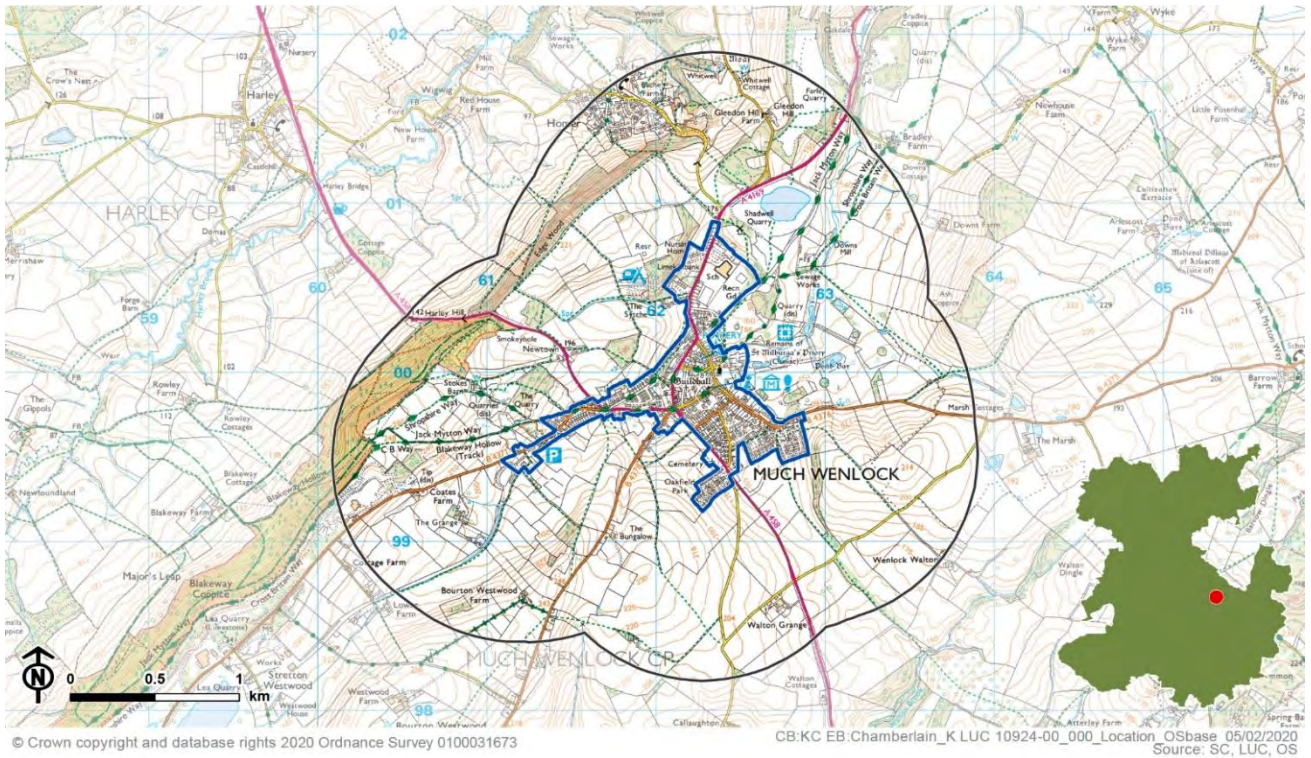


# Key Centre – Much Wenlock

## Location



## Summary of Settlement Study Area and Location

### Introduction

The Shropshire Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2020) identifies Much Wenlock as a Key Centre. This Green Infrastructure Strategy has defined the study area as a 1km buffer around the settlement limits. The identified study area is approximately 1.2km south west from the study limits of the Former Ironbridge Strategic Site.

Much Wenlock is a medieval town located 10 km north west of Bridgnorth in east Shropshire. It is situated at the base of a limestone escarpment, Wenlock Edge, which runs from Craven Arms to Ironbridge. The town developed around an abbey and subsequent monastery and has been a market town for over 700 years. Much Wenlock's population is around 2,250 and the Town Council area covers 5,682ha with a population density of 0.6 people per hectare.

### Development context

Existing development allocations in the town are set out in the SAMDev (2015)<sup>1</sup>, 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.

