We are creating a network of natural neighbourhoods that are exemplar of sustainable living and innovation, with infrastructure in place from the outset.
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TREES AND HEDGEROWS INTEGRATED WITHIN DEVELOPMENT FOR WILDLIFE, SHADE AND IMPROVED AIR QUALITY

THE INTEGRATION OF ALLOTMENTS TO PROVIDE LOCAL FOOD, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND AS A MECHANISM OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

ROUTES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN WALKING OR CYCLING TO SCHOOL SAFELY AND EASILY

CLEAR NETWORK OF FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEPATHS MAKING THE DEVELOPMENT WELCOMING FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS

PERMEABLE DRIVEWAYS TO HELP DRAINAGE

TREES AND HEDGEROWS INTEGRATED WITHIN DEVELOPMENT FOR WILDLIFE, SHADE AND IMPROVED AIR QUALITY

SHARPNESS VALE: natural neighbourhoods
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document has been produced in support of Stroud District Council’s Local Plan Review, which highlights the option of planning a new sustainable settlement at land at Sharpness to help meet the District’s housing and employment requirements.

1.2 It sets out the background, rationale and vision for the development of new neighbourhoods at Sharpness that are exemplar of sustainable living and innovation. The proposals comprise of up to 5,000 dwellings, new employment provision, a new service centre comprising local retail provision, community facilities, health facilities, education provision, renewable energy initiatives, and an extensive web of green infrastructure, including public open space and Strategic Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG).

1.3 The site is being promoted by Sharpness Development LLP which is a partnership between GreenSquare Group and Lioncourt Strategic Land.

1.4 GreenSquare brings its extensive experience of delivering socially sustainable communities and Lioncourt brings commercial experience that will enable the practical delivery of the place and its multistructural infrastructure requirements over the full term of the development phases.

1.5 GreenSquare was formed is 2008 – but can trace its origins back more than 150 years. Today the group owns and manages around 12,000 homes across Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and Gloucestershire.

1.6 Passionate about great places to live, GreenSquare’s core purpose is to be a brilliant landlord, providing homes for rent and shared ownership for those who cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the open market.

1.7 Its well-established housebuilding company GreenSquare Homes also develops new homes for sale, with profits reinvested to help fund more social homes and services for customers. These quality developments range from modern family homes in rural locations, to contemporary city apartments, to specialist property for the over-55s.

1.8 Lioncourt Strategic Land

1.9 Lioncourt Group is a Worcestershire based company comprising Lioncourt Homes Limited, a five-star quality rated housebuilder and Lioncourt Strategic Land Limited, a specialist land trading company.

1.10 Formed in 2006, Lioncourt Group is committed to working with local communities to produce high quality developments that are promoted through and shaped by the planning system.
2.1 Our aim is to create an exemplar, high-quality and sustainable network of new neighbourhoods that people will aspire to live and invest in with a real ‘sense of place.’ The new neighbourhoods will have a strong nature and biodiversity ethos, using the opportunities presented by existing landscape features as well as creating outstanding new spaces. The development will grow organically over time and will be connected by green corridors, personal transport routes (including new walking and cycling infrastructure) and bus routes with the overall aim of minimising car use and maximising the availability of alternative transportation options. We want to get the basics right, providing easy ways to move around the new neighbourhoods and beyond, either by foot or by bike rather than by car.

2.2 The new neighbourhoods will be set back considerably from the Severn Estuary and will provide a new bird reserve (a new high tide roost area), to complement the existing roost site at Berkeley Pill. Proposals also include the diversion of a section of the Severn Way to a location further from Berkeley Pill, as well as restricted access to the new bird reserve, a warden programme and a ‘bird aware’ equivalent scheme for dog walkers in order to avoid recreational disturbance to wetland birds. Visual amenity associated with the estuary location will be maintained by the installation of viewing platforms, allowing visitors the opportunity to look out over the new bird reserve and estuary, and forming a key component of the wider Green Infrastructure and SANG strategy.
2.3 A web of multifunctional Green Infrastructure (GI) will permeate throughout the development including the provision of SANG to absorb human recreational activity, particularly dog walking, away from the Severn Estuary. Work is ongoing with delivery partners and stakeholders including Natural England, the Environment Agency and Building with Nature to continue to develop this bespoke and innovative approach to GI, SANG, and the future management of the new nature reserve.

2.4 The new neighbourhoods will aim to reduce the carbon footprint of its residents and visitors. Energy efficient building methodologies, systems and equipment will support the sustainable use of energy throughout the lifetime of the buildings. The development will not be reliant on domestic gas supply and there will be no provision of domestic gas fuelled boilers.

2.5 On the strength of meetings now held to date with Network Rail, we are also designing our scheme to include the re-opening of the railway line at Sharpness, including the construction of a new station. We envisage that service to be twice hourly from Sharpness to Cam and on to Gloucester. In the interim, a dedicated coach service will link Sharpness to Bristol City Centre providing a quick and reliable option for commuters. Further smart bus services will be incorporated from the outset helping to lessen the demand for car ownership and usage. There will also be enhanced delivery of electric vehicle charging points across the site.

2.6 We are partnering with Virgin Media to deliver lightning fast broadband with top average speeds of 1Gbps to the area. Access to higher speed broadband can bring great social and economic benefits through:

- Helping to improve quality of life through increased access to services as well as enabling the wider use of the more social and recreational uses of the internet which can help to reduce social isolation
- Enabling new and existing business opportunities to prosper and maintain competitiveness in the market
- Enabling a greater ability for home working which can help to reduce the need for commuting by car for employment purposes

2.7 A fast broadband network will also assist with public transport connectivity enabling the provision of accurate real time information on public transport services.
3. WHY AT SHARPNESS?

STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

3.1 The Stroud District Local Plan was formally adopted by the Council on the 19th November 2015 and sets out the strategy for development in the District until 2031. However, as part of the adopted Plan, Stroud District Council made a commitment to an early review of the Plan commencing within five years of adoption or by December 2019, whichever is the sooner.

3.2 The Council is now undertaking the process of reviewing the current Local Plan to ensure it remains up-to-date and, importantly, can meet future needs up to the period of 2040. In that context, Sharpness provides a unique and exceptional opportunity to secure sustainable development to meet the District’s needs to 2040 and beyond.

