Protecting and Enhancing Churton's Natural Environment

Cheshire Wildlife Trust

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Acknowledgements

Protecting and Enhancing Churton's Natural Environment was produced by Laura Saker-George, Pippa Way, Mélusine Velde, and Rachel Giles.

For more information contact:

Cheshire Wildlife Trust,
Bickley Hall Farm,
Bickley,
Malpas,
SY14 8EF
01948 820728
info@cheshirewt.org.uk

Contents

Introduction

The primary aim of our national and local biodiversity policies is to bring nature back into recovery and leave it in a better state than that in which we inherited it. The focus is protection and enhancement at the landscape scale as well as developing healthy ecological networks by delivering strategic habitat creation developers, landowners, conservation charities and individuals will all be encouraged to play their part. The planning system has a central role in this, particularly regarding biodiversity strategies and the delivery of biodiversity net gain, but also through development control.

The success of national plans will depend on the contributions of local communities toward achieving social, economic and environmental objectives and working to protect and enhance their local environment. Local level planning will be a key factor in determining whether the aims of national strategies are realised by identifying local priorities for nature conservation that should be considered during the planning process. Neighbourhood Planning provides an important opportunity for communities to participate in the planning system and shape their local environment for future generations. Identifying and evaluating local environmental opportunities and constraints at a neighbourhood level grants communities an informed position and enables them to better protect their valuable natural assets.

Biodiversity Policy Overview

<u>The State of Nature Partnership (SoNP)</u>

In 2013 the State of Nature Partnership published its first 'State of Nature Report' with the key aim of 'diagnosing the causes of wildlife decline'. In successive updates, the UK was ranked amongst the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and many of the observed SoN measures suggested that the decline of nature has continued in the last decade; as of the latest report (2023), 1 in 6 species are now threatened with extinction.

<u>The 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP)</u>

In 2018, as part of the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan, the government pledged to improve the environment within a generation, leaving it in a better condition than they inherited it in. A key goal of the plan is to achieve a growing and resilient network of land, water and sea that is richer in plants and wildlife through the creation of a Nature Recovery Network. The newest revision, the Environment Improvement Plan 2023, details how DEFRA will collaborate with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver their goals for improving the environment, halting the decline in our biodiversity, and allowing wildlife to thrive. These goals are set to be achieved through a number of mechanisms including the planning system (via the National Planning Policy Framework) and through the Environment Act (2021).

<u>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</u>

The NPPF, first published in 2012 and most recently updated in 2024, draws on the principles set out above. 'To protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment' is one of the three core objectives in the revised NPPF 2024 (paragraph 8c). In the recent revisions of the NPPF there has been a shift in policies from 'no net loss' to a 'measurable net-gain in biodiversity', referring to the use of a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric to measure mandatory biodiversity gains. Alongside BNG is the

establishment of ecological networks at the local level, underpinned by the protection and enhancement of local biodiversity assets. Non-strategic local policies and strategic policy guidance related to ecological networks and biodiversity net-gain are enshrined in the NPPF (2024) paragraphs 187-195.

The Environment Act (2021)

The Environment Act sets out a new environmental governance framework as the UK leaves the European Union's environmental policy and legislative structures. The Act mandates new systems for target-setting, planning, monitoring and reporting with the aim of improving our natural environment. As with the shift toward biodiversity net-gain and ecological networks supported in the NPPF, the Environment Act includes the establishment of Biodiversity Net Gain, and the introduction of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

BNG is a new framework mandated by the Environment Act (2021) aimed at providing funding and opportunities for nature recovery in England through the planning system. It requires developers to provide a 10% biodiversity net-gain - either onsite, offsite, or through statutory credits – secured at the point planning permission is granted for new development. It is applicable to all developments applied for under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (likely from 2025).

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

Each LNRS is a regional or county-level strategy for nature recovery that consists of a statement of biodiversity principles as well as a map of nature recovery opportunity areas. For the area that it covers, the strategy will: (i) map the most valuable existing habitat for nature, (ii) map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals, and (iii) agree priorities for nature's recovery. It is anticipated this local network will then inform a national Nature Recovery Network (NRN).