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

- Site MUW012: Land adjoining the Primary School and hunters Gate, Much Wenlock (south). Site Area: 3.8ha. Site capacity: 120 dwellings

The Proposed Employment Land is:

- Site: EMP1 located to the far west of the town's development boundary. Provision potentially 1ha (no further details found)

The Local Plan Review sees Much Wenlock as continuing to act as a Key Centre and development will balance the need for additional housing and employment growth by accommodating around 200 dwellings and around 2 hectares of employment land between 2016 and 2038. The Local Plan identifies a housing site allocation located south of Much Wenlock Primary School.

Additional development in Much Wenlock will need to recognise the potential impacts on flood risk, heritage assets and the policies and objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan.

<sup>1</sup> Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan 2015





**View towards Wenlock Edge and Shropshire Hills AONB**



**Wenlock Priory**



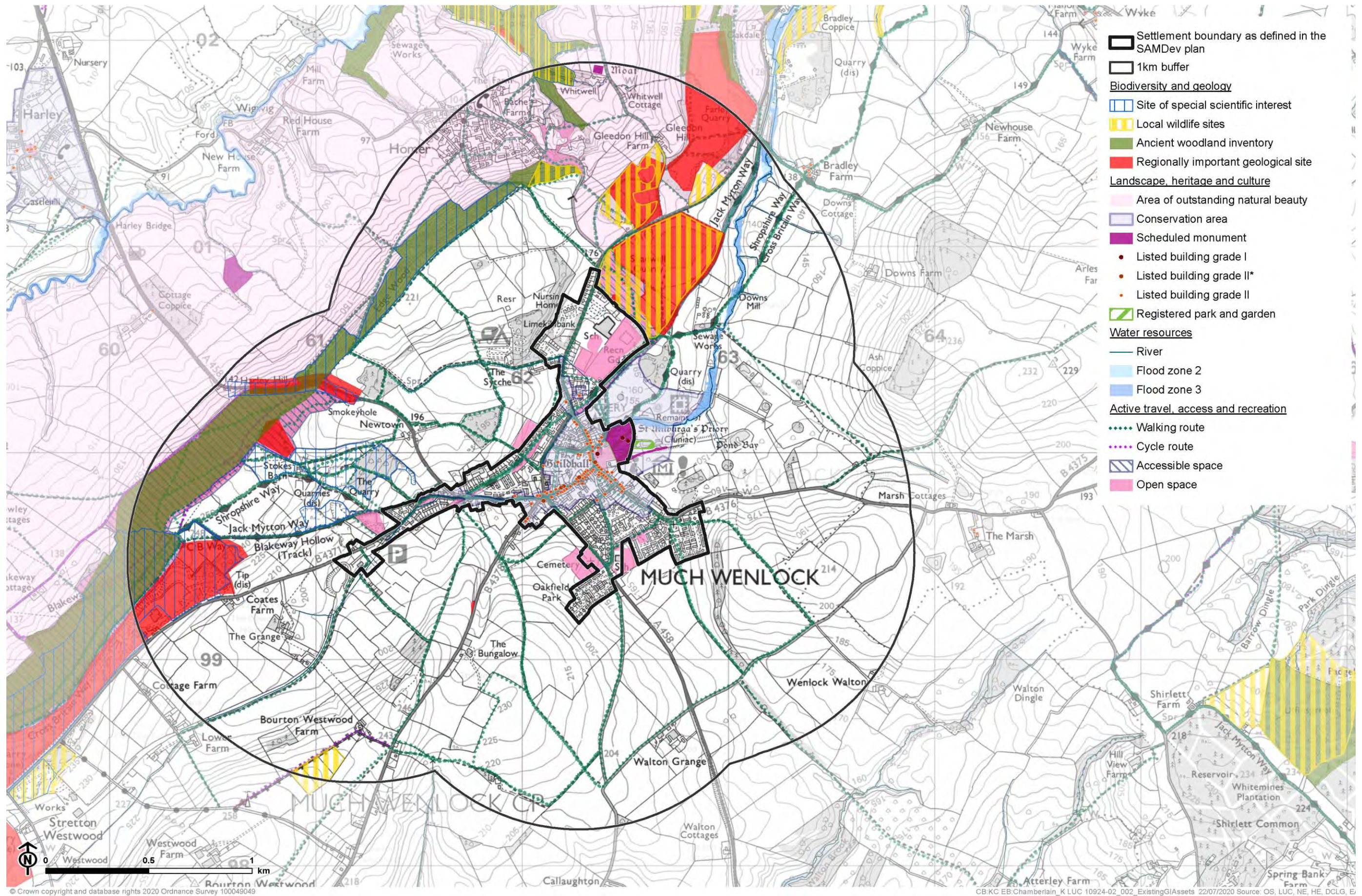
**Shropshire Way Long Distance Footpath**