3.3 As part of this review, Stroud District Council is due to begin consulting on its Draft Local Plan Review which identifies the potential for the development of a new sustainable settlement at Sharpness under site reference PS36 (new settlement at Sharpness) with the following to be delivered over the plan period:

- Up to 2,400 dwellings by year 2040 (5,000 by 2050);
- 10 ha employment;
- A new local centre including shops and community uses;
- New schools; and
- Strategic Green Infrastructure, landscaping and open space.

3.4 As noted in the Draft Local Plan for consultation, the proposed allocation of land at Sharpness is not envisaged as an extension to the existing settlement of Newtown & Sharpness, but as a distinct new settlement in its own right.

CURRENT SITUATION

3.5 Sharpness has existing rail infrastructure, waterways, capacity for improvements/change to the highway infrastructure, existing employment and heritage. It has a unique character and is rich in history, it is an area relatively unconstrained which offers many opportunities. Sharpness is a privileged location for growth in which the demand for housing within the plan period and beyond can be addressed in a sustainable manner. This will provide certainty in the direction of growth for the future of the District.
3.6 Sharpness has the potential to challenge existing ways of working and thinking to push the boundaries of residential led design quality to create a series of interlinked neighbourhoods, using local materials and building on the principles of sustainability to create something innovative and different.

3.7 One of the main objectives will be to create a recognisably high quality development that people will aspire to live and invest in, with a vibrant mix of uses and a real ‘sense of place’, using the opportunities and constraints presented by the Special Protection Area along the Severn and the existing highway network.

3.8 New neighbourhoods at Sharpness will assimilate development into the landscape being both a place people choose to live and work in, but also a place people can enjoy visiting. New places will be designed to be inclusive of all users and will encourage walking, cycling and other modes of personal transport as principal modes of transport (car users will be secondary to pedestrians and cyclists). Its location makes the future development ideal for the provision of safe and accessible ‘green’ route networks that will connect residential areas with areas of employment, education, shopping and leisure, thereby reducing carbon emissions and environmental impact.

3.9 The intention will be for the neighbourhoods to grow organically in the future in a logical and sustainable manner benefiting from the new infrastructure created by the initial development. In this way, the District will have a concentrated growth point for its future, taking away the anxiety of where tiers of growth may end up in the future.
3.10 Development at Sharpness would positively respond to the adopted Local Plan’s principal aims including:

- Achieving sustainable development;
- Creation of mixed, balanced and unique identity communities;
- Improved public transport services;
- Creation of a ‘place to live and work’- reducing out-commuting and travel;
- Greater employment opportunities;
- Easily accessible and adaptable public open spaces;
- Enhanced high quality environment;
- Specialised facilities for young people and the elderly;
- Targeting a zero carbon agenda;
- Increased capacity for renewable energy generation and energy efficiency; and
- Improved tourism industry performance with a wider range of leisure facilities.
4. THE POTENTIAL SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Our preliminary studies have established that growth at Sharpness provides a realistic and deliverable development opportunity.

4.2 With the potential to deliver up to 5,000 new homes, together with a comprehensive package of accompanying social and physical infrastructure, it is clear that development at Sharpness could provide a steady stream of housing delivery to help meet Stroud District Council’s future housing needs.

4.3 The design of the new neighbourhoods will be informed by the Ten Characteristics of the National Design Guide as a basis to create a beautiful place. The Ten Characteristics are:

1. Context – enhances the surroundings.
2. Identity – attractive and distinctive.
4. Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
7. Uses – mixed and integrated.
9. Resources – efficient and resilient.
10. Lifespan – made to last.

4.4 The current proposals for the overall development is:

- 10 Ha Employment
- Education Campus/Secondary School
- 3 No. new Primary Schools & extended primary school
- Up to 5,000 homes
- Railway halt
- Retail
- Community Uses
- Open Space
4.5 The initial Phase 1 in the Current Plan Period is for:

- 2,400 homes
- 1 No. Primary School
- 1 No. existing primary school expanded to 2FE
- 10 ha employment
- Retail
- Community Uses
- Open Space
400M development exclusion zone

The natural landscape creates the edge to the Severn and Berkeley

Web of connected green infrastructure

New railway halt centrally located and linking to Cam/Dursley and Gloucester

SHARPNESS VALE: natural neighbourhoods
High quality bus provision and dedicated coach services

A hierarchy of cycling and personal transport routes that take you directly to the destinations

Network of people friendly streets
5. REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

5.1 The design of Sharpness is proposing to assist both the United Nations “Sustainable Development Goals”, the Government’s future carbon budgets and UK’s 2050 target to reduce emissions. To assist in meeting these goals we propose there are:

- **Far greater opportunities to work from home** - we are committed to delivering a gigabit-level broadband network with a provider to facilitate home working, fast network for schools and public transport connectivity. This will bring high speed broadband infrastructure to the wider area too;

- **Supporting ‘car freedom’** - Residents will be able to rely less on the car with convenient and sustainable transport. There will also be an extensive cycling network as well as a managed and centralised cycle specific programme, where residents and visitors can buy, hire, get cycle repairs, have cycle lessons and learn basic maintenance. We’re designing our scheme to include the re-opening of the Sharpness to Cam & Dursley line, with the construction of a new station. There’s likely to be a twice hourly shuttle service from Sharpness to Cam & Dursley, with connections from there to Gloucester and Bristol Parkway. Smart bus services will serve Sharpness from the outset. Electric vehicle charging points will be available both around the site and in homes;

- **Pioneering the latest in innovative energy from renewable sources** – A decentralised energy centre is proposed to provide heating and power. There is scope for capacity to be built into this energy centre to serve existing buildings in vicinity of the scheme in addition to the new scheme - providing a tangible benefit to the surrounding area. We will not be providing a domestic gas supply network;

- **Reduction in domestic carbon emissions** - Residents will be able to control their energy use through smart technology in their homes and the houses will utilise the latest in green building design techniques, from insulation through to water-saving features. The energy hierarchy will be adopted to apply lean, clean and green energy conservation principles to the scheme to contribute to an energy efficient, low carbon design strategy.

