helliars Lane and Sharpham Road developments have S106 Agreements attached, designed to determine the exact criteria residents of the developments should match in order to be eligible for allocation of an affordable home in Cheddar. The key criterion was an overriding need to have a very strong existing link to Cheddar which would confirm the Parish Council's commitment to having housing to meet local need.

9.15 Housing Needs assessments undertaken by other SDC settlements indicate that they too have a local and largely unmet need for affordable housing. Affordable housing should allow those in local need to remain within the community they grew up in and work in. We propose to govern the eligibility criteria for affordable housing. The precedent for this has been set by SDC's historical S106 Agreements for the Helliars Lane and Sharpham Road sites.

Built Environment Policy 3 (BE3)

All future housing developments shall include affordable housing at 30% on within boundary sites, or 40% on Policy P4 Exception sites, aimed at meeting local Cheddar need. Any planning granted for affordable housing will be allocated by S106 agreement that is by first priority in line with a cascading approach to eligibility criteria as follows:

- Persons who have a minimum period of 5 years permanent and continuous residence within the Parish.
- Persons who are not now resident in the Parish but have a continuous residence of 10 years in the last 20 years.
- Persons who have an essential need to live close to another person within the Parish, who has a minimum of 10 years permanent and continuous residence in the Parish or adjoining Parish and has essential needs arising from proven age or medical reasons for care.
- Persons educated within the village schools system for more than 3 years.
- Where such persons cannot be found, an affordable home may be occupied by persons and their dependents whose housing needs are as above, but substituting 3 years instead of 5.
- If there is no need within the Parish for affordable homes, then they may be offered to persons in need, meeting the above criteria but located within the immediate adjacent parishes of Draycott, Axbridge and Shipham.

Affordable housing will be distributed within estates, and not form an isolated part of the layout, this will encourage inclusive communities. The dwellings will be tenure blind. Also adequate amenity space will be provided for affordable homes.

9.16 Cheddar is an attractive village in which to live and for visitors to explore. Consultation results have confirmed that the appearance of the village is important to residents and business people alike. The village does have a distinctive appearance that comes as much from the local building materials as it does from the rural housing density. Residents are concerned that:

- Housing should be built to a good design, using materials and styles that reflect the vernacular that gives Cheddar its character, at an appropriate density and with sufficient parking and associated infrastructure.
- Local distinctiveness is prioritised in every element of growth and change.
- That whilst there will be future development in the village it should be in keeping with the size and scale of the village.

9.17 The village centre is designated a Conservation Area, this is due mostly to the Roman and Saxon remains of buildings that are to be found there. The village grew slowly over the years around the market cross and outwards to small homesteads and subsistence type small holdings. The village housing is mostly reflective of all the remaining cottages, once thatched but no longer, which were built around the medieval village layout. There are several large Georgian houses plus the Victorian housing, terraced, semi-detached and detached which came with the railway industry and tourism.

9.18 Only the Georgian and the largest of the singular Victorian villas are three floors in height, and in the case of the Victorian villas this is due to the pitch of the roof rather than actually having a third floor.

9.19 All these early houses are built from the local grey limestone. Later houses, mostly from the 1930s onwards are rendered and mainly painted cream or white. There are a few, actual red brick houses in the village.

9.20 Recent developments, including the two affordable houses sites, have been built to reflect this local style, with rendered walls, some with stone accents, with red/brown clay tile roofs. Whilst some 1960s and onwards estates are mostly generic in style, houses have been built wholly or in part using reconstituted stone to achieve a degree of sympathy with the setting; nonetheless this tends towards a suburban rather than village character. Sadly some have been built with Cotswold yellow reconstituted stone rather than the local grey, which is at odds with the older cottages and the local style.

9.21 Cheddar has over 30 listed buildings and these heritage assets make an important contribution to the character of the village. It is important that development proposals affecting them or their setting do not diminish their heritage significance.

9.22 The lower part of Cheddar Gorge, whilst not designated a conservation area, is also of great importance to the village. This part of the Gorge is commercial in character, with shops, cafes and restaurants serving residents and visitors. While its quirky haphazardness can be seen as part of its charm, it is lacking in a level of environmental quality worthy of the dramatic natural setting.

9.23 National Policies require that planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity (NPPF 17) and whilst local policies should not seek to impose styles or stifle innovation, originality of initiative, it is proper to seek to reinforce local distinctiveness (NPPF 57-61). A Design Guide for future developments in the village and Gorge will supplement this Neighbourhood Plan to help developers achieve this aim.

9.24 The provision of safe walking and cycling routes throughout the village and connecting to other villages is a key aim of this Plan. Such safe routes would encourage people to walk and cycle more and encourage a healthier lifestyle and support the aim of improving air quality by reducing car journeys. However whilst promoting sustainable modes of transport is a Plan objective it has to be recognised that as a rural community with poor public transport there is a considerable reliance on cars. Therefore this Plan should include provision for cars, especially parking and traffic issues.

9.25 National and county policies seek to promote sustainable modes of transport. However restricting parking provision in Cheddar has not proved effective in achieving this aim and has tended to lead to parking overspill onto streets and inappropriate areas such as footways, verges and landscaped spaces. Provision of adequate vehicular parking in a manner compatible with an attractive and distinctive built environment is therefore important in new developments.

9.26 It is important that all new development that will generate vehicular traffic makes adequate parking provision for cars, including electric vehicles and where appropriate car share schemes, motor cycles and bicycles in accordance with the Somerset County Council (SCC) Parking Strategy March 2012 and any successor to this. Parking provision must be designed so as not to compromise an over prominent feature to the detriment of the street scene and local character.

9.27 Parking in the Gorge is restricted by the topography and in the village by the current lack of available land and suitable funding to provide more parking. The Parish Council has as one of its objectives to work with residents and businesses to help reduce parking problems.

Built Environment Policy 4 (BE4)

All new development should achieve a high quality of design that:

- Relates to the local context to maintain and enhance existing strengths and/or addresses weaknesses.
- Is informed by positive Cheddar precedent examples to conserve and reinforce local character and distinctiveness.
- Combines scale, form, materials, layout, landscaping and access to integrate new development with its surroundings and contribute to a sense of place.
- Safeguards the amenities of adjoining occupiers.
- Where new development would affect a heritage asset or its setting it will be expected to conserve and where possible enhance the significance of the asset. Development proposals that would enhance a heritage asset or its setting, if satisfactory in all other respects, taking into account the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan, Local Plan and National planning policies, will be encouraged.
- Whilst encouraging windfall development on infill sites, concerns over the impact on neighbours will lead us to resist single tandem development (sites created in the back gardens of existing dwellings sharing the same driveway access as the original dwelling).

Additionally, new build developments should comply with the following specifications regarding estate layout and parking provisions:

- New developments should provide parking in line with SCC Highways Planning Estate Roads in Somerset (Red Book) as a minimum.
- New residential development should provide off street visitor parking at a ratio of one space per three dwellings.
- New employment sites should provide parking in proportion to their staffing level and this should include the provision of bicycle racks as a minimum.

9.28 The topography of the area is such that development is constrained by the slope of the Mendips to the north and the low lying flood plain of the Cheddar Moors to the south. Whilst any future growth would be inhibited by these geographic constraints it is the aim of this Plan to further determine the future size and shape of the village. Our consultation resulted in the writing of a Vision for Cheddar which expresses a strong desire that the village remains compact and does not develop in such a way that its boundaries are merged with those of neighbouring settlements through ribbon development. Our Neighbourhood Plan must also respect the countryside and the AONB by having attractiveness of the built and natural environment at the heart of it.

9.29 The Green Strategy proposed by Arup in its report to the District Council includes provision for Green Lanes or Corridors including one along the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills and south along the B3151 towards Wedmore. We would like to see this themed Strawberry Belt specifically included in the next iteration of the District's Local Plan. In the meanwhile this Plan proposes that the Mendip Hills are not developed any further above the present building line.

9.30 There is great sensitivity around the impact of development of the AONB. Certainly development on the hillside can be seen not only from inside the AONB, but also from afar looking towards the AONB. It is particularly obvious at night when the Mendip dark skies are lit up by inappropriate lighting, but also when buildings are in a prominent position and painted white against the darker background.

9.31 Keeping Cheddar a distinctive destination for visitors means restricting development on the village boundaries so Cheddar is not merged with its neighbours. It is particularly obvious when coming into Cheddar from the Wells direction that there is a green gateway to the village, and Cheddar really starts as you come over the bridge to the church. This type of gateway is significant and it is true that routes across the Moors are currently free of houses and should remain so.

9.32 Potential development sites being put forward in this document were assessed against many criteria, the visual impact on green routes into the village was one of them.