**Wenlock Edge Car Park (National Trust)**



## Existing Green Infrastructure Assets and Key Constraints





Theme	Existing Green Infrastructure Assets / Constraints
<p data-bbox="172 936 328 1014"><b>Key Theme 1: Biodiversity and Geology</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="363 282 504 309"><b>Biodiversity</b></p> <p data-bbox="363 327 560 353"><b>Designated Sites</b></p> <ul data-bbox="379 371 1473 658" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 371 1473 562">■ Wenlock Edge SSSI, forming part of the Shropshire Hills AONB, is located to the west of Much Wenlock. The SSSI designation covers large tracts of Edge Wood and Blakeway Coppice which are also listed as areas of Ancient Woodland. This is a predominantly Broadleaved Mixed and Yew Woodland, with the majority recorded as in favourable condition by Natural England. There are 2 Calcareous Grassland units identified within the SSSI which are recorded as Unfavourable – Declining and Unfavourable Recovering and 4 Earth Heritage sites (Favourable condition). SSSI Impact Risk Zones associated with the Wenlock Edge SSSI cover the full extent of the study area.</li> <li data-bbox="379 577 1473 658">■ Whitwell coppice also extends into the study area at the north and is an example of deciduous woodland. The SSSI is listed as unfavourable declining due to impacts from grazing and browsing by deer.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="363 676 695 703"><b>Notable and Priority Habitats</b></p> <ul data-bbox="379 721 1473 1111" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 721 1473 748">■ Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland is evident at Blakeway Coppice located on Wenlock Edge.</li> <li data-bbox="379 766 1473 792">■ The southern part of Blakeway Coppice is designated Ancient Replanted Woodland.</li> <li data-bbox="379 810 1473 891">■ Priority Habitats are located around Deciduous Woodland within upland parts of the study area and lowland grassland and meadows at Limekilnbank, Wenlock Priory and the lower slopes north of the B4371 Stretton Road.</li> <li data-bbox="379 909 1473 1016">■ A number of Shropshire Environment Network Corridors are located within the survey area, including along Wenlock Edge, tributary streams and ditches and transport routes such as the B4378. The large grounds and surrounding environs of Wenlock Priory are also noted as Key SEN Corridors.</li> <li data-bbox="379 1034 1473 1115">■ Local Wildlife Sites are designated in the north of the study area, at Shadwell Quarry, Gleedon Hill Quarry, Edge Wood (non SSSI) and Farley House Meadow and in the south of the study area at Bourton Westwood Farm.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="363 1128 456 1155"><b>Species</b></p> <ul data-bbox="379 1173 1473 1697" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 1173 1473 1312">■ Protected amphibians, plants and invertebrates are clustered within locally and nationally important designations including Wenlock Edge and priority habitats within the grounds of Wenlock Priory and the areas of lowland meadows and grasslands. Transport corridors also provide valuable habitat for priority species which are particularly concentrated in the areas around the A4169 in the north of the study area.</li> <li data-bbox="379 1330 1473 1384">■ Protected amphibians have been recorded within lowland grassland and meadow areas, particularly north of the B4371 and within Shadwell Quarry.</li> <li data-bbox="379 1402 1473 1456">■ Protected invertebrate records are distributed along the various woodland edges and vegetation belts.</li> <li data-bbox="379 1473 1473 1554">■ Priority flowering plant species are found at their densest at the border between the deciduous woodland and open farmland along Wenlock Edge. A similar distribution pattern is seen in the records of priority invertebrates.</li> <li data-bbox="379 1572 1473 1626">■ There is an absence in recordings of protected and priority species within the south of the study area between the B4371 and the B4378.</li> <li data-bbox="379 1644 1473 1697">■ 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.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="363 1715 462 1742"><b>Geology</b></p> <ul data-bbox="379 1760 1473 1841" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 1760 1473 1841">■ A number of active and disused quarries located within the study area are designated as RIGS. These include Farley Quarry (in operation), Shadwell Quarry (disused), Harley Hill Quarry (geological cuttings adjacent to the A458), Edgefield Quarry (disused) and Lea Quarry (disused).</li> </ul>
<p data-bbox="172 1888 328 1995"><b>Key Theme 2: Landscape, Heritage and Culture</b></p>	<p data-bbox="363 1872 491 1899"><b>Landscape</b></p> <ul data-bbox="379 1917 1473 2011" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="379 1917 1473 2011">■ The western part of the study area is located within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), designated for its geological formations, rich heritage and scenic views which create a landscape of contrast.</li> </ul>



