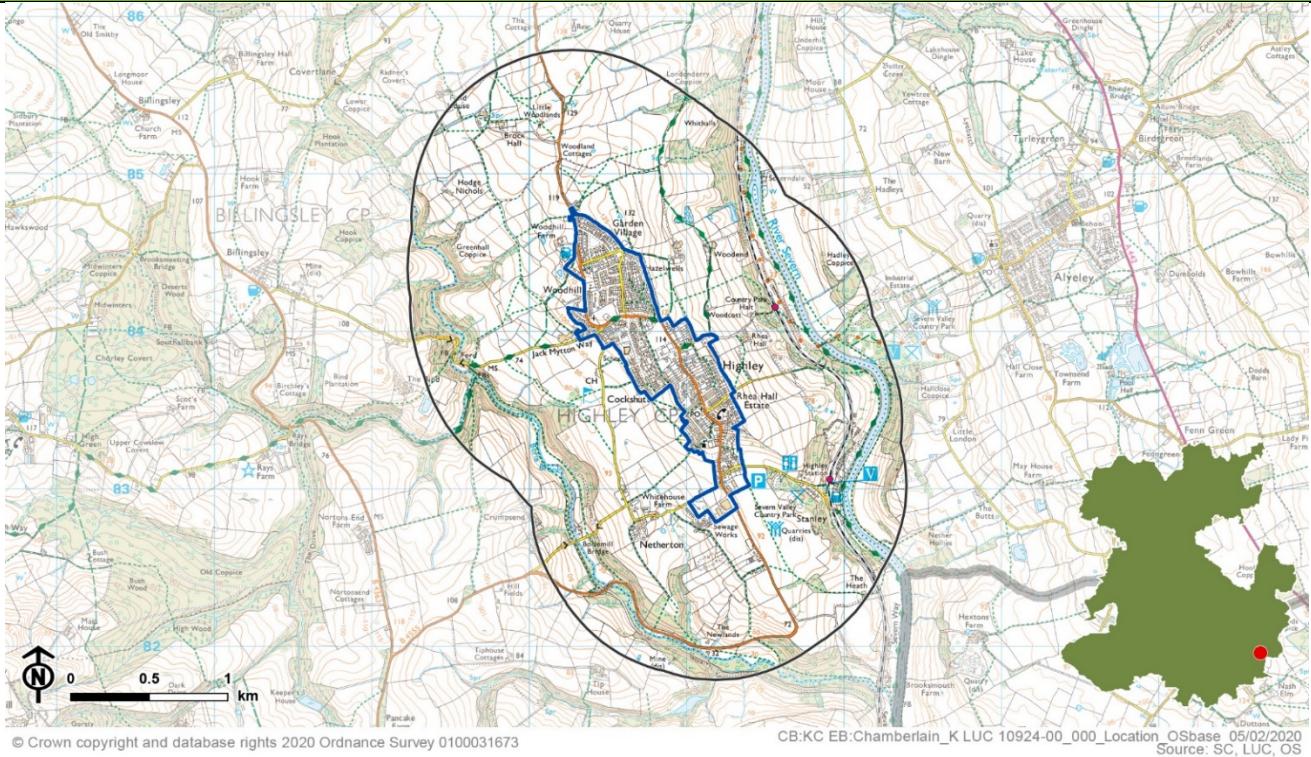


Key Centre - Highley

Location



Summary of Settlement Study Area and Location

Introduction

Highley, in south eastern Shropshire has been identified as a Key Centre within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2020). This Green Infrastructure Strategy has defined the study area as a 1km buffer around this settlement.

The village of Highley is a linear settlement on the western bank of the River Severn, 10 miles south of Bridgnorth and within the community distance of Kidderminster in neighbouring Worcestershire. The settlement has a population of over 3,000 with an older age structure than the Shropshire average.

Development Context

Existing development allocations in the town are set out in the SAMDev (2015)², however the Shropshire Local Plan is currently being reviewed. The Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2020) proposes other sites, which are not yet adopted. The sites currently allocated and those being proposed are set out below.

Existing Housing allocations within the town (SAMDev Sites, 2015³):

- Site HIGH003: Land off Rhea Hall/Coronation Street, Highley. Site provision: 30 dwellings

Existing Employment land allocations (SAMDev Sites, 2015):

- Urban Employment Site: Land at Netherton Workshops. Provision: 0.6 ha

The Proposed Housing Allocations included within the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2020) are:

- Site HNN016: Land South of Oak Street, Highley (north east). Site Area: 5.42ha. Site capacity: 120 dwellings.