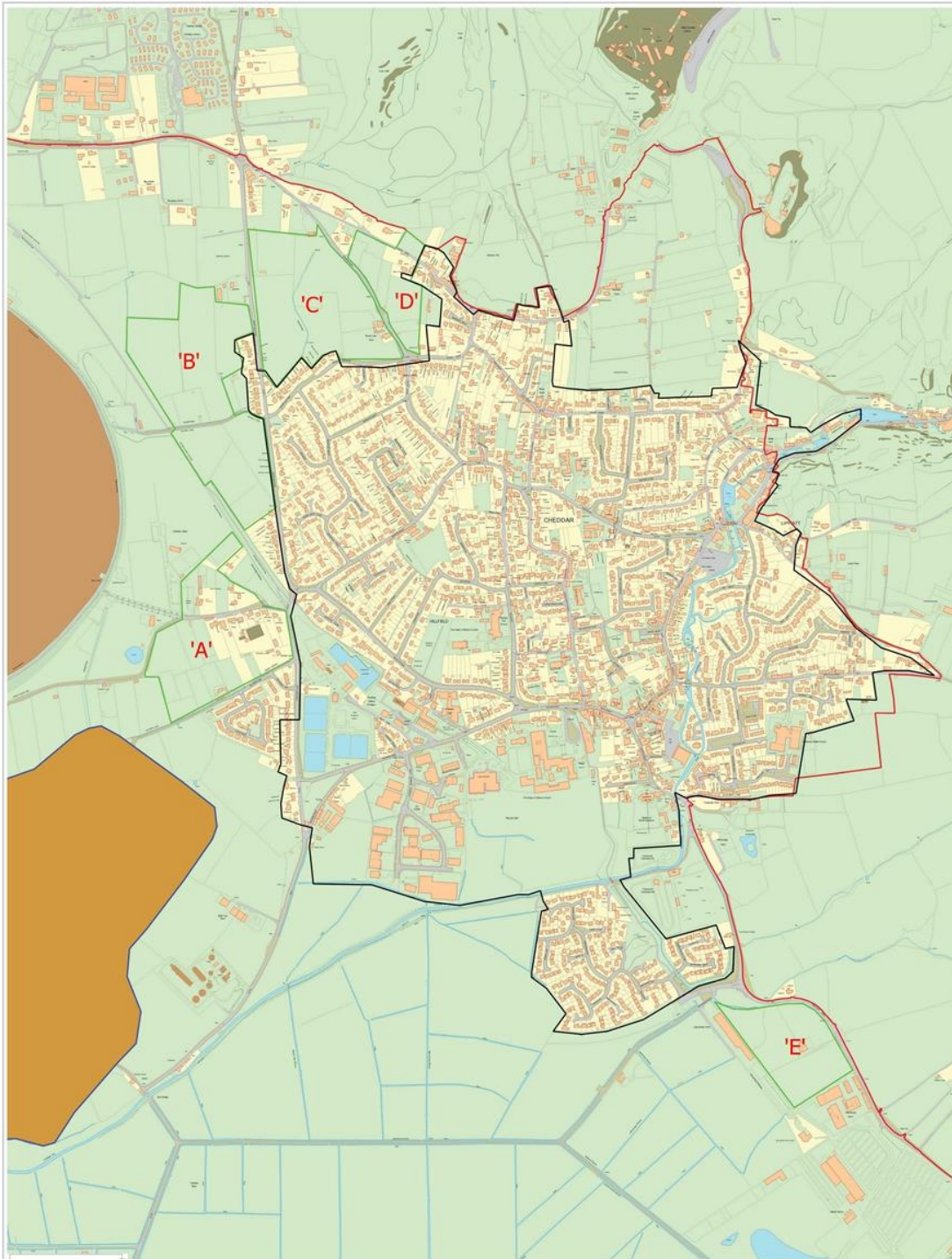
A371 rural aspect approaching Cheddar from Wells

Built Environment Policy 5 (BE5)

The Vision statement expresses a desire to keep the village compact and to maintain the 'community feel' of the village. We will support appropriate development primarily within the development boundary, any ribbon development (development likely to lead to the blurring of the boundaries) between Cheddar and the adjacent settlements of Axbridge and Draycott, plus Wedmore and Shipham, will be resisted.

To further avoid the blurring of the village boundaries and to protect the surrounding countryside, residential development will be resisted along the B3151 from the top of Cheddar Gorge into Cheddar, and leaving Cheddar through to Clewer. Moor Lane from Cocklake to Draycott runs through the Parish of Cheddar, it has no houses along it to Draycott. This road should be left as a country lane without residential development.

9.33 In 2013 the Steering Group conducted a Call for Sites exercise. The resulting potential sites were then added to all those identified in the desk top study exercise of SDC's 2009 and 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA), the full results of which are available in supplementary Document 3 'Housing Needs and Preferred Sites Report'. All the identified sites were plotted and the Steering Group assessed each site against accepted SDC criteria. All of the outside development boundary sites were consulted on with two specific exceptions – the first site was wholly within the AONB and the second wholly within Flood Zone 3. To prevent specific site owners from being identified at this stage of the consultation, the sites were grouped into 5 zones, designated A to E (Map 6).



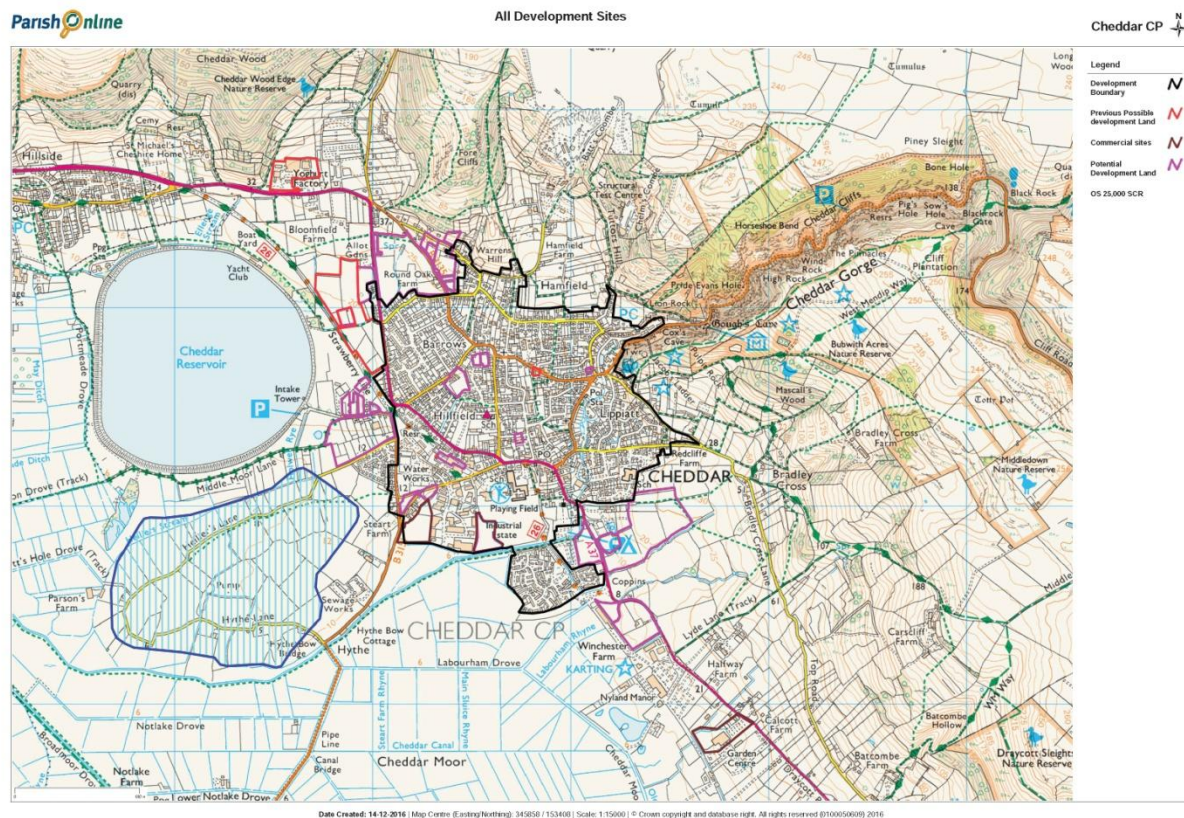
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Map 6

Map used at 2nd Neighbourhood Plan Consultation event showing sites A to E.

9.34 The second consultation event asked people to rank the sites in order of preference for development. Sites within the development boundary, and infill brownfield sites were not consulted on. Our Neighbourhood Plan policy is that such sites should always have priority over sites outside the development boundary, but as some sites have still not become available, even though they were identified as far back as the 2009 SHLAA, they are thought not to be high priority to be developed by the landowners concerned.

9.35 There were 39 sites identified in the two SHLAA reports and the Steering Group's Call for Sites exercise. Much of the identified land was outside but adjacent to the development boundary and was indicative of the landowners obviously putting their land forward for consideration. If all the sites were developed they would yield something in the order of 1000 homes,. Historically Cheddar has grown from 2292 dwellings in 2001 to 2543 in 2011, using census data, an increase of 251 homes in a decade. Whilst historic data is not necessarily a guide to the future it is indicative of the pace of growth that the village has previously tolerated (Map 7).



Map 7

9.36 The District Council in 2015 consulted on potential development boundary changes. The results of the consultation are not yet known. The proposed changes to the boundaries for Cheddar were minimal, mostly being to 'tidy up' small anomalies and as such the sites that have been assessed for this Plan have not been affected by any of the proposed changes.

9.37 The Preferred Sites put forward for possible development in this Plan were assessed according to more criteria than flood potential and avoidance of building in the AONB. Each site was assessed against the full range of SDC criteria but key amongst these were:

- Relationship with nearby land use.
- Proximity to amenities and services in the village centre.
- Visual impact from AONB and roads into the village.
- Proximity to sites of special scientific interest and particularly the impact on bats and other wildlife.
- Accessibility and road safety.

9.38 The Neighbourhood Plan policies are based on the fact that sites inside the development boundary have few constraints on their potential for development. They are all close to services and have the potential for good road access. Development on these sites would be supported.

9.38 The outside boundary sites were grouped together (Map 6). The public's order of priority was:

Area A.	Helliers / Sharpham.
Area E.	Labourham Drove.
Area C.	Round Oak Farm.
Area B.	South of Holwell Lane / West of Upper New Road
Area D.	Venns Gate.