Local policy

Biodiversity and ecological networks are enshrined in the Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (adopted January 2015) and Part Two Land Allocations and Detailed Policies (adopted July 2019). Policy ENV 4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Local Plan Part One) seeks to safeguard and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity through the identification and protection of sites and/or features of local importance. Policy DM 44 – Protecting and Enhancing the Environment (Local Plan Part Two) seeks to strengthen the protection of ecological networks across the borough while requiring development to deliver an overall net-gain for biodiversity. To supplement these policies, CWAC Council have also produced a Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecological Networks guidance note (June 2022). This guidance note details the approach to BNG within CWAC, demonstrating the various ways development can achieve this, contributing positively to biodiversity and ecological networks in a way that is measurable in accordance with the adopted development plan.

Ecological Networks

In 2010, Professor Sir John Lawton submitted a report to DEFRA entitled 'Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network'. The report identified a need for change in our approach to wildlife conservation; shifting from trying to retain what we have to one of large-scale habitat restoration and recreation underpinned by the re-establishment of ecological processes and ecosystem services, for the benefits of both people and wildlife. The report identified that this vision will only be realised by working at local scales in partnership with local people.

The natural environment is fundamental to well-being, health, and the economy, and provides us with a range of ecosystem services such as food, water, raw materials, flood defences, air quality and carbon sequestration. Biodiversity underpins most, if not all, of these ecosystem services. Anthropogenic pressures on the environment are likely to continue to increase, requiring us to manage these important natural resources in ways that deliver multiple benefits. This includes increasing agriculture's ability to store carbon, improving floodwater management and supporting biodiversity.

The provision of these ecosystem services and biodiversity have been declining significantly due to England's wildlife and semi-natural habitats having become increasingly fragmented and isolated. The ecological networks (Figure 1) put forward by Sir John Lawton have shaped the thinking around 'Nature Recovery Networks'. Nature Recovery Networks are now widely recognised as an effective way to conserve wildlife in environments that have been fragmented by human activities and bring nature back into recovery.