Highley will act as a key centre and contribute towards the strategic objectives in the east of the county. The Local Plan review proposes around 250 dwellings and around 3 hectares of employment development over the Plan period to 2038.



View to Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland at New England Area Local Wildlife Site



Good Quality Semi-improved grassland priority habitat off Netherton Lane

² Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan 2015

³ Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan 2015

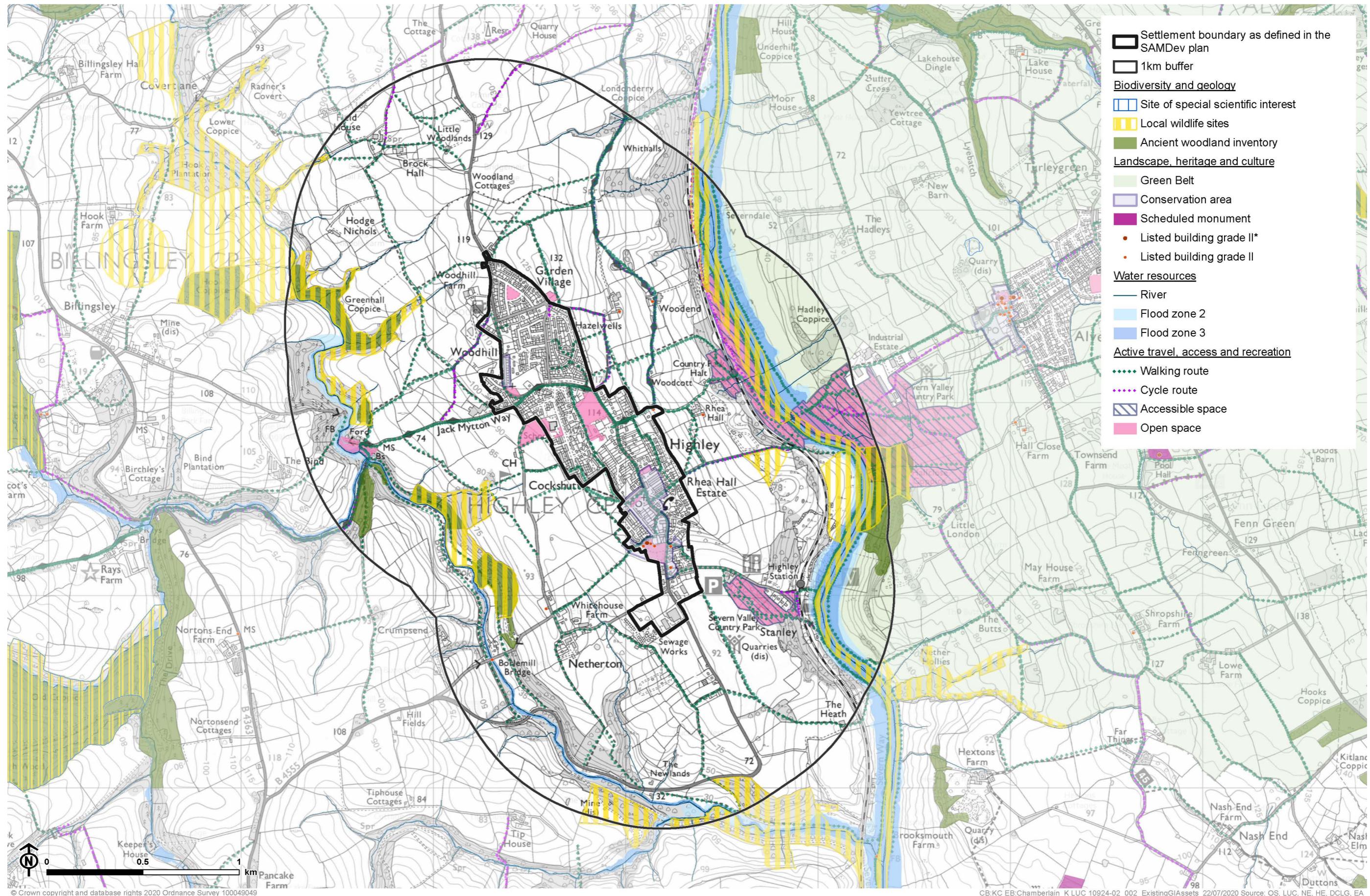


Interpretations of the cultural history at Severn Valley
Country Park, Station Road Site