- **Reduction in waste** – A new scheme of this scale provides a unique opportunity to consider waste management and achieve efficiencies that are usually unattainable on smaller developments, particularly with regards to recycling and reuse. The development will seek to reduce the use of resources, reuse resources and recycle both domestic and construction waste;
• **Local supply** – New areas for farming and horticulture will be provided that will also link to spaces in the mixed use area for the sale of local produce. The land to the west could be an Urban Farm with organic dry pasture and wet pasture (the latter supported from Surface Water (SW) and recycled grey water). This could include horticulture or a market garden with the farmer liaising with the local community in terms of what would be planted to be sold locally. Some of the existing farm buildings could be converted into a community centre to add value to the harvested produce.

• **Carbon Sinks** – There will be new areas of woodland that will assist with carbon sequestration. The woodland will also assist with landscape character and visual amenity. The woodland could be managed for game and/or foraging and include elements of orchard. We envisage allotments would occupy indents in the settlement edge within easy walking distance of dwellings.
6. DELIVERING A WEB OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 Sharpness provides a unique opportunity to create a district-scale, holistic, multi-functional network of green open space. This web of green infrastructure (GI) is an essential component of the DNA of Stroud District and would create a:

a) healthy environment supporting residents’ well-being;
b) significant net gain in biodiversity in terms of both habitat and wildlife species; and
c) beautiful townscape and landscape characters.

6.2 This is in addition to the need to create Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to avoid recreation effects to wetland birds associated with the Severn Estuary SPA/Ramsar site.

6.3 Nature spans artificial anthropogenic boundaries, and so the GI of Sharpness would be seamlessly connected to the wider district/county-wide GI network by strong corridors with multiple functions.

6.4 The different types of GI elements to be woven together include:

- Existing water courses: including the River Severn, Berkeley Pill and the several streams and ditches, which could be reverse-engineered for added amenity, attenuation and wildlife benefit;
- Proposed water bodies: such as wildlife scrapes, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) ponds (to attenuate and clean surface water) and constructed wetlands for waste water treatment;
- Existing and new native woodland, hedgerows and trees: to help assimilate development into the landscape, whilst providing important linked habitat, refuge, shelter, shade, food, materials and visual amenity;
- New open habitats: of wildflower-rich grassland, pasture and reed beds (replacing the existing species-poor, high-nutrient reliant yet impoverished improved/semi-improved grassland), to create seasonal beauty whilst improving the soils, enhancing biodiversity and providing low intensity grazing and fodder;
- Areas for sustainable food production: including potential for low-input community farming, horticulture and private allotments, with opportunities for apiculture with bees harvesting the new green corridors;
- Areas for sustainable energy production: such as solar farms or biomass production, managed in a rotation sensitive to wildlife;
- Amenity spaces: such as parks focused on informal human relaxation and recreation, but managed with wildlife in mind; and
- Formal sports and play: including areas of equipped natural play and formal sports pitches.
6.5 Each of these nodes of GI would be linked together or connected by GI corridors, which themselves serve multiple functions, e.g. as public footpaths, cycle paths, water courses, hedgerows or linear habitats.
a) Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity

6.6 The Site is set next to the Severn Estuary which is designated as a Ramsar site, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); these are statutory designations of the highest (International/European) nature conservation value and reflect the importance of the Severn’s estuarine habitats and passage of wintering birds that visit the estuary each year. The masterplan has ensured that the Severn’s wildlife and habitats are not adversely affected, by ensuring that:

- built development is located away from the estuary shoreline, to a distance of at least 400m and in many locations much more;
- there is ample accessible semi-natural GI elsewhere within and around the neighbourhoods to divert recreational usage away from the estuary with appropriate management of recreational access to the estuary;
- a proposed new Nature Reserve near Berkeley Pill, with ‘scrapes’ to enhance the habitat for endangered wetland birds, such as lapwing and wigeon. Managed by delivery partners in conjunction with a wardening and ‘bird-aware’ scheme; and
- a section of the Severn Way is diverted away from Berkeley Pill and the shoreline.

6.7 Elsewhere, the majority of the Site consists of agricultural land (arable and improved grassland) interspersed with a strong hedgerow network comprising some species-rich hedgerows, and ponds. With the exception of the strong hedgerow, survey work undertaken has shown that the existing habitats are neither unique nor exceptionally valuable and are therefore not ‘in principle’ constraints; being of only local-intrinsic ecological value or less.

6.8 In contrast to modern, intensive agricultural practices (which often rely on a high and unsustainable levels of outputs that can pollute the soil and water), the GI proposals together provide a fantastic opportunity for tangible and sustainable biodiversity gain across this part of the district. The GI corridors provide an extensive habitat network to interlinked semi-natural islands of greenspace, providing a network that will be of high wildlife value.

6.9 In terms of trees, the highest arboricultural value is associated with the large number of lapsed oak pollards present, a significant proportion of which have ‘veteran’ status (and receive national planning policy protection). These lapsed pollards have the potential for exceptional longevity, for providing niche biodiversity opportunities, and for unique features of the site’s landscape.
6.10 A sensible GI management regime would lead to improvements at all scale, from soil health, micro-flora and fauna to increased populations of larger birds and animals that are supported by them and many of which are currently endangered. For example, the proposed district-wide series of constructed wetlands for on-site waste water treatment (on a larger scale to that at Slimbridge), would not only reduce the need for hard engineering, but would create new reed-bed habitats for a variety of birds.
b) Supporting Health and Well-Being

6.11 The web of GI at Sharpness is designed to bring green space and associated nature very close to all the resident human population. There is a growing body of empirical research and evidence to show how being in close proximity to nature can maintain and even improve the mental health and well-being of human beings.

6.12 The accessible nature of the proposed GI web will ensure that every new resident will live within approximately 200m of open space and movement corridors, providing onward access to various amenity destinations and recreation experiences. The GI corridors provide an extensive network of interlinked semi-natural spaces of high amenity value.

6.13 This design principal of accessibility will help ensure that the resident population, including dog-walkers, would satiate their amenity needs without adding material visitor pressure to the Severn Estuary.