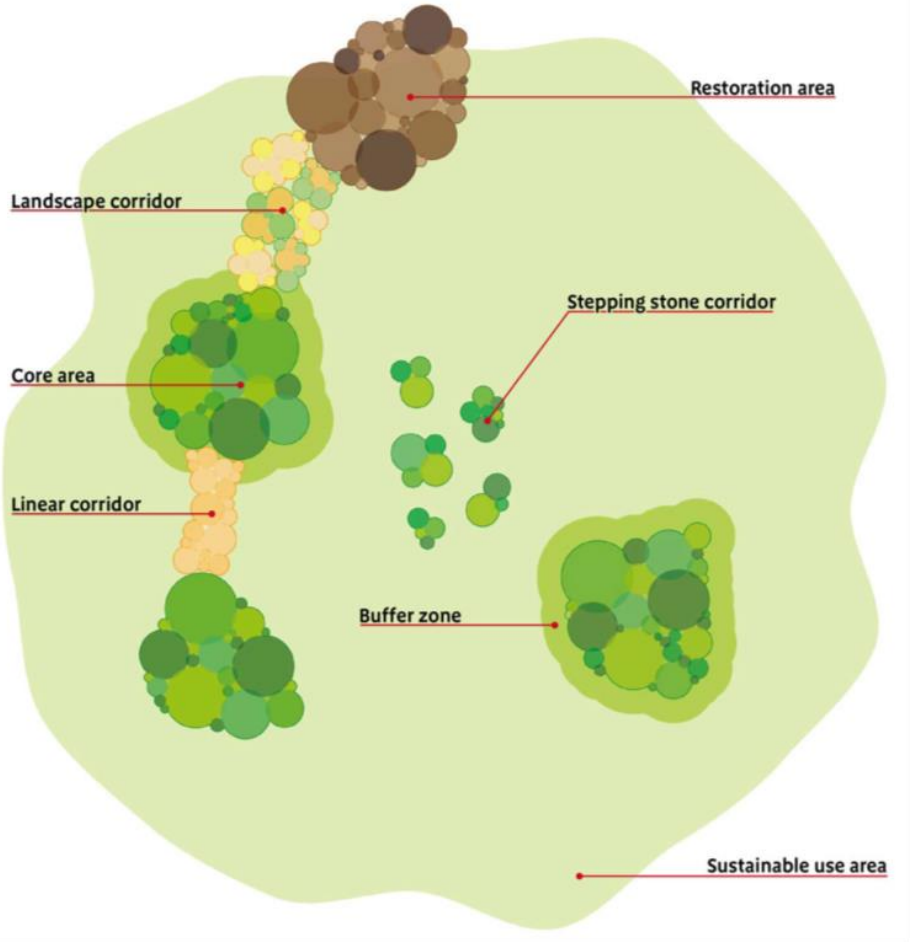


Figure 1. The components of ecological networks (Making Space for Nature report)

Ecological Networks / Nature Recovery Networks in policy

As discussed, the principles of establishing coherent ecological networks are now embedded within many planning and policy documents. The NPPF (2024), includes specific guidance on conserving, restoring and enhancing ecological networks including:

- Paragraph 187 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
    a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
    b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
    c) Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
    d) Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
    e) Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
    f) Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- Paragraph 188 - Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- Paragraph 192 - To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
    a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
    b) Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Objectives of the Study

In order to protect and enhance the natural environment it is important to first identify the natural assets that exist within a neighbourhood. This report aims to identify the core, high and medium ecological value sites for nature conservation within the Churton Neighbourhood Planning (NP) area. High value sites are recommended for protection through the neighbourhood planning process and medium value sites could be considered as biodiversity opportunity areas subject to further evaluation. Medium and high value sites should also act as an alert in the planning system, triggering full evaluation and assessment, should they be proposed for future development. The report also aims to identify the main local and regional ecological networks within the NP area and recommends these are safeguarded within the neighbourhood plan. Additionally, it identifies key features associated with the landscape character of the Churton area so they can be referenced in neighbourhood planning policies.

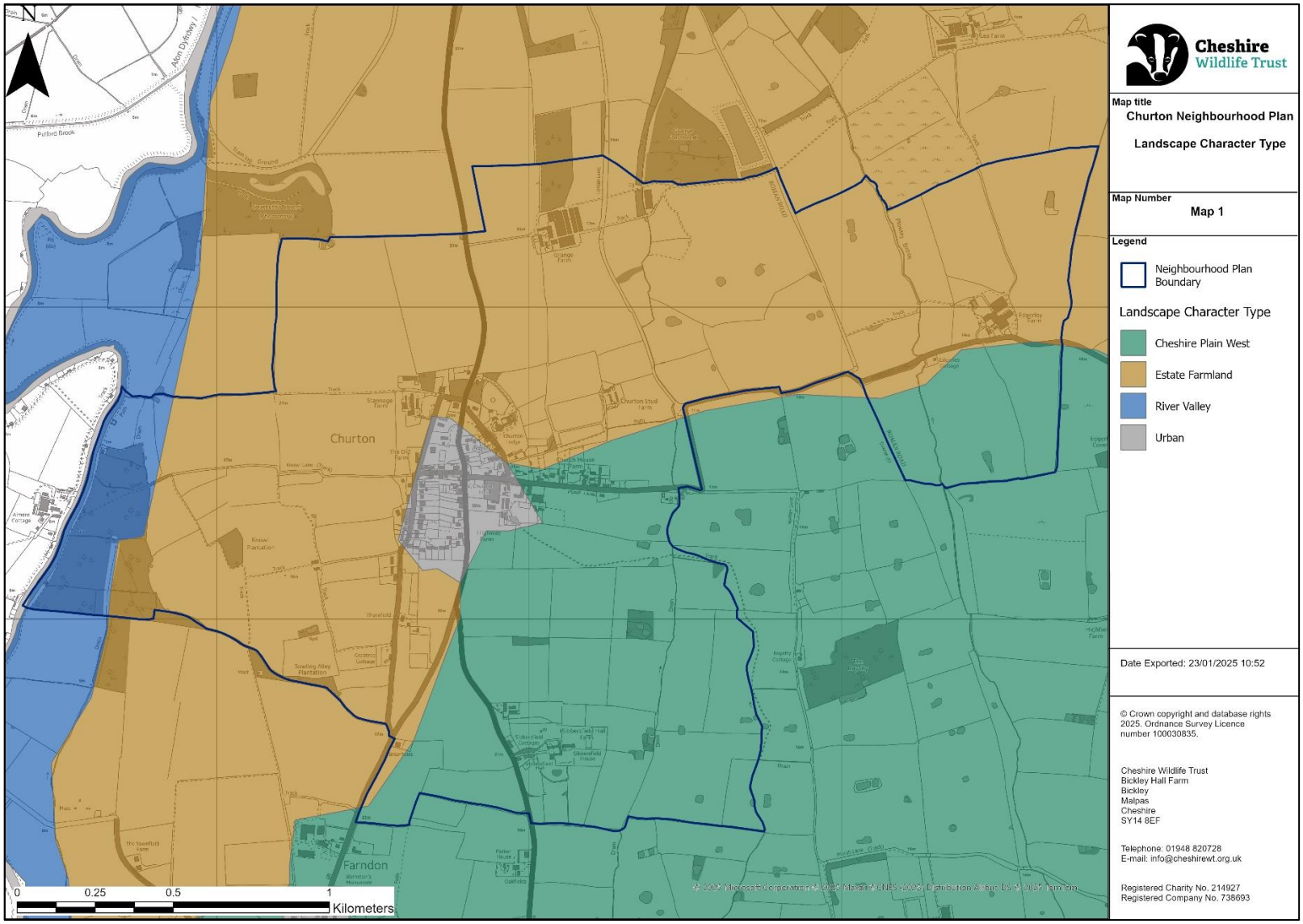
Churton's Landscape Character Assessment