- There are key views towards the Shropshire Hills AONB and Wenlock Edge from lowland areas to the west and south of Much Wenlock.
- The landscape within the study area is characterised as the Shropshire Hills<sup>2</sup>. The landscape is further defined within three Landscape Character Types, these being Wooded Hills and Estate lands, Wooded Estate lands and Principal Wooded Hills. The dominant landscape features are associated with the wooded ridges (Wenlock Edge) and estate landscapes. Farmland is mainly pastoral, and settlements are linear, focused around river corridors, crossings and road infrastructure<sup>3</sup>.
- The landscape of the area is considered to be of very strong character and high scenic quality. Parcels to the east around Wenlock Priory have a very high sensitivity to development. The landscape surrounding Wenlock edge is also of higher sensitivity than neighbouring agricultural land to the south.
- The land within the study area is predominantly classified as Grade 3 for agriculture with smaller areas of Grade 2 located to the south/east of the town. Large sections (west and east) of the study area are under Environmental Stewardship Agreements and there are many areas under Countryside Stewardship schemes.

#### Heritage

- The remains of Wenlock Priory (St. Milburga's Priory), a Scheduled Ancient Monument (English Heritage) are located in the centre of the study area.
- Much Wenlock Conservation Area covers most of the urban form of Much Wenlock.
- A number of prominent Listed buildings are evident within the area, most notably The Church of Holy Trinity (Grade I) and infrastructure associated with Wenlock Priory. A number of Grade I, Grade II\* and Grade II listed buildings are also located along Wilmore Street, Barrow Street and the High Street.
- The GWR Wenlock Branch, a disused railway line bisects the study area north east to south west through the centre of Much Wenlock.

### Key Theme 3: Water Resources





#### Freshwater Assets


- A small tributary of the River Severn traverses the study area south west to north east.
- A number of small ponds are associated with the tributary stream, north of Wenlock Priory.
- A large man-made lake is evident at Shadwell Quarry in the north of the study area.

#### Flooding

- The extent of the fluvial Flood Zones in the town is limited as the catchment of the Shylte Brook is smaller than 3km<sup>2</sup> and not shown on national scale mapping.
- There is a narrow flood-risk area ( Flood Zone 2 and 3) associated with the Shylte Brook. This is confined by the steep valley sides to the east and west of the town, with Much Wenlock itself located in an elevated position.
- The main surface water risk is via overland flow routes to the unnamed watercourse. Associated flow routes are the B4378, the A4169 and Shineton Street, there are also isolated pockets of surface ponding, notably along Station Road and in Much Wenlock Park. Overland flow routes are also present along Racecourse Road, Barrow Street and the A458.
- Much Wenlock town catchment has been designated as a Flood Rapid Response Catchment in the highest category. Surface water flooding can develop very quickly in this situation and the potential impact on flood risk is significant.
- Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (2014) Policy RF5 advocates that development will not be permitted in flood attenuation areas where that development would reduce the ability of these areas to alleviate flooding. These flood attenuation areas are located south of Styche Lane and Stretton Road.