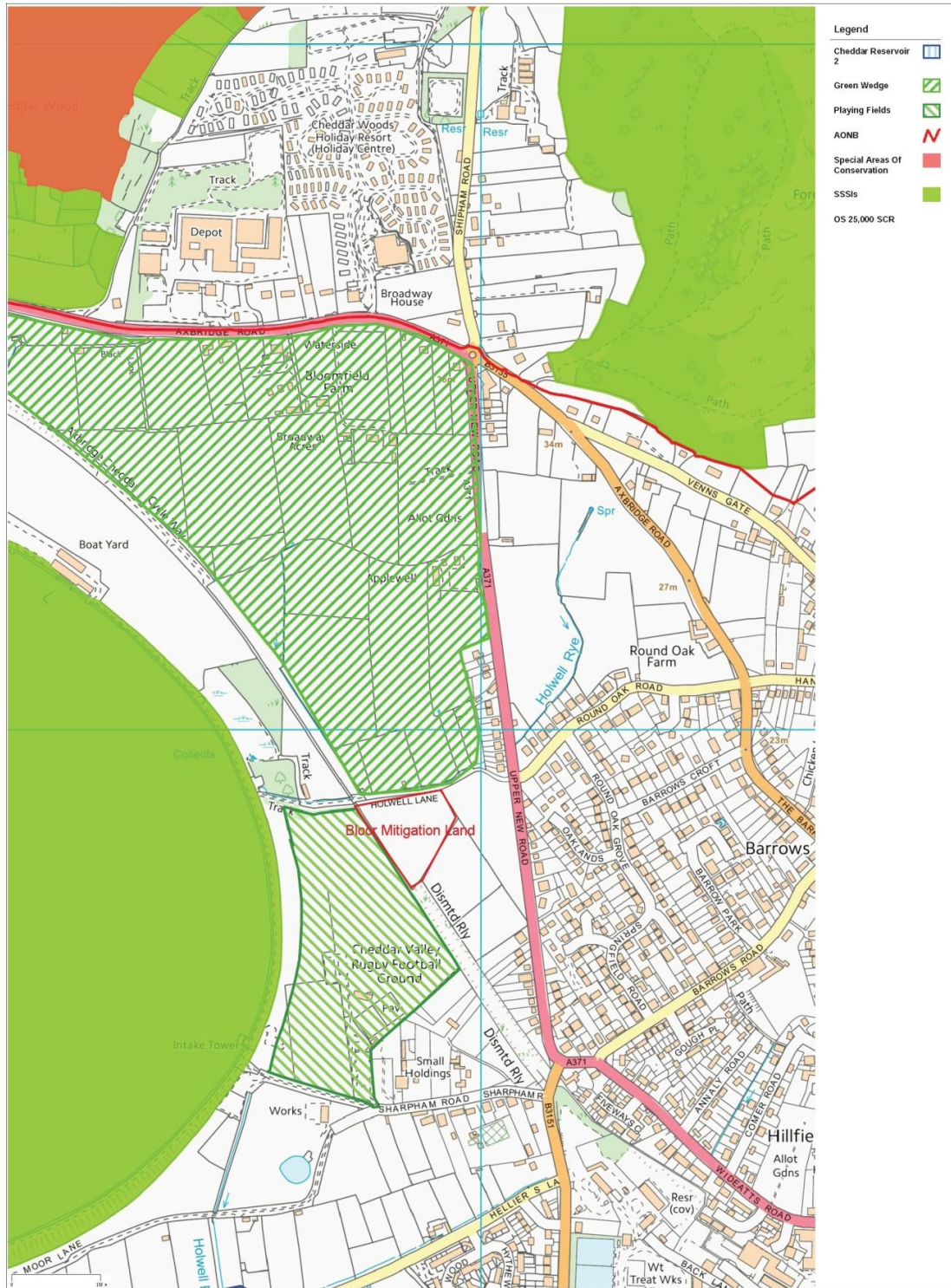
9.39 The Steering Group considered this ranking but placed site E, Labourham Drove further down the priority list as it determined that development here was on the eastern side of the village on the A371 and extending the village in such a way as to encourage ribbon development. Due to the lack of pavements, and the narrow bridge, safe road access to village services is not possible currently leaving the site isolated. It was a popular choice as it would cause the least inconvenience to build and there has historically been talk that Draycott Park estate would be extended.

9.40 There had also been a plan for a potential Cheddar by-pass which would run from the A371 junction, westwards, south of Draycott Park to connect on the other side of the village with the B3151, thereby taking traffic away from the village centre. This plan had not been in the 2010 SDC strategic infrastructure plan.

9.41 This site is on a valued green route into the village. Pedestrians could potentially access the village via the Draycott Park Estate on foot or by bike. The boundary of the AONB is literally on the other side of the road. From this point eastwards the road is dark and this is a bat foraging route from nearby roosts in the AONB.

9.42 Using the above criteria (9.37) the Steering Group determined that the Venns Gate site (Site D) was the least-best choice, being the most isolated site on the northern edge of the village with poor road access. The site is almost on the boundary of the AONB.

9.43 All of Site B, West of Upper New Road, was rejected because the first draft of this Plan contained a policy to extend the parish owned Sharpham Road sports field and maintain a green wedge between Cheddar and Axbridge for leisure, recreation and maintenance of the countryside and preventing built up sprawl. However this draft policy has been overtaken by events. Bloor Homes have had an application for 90 homes approved for the southern part of Site B. Part of the wildlife mitigation for this planned development is the preserving of an area of land specifically for wildlife on and around the flood attenuation pond. This development area is shown on the enlarged diagram (Map 8) below and the 'Habitat mitigation land' can be seen to connect the Neighbourhood Plan designated 'Green Wedge' with the Parish Council allotments, playing fields, down through the parish cemetery and on to the open moors which all form part of the bat foraging areas.



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Map 8

9.44 The whole of Site B north and south of Holwell Lane is open countryside at present and within the bat foraging zone from the three Mendip SACs. Dormice have been found in both parts of Site B. Having this area built up with accompanying street lighting is not desirable. It is also a highly visible site from both the AONB and the A371 and development will be resisted. Whilst the southern part of Site B now has planning permission development in the northern portion will be resisted as sequentially other available sites are more suitable or in the case of Round Oak Farm, can be perceived to be more 'infill' rather than extending the village eastwards to the other side of the A371.

9.45 Future growth would be best sited at Helliars Lane (Site A) and Round Oak Farm (Site C). Both sites are sustainable, and have good access to the village centre. The Round Oak Farm site on the eastern side of the A371 does not extend the village on its western side, leaving the proposed Green Wedge between Cheddar, the reservoir and Axbridge.

9.46 Developers have applied for outline planning permission for Helliars Lane (Site A). It implied that little hedging would need to be removed to build the site and that every consideration would be made to lighting and housing density. This is a 'preferred site' in this Neighbourhood Plan. It is the least visible from the main road into the village, sequentially of the outside the village boundary sites it is the closest to village facilities. There would be a need to improve road junctions and pedestrian routes but it could be a well-designed sustainable site, with advantages over some sites and fewer disadvantages.

9.47 Inside the development boundary sites, Steart Bushes, Steart Triangle and Ashley Lane/Hopwoods are being put forward for future development in this Plan as being suitable for appropriate development.

9.48 All three sites are sequentially the most suitable for access to village facilities. Steart Triangle has recently had two new homes built on it and further homes would be possible on that site. The Ashley Lane/Hopwoods site has been identified in SHLAA reports since 2009 but the land has not come forward yet for development. Whilst each of these sites has constraints with appropriate design and infrastructure development plans would be supported.

Built Environment Policy 6 (BE6)

The following sites inside the development boundary have been identified as the best and preferred sites most suitable for development within the plan period:

- Steart Bushes
- Steart Triangle
- Ashley Lane / Hopwoods

These sites would yield approximately 53 new dwellings in total.

The following sites outside the development boundary have been allocated:

- Helliers Lane
- Round Oak Farm

These two sites could yield approximately 177 homes in total. (Map 5)

10.0 Employment and Economy

10.1 Key objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan with regards to the employment and economic vitality of the village were identified as:

- The village should continue to function as a varied retail, employment and service centre for its residents and nearest neighbours.
- That the openness and beauty of the countryside around the village be preserved whilst retaining Cheddar's role in enabling a working rural population.
- That the village recognises the economic and employment value of Cheddar Gorge and Caves and the businesses associated with its unique location.
- To strengthen and support economic growth and change that makes for a sustainable village.
- The village centre needs revitalising.
- We need to attract and retain a mix of independent shops.
- The village needs attractive pedestrian friendly, public open spaces for informal relaxation, events and markets.

10.2 The public and business consultations that underpinned the above objectives, highlighted concerns about the attractiveness and viability of both the village centre and the Gorge. There were also comments about providing attractive pedestrian areas for relaxation and events and the need to maintain and attract more independent retail outlets. There was also a desire to attract well paid job opportunities and for some businesses to find specialist skilled employees.

10.3 The primary commercial centre of Cheddar stretches from Tesco at one end of Bath Street, to Sainsburys at the other, with a few other shops in Union Street and Cliff Street. This is the centre for retail and other services such as banking and professional services including insurance and accountancy. We will protect and support the enhancement of this area, and would support the improvement of the area behind Tesco (known locally as the 'Lane's Site') for commercial or mixed use (as seen at the Borough Mall Wedmore).

10.4 Cheddar had a significant period of decline to its commercial centre through the recession, but improvement, since the 2013 consultation, to the main hotel /public house, the Bath Arms, in the centre of the village, along with significant private investment in shop front improvements and the takeover of a local supermarket by Sainsbury has led to a better environment. This is encouraging and has gone a long way to addressing the concern about the middle of the village needing revitalising.

10.5 The possibility of creating an attractive public space for markets and events in the middle of the village is very slim. No landowner has been identified who would provide such a space and carving a pedestrian area out of the current road system would require major highway plans which at the preliminary stage have been met with a negative response. The A371 is a county route and could not be closed unless a bypass was built sometime in the future as a major infrastructure project. Nor could Union Street be closed off without creating a major reclassification of the road structure and the diversion of traffic along residential roads. However the desire to achieve this goal should be carried forward to a future plan when resources may be available to undertake a more robust feasibility study.