At a national level Churton parish lies within National Character Area (NCA) 61 – Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain; a largely pastoral area of rolling plain which is important for food production. Especially important is dairy farming which is well suited to the damp lush pastures that are found on the glacial till clay soils.

More locally, CWAC Council produced a Landscape Strategy in 2016 which incorporates 16 Landscape Character Types (LCTs). Different aspects such as geology, landform, soils, vegetation and land use have been used to identify recognisable patterns that have categorised into different LCTs. This Landscape Strategy is intended to be used as a basis for planning and the creation of future landscape strategies as well as raising public awareness of landscape character and creating a sense of place.

The Landscape Character Assessment for CWAC (Map 1) identifies three recognisable landscape character types (LCT) within the Churton NP area: 'Cheshire Plain West', 'Estate Farmland', and 'River Valley'. Each LCT is subdivided into smaller Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), the details of which are given below.

Map 1 – Cheshire West and Chester Landscape Character Typology 2016



LCT 9: Cheshire Plain West

This character type dominates a large portion of borough, extending from Stanlow and Helsby in the north to Threapwood in the south, it is bounded at the northern and eastern fringes by the City of Chester and Sandstone Fringe. It is defined by its flat or very gentle topography enclosed by hedgerows and standard trees in small-medium enclosures. Views from more open ground can feature a succession of hedgerows receding into the distance, and these coalesce visually to create a false impression of woodland cover. In reality the woodland cover is very low, being restricted to small copses, game coverts and groups of trees associated with ponds and lines of drainage.

LCA 9c: Tattenhall to Shocklach Plain Character Area

A large south-westerly swathe of thinly populated deeply rural countryside, with a long western boundary along the Dee Valley. The overall management strategy for this LCA should be to conserve the regionally significant historic landscape, restore the historic field pattern of hawthorn hedgerows with oak tree standards, and enhance the grassland and woodland network.

LCT 11: Estate Farmland

A landscape of consistent topography, land use, woodland blocks and formal parkland, and tree-lined avenues associated with historical estate ownership, which shares many characteristics of the Cheshire Plain West LCT. There are extensive areas of designed parkland and mature woodland, interspersed with highly attractive estate villages and buildings.

