

The Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The Neighbourhood Plan includes two distinct groups of policies, the first simply called Policies are to advise planners and affect the design, size, location and identify necessary mitigation for future housing development within the Parish. For clarity these policies have been highlighted with a border in this document.

The second group are called Action Policies and have been designed to direct decisions for both the Parish Council and B&NES about social and economic developments that the community has requested through the Neighbourhood Plan process. These policies are not intended to be delivered through the planning system, but through other funding streams.

To aid interpretation for decision makers and applicants, each policy is accompanied by supporting text setting out the context for the theme, the local community's views on that subject and the evidence, plans and strategies that offer support and evidence for its approach. All policies have been framed in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and the B&NES Core Strategy.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is first and foremost a land-use document a number of issues falling outside of the planning system's remit were identified by the local community during

consultation events. Alongside its core policies the Plan therefore includes a number of aspirations to encourage interventions by wider stakeholders. These are included within each topic where relevant.

Housing and Development

Stowey Sutton is a rural parish with approximately 450 houses in the village of Bishop Sutton and 50 houses in the smaller village of Stowey. The housing dates back to the early 19th century with a history of agriculture and mining. The character of the Parish is therefore of individual houses many built from locally quarried limestone dating back to housing to support farming and large estates such as Sutton Court, this is more obvious in Stowey, to cottages in Bishop Sutton associated with coal mining. There is therefore no one predominant character of housing across the Parish but more a mixed 'palette' of different designs, age and building materials. There were some small developments built in the 1950's, 1960's 1980's and 1990's which in turn add to the mixture.

The Parish undertook a detailed Character Assessment in 2014 and this supports the findings as summarized in this paragraph, i.e. that of a Parish made up of individual character houses, the houses have a sense of space and informality with open views, mature vegetation and trees and a sense of space and openness, they are built of different materials and styles.

The full Character Assessment and Community Asset document can be found at Appendix E and Appendix F It is noteworthy the recent Edward Ware and Barrett developments when completed,

along with previous Edward Ware developments, increasingly account for housing of a single design. Any similar large scale developments will severely challenge and change the character of the Parish.

Stowey Sutton is classed by B&NES as a Rural Allocation 1 village (Policy RA1) having a local shop, a primary school, a public house and public transport connections although the latter are less than adequate as evidenced through the bus timetables.

B&NES calculations for new houses in an RA1 village is based on a ratio to population carried out by officers in the development stages of the Core Strategy.

This identified the need in Bishop Sutton for around 50 houses of which 35% should be affordable. It should be noted that the B&NES definition of 'affordable' is housing available through social housing rental and the Council wide housing needs register.

For Bishop Sutton this figure of 'around 50 houses' has already (Feb 2014) been approved and exceeded as planning permission has already been given for a total of 76 houses a number which exceeds the B&NES building target for the Parish for 2029.

All of these houses have been built as part of two housing developments and are outside the HDB. Evidence shows that on average 3 new properties have been built within the Parish HDB every year since 2011. This accords with, and is incorporated with, the Parish Residential

housing policy which has been used to inform the development of this Neighbourhood Plan and can be viewed at <http://stowesuttonpc.org/parish-policy.asp>.

The Parish Policy on Residential Planning as adopted in in March 2012 and reviewed and updated by the Parish Council in June 2014. The policy states:

“This Parish Council recognises the duty placed on the district authority by central government to provide a significant number of additional dwellings in the B&NES area over the period to 2029. The Parish is defined by the District Council as a “rural allocation 1 settlement” and as such is expected to provide for “around 50” new houses within the Core Strategy in the period to 2029, this number has already been exceeded.

We believe that for the rural economy to remain sustainable and self-supporting, development should be organic, with each community growing by a smaller number of dwellings, these should be within the Housing Development Boundary, of an individual character in keeping with the character and build materials of the immediate area and in keeping with the findings of the Character Assessment.

Dwellings need to be of mixed size including one and two bedroom dwellings as well as provision for single occupancy, rather than by the development of a small number of large urban extensions.”