10.6 The Parish Council will look to land it owns or leases that may be appropriate to provide such a public space for events.

10.7 The medieval nature of the road layout in the centre of the village means that the A371 passes through the shopping area but the pavements are very narrow in places. There have been initial discussions with the SCC Highways department about improving these substandard pavements in the middle of the village but there is no easy solution.

10.8 The other main highway issue is that HGV lorries have to drive in the centre of the narrow road to negotiate the bend and pass the NatWest bank. Pedestrians are in danger of being struck by their wing mirrors. Initial discussions with the Highways department suggest that as the road curves here it is not considered possible to put in chicanes to create single lane right of way access. The route out of the single lane section is not visible around the bend and priority access could not be determined. The Parish Council will continue to consider how this problem could be addressed. A similar scheme has recently been built in Draycott so there may be possibilities to do something to make the road in the centre of the village safer.

Employment & Economy Policy 1 (EE1)

We will support development that rejuvenates the commercial centre (Class A / B1 / C1) of Cheddar, and resist the conversion of 'commercial centre' properties to residential at ground floor level in order to retain a commercial centre in the village.

We will support the use of the former Lane's site behind Tesco (Map 11) for retail/commercial expansion of the village centre. Whilst this site has an expired permission for domestic dwellings exclusively, such use would be resisted, due to its location within the commercial centre, as it would not enhance the commercial offering within the village. Small commercial units or mixed use units, may encourage specialist suppliers to set up in this location. Provision of some short term shoppers' parking would encourage people to use the new businesses.

10.9 The second retail area of the village is located in the Lower Gorge. This area is predominantly aimed at the tourist sector, with souvenir and gift shops. Also located in this area are numerous teashops and food outlets, and three public houses. In the middle of the commercial heart of the Gorge is a particularly rundown area around the derelict Cox's Mill Hotel and its adjacent parade of small short term rental shops at Queen's Row.

10.10 There are various landowners with interests in the Gorge. The Parish Council is working closely with the District Council, the AONB management team, National Trust, Longleat Enterprises and the Chamber of Commerce to make improvements in the Gorge area. The major commercial landowner is Longleat Estates and the management team of this organisation is making new investment in their buildings and tourist attractions. However after many years of low investment it will take time and considerable expense to regenerate Cox's Mill and to develop a tourist attraction that brings new visitors and encourages them to stay for longer, and add to the economic vitality of the Gorge and area as a whole.

10.11 A working party consisting of all the interested parties noted above is currently looking to make improvements to the Lower Gorge and to make it a more attractive place. Short term plans include improving the appearance of the island beds in the River Yeo, looking at the possibility of putting telephone and electricity cables underground and repainting buildings owned by Longleat. In the longer term working with Bristol Water could bring improvements to the water features and the Garden of Fragrance.

10.12 Improvements based around the Garden of Fragrance and Daghole may provide the space for more outdoor events including markets and exhibitions and close the perceived economic interest between activity in the village and activity in the Gorge.

10.13 The working party is aiming to make Cheddar a premier visitor destination for those who wish to stay in quality accommodation and spend time in the area enjoying activities such as climbing, walking riding etc. Cheddar Gorge has been seen as a place for day trippers to visit, and whilst they are of great value to the village and surrounding businesses reliant on tourism, extending the tourist experience beyond that of walking around the caves and then leaving will be of economic value to the area as a whole.

10.14 SDC in conjunction with the Parish Council published a Design Guide for the Gorge and its buildings and public realm in 1996. This is being reviewed and updated and will be a Design Guide for the village as a whole presented as a supplementary planning document in due course. The design guide will be aimed at encouraging a more cohesive style that fits the whole village including the Gorge, thereby enhancing the distinctive features of the village and adding to the tourist experience of those visiting Cheddar.

10.15 The Upper Gorge remains open countryside and there are no plans for this to change. Features to improve road safety and parking provision will be encouraged if they are appropriate to an area recognised as being one of the most visited Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the UK.

Employment & Economy Policy 2 (EE2)

We will look to support, protect and enhance existing and proposed tourist based activities.

We will support the sympathetic re-development of Cox's Mill Hotel, be this as a quality hotel or other appropriate use due to its unique location in the centre of the tourist area of Cheddar Gorge. Considering the site already has most of the infrastructure to allow hydro electric power production, we will encourage this to be incorporated in any future design proposals.

10.16 Cheddar has two main industrial areas, the first and main 'official' industrial estate is situated off Station Road at Cheddar Business Park. This is a purpose-built industrial estate, comprising modern industrial 'warehouse type' units, plus a small number of starter units covering a wide range of industrial and commercial activities. This area is next to the location of the local recycling amenity site, located and accessed off Station Road.

10.17 Land to the south and west of the existing Cheddar Business Park (Stear Bushes) has had planning permission granted for a Sainsbury store, but Sainsbury recently took over the existing middle of the village supermarket leaving this site available for future development. Internal roads on the Park could be extended and access to the B3151 could be made (Map 9), enabling the business park to expand in this direction. Such expansion would provide further employment opportunities by attracting new business and allowing some existing ones to expand. This site was allocated for commercial use in the 1991 to 2011 Local Development Plan. Our call for sites exercise identified a further piece of land adjacent to the business park and Kings of Wessex School; this land is still allocated for educational use in a retained policy within the Core Strategy. However it could provide further commercial land on the west side of the village to keep HGV traffic away from the village centre (Map 9). Part of it is in Flood Zone 3, and like the 'Former Sainsbury' site the flood prone areas would be best used for parking. This land may not come forward in the time frame of this Plan however should it be developed then along with the 'Former Sainsbury' site it should be noted that the extension to the Strawberry Line' cycle and walking route will likely pass across the sites and any plans must provide for this extension to the route.



Map 9

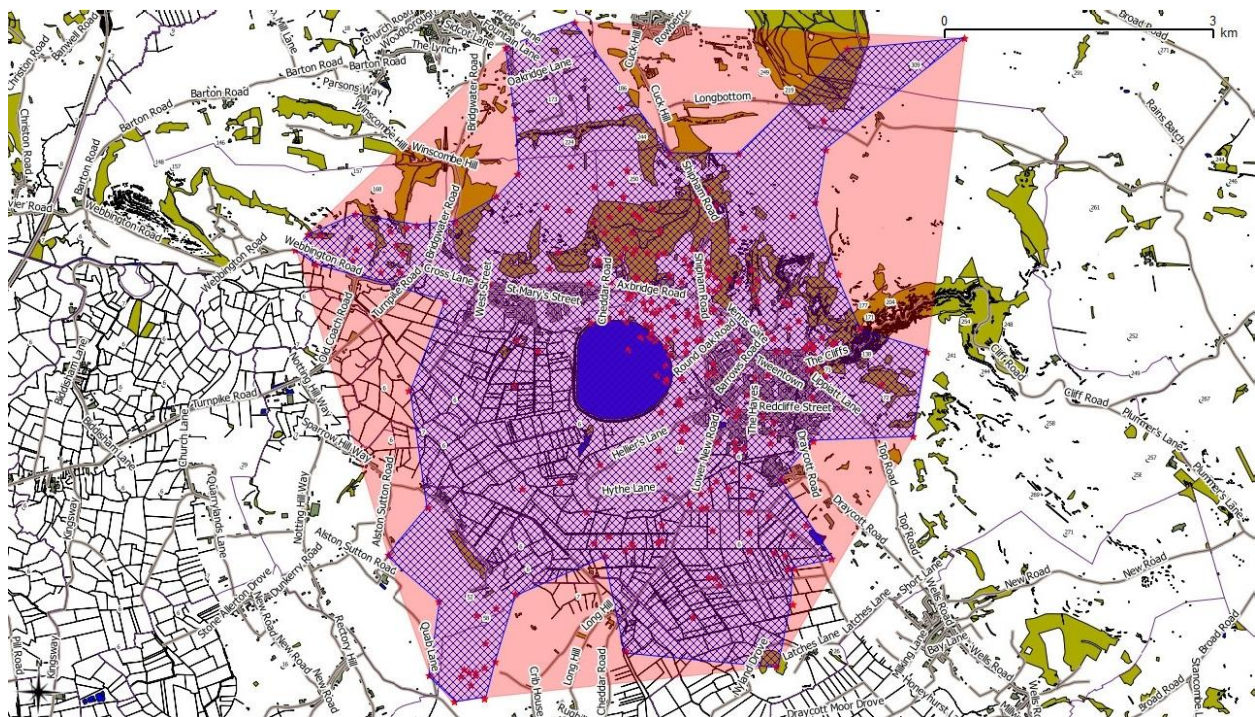
10.18 The second industrial area of Cheddar is situated at Winchester Farm off Draycott Road (A371) on the outskirts of Cheddar. This comprises a number of units that have evolved within converted farm buildings and new build buildings. Whilst outside the development boundary, this has evolved into a light industrial site, with engineering companies and is also the home of 'Cheddar Ales', the local Cheddar brewery. Winchester Farm also hosts the weekly Sunday market, a popular event offering numerous stalls with both local traders drawing people from Cheddar and wider afield offering everything from food, to second hand cars.

10.19 Traffic associated with further commercial development here would most likely come from the west on the A371 connecting to the A38 and the M5. HGV traffic in the village centre is a concern as both the roads and pavements are narrow. Church bridge is narrow, on a bend, can only accommodate vehicles in one direction at a time, has no pavement and is a frightening place to walk. We do not wish to encourage more HGVs to travel eastwards.

10.20 Cheddar Garden Centre, further along the Draycott Road (A371) is on the 2014 SHLAA as a potential redevelopment site. We will resist this becoming a residential site as it is totally isolated from the village, and would lead to ribbon development. We would support any suitable tourist, horticultural or agricultural orientated business. We would resist any large scale out of village retail use that was not, as presently, associated with horticulture and therefore offering goods not on sale within the village. Any lighting on this site would also be restricted as it is highly visible from the AONB.