LCA 11a: Grosvenor Estate Character Area

This is the only character area within the Estate Farmland LCT, divided into two blocks by the River Dee. The LCA is a mixture of pastoral and arable land use with large blocks of woodland. There are also extensive areas of floodplain where tributaries flow into the River Dee, while dense concentrations of listed historic estate buildings sit within the Conservation Areas at Eaton Hall. The overall management objective for this landscape should be to conserve and enhance the condition of the hedgerow, tree and woodland network, and restore and link former habitats such as woodland and maintain ponds and wetland. New development should have strong a reference to estate village scale, layout, architecture and planting.

LCT 15: River Valley

Cheshire West and Chester borough is partly bounded by the Mersey estuary to the north and the River Dee to the west, both of which largely drain areas outside the district. The Weaver, Dane and Gowy rivers are important watercourses draining large parts of the district, as well as many other smaller rivers and streams. This LCT contains internationally significant ecological and nationally important geomorphological features, with some river sections designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for their species and habitats.

LCA 15f: Dee Valley Character Area

A narrow and sinuous landscape area reflecting the course of the River Dee following the western boundary of the borough, in part defining the border between England and Wales. The low lying, shallow valley sides of arable farmland and pasture allows for seasonal flooding in some parts, and it is interspersed with pockets of woodland and estate plantation.

Natural Area

Natural Areas as defined by English Nature (now Natural England) in 1996 are a series of biogeographical units reflecting ecological integrity, land-form, land-use and cultural influences. Their boundaries usually correspond to those of the Landscape Character Areas although they normally encompass multiple LCAs as they are generally larger.

Churton, along with most of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and part of northwest Staffordshire sit within the Meres and Mosses Natural Area. This is an expansive area of gently rolling agricultural plain which at the end of the last ice age was largely underwater. Although the vast area of water eventually drained away it left behind a wetland landscape of meres, mosses, meandering rivers and ponds. This landscape is recognised as being of international importance for its wetland wildlife.

National and Regional Ecological Network

Habitat Network Mapping

Natural England's 'Nature Networks Handbook' is an integrated framework for creating ecological networks for wildlife and people. It aims to provide practical recommendations that support the delivery of the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy, the Natural England Conservation Strategy (C21) & the DEFRA 25YEP. The National Habitat Network Mapping Project is a spatial tool developed as part of the Handbook. It provides a national overview of the distribution of habitat networks for the following 19 separate priority habitats:

- Upland calcareous grassland
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Reed-beds
- Lowland meadows
- Upland hay meadows
- Purple moor-grass and rush pastures
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland heathland
- Upland heathland
- Upland flushes fens & swamps
- Lowland fens
- Lowland raised bog
- Blanket bog
- Limestone pavements
- Coastal sand-dunes
- Coastal shingle
- Maritime cliff & slope
- Saltmarsh
- Semi-natural Ancient Woodland