Borle Brook, running west of Highley

Existing Green Infrastructure Assets and Key Constraints



Existing Green Infrastructure Assets and Constraints

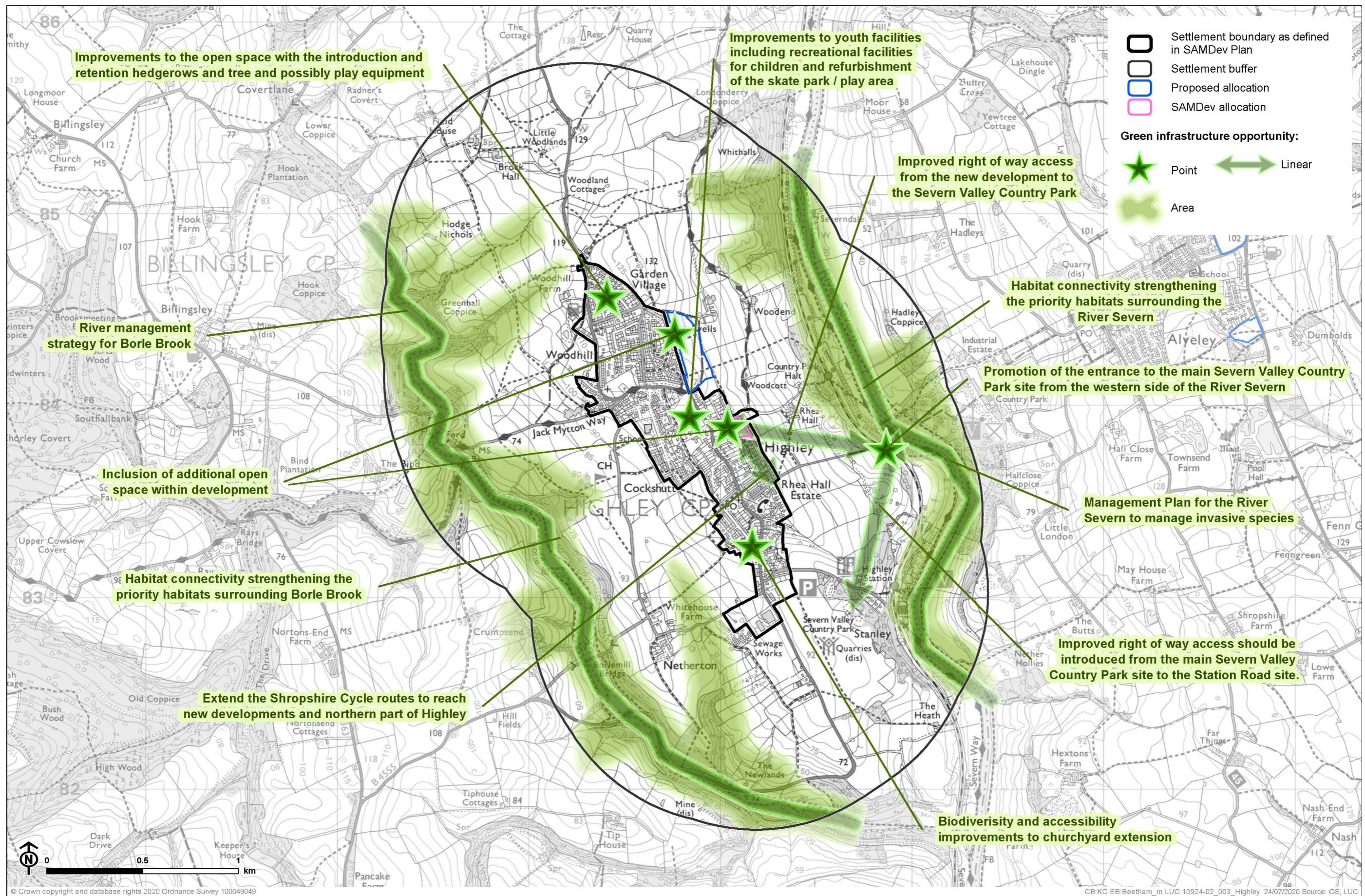
Theme	Existing Green Infrastructure Assets / Constraints
Key Theme 1: Biodiversity and Geology 	<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Designated Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are no local or national designations within the study area for Highley. <p>Notable and priority habitats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the eastern half of the study area the Severn Valley Country Park is located on the banks of the River Severn , with the section at Station Road near Highley Station. The Country Park encompasses sections of semi-natural ancient woodland on the eastern bank of the river, at the Local Wildlife Site of Hallclose Coppice, as well as deciduous woodland and good quality semi-improved grassland Priority Habitats. ■ Outside of the country park, deciduous woodlands Priority Habitats are located along the railway line to the east and Borle Brook to the west which includes several sections of ancient woodland. These tracts of woodland are also noted as Core areas and Corridors in the Shropshire Environment Network. Adjoining the brook are several Local Wildlife Sites: Hodge Nicholls Wood and Severn Lodge Woods are both noted for their oak woodland and stream habitats, and New England Area, which is hawthorn dominated scrub with notable flora. ■ On the western bank of the River Severn and bordering the south west of the settlement of Highley, Good Quality Semi-improved grassland Priority Habitat is present. This is part of the Severn (W. Bank) Meadows Local Wildlife Site. ■ The north west of the study area is classed as Network Enhancement Zone 1 by the Natural England habitat mapping, linked to the Primary Habitat around Hook Coppice, just outside the study area. There is Restorable Habitat within the study area just north of Hodge Nichols Farm. ■ The River Severn and Borle Brook are both noted as Core Areas within the Shropshire Environment Network and the River Severn itself is a Local Wildlife Site with riparian habitats which provide habitats for a variety of species. ■ There was an historic Local Wildlife Site between Highley and the River Severn, either side of the railway line but this has now been deleted as it has been destroyed by agriculture and development. <p>Species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Records of Priority Invertebrates and flowering Priority Plants are linked to the rivers, with dragonfly records particularly present around the River Severn at the Country Park. ■ There are several records of Protected slow-worms within Highley, off Vicarage Lane and records of otters along the River Severn. ■ Japanese knotweed and Indian balsam have been recorded along the River Severn. Please note, species records only reflect what was present when the surveyor was on site and may not be exhaustive of the true species and geographic spread within the study area. <p>Geology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are no geological sites of note within the study area.