10.21 It is proposed that the Yeo Valley site on the Axbridge Road (A371) remains one used for employment rather than housing. Both the 2009 and 2014 SDC SHLAA assessments have rejected this as a residential site. HGV traffic generated by the current business does not come through the village as it is mostly traffic connecting with the A38 and the M5 to the west. As a housing site it would fail the sequential test, and as it is currently a commercial site offering employment it should continue to do so in order to maintain the sustainability of the village. On the edge of the AONB, business here should be in low rise buildings, non-polluting and preferably offering skilled employment. Lighting in this area would also be restricted due to the sites location within the bat flight and foraging areas (Map 10).

August GPS Bat Tracking Data (source SCC Mr. L Burrows).



Map 10

10.22 Our business survey uncovered a need for more purpose-built office space and serviced office space. It is considered that the Yeo Valley site, being on the boundary of the AONB is well suited for low level office accommodation. There is sufficient parking, easy access and it is a brownfield site. Low level lighting, which is turned off after business hours is more suitable here than street lighting associated with residential development as this site is on the AONB boundary and close to bat roosts and foraging zones. (Map 13)

10.23 Windfall employment sites include any future re-development of the land behind Tesco on Bath Street and that at Lanier in Tweentown. The land behind Tesco (former Lane's site) would be suited for further retail and light commercial use (Class A, or B1 use) or possible mixed use, preferably offering some short term shoppers parking. The Lanier site at Tweentown lends itself to further office or light manufacturing / showroom use (Class A1 or A2 or B1 use).

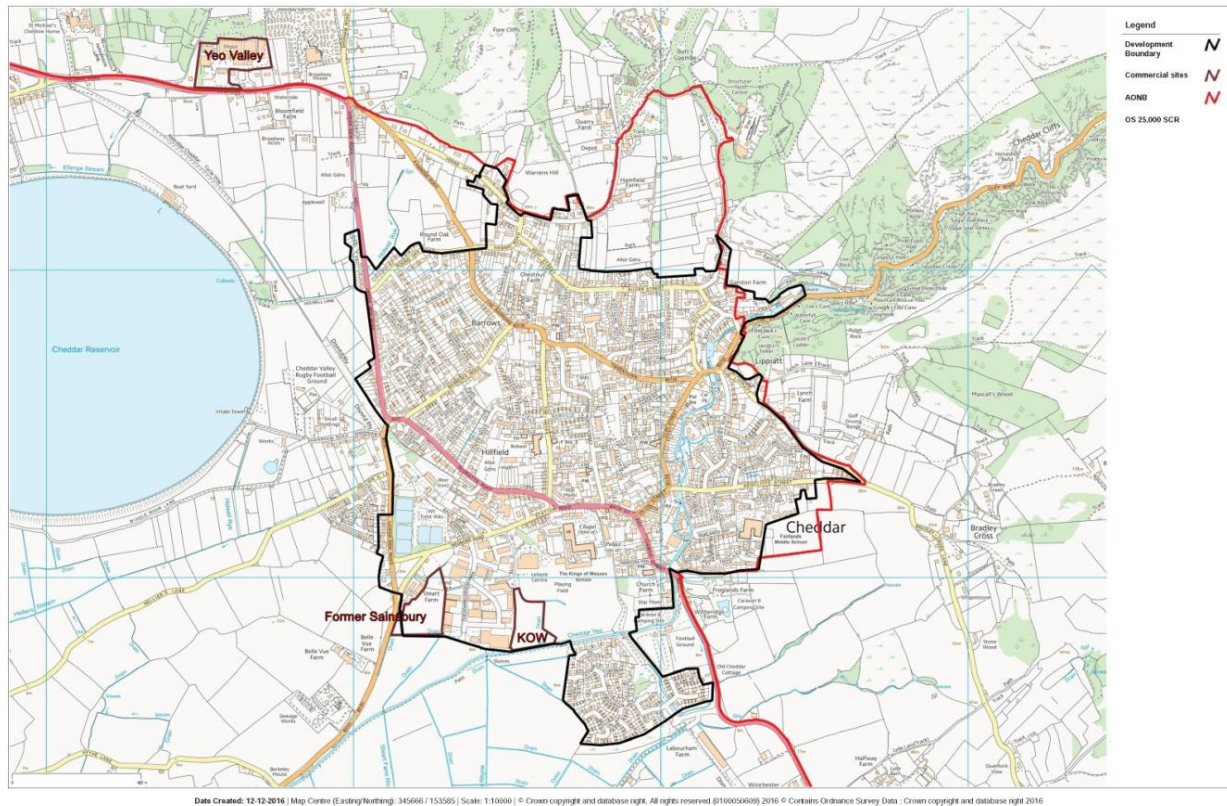
10.24 Residents and business owners expressed their frustration with slow broadband provision. Since the consultations BT Openreach has provided fibre broadband to most of the village so this frustration should have been relieved.



Map 11



57 | Page



Data Created: 12-12-2016 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing: 345666 / 153585) | Scale: 1:10000 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (0100050699) 2016 © Contains Ordnance Survey Data - Crown copyright and database right 2016

Map 13

Employment & Economy Policy 3 (EE3)

Expansion of the existing industrial area at Cheddar Business Park will be supported. A triangle of land bordering the industrial area (labelled KOW above) has been reserved, and additionally in the event of the Sainsbury extant permission expiring, we will return this land to its former Local Plan allocation of 'business park extension'. Retail uses would only be considered if no significant adverse retail impact on the village centre could be demonstrated.

We will support the use of the existing 'Yeo Valley' site and we would allocate it, for office and serviced office use, light industrial use / commercial and high technology use (category B1, B2, & B8) resisting other uses unless there is evidence that the land is not required for these uses. This site is in the AONB, adjacent to both SSSI & SAC areas, and must remain a 'dark site' for internationally protected species.

11.0 Sport, Leisure and Wellbeing

11.1 Our consultation identified the following issues residents would like to see addressed:

- Enhance the sports and recreational offering to encourage sport and healthy living.
- Encourage an environment conducive to health and wellbeing by extending facilities for sports and outdoor leisure pursuits.
- Continue to offer excellent educational, health and retail service choices to residents, neighbours and visitors. It should continue with its Christmas Festive Night and encourage other festivities, farmers' markets and events.
- Remain attractive to residents and visitors and provide an environment which enables interaction and community spirit.

11.2 Cheddar has two large public green spaces; Hannah More Park with children's playground equipment and Sharpham Road Playing Fields with outdoor sports pitches (cricket, football, rugby and tennis) skate park and children's play area. In addition each of the three schools (first, middle and upper) has outdoor sports facilities, and King's Fitness & Leisure provides indoor sports facilities including a swimming pool.

11.3 In consultation with sports club representatives a need was identified for more facilities especially increased rugby and football play areas. The Cheddar hockey club has to practice / play away from the village as there is no artificial grass pitch for them in the village. This pent-up demand has also been identified in the SDC Sports and Recreation Facilities Strategy and Delivery Plan 2013-2017 report.

11.4 In March 2016 Bloor Homes was given planning permission to build 90 homes on land south of Holwell Lane and west of Upper New Road. The Parish Council had considered using this land to meet some of the sports needs identified, as it is adjacent to Sharpham Road playing fields and associated pavilion owned by the Parish Council. This Neighbourhood Plan will support any appropriate plans to provide further sports pitches on other suitable sites.

11.5 The Parish Council is working towards improving the Sharpham Road sports facilities. Plans are currently being considered to improve the pavilion. Outside there are plans to improve drainage, car parking and to possibly enlarge the skate park. New playground equipment and an adult trim trail have been recently installed.

Sport, Leisure and Wellbeing Policy 1 (SLW1)

In order to encourage healthy lifestyles and wellbeing the Neighbourhood Plan would seek to:

- Preserve Sharpham Road Playing Fields and Hannah More Park as the prime public outdoor sports and leisure facilities in the Parish.
- Support the increase of available land at *or near* Sharpham Road Playing Fields to enable more pitches to be added to accommodate the needs of a growing community, providing that there is:
 - Evidence of need.
 - Support from local sports organisations and the community.
- Support the development of sport and leisure facilities at Kings of Wessex Academy and King's Fitness & Leisure which can be used by the whole community.

11.6 Whilst a Neighbourhood Plan cannot influence the educational standards that schools attain it is possible to support appropriate plans which enhance the facilities and opportunities offered by our outstanding local schools. Cheddar Parish Council will continue to support the excellent schools when plans for improved educational and sports facilities are put forward.

11.7 Consultation identified that residents are concerned that as the village grew larger the community feel and sense of belonging to a varied and vibrant community could be lost. The Parish Council will support Christmas Festive Night and any other appropriate events and festivities that encourage a community spirit and create a sense of belonging in a friendly and safe community.

11.8 Hannah More Cottage and the Sharpham Road facilities will remain available for hire for all suitable public events. The Parish Council will continue to support and work with community groups which contribute to the wellbeing of residents. Such groups could include but are not limited to the Cheddar Youth Trust, My Cheddar Group, Henry Budgett Charity, Cheddar Medical Centre Patient Group, the Strawberry Line Group, and the sports clubs.

11.9 The Parish Council is responsible for other aspects of community provision which include cemetery space. The Parish Council is extending the cemetery and the garden of remembrance, including creating a green funeral/woodland section of the cemetery.

12.0 Roads, Transport and Access

12.1 Our consultation revealed that residents had the following concerns that would need addressing:-

- That too many journeys are by car, we should encourage more walking and cycling.
- Too much traffic goes through the village centre especially HGVs.
- There is not enough parking in the village centre.
- There is an inadequate bus service to places of employment and shops.
- That we maintain an attractive and safe village centre.

12.2 Transport and movement within the Parish and connections to areas beyond are of fundamental importance to the local economy, quality of life, community safety and sustainability of Cheddar.