6.14 Each of the destination spaces and the interconnecting routes will serve many purposes and will also be designed to be accessible, in terms of gradient and surface treatment. The proposals will result in attractive, high quality spaces that not only support a diverse wildlife population, but contribute significantly to the health and wellbeing of the human population. For example, the extensive woodland planting will help mitigate noise, air quality and even shelter the urban areas from cold north-westerly winter winds.

6.15 The GI web will have a finer grain of connections types, such as retained Public Rights of Way (PRoW), new permissive footpaths and cycleways and new shared streets. Signage would be used to highlight the ‘piste map’ of circular rides and walks including short and easy (‘green’) routes of 1km, to longer and more challenging (‘red’) routes, over 3km in distance. The ‘black’ routes may include sections of ‘trim-trail’ with fitness stations.

6.16 Rather than ‘pepper-potting’ sports facilities around the development, two or three multi-functional sports hubs are proposed that are well connected by personal transport routes and close to schools and residents to encourage healthy lifestyles.
c) Creating Landscape and Townscape Character

6.17 The Severn Estuary creates a unique landscape setting for the individual Sharpness neighbourhoods. Views and physical links to the estuary are created through direct axial lines along GI corridors that incorporate sustainable and non-car based movement in a similar way to the ‘Copenhagen Model’ or early Garden Village concept diagrams.

6.18 The British landscape is not, and never has been, a static environment, but has continuously evolved in response to functional needs, technological advancement, population dynamics and climate pressures. Development at Sharpness will respect (protect, conserve and enhance) baseline character, but more importantly, it can create new and more diverse and beautiful landscapes and townscapes.

6.19 There are listed farm buildings on-site and nearby which, in some cases, have associated land that makes a positive contribution to their significance and forms a location from where their significance can be appreciated. The openness of this land will need to be preserved, and the listed buildings can continue to be read and appreciated within the new landscape.

6.20 The baseline landscape character presents distinct variations: whilst the northern area has an undulating topography with greater structural vegetation creating a more enclosed and intimate feel, the southern area is predominantly more open arable land with less structural vegetation and with remarkable views to the Severn Estuary. The design will respect and capitalise on these distinctions.

6.21 It is important that the neighbourhoods within the overall townscape have individual identities and GI can help achieve this. One major GI corridor (for use by personalised transport) runs north-east to south-west - linking Purton/Slimbridge with Berkeley Green Tech College - crossing the railway. This green corridor, like others, will physically and visually separate the neighbourhoods. Specifically, it will help prevent coalescence of the nuclear settlement of Newton with the linear settlement of Brookend/Wanswell. This GI will help each of the neighbourhoods gain their own distinct character.
Integrated GI Functions Example - Water Management Process

6.22 Water is a valuable resource and the GI design could re-use water, maximise its benefits, whilst lowering any flood risk, a critical function in response to climate change. The southern part of the site (Phase 1) in general has a gentle fall from north-east to south west, providing the opportunity for natural, gravity fed water management:

A. Rainwater falling on buildings could be harvested and filtered and potentially re-used as potable water, or at least for commercial or household functions such as toilet flushing;

B. Rainwater falling on external hard surfaces could be attenuated and cleansed in GI SuDS features - such as swales, infiltration basins and ponds.
C. Greywater and blackwater from commercial units and residencies could be treated off-grid, i.e. onsite and with no need for hard engineering solutions piping waste to existing sewage treatment plants. Solid material would be captured in large, anaerobic digesters, e.g. Klargester, for potential use as fertiliser. The liquid material would then flow through constructed wetlands within the GI network, which would detoxify and cleanse the water. These artificial reed beds would provide a habitat for many species including endangered birds;

D. The cleansed water could be allowed to run onto the GI areas allocated for urban farming, where it might permeate the sub-soil and create opportunities for wet pasture, or be used for surface irrigation or use in hydroponics;

E. Any residual water would naturally gravitate towards the GI area allocated for a Nature Reserve, where it would help irrigate the pasture and keep the scrapes replenished with fresh water. The pasture in the Nature Reserve would be managed by a mix of large grazing herbivores, e.g. including Longhorn cattle, to create a healthy soil and a diverse sward;

F. As a result, the rainwater run-off rates into and along water courses could be at least the same, but probably lower than, existing rates, thus reducing peak-flow flood risks;

G. Finally, these clean waters, after their valuable journey through the GI web, could return to the River Severn SPA and the ocean to be evaporated and then fall as rain to start the cycle again.
Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity Example 1 – Severn Estuary Buffer Zone

6.23 Other recreation avoidance strategies for European designations in England invoke a 400m exclusion zone between development and the designation, because it is considered that adverse effects cannot be mitigated within this zone. Therefore a fundamental design principle for Sharpness is that there will be at least a 400m buffer between the Severn Estuary and built development. The proposed GI strategy in fact includes a buffer zone which is at least, but often much wider than, 400m which reflects the extent of the flood risk zone.

6.24 The nature of the land within that buffer zone would be much improved in terms of its ability to provide an ecological buffer function.

6.25 Firstly, the buffer zone will comprise, in the most part, the proposed new Nature Reserve. This will replace the ecologically-poor agriculturally-improved sheep pasture with a habitat specifically designed to support wetland birds associated with the Severn Estuary designations, for example shallow scrapes and marshy grassland.
SHARPNESS VALE: natural neighbourhoods
6.26 Next, there is the opportunity to divert a section of the Severn Way national trail away from the Berkeley Pill high tide roost area and away from a section of the Severn Estuary to a new location further inland by approximately 400m. This would in fact deliver one of the location-specific mitigation projects identified in Stroud District Council’s current Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy for the Severn Estuary. In addition, a sunken fence/’haha’ boundary treatment will be installed as the boundary between the nature reserve and the diverted Severn Way, to restrict access to the reserve. To continue to provide a level of amenity, viewpoint hides would be installed along the diverted path looking out across the reserve and the estuary.

6.27 Work is underway to engage with potential delivery partners, including WWT Slimbridge and Natural England, who following the provision of a commuted sum could take on the management of the proposed new Nature Reserve. This could include a wardening and education scheme, involving a code of conduct for responsible dog ownership and recreational activity in this area of the Severn Estuary. Similar schemes operate at coastal sites elsewhere, for example Bird Aware Solent and Bird Aware Essex Coast.