The view of the community in the housing and development questionnaire (March 2014) clearly identified that 49.8% did not want further large scale housing developments.

Footfall questioning of Parish residents supported small scale infill housing development of one to two bedrooms.

In the questionnaire where more housing was supported this was for 1 and 2 bedroomed houses. The results of the questionnaire have been set against other data including housing needs register, rental costs and availability, properties on the market and the cost/resale time of these, all the data informs the draft housing policies as set out below.

Housing and Development Policy SSHP01 Housing Boundary

The housing development boundary (HDB) for Bishop Sutton should be re-defined to strictly follow the existing HDB but with the addition of the strict boundary of the two already approved housing developments of Cappards and Oak Park which together total 76 houses.

See Figure 8

Reason: As the number of new houses already approved by B&NES has already exceeded the ‘around 50’ allocated to the Parish as an RA1 village within the Core Strategy for the period to 2028, further

large scale development would be in contravention of the Core Strategy.

Redefining the housing development boundary so that it matches the existing, with tight extensions around the recently approved developments, in accordance with the B&NES Placemaking plan HDB Criterion.



Figure 4 In 2014 Barratts began building 41 additional homes in Bishop Sutton

Housing and Development Policy SSHP02 Development Scale

The Neighbourhood Plan will support infill housing, within the housing development boundary, this is likely to be small scale development and will be of an individual character in keeping with the Character Assessment, the exception to such development will be if it is deemed to be harmful to the Green Belt, or threaten the AONB which has the highest level of protection in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

Reason: In accordance with NPPF para 79 which states – “The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.....the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”.

Furthermore, at paragraph 87 the Framework states “inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”

In respect of AONB the NPPF at para 115 states “Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations...”

The Character Assessment identifies areas of SSSI within the Parish. The NPPF at para 118 makes reference to “development of land within or outside a SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted”.

Housing and Development Policy SSHP03 Development Character

The Neighbourhood Plan will support future housing development which will reflect the character, varied materials and varied build design as identified through the Character Assessment and should be limited to infill within the amended HDB.

Reason: The already permitted development of 76 homes within Bishop Sutton exceeds the target to 2029 (in the Core Strategy) and equates to 14% of the village of Bishop Sutton this strongly

suggests that the village has reached and exceeded its 'critical mass' and the infrastructure cannot support additional housing beyond infill.

A survey of the Parish has identified a future potential supply of future housing build sites within the HDB.

During the preparation of the Character Assessment the Parish was divided into distinct areas with an assessment made of the character for each defined area, in considering infill reference should be made to and followed in respect of design and build materials. See Appendix E Character Assessment and sites boundaries.

Any development outside the HDB and within the Green Belt should be limited to the exceptions as listed in the NPPF at paragraph 89 and 90.



Figure 5 Typical Bishop Sutton House

Housing and Development Policy SSHP04 Property Size

In accordance with the 2014 housing needs survey the Neighbourhood Plan supports infill development which

proposes to build small (1 and 2 bedroom) low cost open market houses.

Other types and sizes of dwellings on infill sites will be supported if they reflect identified housing needs.

Reason: The 2014 Housing Needs Survey identified and quantified a local need for small, low cost open market housing.

This policy is designed to address the shortfall in smaller low cost open market properties, Demand for larger 3, 4 and 5 bedroomed open market houses and 1, 2 and 3 bedroom affordable houses for rental has been met by the recently approved developments of 76 houses within the Parish.

There was a small demand from existing residents wishing to move within the Parish to larger houses. This demand could be met from sales of this type of house being sold within the Parish.

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The demand from local residents wishing to move to affordable homes for rental was very low.

The gap in the supply of homes within the Parish as currently presented by developers is for low cost open market housing usually identified as "starter homes". This is not provided for in the recent large housing developments.