12.3 The A371 runs to Weston-Super-Mare in the west and provides the connection with the A38 and M5 and access via these routes to Bristol. Running eastward the A371 links Cheddar to the city of Wells. The A371 runs through the centre of the village which is the key shopping area. It is used by significant numbers of heavy good vehicles.

12.4 The main bus service in Cheddar is the 126 connecting to Wells and Weston Super Mare. There is also service 668 to Street, plus a student bus (620) to Bridgewater College. There is no direct service to the main employment areas of Bridgwater, or Bristol.

12.5 The nearest train stations are Highbridge, Worle, Weston-Super-Mare and Yatton, all approximately 10 miles away, with services to the south west, Bristol and beyond, including London. Much of the route of the former Cheddar Strawberry (railway) Line remains intact and now provides a largely off-road cycle and walking route that runs as far as Yatton Station (this route is classified as 'Nature Reserve' in North Somerset).

12.6 A high proportion of short local journeys are undertaken by car. Whilst for a variety of reasons some journeys have to be undertaken by car, it is an objective of the Neighbourhood Plan to enable a higher proportion of such journeys to be made by foot, cycle and public transport.

12.7 Many aspects of transport and movement, such as frequency of bus services and traffic calming works to the highway, fall outside the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, there are important aspects that the Plan can help influence, guide and control. In part this is through the location of development and this is dealt with in other sections. However, a number of transport specific policies also have a role to play.

12.8 Cheddar's highway infrastructure is characteristic of a rural area and for the most part was not designed for modern levels of traffic. It is important that new development is served by adequate access without harm to the character of the area or the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

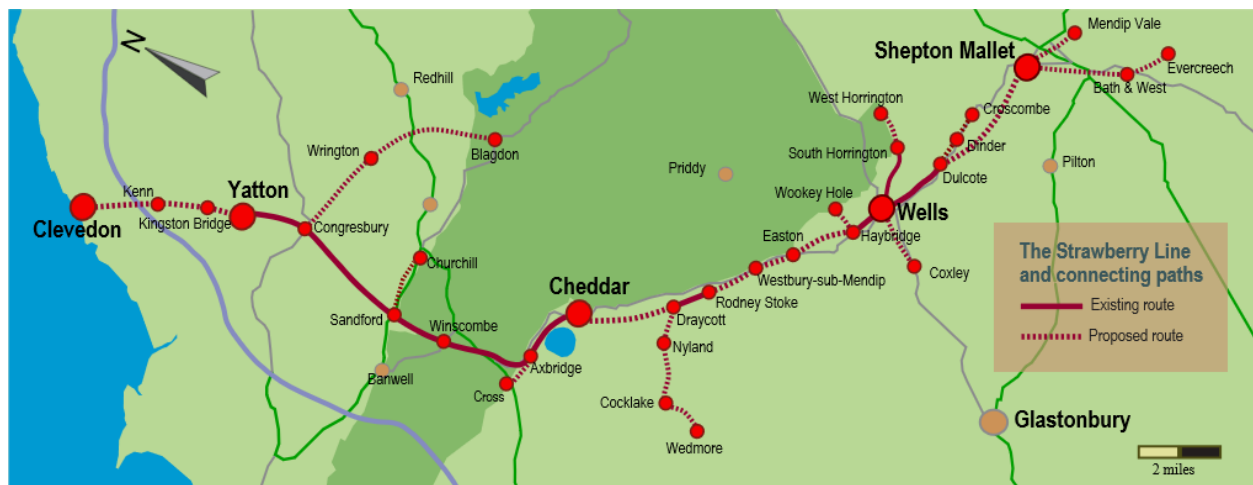
12.9 Improvements to the existing road infrastructure are the remit of SCC Highways and the Parish Council will continue to liaise and work closely with the authority to make improvements to the roads, pavements and road safety. Our aim would be to have improvements made to acknowledged 'difficult' junctions and pinch points.

12.10 The junction known locally as 'The Magic Roundabout' the A371 junction with Axbridge Road and Shipham Hill to the north of the village is acknowledged as one of the main problem junctions. Development likely to increase traffic volume will be required to mitigate through CIL or S106 agreements to improve this junction and others. The quarry's are the biggest HGV users of this junction and further expansion plans for the quarries should include traffic mitigation measures.

Transport Policy 1 (T1)

Where transport related infrastructure improvements are conditioned, these infrastructure improvements should be completed where practical prior to the development being commenced, but must be fully completed prior to occupation of development.

12.11 The Strawberry Line provides both an important recreational route and connects some residential areas with the centre of Cheddar. The Strawberry Line Society and the Strawberry Line Association, working with a range of partners, aim to extend the route to Cheddar's nearest market town of Wells. This would provide a very significant sustainable transport corridor for both functional and recreational use. Ultimately the vision for the project seeks to make the route part of the 'Somerset Circle' connecting to Bath and Bristol. The route eastwards (Map 15) has not yet been determined but the Neighbourhood Plan will support any suitable extension proposal.



Map 15

Strawberry line map - www.thestrawberryline.org.uk

Transport Policy 2 (T2)

The corridor shown on the above map is indicative of an extension of the Strawberry Line cycling and walking route. Any development plans which may impact on the corridor the Strawberry Line is likely to use will be expected to safe guard land for this purpose and no other form of development on this route will be permitted. Development of a walking and cycling route within the outlined corridor and improvement to the established route will be permitted subject to safeguarding of habitat and design detail appropriate to the rural setting.

12.12 The public realm in the centre of the village currently does not create a strong sense of place or look attractive. It is dominated by tarmac and has the character of a place that is primarily for vehicles, not people. Whilst the presence of the A371 is a fact of life, design measures and alternative materials could reduce its impact on the character of the village centre. The village centre also lacks pedestrian space. The footways in places are extremely narrow and there is no space for street markets and other events.

12.13 A Design Guide will be produced as a supplementary planning document in due course. The aim is that it will address issues around street furniture, and street lighting so as to provide a cohesive design to improve the overall appearance of the village and tourist areas. This should enhance the sense of place and define Cheddar as a distinctive destination for visitors. The project will include lighting designs that add to the heritage appearance and highlight such features as the Market Cross as a village focal point.

12.14 It is considered that there are opportunities for making better use of existing public space and for creating more space for pedestrians, despite the restrictions imposed by the A371 running through the village centre. This requires a coordinated approach and it is intended that this is achieved through future consultation with the appropriate authorities and it may be funded through Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

Transport Policy 3 (T3)

Proposals to enhance and expand pedestrian space within the centre of Cheddar and elsewhere will be supported provided that they form part of a master plan that has been the subject of public consultation and formal approval by the relevant authorities.

12.15 Cheddar Gorge is known nationally and beyond for its natural beauty. However, its sense of natural wonder is degraded by parking areas intruding beyond the commercial centre of the Lower Gorge into the Upper Gorge. The Gorge and its associated parking provision are of great importance to the area's visitor economy and the potential for alternative parking provision is greatly constrained by the availability of suitable land and financial viability. Nevertheless, because of the importance of the natural beauty of Cheddar Gorge, it is right that the Neighbourhood Plan provides a planning policy framework that is supportive of appropriate measures to reduce the negative impact of parking within the Gorge.

12.16 The Gorge has proven to be a place that can attract some antisocial behaviour especially with people wanting to seek their thrills by dangerous driving or riding 'Drift Trikes' on the roads. In order to protect pedestrians and other road users and reduce the nuisance created by cars creating excessive noise through either having loud exhausts or playing music too loudly, for example, the Parish Council is working closely within a multi-agency group to investigate measures to reduce the levels of such behaviour. The Parish Council will work closely with the police, Somerset Highways and Longleat Estates in particular to address the issues associated with car enthusiasts meeting and creating a nuisance.

12.17 The Parish Council will explore and welcome suitable measures to reduce the number of cars in the Lower Gorge and the associated amount of parking. Such measures would help to increase the experience of visiting a beautiful place without having to be mindful of traffic. Initiatives such as the 'Walkers are Welcome' scheme are the start of this process and are fully supported by the Parish Council.

12.18 Ideas that could be explored include alternative parking sites, reducing the carriageway width and introducing traffic calming measures to change driver behaviour and make the road through the Gorge more of a scenic route safeguarding pedestrians, than a through route.

Transport Policy 4 (T4)

Proposals to reduce the impact of car parking upon the natural beauty of Cheddar Gorge through alternative provision will be supported provided that they achieve net overall benefit in terms of landscape and visual impact and do not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on habitat or the highway network.

13.0 Landscape, Environment and History

13.1 Consultation identified that the following areas should be considered in producing a Neighbourhood Plan to meet residents' expectations:

- The openness and beauty of the countryside around the village should be preserved whilst retaining Cheddar's role in enabling a working rural economy.
- The countryside should be preserved for its own sake, and any permitted development should respect this and be in keeping. The Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Cheddar Moors should be protected for their beauty and farmed landscape appearance.
- The Lower Gorge should be an attractive place for visitors and recreational users, and the Upper Gorge retain its non commercial beauty.

13.2 Cheddar Parish consists of the village of Cheddar, the Gorge and the open countryside which includes the hamlet of Nyland. Outside the village development boundary the rural nature of the area becomes more apparent. This area is an important tourist destination but it also provides other forms of employment not least agriculture, horticulture and small low tech businesses.

13.3 It is important that the area remains both visually attractive and pleasant to be in. The Mendip Hills have protection, being designated an AONB. However the rest of the countryside also needs protection and the policy to prevent ribbon development is part of the protection required to keep this part of Somerset attractive.

13.4 Within the village, the conservation area protects the existing built environment, however the Design Guide, which the Steering Group plans to add as a supplementary document, will be aimed at preserving the character of the village and the Gorge through finer guidance on future building design, public realm colour palette and styles.