<sup>2</sup> The Shropshire Landscape Typology, 2006

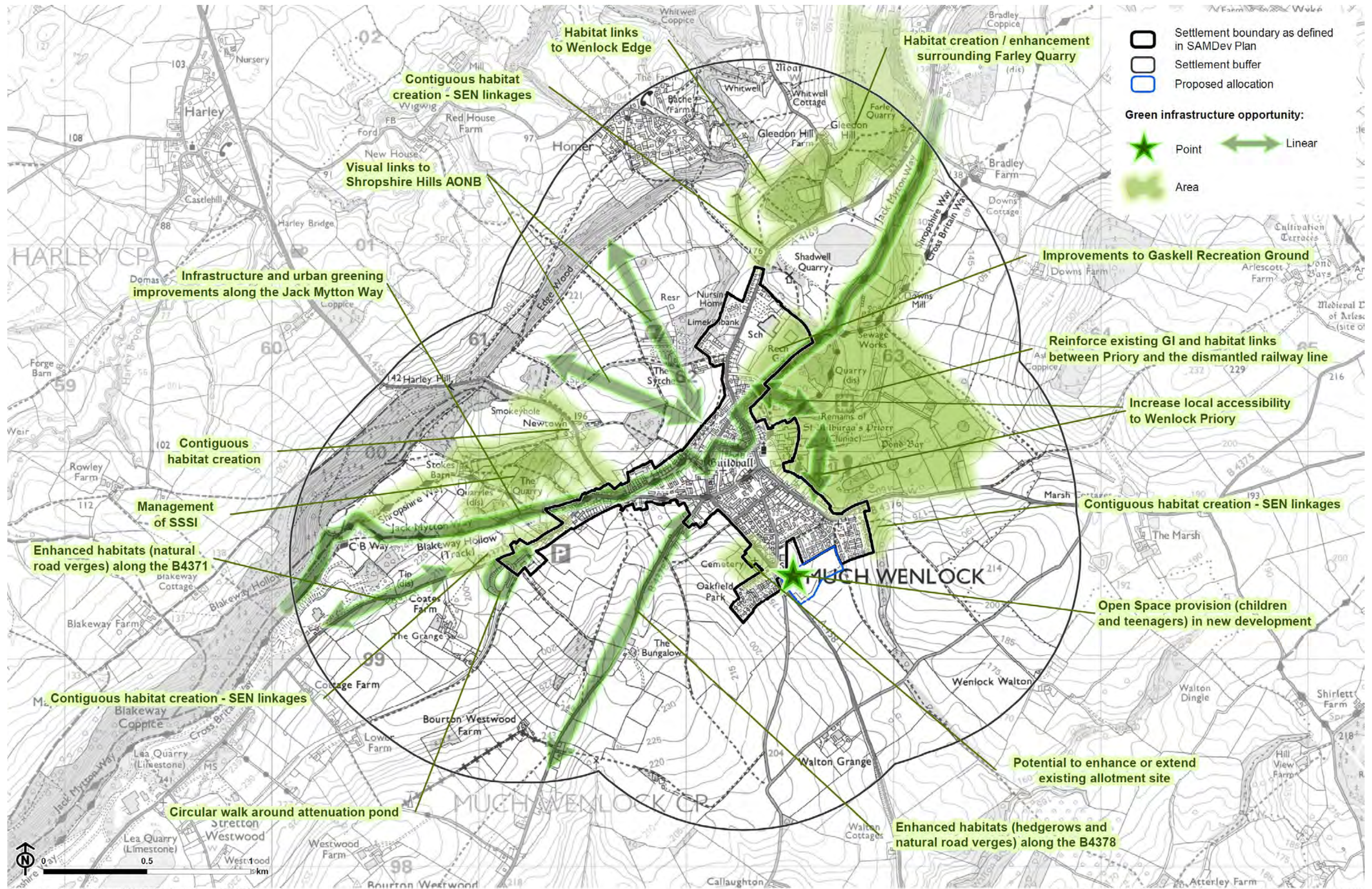
	<p><b>Pollution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The majority of the Much Wenlock study area has been identified as a Surface Water Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), defined by DEFRA as an area which is at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A proposed housing site allocation is located on greenfield land to the south of Much Wenlock Primary School to the south east of the town. There are also several small-scale domestic planning applications within Much Wenlock itself and along the B4378. The Shropshire Outline Water Cycle Study (2010) suggests that attenuation based SUDs interventions are likely to be suitable within this area and should be designed into new development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 4: Active Travel, Access and Recreation</b></p> 	<p><b>Transport context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The A458 is a key transport route to Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury passing through the southern fringe of Much Wenlock and forms a key commuter settlement for Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Telford. The need for improvement in pedestrian safety and access on the A458 has been highlighted in the Much Wenlock Place Plan (2019 / 2020).</li> </ul> <p><b>Active Travel</b></p> <p><b>Walking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The study area is interspersed with a substantial number of PRow routes, particularly connecting Wenlock Edge to the west with Much Wenlock town. A number of routes also extend southwards into the wider countryside.</li> <li>■ The Shropshire Way, Cross Britain Way and Jack Mytton Way long distance footpaths all pass through the study area. This section of the Shropshire Way links Wenlock Edge with the River Severn to the north of the study area. The Cross Britain Way, developed to connect less well-known parts of the English countryside, connects Ironbridge Gorge with the Shropshire Hills. The Jack Mytton Way is a Shropshire County route which joins Wyre Forest in the east with the Powys Border in the west via Wenlock Edge. It travels a length of the disused railway line within the study area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cycling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There are no national or local level cycle routes located within the study area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Access and Recreation</b></p> <p><b>Open Space</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There is a linear section of natural and semi-natural green space surrounding Much Wenlock disused railway line.