The Housing Needs Survey identified that a significant proportion (25%) of existing residents of the Parish had a family member who had been forced to leave the Parish due to the lack of any low cost open market housing, this was further evidenced by residents at the community event where local families currently renting could not afford to buy a home in the Parish.

Demand for larger 3, 4 and 5 bedrooled open market houses and 1, 2 and 3 bedroom affordable houses for rental has been met by the recently approved developments of 76 houses within the Parish. This policy seeks to reflect local representation to enable family members of existing residents to remain close to their wider family



Figure 6 Mountain Ash Farm

Housing and Development Policy SSHP05

Sustainability Impact

All planning applications must address the sustainability of each proposal and the impact on the whole community, in order to assess the mitigation necessary to balance the impact on the existing infrastructure and community.

Specific reviews must cover:

- Surface water drainage and flooding risk
- Electricity supply
- Mains gas supply
- Sewage capacity
- Parking provision
- Telephone capacity
- Broadband connections and performance for the whole community

The sustainability review must also include the impact of the proposed development on:

- Primary schooling
- Secondary schooling
- Pre-school provision
- Recreational facilities

The developer will be expected to propose how any deficiency or risk identified in the reviews will be addressed, this may be through Community Infrastructure Levy or via a Section 106 Agreement where possible. (See Appendix B Sustainability and infrastructure).

Reason: In the recent surveys carried out by the Parish Council the quality of the local broadband service was rated as poor and in particular was quoted as the reason why 3 local businesses had left the Parish. The impact of the additional 76 houses on the phone and broadband service is unknown but is unlikely to improve matters.

Many aspects of local infrastructure are currently poor or just acceptable, the addition of additional housing without a meaningful review of its impact and where necessary improvement is not a sustainable way forward.



Figure 7 The Old Vicarage Stowey

Housing and Development Policy SSHP06 Lighting

Where lighting is proposed, it should be designed to avoid intruding into areas where darkness is a characteristic of the village. Any lighting scheme must not impact negatively near woodland edges or near hedgerows used by bats for foraging.

Reason: This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect and enhance the conservation interests of the North Somerset and Mendips Bat Special Area of

Conservation. There are also areas of the Parish that lie within the Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Beauty, an objective of this plan is to minimise light pollution sources wherever possible.