6.28 Modelling work is underway, in consultation with the Environment Agency, to understand the effect that climate change and future flooding events (freshwater and overtopping due to sea level rise) may have on the creation and management of the proposed new Nature Reserve.

6.29 This proposal therefore offers an improvement on the existing status quo, by diverting and avoiding existing levels of recreation near the Berkeley Pill high tide roost and increasing the area of suitable non-disturbed habitat. This then makes this location of the Severn Estuary a more sustainable and resilient place for wetland birds.
6.30 The bespoke innovative approach for Sharpness proposes a fresh new take on SANG particularly with the new proposed Nature Reserve. The presence of restricted access and hide viewpoints on the boundary of the proposed new Nature Reserve and Severn Way means that humans can indirectly access (view) and experience it (at distance); in much the same way as people do at WWT Slimbridge, and in much the same way as people experience the estuary when walking down the canal path from Purton to Sharpness Docks. The estuary is not directly accessed, but people have the sense of it being there and being able to view and experience it at distance. The reserve would therefore not be wholly isolated from the GI or other areas of SANG, and being the functional link between the inland GI and the Severn Estuary, the presence of such an area enhances the experience of being in the core SANG area.

6.31 Further inland, a wide zone has been allocated for ‘urban farming.’ This term might embrace small-scale, low-input/organic pasture-fed livestock, cooperative horticulture and hydroponics as well as private allotments. The organic and diverse nature of this urban farming would, in effect, create new habitat and stabilise the environment and soils in the immediate context of the Nature Reserve and SPA, so offering an ecological, not just a physical, buffer.

6.32 Finally, and before the urbanised built zone, is reached there would be a depth of buffer comprising green corridors managed for biodiversity, not solely human amenity. Each corridor might be planted with a specific target species of ecosystem in mind. They might be named accordingly, e.g. the ‘Bee Line’ (facilitating bees foraging for nectar) or the ‘Butterfly-By’ (facilitating the lifecycle of local lepidopteran species), which in turn would sustain other species for which they form a useful food source. Within these corridors would be located the SuDS features and constructed wetlands or an amphibian route (a chain of ponds and scrubby vegetation to support the lifecycle of the protected Great Crested Newt (GCN).
Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity Example 2 – GI Web as the SANG

6.33 The GI strategy is crucial to managing the effects of the new Sharpness neighbourhoods on the River Severn SPA. The GI comes together to not only mitigate recreational pressure on the Severn Estuary and wildlife across the site, but moreover to provide opportunities for significant biodiversity net gain.

6.34 By definition, the purpose of a SANG is a network of multi-functional greenspace that provides a welcoming, attractive, high-quality informal natural green space experience at an appropriate scale to be effective in diverting potential visits away from a European designation, not to re-create the actual landscape or actual experience of being within the

European designations. It must accommodate dogs off lead and circular walks. As noted in the current Severn Estuary Visitor Survey report that supports the Stroud District Council Severn Estuary Mitigation Strategy, most visitors to the Severn Estuary undertake dog walking or walking and commented on enjoying ‘views across water’ and a sense of ‘peacefulness.’ There is ample capacity for the new neighbourhoods to accommodate these activities and requirements within high-quality SANG on site. Indeed, indicative land budget calculations indicate that there is enough GI at Sharpness to provide enough SANG for the predicted number of new residents and those travelling from further afield, since the site is sufficiently large to be a likely destination for overnight and daytime visitors in its own right.
## Green Infrastructure (GI) Umbrella

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Amenity</th>
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**SANG**

SHARPNESS VALE: natural neighbourhoods
6.35 As described above, the innovative bespoke approach to the design for Sharpness is that the entire GI spaces network and the SANG are effectively one and the same thing. This is because the principles of high-quality GI accord closely with the purposes of SANG and because the significant extent of the Green Infrastructure proposed would mean a strategic development of this magnitude would include compliancy with Green Infrastructure best practice standards, local and national planning policy. Combining a SANG and GI approach maximises the multiple benefits that can be delivered for people and the environment. ‘The GI Umbrella’ illustrates how the functions and type of GI at Sharpness would meet the requirements of the SANG.

6.36 In addition, the main objective of the GI strategy is to provide accessible space to encourage residents to walk their dogs ‘off-lead’ in a high-quality naturalised environment away from the Severn Estuary. Distance views across the new proposed nature reserve will still give the impression of being near the estuary. Whilst certain areas of the site will have greater emphasis placed on fulfilling a SANG role, in terms of design, particularly between the built development and the Severn Estuary, on the ground there will be a more fluid and seamless transition between SANG and the core GI so that the experience of being outdoors is extended. The need for car parks will be reduced and any will be located well away from the Severn Estuary.
6.37 In this way, the GI augments and places core SANG areas in a wider green web, so that there is a gradual transition, rather than there being a stark formalised contrast between new development and SANG. In this way, users are already primed to experience the outdoors before arriving at the SANG, rather than the SANG being the starting point for experiencing being outdoors, enhancing their wellbeing from the moment they leave their front door. Such an approach is supported by the findings of the current Severn Estuary Visitor Survey; the results showed that the majority of people visiting the Severn Estuary were walking local residents, visiting for dog walking or walking.
SHARPNESS VALE: natural neighbourhoods
The GI strategy delivers the following biodiversity objectives:

A. The Severn Estuary contains valuable habitat for birds, such as inter-tidal mud flats, and requires mitigation from the effects of development and any increase in visitor numbers;

B. A new Nature Reserve is proposed with diverse species-rich grassland and shallow scrapes to provide habitat suitable for SPA bird species, and to provide a further buffer between development and the SPA;

C. The Severn Way would be diverted away from the SPA to mitigate disturbance on birds. Raised viewing platforms (with hides and interpretation boards) would increase visual and recreational amenity of this stretch of the long-distance path;

D. Any dog-walkers approaching the SPA and Nature Reserve (and using the diverted stretch of the Severn Way) would be required to keep dogs ‘on lead’ at all times, to minimise disturbance on overwintering and breeding birds;