</li> <li>■ Much Wenlock allotments are located along the western boundary of the town.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 5: Health and Wellbeing</b></p> 	<p><b>Health</b></p> <p><b>Health Deprivation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The IMD relating to health indicates that the most health deprived portion of the study area is wrapped around the northern part of the settlement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Childhood obesity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Records indicate that childhood obesity is not a key issue in Much Wenlock.</li> </ul> <p><b>Air Quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There are no recorded AQMA within the study area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Accessible Open Space</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Open Space Assessment undertaken by LUC to inform this GI Strategy identified the following baseline provision of open space.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Accessible Open Space: 0.53ha per 1000 persons (2018 population base). Analysis shows that the settlement falls within 400m of such provision excluding very small parts of the settlement to the south.</li> <li>– Allotments: 0ha per 1000 persons (2018 population base). Analysis shows that the entire settlement is within the 1.2km access buffer for provision.</li> <li>– Provision for Children and Teenagers: 0 spaces in total.</li> <li>■ See the Open Space Assessment appended to the GI Strategy Report for more details.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 6: Climate Change</b></p> 	<p><b>Tree Cover</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ According to Shropshire Council urban tree mapping, blocks of resilient trees are located in Limekilnbank, William Brookes School with an avenue of resilient Lime Trees either side of the school access road.</li> <li>■ Individual and groups of trees are scattered throughout the urban form of Much Wenlock linked to green spaces and residential gardens.</li> <li>■ Much of the key PROW infrastructure is located within or adjacent woodland and hedgerows, providing some shelter against extreme weather events.</li> </ul> <p><b>Flooding Climate Change Allowance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The majority of the existing Flood Zones have been modelled as Higher Central, Central and Upper End with regard to Climate Change Allowance according to The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment<sup>3</sup>. These all indicate that flood risk in the study area is likely to increase in size, but this is not likely to affect existing properties.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2018