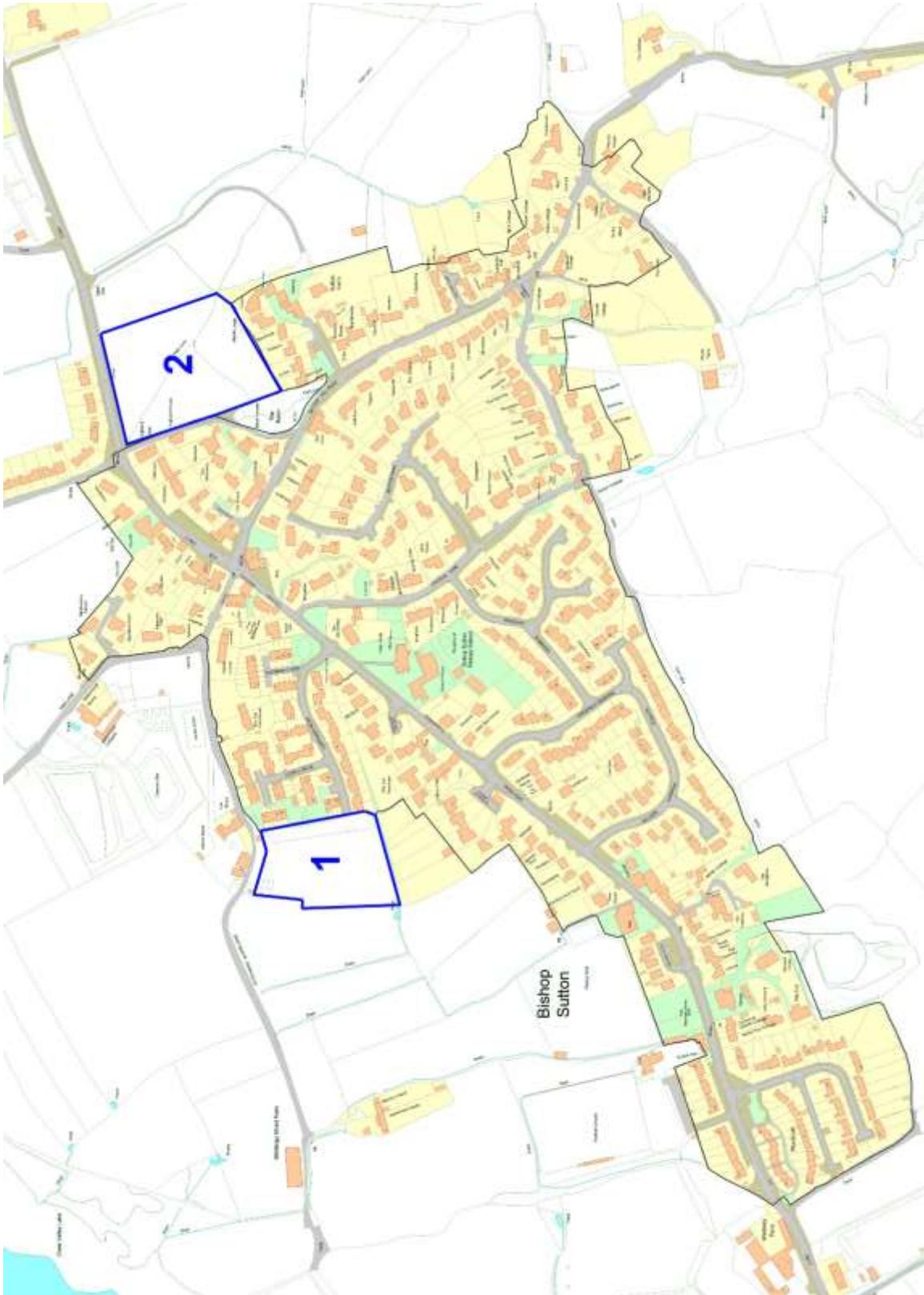


Figure 8: Stovey Sutton housing development boundary within black border, with revised housing development areas 1 & 2 boundaries shown with blue border.

Business and Employment

Our Business and Employment policies are derived from consultation with the business community balanced with the preferences of the residents of the parish and set out to accord with the overall aims of making our community more sustainable and vibrant, whilst remaining compliant with both the B&NES Core Strategy and national policy.

In particular, the policies seek to encourage and facilitate the establishment and growth of sustainable businesses to create local employment opportunities where possible.

Community preferences were garnered using several consultation methods including informal gatherings as well as formally conducted and collated community surveys.

The headline issues raised were:

- The lack of local employment opportunities and currently limited support and infrastructure for homeworking
- Improved access to and parking for village retail and catering businesses is also necessary to encourage their use and to make them sustainable
- Improvements are desperately required to the broadband currently on offer to businesses in the parish, with several people identifying lost opportunities directly related to this poor performance.

This concern was echoed by the majority of respondents in the community as well because the inadequate broadband limits its use for social, recreational and retail purposes.

Background

Many of the issues highlighted in the community consultation process derive from the fact that the District Council has permitted several residential developments, which are large by rural standards, over the last 20 years, each of which has been a self-contained dormitory development, with few links to the existing community and no associated commercial development, causing the new residents to commute to larger local centres, such as Bath and Bristol in search of work.

This is not a sustainable approach and although the lack of adequate rural public transport means that private cars are needed to access any commercial development.



Figure 9 Westway Business Units

Business and Employment Policy SSBE01 Business Conservation and Preservation

THE Neighbourhood Plan supports the continued usage of business or office units in preference to converting such properties to domestic housing wherever planning permission is required.

Reason: To ensure economic sustainability of the Parish through avoiding a reduction in business premises and to maintain local employment opportunities.