13.5 During consultation, appreciation of the beautiful surrounding in which Cheddar is set was strongly expressed and our Neighbourhood Plan aims to acknowledge this by reinforcing the SDC policies that protect the countryside for its own sake.

13.6 It is our unique landscape of Mendip Hills and open low lying pasture land which is loved by locals and attracts tourists. The lower slopes of the Mendips are recognised as being grade one agricultural land and are still used for the production of market garden crops, and especially strawberries.

13.7 The darkness of the sky above Cheddar is an important characteristic of the rural area, the AONB and its setting. In some places this is compromised by street lighting (over which there is no planning control) and other lighting installations, such as the floodlights at Bowden's Park, which spill light into the night sky. External lighting as part of future development and stand-alone light installations that require planning permission should be designed to minimise light pollution.

13.8 We would encourage commercial premises to reduce their lighting and light spillage, and new developments not to use un-shuttered skylight/roof light windows if they intend to have lighting on at night. New build and conversions in the AONB and on the Mendip slopes should have regard to the impact of external lighting and light escaping from large windows at night which distracts from the natural darkness associated with the natural landscape. Also designers should have regard for reflection off glass windows which becomes very obvious over a wide area when the sun shines on the southern Mendip slopes.

Landscape, Environment and History Policy 1 (LEH1)

The plan will resist development which takes best productive agricultural, market garden and horticultural land out of production, other than the allocated residential and commercial sites defined within this plan.

External lighting or roof lighting as part of development proposals or stand-alone installations must minimise light pollution in accordance with the Institution of Lighting Engineers guidance or any other locally adopted guidance current at the time.

13.9 This Neighbourhood Plan contains policies designed to keep the village compact and to preserve its distinctive sense of place and belonging. The selection of preferred potential development sites takes into account the visual impact of any development on 'green corridor' routes into the village. Certainly resisting development at Labourham is an example of preserving the visual aspect of entering the village from the east on the A371, where the view of the Mendips to the right and the church tower ahead presents a very obvious 'entrance' to the village which is worth preserving and not spoiling.

13.10 The A371 is in many parts the actual development boundary for the village. On the western edge of the village the A371 is known as Upper New Road, and except for a small number of 1930s and earlier houses on the western side of the road it is mostly undeveloped (Map 16).

13.11 From north to south along this stretch of road there is the largest of the three allotment sites owned by the Parish Council, south there is grazing, then Holwell Rye and the Bloor Homes site. Adjacent to that is Sharpham Road playing fields, the Parish cemetery and south to a privately owned boating lake and fishing pool.

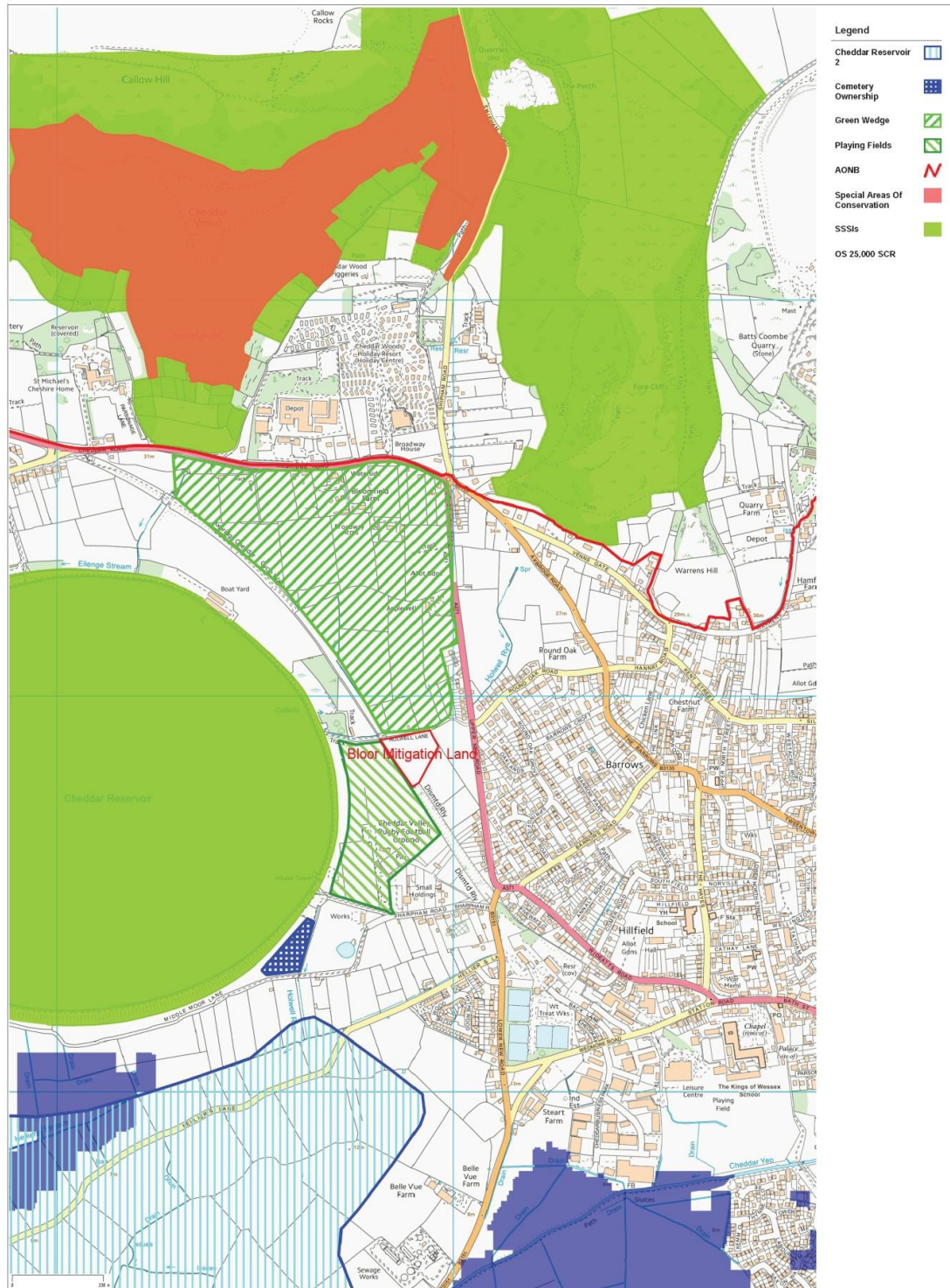
13.12 A second reservoir has been granted planning permission although funding has been withheld by OFWAT. The present reservoir is used by the sailing club and is a well-used 3 mile walking circuit. The plans for the second reservoir included recreational facilities including bird watching, bridle paths, café, play area etc.

13.13 Most of the land from north of the village to as far south as Hythe Bow is currently either agricultural, reservoir or recreational or cemetery. All of the northern section is bounded by the Strawberry Line, the walking and cycling route recognised as a national route. We propose that this western boundary of the village be protected as a Green Wedge. This area is also used by bats from the adjacent SACs as a flight line and foraging area. Such a Green Wedge would protect the village from urban sprawl to the west, and protect the edge of the village which provides the quiet and attractive recreational and contemplative corner of the village, whilst at the same time assisting internationally protected species and their habitat. The Habitats Regulations Assessment Report, (Document 7) gives further information about dormouse and bat populations that are found here.

13.14 This proposal for a Green Wedge is aligned with SDC's policy D20 and habitat regulations, which aims to not only maintain but enhance green infrastructure, including green wedges and strategic gaps. Such a Green Wedge would link with the themed landscape proposed by Arup in their report for SDC, Green Infrastructure Strategy, which is proposed to be called the Strawberry Belt and to link green areas and wildlife habitats along the Mendip slopes.

Leisure, Environment and History Policy 2 (LEH2)

To reduce ribbon development and preserve the peace and quiet associated with land to the west of the A371 and southwards it is proposed that a green wedge be protected as shown on Map 16 below. Development will not be supported within this Green Wedge, such designation would protect the habitats for protected species including the Hazel Dormouse found within this area, along with significant bat flight lines to the moors (Map 10).



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Map 16

14.0 Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Checklist

14.1 Our Neighbourhood Plan has to support sustainable development, not only to align with the District Council's Core Strategy but also to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Policies put forward in our Plan have been checked against the sustainability objectives used for the Sustainability Assessment of the Sedgemoor Core Strategy.

14.2 The Core Strategy has been taken as the basis of our Plan and then our policies have been assessed on top of the Core Strategy policies. In other words what is the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan over policies already in place?

14.3 Each policy has been checked against each of the questions set out for each criterion and rated using a traffic light system:

	Negative impact
	Minor impact
	Positive impact
	Not relevant

From this assessment, a rating for each sustainability assessment objective was ascertained, as shown in the left hand column.

14.4 The results show that overall the Neighbourhood Plan would have a positive impact in regard to the sustainability assessment objectives, and can therefore contribute to sustainable development.

14.5 The Neighbourhood Plan shows particularly positive impacts in regard to social objectives.

14.6 Negative impacts are the inevitable impact of new development on the environment, particularly on water consumption and the risk to soils. It is considered that the Plan mitigates against these effects as far as is possible.