## Green Infrastructure Opportunities












## Key Green Infrastructure Opportunities

Theme	Green Infrastructure Opportunities
<p><b>Key Theme 1: Biodiversity and Geology</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Shropshire Environmental Network within the study area, including Wenlock Edge, Wenlock Priory and the B4378 should be managed to ensure that they continue to support their functionality through enhanced local connectivity. The corridors could be linked to the new deciduous woodland network, local wildlife sites and natural roadside verges to further reduce the fragmentation of habitats within the study area. As part of this, the management of SSSI sites should be reviewed alongside designation reasons to ensure all Unfavourable Recovering sites are reverted to Favourable. Whitwell coppice should be the subject of a separate management plan and capital investment to ensure the decline in condition through deer over-grazing is limited.</li> <li>■ Increasing connectivity between Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland evident at Blakeway Coppice located on Wenlock Edge with priority deciduous woodland habitats at Newtown, Limekilnbank and the disused quarries to the west of the settlement is recommended. In particular, road networks and PRow could be used as corridors to form contiguous habitat mosaics between woodland blocks.</li> <li>■ Lowland grassland and meadow are key habitats for a number of protected and priority species, including priority invertebrates. Habitat enhancements could incorporate natural flood management principles, particularly attenuation, particularly in the sensitive landscape surrounding Wenlock Priory in the east of the settlement.</li> <li>■ It is recommended that new habitat is created in the landscape within the south of the study area, particularly through the reinforcement of roadside vegetation along the B4371 and B4378.</li> <li>■ Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (2014) offers special protection from re-use to older disused quarry workings where natural regeneration has occurred and resulted in rich habitats. These opportunity areas are located at Farley Quarry. The richness of these habitats should be protected and enhanced alongside improved access, with links to nearby Wenlock Edge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 2: Landscape, Heritage and Culture</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The setting, views and quality of the Shropshire Hills AONB within and surrounding the study area should be maintained and where possible enhanced.</li> <li>■ Landscape and visual sensitivity should be taken into account within all development proposals with development to the east. Where sensitivity is higher, developments should be committed to more rigorous controls.</li> <li>■ The key rural and heritage features associated with the landscape should be taken into account within future development in order to maintain Much Wenlock's strong identity and sense of place. This will be particularly important in designing new, quality green space within all future allocation sites. The Much Wenlock Design Statement (2000) should be used within all development proposal to deliver positive design solutions. This could include increased accessibility and linkages to Much Wenlock Priory.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 3: Water Resources</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All developments in flood-sensitive areas should be designed and constructed to reduce the overall level of flood risk both to the use of the site and elsewhere when compared to current use (Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan, 2014).</li> <li>■ Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (2014) Policy RF5 could be extended to include additional areas of EA Flood Zones 2 and 3 adjacent the unnamed tributary. These could be designated informal flood meadows with multi-functional biodiversity benefits.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Key Theme 4: Active Travel, Access and Recreation</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Much Wenlock now has 'Walkers Welcome' status and in accordance with the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan (2014), all new developments should be integrated with the existing rights of way network by creating new links wherever possible.</li> <li>■ Particular emphasis should be placed on connecting new development with Wenlock Edge and Much Wenlock disused railway line, creating a series of new green routes.</li> <li>■ Improvements to the infrastructure of The Shropshire Way, Cross Britain Way and Jack Mytton Way long-distance footpaths could all enhance local community use as well as improving cross-country usability.</li> <li>■ Provision of a new circular walk around the attenuation pond at Stretton Road, as suggested through the town council consultation, is recommended.</li> <li>■ Enhancements to Gaskell Park, including a new perimeter path, outdoor exercise equipment and a new pavilion, as suggested through the town council consultation, is recommended.</li> <li>■ Creation of on-road cycle connectivity, particularly linking outlying settlements including Broseley and Ironbridge to the north east and Bridgnorth to the south east is recommended. These settlements are also served with NCN Routes 45 and 55 with and local connectivity would therefore have potential to provide wider national cycling links.</li> <li>■ New development should provide open space which includes provision for children and teenagers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 5: Health and Wellbeing</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Providing improved access to the wider landscape for the most health deprived parts of Much Wenlock (north and east) is strongly recommended. Improved access to walking routes and to the countryside surrounding Wenlock Edge and Wenlock Priory are recommended.</li> <li>■ Subject to financial constraints, provision of new, good quality semi-natural open space utilising the disused railway line is recommended. The emphasis could be on establishing a multi-functional green corridor which connects the wider countryside with the urban core of Much Wenlock.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Theme 6: Climate Change</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where practical and appropriate, urban street trees and vegetation should be included within the urban form of Much Wenlock, particularly noted at publicly accessible locations including the grounds of the primary and secondary schools, the allotments and the recreation ground and to bolster the functionality of key recreational routes such as the long distance footpaths.</li> <li>■ There is opportunity to enhance or even extend the existing allotment site to increase capacity and new community food growing provision should be considered within future development proposals.</li> <li>■ All new planting should provide climate resilient species.</li> </ul>

Summary of key opportunities						
SSSI management improvements at Whitewell Coppice to improve condition.	✓	✓				✓
Link key habitats to create more contiguous network around Wenlock Edge	✓	✓				✓
Habitat creation / enhancement around Farley Quarry	✓	✓				✓
Retain and enhance visual links towards AONB	✓	✓			✓	
Increase local accessibility to Much Wenlock Priory				✓	✓	✓
Include new open space ( children's / teenager facilities) within proposed allocation.				✓	✓	
Improve infrastructure along the long-distance footpaths to create sustainable, greened corridors through Much Wenlock	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Reinforce existing GI habitat surrounding Much Wenlock Priory with a particular emphasis on flood risk mitigation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extension and / or enhancement of existing allotment site				✓	✓	✓
Provision of a new circular walk around the attenuation pond at Stretton Road				✓	✓	✓
Enhancements to Gaskell Park, including a new perimeter path, outdoor exercise equipment and a new pavilion				✓	✓	✓
Enhanced habitats along key transport routes including the B4371 and B4378	✓	✓	✓			✓