Key Theme 2: Landscape, Heritage and Culture 	<p>Landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The settlement of Highley and the land immediately surrounding it to the east, west and south is characterised as Principal Settled Farmland Landscape Character type, with a mixed farming use and clustered settlement patterns. ■ Wooded River Gorges follow the paths of the Borle Brook and Severn Valley creating small, intimate landscapes with interlocking woodlands which are ancient in character. On the immediate banks of the River Severn the Landscape Character Type is Riverside Meadows typified by flat areas with linear belts of trees and pastoral land uses. ■ The majority of the study area is defined as moderately sensitive to development, with the Riverside Meadows around the River Severn less sensitive. The Wooded River Gorge Landscape Character Type on the eastern bank of the river is marked as highly sensitive to development. <p>Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a small cluster of Grade II listed buildings within the south of Highley and to the east of the Settlement, such as Rhea Hall Farm House. ■ Within the settlement itself there are two conservation areas: Highley conservation covers most of the southern part of the settlement, with Highley Clee View covering a small section on the north-west edge.
Key Theme 3: Water Resources 	<p>Freshwater Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Highley is located between two rivers, with the Severn running north to south roughly 1/2km east of the settlement and its tributary Borle Brook roughly the same distance to the east. <p>Flood Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The relatively steep topography around these watercourses leads to fairly localised flood zones associated with each river and the settlement of Highley itself is not in land defined as Flood Zone 2 or 3. ■ The railway line runs roughly parallel to the River Severn and, particularly north of Country Park Halt station, is located right on the edge of land defined as within the Flood Zone. <p>Pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Issues with diffuse agricultural pollution exist within the study area. ■ The eastern half of the study area is within the Surface Water River Severn (River Worfe to River Stour) NVZ and the eastern most edge is also within the Bobbington Ground Water NVZ. <p>Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Shropshire Outline Water Study (2020) determines that a combination of SUDs approaches is likely to be suitable within this settlement.