E. The existing improved sheep pasture in the flood zone would be transformed to a cattle-grazed, species-rich meadow, fed by recycled water, and supporting urban farming. This area would also form an additional buffer between the SPA and development;

F. Land on the urban edge would be safeguarded for private allotments and also for larger scale cooperative horticulture, or hydroponics. An organic approach to food-growing would be encouraged or enforced. The approach would enhance biodiversity and supply local food needs;

G. The SANG includes the network of multi-functional greenspace that runs through the built development primarily to provide accessible space. Although some of these spaces might appear less semi-natural than others, the objective is to encourage residents to walk their dogs ‘off-lead’ away from the SPA;

H. Rain water, surface water, grey water and black water could be captured, filtered, recycled and ultimately treated in reed beds outside the flood zone. These would form an intrinsic part of the GI network and help to create new habitats for wildlife;

I. Surface water within the development would be captured, attenuated and cleansed in swales, basins and ponds that form part of the GI network. The vegetation within these SuDS features would be managed to add to overall biodiversity;

J. The generous GI network (or SANG) is easily accessible, providing a range of amenity opportunities for residents of all ages. The more the SANG is utilised, the less the SPA would be disturbed;

K. All new dwellings would be within 400m (a 5-minute walk) of part of the GI network that seamlessly transitions into areas of GI with a stronger SANG function. For those with mobility challenges, a car park would be created as an accessible and informative gateway into the SANG network;

L. The GI network would include open areas for formal sport, such as a cricket pitch and football pitches. Although the playing surfaces would be managed intensively, the margins could be planted with a more wildlife friendly seed mix and cut less-often. The sport activities could be screened by new native woodland planting, which would add to the variety of SANG landscape character and increase habitat and biodiversity; and

M. The SANG includes a variety of long and short circular walks that might include areas of formal play but could also incorporate linear play such as trim trail apparatus. This variety and choice would all help to reduce the visitor pressures on the SPA.
Supporting Health and Well-being Example – The Phase 1 Piste Map

6.39 The GI web is designed to encourage an active lifestyle, with many easily accessible opportunities to walk, cycle or use any other sustainable modes of personal transport.

6.40 Signage throughout the development would orient residents around these sustainable routes and guide them towards short (c. 1km) and easy ‘green’ routes or longer (c. 3km) ‘red’ routes. The ‘black’ routes may include sections of ‘trim-trail’ with fitness stations.

6.41 Opportunities to connect onto the Severn Way would be restricted with the aim of intercepting visitors within the SANGS and GI elsewhere, diverting recreational pressure away from the Severn Estuary. In these sections, dogs would be required to be kept on-lead in conjunction with a programme or wardening and code of conduct for responsible dog ownership as mentioned previously, and opportunities for off the lead dog walking promoted elsewhere within high-quality inland SANG.
PHASE 1 PISTE MAP - SANG ROUTES

SHARPNESS VALE: natural neighbourhoods
7. INNOVATION, EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

7.1 Stroud District has a proud heritage of manufacturing, innovation and entrepreneurship. Traditionally the District thrived on the woollen industry and this has subsequently been replaced by manufacturing and innovation. In addition to this, the District has nurtured and grown many entrepreneurs and their businesses, many of whom have become national success stories and employ large numbers of people that provide great support to the local economy.

7.2 Stroud District has relatively low levels of unemployment but there are too few jobs in the District itself to meet the needs of the resident workforce. As a consequence, there are high levels of daily commuting out of and into the District and currently there is a net outflow of people travelling to other centres, outside the District to work. Good employment land is very scarce in the District, with very few accessible sites.

7.3 The aim of the District is to attract more knowledge-based industries, enabling greater employment opportunities for the highly skilled and well qualified working population. However, in order to do this, the District needs to provide a greater range of quality employment land and premises, that are in accessible locations. Stroud particularly lacks modern office premises and small, well serviced industrial sites.

7.4 A large proportion of the District’s employment land is situated along the valley bottoms, where sites can be physically constrained with poor access to major transport arteries. Modern businesses are currently looking for well serviced, accessible and flat employment land. There are not many of these sites within the District and those that are available are occupied quickly.

7.5 One of the primary aims of Sharpness Vale is to create a self-contained community where people can choose to live and work in the same settlement and
The development is looking to pursue the delivery of a gigabit-level broadband network with Virgin Media, which will facilitate faster communication links for the businesses on site as well as support additional home working.

The ambition will be to attract some of the entrepreneurial talent which currently goes elsewhere to find modern business space and to ensure we develop a range of knowledge intensive businesses on the site, right from the beginning of the development.

The new business park will be within the Growth Zone identified by GFirst LEP. Irrespective of this, market signals have indicated that this is an attractive location for business growth due to its accessible location as well as being flat, serviceable land. New housing will also help support a local workforce making the site suitable and attractive for local businesses.
8. MOVEMENT STRATEGY

8.1 Sharpness is developing a wholly sustainably focused strategy for Access and Movement. The philosophical approach to this is two-fold:

- Looking to the future, at emerging trends and changes in behaviour, technology and attitudes to create a place that is resilient to changes like necessary climate change responses, and;
- Planning positively for people to use sustainable modes, and hence providing for the outcome that we want to see rather than the one that may occur.

8.2 This means that we will make maximum use of the resources and capacity that is already available:

- We want as many people as practically can to meet their daily needs for work, shopping education and leisure within the Sharpness settlement;
- We want to bring the railway back into use, providing a regular service to Cam & Dursley and onwards to Gloucester;
- We want to provide bespoke, high quality coach services to key employment and education destinations that are a genuine alternative to the private car;
• We want to provide neat, tidy, easily understandable local bus services that link places that people need to go and want to go;

• We won’t limit car use if people really want to use this mode, but we aren’t planning to provide any extra capacity for them, as we know that this simply exacerbates the temptation to get in the car for unnecessary trips.
8.3 At the most simple we are going to focus on the morning and evening peak periods, when the whole network is under stress, and we are going to make sure that almost everyone could complete the journey they need to make by a sustainable mode. This means providing for walking, cycling – and lots of other emerging personal transport modes, like electric scooters and even Segway based machines, so that people can get around Sharpness. For journeys further afield, we will have made sure that there is a seat available for them on a bus, coach or train that matches where they need to go.