Business and Employment Policy SSBE002 Business Type

The Neighbourhood Plan will encourage and support new retail, catering, small office and business units or the expansion of existing businesses, providing they can be shown to be viable, sustainable, benefit the local economy and the wellbeing of the parish.

They should be sensitive to the local setting and not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding environment.

Reason: The Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire identified some types of business which would be welcomed and therefore sustainable within the Parish we will encourage an appropriate mix of business leading to a more sustainable community which will also improve and

enhance facilities available to residents and provide employment opportunities.

Business and Employment Policy SSBE03 Employee



Figure 10 Cut Above Hairdresser's

Parking

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance that new businesses provide adequate parking for both staff and customers.

Reason: Retained B&NES local plan policies require access to commercial developments by public transport, however the lack of adequate rural public transport means that private cars are needed to access any commercial development

Business and Employment Policy SSBE04 Homeworking

Building alterations that support homeworking for residents will be supported in principle by this Neighbourhood Plan.

Reason: The Parish has experienced a reduction in small businesses during recent years which has reduced local employment opportunities, home working will help to prevent the parish becoming a dormitory, encouraging a better work life balance for residents.



Figure 11 F E Brent and Sons Garage

Homeworking is defined as a householder and one or two other people working in a way which does not intrude on neighbouring properties adversely, for instance by increasing traffic, receiving large vehicles, generating noise or odours, or by working anti-social hours.

Business and Employment Action Policy SSBE05 Broadband

The Neighbourhood Plan strongly supports the need for faster Broadband speed, through development of fibre optic networks, to slow the movement out of the Parish of existing small businesses and to encourage new business to relocate or set up within the Parish.

The community supports developments to improve broadband speed across the parish through community investment.

Reason: this will bring long term sustainability through the provision of employment opportunities as well as enabling working from home to support business enterprises and social communication. Businesses once established will be able to compete openly on a national basis.

Transport and Communications

Our roads and transports policies are derived from the preferences of the residents of the parish and set out to accord with the overall aims of making our transport infrastructure more sustainable, more accessible for both work and social use and safer for all, whilst remaining compliant with the B&NES Core Strategy as well as national policy. In particular, the policies seek to encourage and facilitate the use of public and non-motorised transport where possible.

Community preferences were garnered using several consultation methods including informal gatherings as well as

formally conducted and collated community surveys.

The headline issues raised were:

- It is only feasible to reduce the carbon footprint of transport in the parish by improving access to public transport and by encouraging cycling and walking through improved facilities and safety
- Improved access to and parking for village retail businesses is also necessary to encourage their use and to make them sustainable
- Safer parking and access to other facilities such as the school also featured highly, with significant support for traffic calming measures, in particular, a specific survey on the subject of safe road crossings highlighted the fact that a high



Figure 12 Map of Bishop Sutton showing community and commercial premises

proportion of pedestrians do not feel safe when crossing the main through road in Bishop Sutton.

Background

Many of the issues highlighted in the community consultation process derive from the fact that the parish's main thoroughfare is the busy A368, and particularly the fact that virtually all of Bishop Sutton's public and commercial buildings are on that road. This gives rise to safety concerns regarding crossings, parking and general access to premises.

In addition the settlement at Stowey is bisected by another busy road "The Street" which is currently frequently used by a significant volume of through traffic and heavy goods vehicles, which are unsuitable for the design, width, route and classification of the road, as can be evidenced by the frequent damage to walls and pavements.

Map of Bishop Sutton showing A368 and public / commercial premises

Road and Transport Action Policy SSRT01 Public Transport

The Neighbourhood Plan supports improving the availability of public transport both for the purpose of commuting to work outside of the parish and for general social use such as for journeys between local villages

Specifically, a viable link to services facilitating commuting to local urban centres to be developed using funding from CIL and grants where available.

Reason: Current bus services are limited both in terms of number of journeys and the times of those journeys, making commuting to Bristol, Bath and other likely places of employment impractical if not impossible. For instance, the current timetable for buses to Bristol from Bishop Sutton shows one departure suitable for commuting to work (assuming normal office hours), departing as it does at 07.15 and arriving at 08.17.