14.7 A brief comment on each policy is after the matrix.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
	Sustainability Appraisal Matrix		Policies																
1	SA Objective		BE1	BE2	BE3	BE4	BE5	BE6	EE1	EE2	EE3	SLW1	T1	T2	T3	T4	LEH1	LEH2	Policy Overall
3	Environmental Objectives																		
4	SO1 - Reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change	Will the plan help to minimise the risk of flooding from rivers and watercourses to people and property?																	
5		Will the plan help to ensure that development is run - off neutral?																	
6		Will the plan encourage the use of sustainable drainage (SuDs) where feasible?																	
7		Will the plan help us to cope with hotter, drier summers (shade, ventilation, ground conditions etc.)?																	
8	SO2 - To reduce contributions to climate change	Will the plan help reduce emissions from greenhouse gasses by reducing energy consumption?																	
9		Will the plan help to increase the supply and encourage the use of renewable sources of energy?																	
10	SO3 - To use materials efficiently and minimise waste, then re-use or recover it through recycling, composting or energy recovery	Will the plan encourage the use of locally sourced materials?																	
11		Will the plan encourage the re-use and recycling of materials?																	
12		Will the plan help to minimise the use of natural resources?																	
13	SO4 - To provide for and maintain sustainable sources of water supply	Will the plan help to reduce water consumption?																	
14		Will the plan help maintain water flows in local watercourses and wetlands?																	
15	SO5 - To maintain and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity?	Will the plan help to conserve and enhance species diversity and in particular avoid harm to protected species?																	
16		Will the plan help to involve habitat creation/restoration?																	
17		Will the plan help to maintain and enhance sites designed for their conservation interest (including sites of international interest)?																	
18		Will the plan help to maintain and enhance the wildlife value of the rural and urban environment (e.g. hedgerows and other wildlife corridors)?																	
19	SO6 - To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes and townscapes	Will the plan help to reduce the amount of derelict, degraded and underused land and buildings?																	
20		Will the plan help to make a positive contribution to the townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place?																	
21		Will the plan maintain and enhance the landscape character and quality?																	
22		Will the plan help to respect the qualities of designated AONB?																	
23	SO7 - To conserve and enhance the historic environment	Will the plan help protect and enhance sites, features and areas of historical, archaeological and cultural value in both urban and rural areas?																	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1	Sustainability Appraisal Matrix		Policies																
2	SA Objective		BE1	BE2	BE3	BE4	BE5	BE6	EE1	EE2	EE3	SLW1	T1	T2	T3	T4	LEH1	LEH2	Policy Overall
24	SO8 - To protect and enhance the quality of land and soil	Will the plan help to minimise or avoid the loss of best and most versatile land?																	
25		Will the plan help protect soils?																	
26		Will the plan help reduce areas of contaminated land or avoid contaminating land?																	
27	SO9 - To protect and improve air quality	Will the plan help to reduce the incidence of airborne pollutants?																	
28		Will the plan help to encourage the planting of vegetation, particularly trees, in compensation for carbon dioxide emissions and other airborne pollutants?																	
29		Will the plan help to avoid the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)?																	
30	SO10 - To protect and improve water quality	Will the plan help to improve the quality of inland water?																	
31		Will the plan help to improve the quality of coastal waters?																	
32		Will the plan help to improve the quality of groundwater?																	
33	Social Objectives	Appraisal Questions																	
34	SA Objective																		
35	SO11 - To provide everybody with the opportunity to live in a decent home	Will the plan help to increase the range and affordability of housing for all social groups?																	
36		Will the plan help to reduce homelessness?																	
37		Will the plan help to improve the quality of existing homes and reduce the number of unfit homes?																	
38		Will the plan help to ensure the housing needs of the community are met locally?																	
39	SO12 - To reduce poverty and social exclusion	Will the plan help to reduce poverty and social exclusion in those areas most affected?																	
40	SO13 - To reduce anti-social activity, crime and manage the fear of crime?	Will the plan help to reduce the actual levels of crime?																	
41		Will the plan help to manage the fear of crime?																	
42		Will the plan help to reduce anti-social activity?																	
43	SO14 - Improve opportunities and access to jobs	Will the plan help to reduce overall unemployment and provide job opportunities for those most in need?																	
44		Will the plan help to increase the diversity of employers?																	
45		Will the plan help to increase the accessibility of key employment sites by public transport, walking and cycling?																	
46	SO15 - To protect and improve human health	Will the plan help to improve access to high quality health facilities?																	
47		Will the plan help to improve health inequalities?																	
48		Will the plan help to encourage walking and cycling?																	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1	Sustainability Appraisal Matrix		Policies																
2	SA Objective		BE1	BE2	BE3	BE4	BE5	BE6	EE1	EE2	EE3	SLW1	T1	T2	T3	T4	LEH1	LEH2	Policy Overall
49	SO16 - To improve the quality of where people live	Will the plan help to improve the satisfaction of people with their neighbourhoods as places to live?																	
50		Will the plan help to improve the quantity, quality, accessibility or amenity value of public open space?																	
51	SO17 - To minimise vibration, noise and light pollution	Will the plan help to avoid light pollution, particularly in sensitive areas?																	
52		Will the plan help to avoid an increase in noise and vibration levels?																	
53	SO18 - Give everyone access to learning, training, skills and knowledge	Will the plan help to improve the quality and/or accessibility of schools, colleges and libraries?																	
54	SO19 - Improve access to and encourage participation in cultural activities	Will the plan help to safeguard, create or improve facilities and spaces which support cultural, sporting, leisure activities such as performing and visual arts, museums, sports facilities and places of worship?																	
55	Economic Objectives	Appraisal Questions																	
56	SA Objective																		
57	SO20 - To encourage a diverse, robust and thriving economy	Will the plan help to encourage and accommodate both indigenous and inward investment?																	
58		Will the plan help to enhance the image of the area as a business and tourism location?																	
59		Will the plan help to improve the resilience of business and the economy?																	
60		Will the plan help to promote sustainable leisure and tourism?																	
61		Will the plan help to make land and property available for business development?																	
62		Will the plan help to encourage rural diversification?																	
63		Will the plan help to support the local/regional food industry?																	
64	SO21 - Promote vitality and viability of town and local centres	Will the plan help to maintain and increase the diversity of uses within Bridgewater centre?																	
65		Will the plan help to increase access to local shops?																	
66		Will the plan help to maintain the retail function within town centres and the provision of complementary uses?																	
67	SO22 - To reduce the effect of congestion	Will the plan help facilitate efficiency in freight distribution?																	
68		Will the plan help to reduce the need/desire to travel by car?																	
69		Will the plan help reduce traffic volumes and avoid exacerbating congestion?																	
70		Will the plan help to reduce the effect of heavy goods traffic on people and the environment?																	
71		Will the plan help to increase the proportion of journeys using modes other than the car?																	
72																			

Policy Notes

Policy BE1.

This policy shows an overall positive impact on the sustainability criteria as would be expected from a policy which is about energy conservation and mitigating the impact of climate change. This particularly addresses the environmental objectives SO1, SO2 and SO3.

Policy BE2.

This policy is about delivering an amount of housing which can be sustained in order to provide housing for local people. It has an overall positive impact. This policy especially meets the SA objectives SO11 and SO12 as key aspects of delivering socially responsible policies.

Policy BE3.

Policy BE3 is specifically aimed at meeting the objective of providing affordable housing to meet local need. This policy has an overall positive impact. This too meets the objectives of SO11 and SO12 in particular.

Policy BE4.

This policy is very much about maintaining the characteristics of the village and Gorge which give it its distinctiveness. It also aims to improve the wellbeing of neighbours by resisting tandem development but especially preventing inconsiderate and inappropriate parking, which in turn gives the village a more urban appearance than would be desired. This policy has some negative connotations as it acknowledges the number of cars rather than attempting to reduce them. This policy is aimed at meeting specifically objectives SO13, SO16 and SO20.

Policy BE5.

This policy is designed to determine a sense of place and to promote the distinctiveness of Cheddar. It has a positive impact and aims to meet objective SO16. It is also aimed at protecting the countryside from development and meet objectives SO20 and SO22.

Policy BE6.

This policy has a positive impact on providing preferred sites for residential development. The sites avoid flood plains and the AONB and following a sequential test provide the best access to village facilities, whilst reducing both urban and ribbon sprawl. This policy meets objectives SO6, SO11, SO16, and SO22.

Policy EE1.

This policy has a positive impact by aiming to maintain and enhance the economic value of the centre of Cheddar and providing local job opportunities. This meets objectives SO14, SO20, SO21, and SO22.

Policy EE2.

This policy has a positive impact by meeting the sustainability objectives related to encouraging tourism and its associated economic benefits whilst improving the appearance and reuse of a building in the Lower Gorge. This specifically meets objectives SO6 and SO20.

Policy EE3.

This policy is aimed at providing local employment sites which when developed will provide local employment opportunities. This has a positive effect on the sustainability of the village. The policy meets objectives SO14, SO20, SO21 and SO22.

Policy SLW1.

This policy has a positive impact by encouraging healthy living and offering the opportunity for providing further leisure facilities. This policy helps achieve objectives SO16 and SO19.

Policy T1.

Whilst further development will likely increase the amount of traffic on Cheddar roads, nevertheless this policy is aimed to prevent developers from carrying out the beneficial part of a permission (the development) but then declaring that conditioned improvements to infrastructure are too costly to carry out.

Policy T2.

This policy has a positive impact by encouraging more walking and cycling and providing safe access to the village. This policy supports objectives SO22, SO23.

Policy T3.

This policy has a positive impact on the village centre and consequently on the viability of shops and businesses in it. This aims to meet objectives SO16 and SO19.

Policy T4.

This policy has a mixed outcome as the appearance of the Gorge would be enhanced if parking were moved but another site would have to be found in a greenfield area to accommodate it. However if a sympathetic solution could be found to the parking problem then overall the impact would be positive as a major economic tourist destination would be improved. This policy impacts on objectives SO6 and SO20.

Policy LEH 1

This policy has a positive impact as it aims to protect the countryside, food producing land and rural employment opportunities. The impacts on the environment of light pollution are also addressed and the dark areas of the countryside and the views from the AONB are protected. This policy is aimed at meeting objectives SO5, SO6, SO16, SO17 and SO20.

Policy LEH2

This policy has a positive impact on preserving the distinctiveness of the village and protecting leisure, recreational and agricultural land on the western boundary of the village. This policy meets objectives SO5, SO7 and SO15.