8.4 We are using census and other National survey data and statistics related to the Sharpness area to analyse the destinations that people will want to go to. Based on these patterns, we think that there will be around 4,700 person trips in the morning, and 4,200 in the evening:

8.5 And they will be travelling for a whole range of purposes – like this:
8.6 Some of these will stay in Sharpness, but some will need to travel further afield. As part of our preliminary work, we have looked at how many people there may be, and what we may need to be able to get them to where they need to go.

8.7 We calculate just over 2,000 people will need to travel to and from Sharpness from outside in the peak periods. For these people to travel sustainably following the current trends, we will need these services each hour:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morning Peak</th>
<th>Evening Peak</th>
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<tr>
<td>Berkeley &amp; Sharpness</td>
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<td>Cam &amp; Dursley</td>
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8.8 In reality, we think these might be a bit different when Sharpness is established – if there is a new train service, twice every hour, to Gloucester then more residents might look to find work there rather than in Bristol where most of the existing pattern of movement is targeted. We will evaluate how much this might change as part of our on-going work.

8.9 Some of the bus services will be combined, as not all of them will be full – so there won’t need to be quite as many actual buses as the graph suggests. But for those heading to Bristol and its wider conurbation, quite a few of these will be dedicated to take people efficiently to a particular business park or common employment destination. Services like this are already running really successfully between South Wales and Bristol – so this isn’t a new idea!

8.10 Hence, the aspiration is that the sustainable transport measures provided alongside the scheme would provide for every trip that may need to be undertaken within or beyond the development.
8.11 This approach isn’t expected to be cheap though. Providing the movement infrastructure necessary to make this work will be expensive to establish – although we are confident that it will be able to sustain itself once a “critical mass” is achieved at Sharpness. But our plan is that, although this significant investment may need to be made into these sustainable modes, this should minimise the amount of highway capacity upgrades. The movement strategy is that, as sustainable mode capacity will exist, sufficient to allow every movement likely to take place during the key peak periods to be undertaken without reliance on the private car, then no highway capacity provision will need to be made.

8.12 There will be no limitation on the use of the car – Sharpness residents and visitors will be free to choose this mode if they wish, but no concession will be made in respect of this mode of transport. This approach recognises that where highway capacity is provided as part of development schemes – especially where it is provided as a “backstop” in the event that the sustainable modes are not taken up by users, then this effectively encourages use of the private car. If capacity is provided, irrespective of what alternatives exist, then it is clear that capacity will be used.
8.13 The Sharpness Movement Strategy is geared around the ‘low hanging fruit’ – target the mass movements, encourage people to come to Sharpness if they buy into the strategy and approach. We should make it really easy for those that do – and they must be able to adopt the lifestyle from the outset, day one, as soon as they move in.

8.14 The Sharpness Movement Strategy has been developed as a response to the considerable uncertainties that exist in seeking to define transport mitigation measures for large scale, long term projects, and the need to actively discourage private car use. However, it also has a positive positioning by recognising the changes in travel trends, as people are buying fewer cars and driving less.

8.15 We know that adding capacity to the highway network does not resolve congestion or delay issues. There is ample evidence of that already. The Sharpness movement strategy will therefore attempt to redress this balance.

8.16 We think that Sharpness, because of its unique location and proximity, offers an unusual opportunity to do things differently. We don’t expect this approach to be cheaper for the developer, it is likely to cost the same as the traditional approach – but it will be genuinely sustainable.
Work is at an early stage, but we have given some considerable thought to how we will achieve the forecast outcome that we want at Sharpness. There will be a range of components, but the headline ones are likely to be these:

- Re-opening the Sharpness railway line to passenger trains, with a new service to Cam and Gloucester. This will require a new station at Sharpness, track and signal improvements that can be programmed alongside re-signalling works Network Rail are planning anyway, and appointment of a suitable operator. We have met with Network Rail, Gloucestershire County Council and the Vale of Berkeley Railway Group in respect of our proposals. Network Rail and Gloucestershire County Council are currently undertaking timetable modelling work in the area anyway, as part of the re-signalling scheme, and have agreed to further model these new services from Sharpness, to confirm that this is possible. Preliminary discussions look positive, with train paths for two trains per hour in the peak period being explored. We are pleased with the collaborative discussions that have been held with Vale of Berkeley Railway Group and these are set to continue.

- Operating a high quality, express coach service to Bristol, and key employment nodes around the city. This would use the “Zeelo” model, or similar, to utilise chartered coach resources on routes designed to unashamedly maximise the commuter patronage.

- Recognise that getting the peak periods right is key – that is when we need everyone to adopt non-car based travel, as that is when the network is most stressed. We can afford to be more relaxed about how people travel outside of the busiest periods. All the sustainable modes will be available – but it is the peak period travelling we are really targeting.

- Commit to early years express coach services in advance of the railway being regenerated. People should be able to rely on this from the first day they move in, so they can adopt the movement strategy easily and without needing any stopgap car reliance.

- Provide core facilities on the site. This will include schools, surgeries, shops, leisure and community facilities.

- Make sure there is a mix of employment uses on site. These should complement the existing jobs available in and around the docks, and provide a real progression of career opportunities and grades of job to allow people to work locally, but stay local as they progress and develop.

- Provide flexible start up and “one-man band” spaces for people at both ends of their careers to use.
• Provide flexible approaches to parking, so that as less car ownership occurs over time, these spaces don’t become unnecessary hard paved areas but can be re-purposed as green spaces, development plots, play spaces, community gardens, allotments and more.

• Non-car Green Ways & Corridors – unadopted routes to maximise every opportunity to use every possible mode for getting around safely – walking, jogging, bikes and scooters, electric bikes and scooters, segways, motorised skateboards – any method that makes it easy to get around. Some of these are currently legal to use on highways – so we will keep these routes threaded across and around the development unadopted so that people can use the latest and easiest technology to get around.

• “MaaS” and subscription-based transport – Mobility-as-a-Service managed systems to allow people to dispense with car ownership, but still gain occasional access when they need to. In the meantime, the MaaS system gives access to bike hire, public transport, taxis, Uber and real-time travel planning through a single app, and a fixed payment.