Only weekly services are available to centres such as Bath, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton or Weston-Super-Mare so commuting by public transport is not possible.

Additionally, the current services do not facilitate local journeys in any practical way and are thus making no contribution to the reduction of private car use or to the social and community life in the parish and wider Chew Valley.

Road and Transport Action Policy SSRT02 Parking

The Neighbourhood Plan supports improving access to local retail facilities by the provision of additional parking spaces, particularly in the area of the junction of the A368 and Sutton Hill Road, where a local retail store, a hairdresser and a pub/restaurant are located.

While the pub/restaurant has adequate parking facilities, the shop/post office and the hairdresser are limited to three and four parking spaces respectively.

This policy will be promoted using funding from CIL and grants where available.

Reason: From the community consultation survey, 72% of respondents stated the need to facilitate and make safer the use of the existing retail facilities by residents of the parish. Further, the alternative being journeys by private transport to facilities further afield, it is crucial to the general reduction of the carbon footprint of the area that use of these facilities be encouraged. It is also essential to accommodate the additional 'user traffic' for the above facilities likely to derive from current housing developments and to encourage the development of other, similar businesses for the same reasons.



Figure 13 The village hairdresser has four spaces to accommodate customers and staff

Road and Transport Action Policy SSRT03 Footpaths

The Neighbourhood Plan supports improvements to existing footpaths and

the provision of safer and more extensive footpaths throughout the village and parish, including pedestrian friendly access to:

- The Herriotts Mill area which contains a farm shop, restaurant and children's leisure area
- Bishop Sutton village, site of a Church and an extensive retail outlet
- Chew Valley Lake area, providing extensive leisure facilities, a tea room and a farmers market. This will be promoted through the use of funding from CIL and grants where available and will need to safeguard the Chew Valley SPA and North Somerset and Mendips Bat SAC.
- Extend and upgrade the footpath along the A368 linking the villages of Stowey & Bishop Sutton

Reason: Current footpaths are inadequate, too narrow and unsafe in places. Considerable improvement as well as development of new access paths is essential to improve safety and to provide access for the general population as a whole but particularly for wheelchair or mobility scooter users together with people with children or using a pushchair.

Road and Transport Action Policy SSRT04 Safe Road Crossing

The Neighbourhood Plan supports provision of safe road crossing facilities at relevant points throughout the village and parish.

This is essential given the likely increase in both vehicular and pedestrian traffic arising from the newer housing developments.

Sites with a high footfall together with busy junctions like the junction of the A368 and Sutton Hill road, the junction of A368 and Bonhill Road and popular crossing points such as the area around the School entrance(s), as well as social and meeting places like the Bishop Sutton Village and Methodist halls, should be considered for the provision of safe pedestrian crossings. To be promoted using funding from CIL and grants where available.

Reason: Despite being on the busy A368, the village is very poorly served for safe pedestrian crossing opportunities. This is to be remedied for both safety reasons and for the more general purpose of facilitating use of village facilities rather than undertaking journeys to other centres. In particular, consideration must be given to making crossing the A368 safer for wheelchair users, riders of mobility scooters and the elderly together with people with children or using a pushchair.

In particular, on the 15th July 2014 a specific survey (*page 195*) asking whether pedestrians felt safe in crossing the roads in the area highlighted the fact that a very high proportion do not always do so.

The areas of main concern were at the junction of the A368 and Sutton Hill Road and by the village school.



Figure 14 The village shop and post office is limited to three parking spaces for its customers

Road and Transport Action Policy SSRT05 Cycle and Walk for Recreation

The Neighbourhood Plan supports provision of safe and accessible walking and cycling facilities for leisure purposes. For example the leisure opportunities already available at Chew Valley Lake need to be optimised by the provision of a safe cycle and footpath route that provides improved access to the lake. Any provision for cycling and walking access around the entire lake will only be supported and promoted where the route has been designed in partnership with Natural England and Bristol Water and where it adopts a sensitive route that will avoid any detrimental impacts of the special interests of the designated Special Protection Area. In accordance with policy SSRT03.