<p>Key Theme 4: Active Travel, Access and Recreation</p> 	<p>Transport Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The B4555 runs north to south through the centre of Highley, linking to Bridgnorth to the north and smaller settlements to the south. ■ Highley has two stops on the Severn Valley Railway line both located to the east of the village, the line runs north to south. <p>Active Travel</p> <p>Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a substantial network of footpaths and bridleways within the study area, particularly running north to south. ■ There are a number of promoted walks which pass through the study area. These routes include the Severn Way long distance route and the Alveley Area (Walks 2 and 3) which are circular walks of varying lengths. <p>Cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Cycle Route 45 runs through the eastern part of the study area and along the western bank of the River Severn in the northern part of the study area. It crosses the River Severn within the Country Park to the eastern bank. ■ The Mercian, Route 45 is part of the Shropshire Cycle Route and runs from the centre of Highley eastwards to join the National Cycle Route. <p>Horse-riding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Part of the Jack Mytton Way runs through the northern half of the study area including through the settlement of Highley. This is part of Route 1: Cleobury Mortimer to Chelmarsh 'Seven Wonders' and follow bridleways, byways and country lanes throughout rural Shropshire. ■ These same bridleways and road links are also part of the Sabrina Way, a long-distance route developed for the British Horse Society. <p>Access and Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open spaces in and around Highley include parks and gardens and outdoor sport provision. ■ Of particular importance are the two Severn Valley Country Park sites, although it is important to note that the portion of this on the eastern bank of the River Severn, including the main visitor centre cannot be accessed by vehicle other than going as far north as Bridgnorth to cross the river.
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<p>Key Theme 5: Health and Wellbeing</p> 	<p>Health</p> <p>Health Deprivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within the study area health levels are generally high with all parts within the sixth decile or higher. ■ The most deprived part of the study area in terms of health forms a curve along the northern, eastern and southern parts of the settlement itself. <p>Childhood obesity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data indicates that childhood obesity is not a significant issue in Highley. <p>Air Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are no recorded AQMA within this study area. <p>Wellbeing</p> <p>Accessible Open Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Open Space Assessment undertaken by LUC to inform this GI Strategy identified the following baseline provision of open space. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Accessible Open Space: 0.10ha per 1000 persons (2018 population base). Analysis shows that most of the settlement is not within 400m of such provision. The exception to this is in the north around Woodhill and the very southern part of Highley. — Allotments: 0ha per 1000 persons (2018 population base). — Provision for Children and Teenagers: 2 spaces in total. Analysis shows that the majority of the town falls within 800m of such provision, however the very north and south of the settlement does not. ■ See the Open Space Assessment appended to the GI Strategy Report for more details. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are no parts of the study area which exposed to high noise levels from either roads or railways.
<p>Key Theme 6: Climate Change</p> 	<p>Tree cover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tree cover within the study area predominantly follows the water courses. The National Forest Inventory identifies that this broadleaved forest dominates the woodland cover. ■ Shropshire Council urban tree mapping shows that there are some urban trees within the settlement, particularly in the north east edge of Highley. <p>Flooding Climate Change Allowance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Modelling suggests that taking account of climate change, flooding will bypass current flood zone 3 levels in over 50% of events, however these risk zones are still limited to the river valleys and do not impact the settlement of Highley itself.