• Marketing towards specific individuals – recognise the unique place that Sharpness is, and the amazing links it will have to Gloucester and Bristol, and sell it to those people.
9. HOME AND WELL-BEING

9.1 The design of the new neighbourhoods at Sharpness will provide a distinct and innovative design response that creates a strong character and sense of place. The Concept Plan is not a detailed or fixed design, but the first steps in shaping a place that is flexible enough to provide guidance on the development of the area, whilst providing specific enough guidance to ensure the area is designed appropriately. The creation of a Design Code to ensure design quality is delivered will be part of the planning process. The new neighbourhoods will incorporate modular, traditional and self-build homes as well as being inclusive and future-proofed for the lifetime of the residents, providing inter-generational living.

9.2 The Concept Plan shows the general disposition of land uses and the proposed structure of the development. Separate proposed new access points from the B4066 for the employment area, bus only and main accesses would lead to a strategically positioned mixed use centre. The green corridors radiate out from the mixed use centre providing vistas to the Severn Estuary and promoting the creation of a walkable place and a well-connected movement network within a network of green corridors accessible by all users.

9.3 The design will provide well-connected distinct new neighbourhoods. Existing topography naturally defines what will form the extension of the existing neighbourhoods such as Sharpness, Newtown, Brookend and Wanswell. A series of green corridors will further define the edge of these neighbourhoods as well as provide walking/cycle route networks which will provide connections to public transport, employment, leisure, amenity and health facilities.

9.4 The character of the new neighbourhoods will be influenced by the surrounding landscape and the existing settlements which in turn will give this area a strong identity and character. To the south of the B4066, the character of the neighbourhood will be strongly influenced by its connection to the estuary.

9.5 Designing for the scale of development from the outset has clear advantages and opportunities in planning social, physical and green infrastructure in a comprehensive manner. This is a clear advantage of the proposals at Sharpness. It will include a range of facilities sufficient to meet future users’ basic needs on-site, allowing them to ‘live life locally’.
THE STREAM CORRIDORS AND TREE BELTS PROVIDE STRUCTURE TO THE PLACE WITH MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ROLES IN THE PROVISION OF GREEN SPACE, HABITAT, BIODIVERSITY GAIN, SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE, RECREATION AND HEALTH, MOVEMENT AND ACCESS.

SAFE, ATTRACTIVE AND CONNECTED PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ROUTES

BAT ROOSTS, BIRD BOXES AND OTHER WILDLIFE FEATURES DESIGN INTO BUILDINGS

NATIVE, WILDLIFE FRIENDLY PLANTS IN GARDENS AND LANDSCAPING

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVERTEBRATES, REPTILES, HEDGEHOGS AND MAMMALS WITHIN DEVELOPMENT AREA

QUALITY CYCLE STORAGE AT THE HOMES AND CYCLE PARKING FACILITIES IN THE LOCAL CENTRES AND EMPLOYMENT AREAS

GREEN CORRIDORS ACT FOR WILDLIFE BUT ALSO FOR RESIDENTS AS PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE CYCLING AND WALKING NETWORK.
10. BUILDING WITH NATURE

“Well-planned networks of high-quality, multi-functional green space help enhance biodiversity, make cities more resilient and contribute to the physical and mental health of people.”

Professor Alister Scott, Chair Building with Nature Standards Board

10.1 We have been developing the masterplan in accordance with the Building with Nature (BwN) standards and we wish to engage with BwN assessors to achieve accreditation for the proposals at Sharpness. Having Building with Nature involved from an early stage of the planning and design process will enable Sharpness to provide high quality green infrastructure and promote its benefits to the future population.

“Building with Nature introduces a positive way of thinking about new development. By providing an opportunity for people and nature to flourish together, Building with Nature sets the standard for places that existing and future communities can enjoy and be proud of.”

10.2 BwN helps to create places where people want to live, work and play; places where people can enjoy the environment around them; and places where people can have happier and healthier lives. It is a locally developed initiative which has come about through a collaboration between Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the University of the West of England therefore it is particularly relevant to the proposed development.

10.3 There are 23 standards contained within the following groups:

- **Core Standards (CORE)** - Distinguish a green infrastructure approach to planning and development from a more conventional open and green space approach.
- **Wellbeing Standards (WELL)** - Aim to secure the delivery of health and wellbeing outcomes through the delivery of green infrastructure features.
- **Water Standards (WAT)** - Aim to provide green infrastructure to effectively manage water quantity and quality, increase flood resilience, and maximise opportunities for amenity.
- **Wildlife Standards (WILD)** - Aim to ensure that green infrastructure allows nature to flourish, both within the boundary of the development, and at a landscape scale.
11.1 Preliminary technical studies have established that development at Sharpness provides a realistic and deliverable development opportunity. The new neighbourhoods will benefit from designed and integrated infrastructure from the outset, that can be expanded into successive phases.

11.2 With the potential to deliver up to 5,000 new homes, together with a comprehensive package of accompanying social and physical infrastructure, it is clear that Sharpness could provide a steady stream of housing delivery to help meet Stroud District’s future housing needs.

11.3 Sharpness Development LLP has been created to deliver this Vision, and help plan for the District’s housing needs up to 2040 and beyond.

11.4 The development will comprise a combination of innovative approaches to green infrastructure, distinct neighbourhoods, education, community facilities and retail. This document has identified that it is possible to develop the land in a sensitive and sustainable way and our ambition is to deliver an exemplar development. The site benefits from access to the strategic road network and has the potential to improve the existing infrastructure. It will also be designed to address flood risk, landscape and heritage issues.

11.5 Sharpness will also provide the opportunity to provide new jobs, open space and new and improved public transport services. Sharpness provides a unique opportunity to create a district-scale, holistic, multifunctional network of green open space. This web of Green Infrastructure is an essential component of the DNA of Stroud District and would create a healthy environment supporting residents’ wellbeing, significant net gain in biodiversity in terms of both habitat and wildlife species and a beautiful townscape and landscape character.

11.6 In this context, the development will respect the setting and will accord with the principles of high quality design, best practice and sustainability to create a new place that is rich, varied and sympathetic to its environment. The aim is to achieve an exemplar development with a strong identity and ‘sense of place.’