Reason: The parish is at the heart of an AONB and lies on the bank of one of the AONB's best features; Chew Valley Lake. However, the lake area is not accessible from Bishop Sutton or Stowey villages other than by road. Footpath and cycle path access is essential to reduce the need for car journeys to this local facility, to provide safer use of this leisure area for

both pedestrians and cyclists and to increase the overall appeal of the parish as a tourist destination In partnership with Natural England.

Road and Transport Action Policy SSRT06 Stowey Weight Restriction

The Neighbourhood Plan supports restrictions on the size and volume of traffic using "The Street" in Stowey, by the implementation of a 7.5 ton weight limit, except for access to properties within the restricted zone, from the junction at the top of Stowey Hill to the junction with the A368. This will require further restrictions to prevent users diverting via Sutton Hill Road and other unsuitable routes. This will be promoted using funding from CIL and grants where available.

Reason: The road that climbs Stowey Hill from the village is suffering from subsidence, caused in part by the volume of traffic and heavy goods vehicles using this road, there is regular damage to walls and kerbs within Stowey caused by drivers of large vehicles who mis-judge the available space.

A decision to impose this restriction was taken by B&NES Transportation sub-committee on the 3rd October 2000 but has never been implemented.

Community and Recreation

The survey of the parish showed nearly all respondents consider the parish to be a comfortable and safe place to live with basic recreational and community facilities.



Figure 15 School is at the heart of the community

However, the playground facilities are quite limited and the problem of anti-social behaviour from young people (as evidenced by local police reports) in the vicinity of the Village Hall and bus shelter affects Bishop Sutton on a regular cycle.

There is a strong call for better public transport from the village, not only to more destinations, but with greater frequency, particularly for commuters.

The survey shows strong support for safe crossing points along the A368 in Bishop Sutton.

Many respondents expressed the view that there is insufficient parking spaces for the shop, hairdressers and Red Lion.

Pavements in Bishop Sutton are in need of improvement along with pedestrian access to Manor Farm Shop and Chew Valley Lake. Additional retail and café / restaurant facilities within the parish are also to be encouraged.

The broadband service in the parish is notoriously slow and does not effectively support many of the facilities that should be available. There are concerns that further housing development will exacerbate the situation.

There is concern that the pre-school will not be able to meet the increased demand for places with the current housing development taking place within the parish. There is also a lack of after school child care that is resulting in children being taken by taxi to neighbouring parishes for these facilities.



Figure 16 Bishop Sutton Primary School

Improvements in recreational facilities including existing play areas are needed including more recreation space and leisure facilities with facilities for older children and teenagers.

More recent housing development in the parish has small gardens with insufficient space for growing fruit and vegetables

such that there may be demand for allotments within the parish.

Community and Recreational Action Policy

SSCR01 Recreation Ground

The Neighbourhood Plan will promote greater use of the recreation ground and play areas within the parish, improving facilities to meet the needs of users of all age groups, including access to toilet facilities at the recreation ground when the village hall is closed. To be promoted using funding from CIL and grants where available.

Reason: Several community groups have identified inadequacies in the current recreational facilities in the parish, causing many residents to travel to other facilities outside the village.

A group of residents is already working towards improvements to some of the play facilities for younger children, whilst another group have identified the problem with the lack of toilet facilities when the village hall is not available.



Figure 17 Bishop Sutton Village Hall



Figure 18 Bishop Sutton recreation ground

Community and Recreational Action Policy

SSCR02 Allotments

The Neighbourhood Plan will support the provision of allotments for community use where there is an identified need. To be promoted using funding from CIL and grants where available.

Reason: To encourage recreational activities and provide a healthy and sustainable food supply, together with developing a better understanding of the food chain in younger residents.