Green Infrastructure Opportunities



Key Green Infrastructure Opportunities

Theme	Green Infrastructure Opportunities
Key Theme 1: Biodiversity and Geology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Shropshire Environmental Network and Natural England Habitat Network within the study area should be managed to ensure that they are enhanced in order to support wildlife populations. ■ Enhancement of habitats at the Severn Valley Country park should be undertaken to reinforce the connected mosaic of habitats within the study area, particularly to improve habitats for priority and protected species recorded on the site. ■ Hedgerows, tree lines and mature trees on the proposed Land South of Oak Street allocation in the Local Plan Review Preferred Sites Consultation (2018) should be retained. ■ The priority to extend the churchyard, as identified within the place plan, should include providing biodiversity improvements such as retaining or creating species rich hedgerows and include vegetation and trees within its design. ■ A management plan for the water courses in the study area including the Rivers Severn and Borle to manage invasive species is recommended. This should include additional surveying to establish the true spread of the issue and be part of a joined up approach to combatting invasive species across river corridors.
Key Theme 2: Landscape, Heritage and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hedged edges to new developments along the eastern edge of the settlement are recommended to help preserve the tranquil character of the surrounding countryside. ■ New developments should be planned to provide / retain elevated views across the Severn Valley and in particular Rhea Hall Estate. ■ Enhanced planting alongside the rivers is recommended as this would improve the character of the Wooded River Gorges along the Borle Brook and Severn Valley.
Key Theme 3: Water Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although Highley is situated on high ground and has relatively low risk to flooding, improvements within Highley are recommended as these will benefit flooding within the study area and elsewhere in Shropshire. Particular interventions recommended include increased planting along the slopes to reduce the flow of water into the rivers.
Key Theme 4: Active Travel, Access and Recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development at the proposed allocation on the north eastern edge of the settlement should include improvements to the existing footpath which links the site to Severn Valley Country Park. An additional right of way should also be established linking the development to the Station Road Severn Valley Country Park site. ■ Extension of the Shropshire Cycle Routes in the study area is recommended to connect the Land South of Oak Street allocation and provide greater active travel opportunities for the northern part of the settlement. ■ Wayfinding towards open space assets at the Severn Valley Country Park should be promoted and footpath improvements should focus primarily on these routes.

Key Theme 5: Health and Wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In line with the neighbourhood priority to improve youth facilities including recreational facilities for children and refurbishment of the skate park / play area as highlighted in the Place Plan, investment should be made to the skate park and where possible youth facilities should include natural materials or link to new habitats to engage young people with the natural world. Additional access points to this space should also be considered to improve accessibility to open space within the settlement. ■ Development allocations should include provision of open space, in particular these should provide play areas and allotments, and natural and semi-natural open space typologies,, which will help to achieve biodiversity gains. ■ Improvements to the green space between Ash Street and Oak Street is recommended to allow this to be better utilised as an open space, for example by introducing benches, trees and annual bedding with the possible option for some children's play equipment if safe crossings across the roads can be established. This will also provide biodiversity improvements and address the poor accessibility to children and teenager provision in the north of the settlement.. ■ Visitor facilities at the Severn Valley Country Park, particularly on the western side of the river should be improved and volunteering opportunities within the park should be promoted. ■ It is noted that the steep gradients between Highley and the Severn Valley Country Park may make this site inaccessible to some people, therefore improvements to this site should be in addition to the enhancements of open spaces within the settlement itself.
Key Theme 6: Climate Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All new planting should provide climate resilient species. ■ Urban street planting within the settlement should be promoted, particularly on council owned land to the north and south east.

Summary of key opportunities						
Habitat connectivity east and west of the settlement should strengthen the priority habitats surrounding the watercourses, including slowing the flow of water and reducing flood risk. This should be done sensitively through planned tree planting, improving management of grasslands and restoring hedgerows to ensure changes strengthen the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape character type.	✓	✓	✓			✓
Improvements to Severn Valley Country Park should include improved accessibility within site through wayfinding; in addition to reinforcement of habitats, increased encouragement of voluntary participation in site management and improvements to visitor facilities.	✓			✓	✓	✓
Improved right of way access should be introduced from new development to the Severn Valley Country Park and from the main Severn Valley Country Park site to the Station Road site and promotion of the entrance to the main Severn Valley Country Park site from the western side of the River Severn				✓	✓	✓
Additional provision of open space with the introduction and retention of hedgerows and trees, should take place alongside new developments. This should include natural and semi-natural open space or parks and gardens preferentially.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Summary of key opportunities						
Improvements to the amenity green space between Ash Street and Oak Street with the possibility to include provision for children and young people.	✓			✓	✓	✓
River management strategies for the watercourses in the study area should be produced, particularly to include the management of invasive species (for the River Severn), the provision for adjoining wetlands for water storage, and increased vegetation to slow the flow of water to the channels.	✓		✓			✓
The priority to extend the churchyard, as identified within the place plan, should include providing biodiversity improvements such as retaining or creating species rich hedgerows and include vegetation and trees within its design.	✓			✓		
Improvements to youth facilities including recreational facilities for children and refurbishment of the skate park / play area, where possible including natural materials or linking to new habitats to engage young people with the natural world. Additional access points to this space should also be considered to improve accessibility to open space within the settlement.	✓			✓	✓	✓
Extend the Shropshire Cycle routes to reach new developments and northern part of Highley				✓		✓