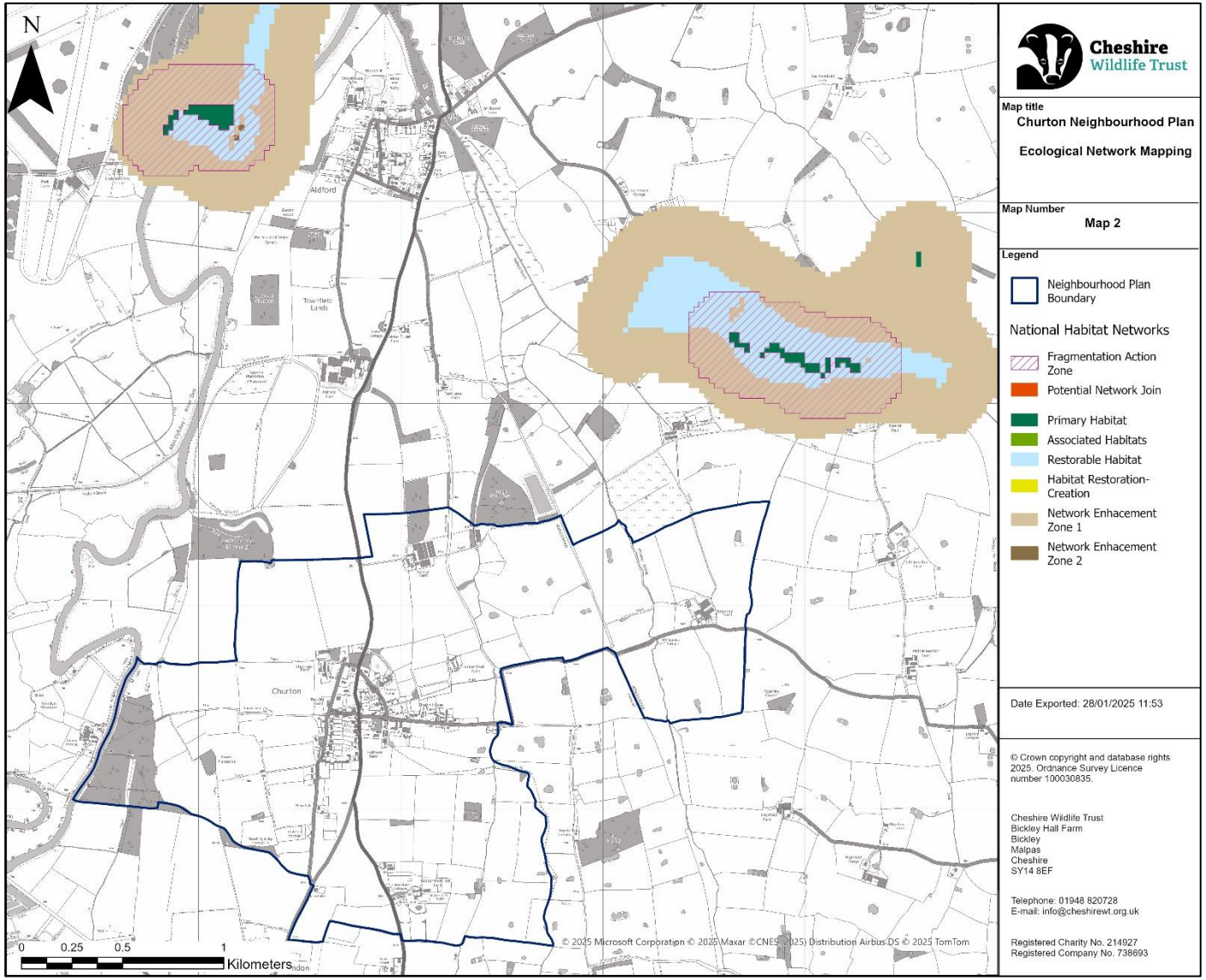
The Key components of the National Habitat Network map are:

- **Primary Habitat** – Existing patches of priority habitat for each habitat network e.g. lowland heathland;
- **Associated Habitats** – Other habitat types that form a mosaic or an ecologically coherent grouping;
- **Habitat Created-Restored** – Habitat where restoration or creation of new habitat is underway;
- **Restorable Habitat** – Habitats that are currently degraded but have the potential to be restored;
- **Network Enhancement Zones** – These are areas that should be prioritised for actions to buffer priority habitat/habitat networks;
- **Fragmentation Action Zone** – Smaller fragmented areas of habitat that have the potential to be enlarged or joined with other habitat patches, and;
- **Potential Network Joins** - Potential locations for action to create network links.

The maps are intended for use at a national level and to feed into the development of ecological networks at a local level. They should be used in conjunction with other data sets and local knowledge to help improve the ecological resilience of habitats and habitat networks. The National Habitat Network in the vicinity of Churton is shown in Map 2.

In March 2025 Natural England are due to roll out Local Nature Recovery Strategies which, once completed, should inform a national Nature Recovery Network. Until then, the 'Nature Networks Handbook' is the preferred methodology at scales above the local level.

Map 2 – National Habitat Network



National Habitat Network Mapping has highlighted an area of lowland fen primary habitat and associated habitats to the north of the parish boundary. These Primary and Restorable Habitats are buffered by Network Enhancement Zones and Fragmentation Action Zones; where opportunities to enhance the habitat network should be prioritised. This could be through the restoration of degraded habitat or through the expansion of existing habitat.

Ecological Network for Cheshire West and Chester 2016

As part of the CWAC updated Local Plan (Part Two), which contains detailed policies to protect and enhance the natural environment, a map of the ecological network within the borough has been produced (Figure 2).

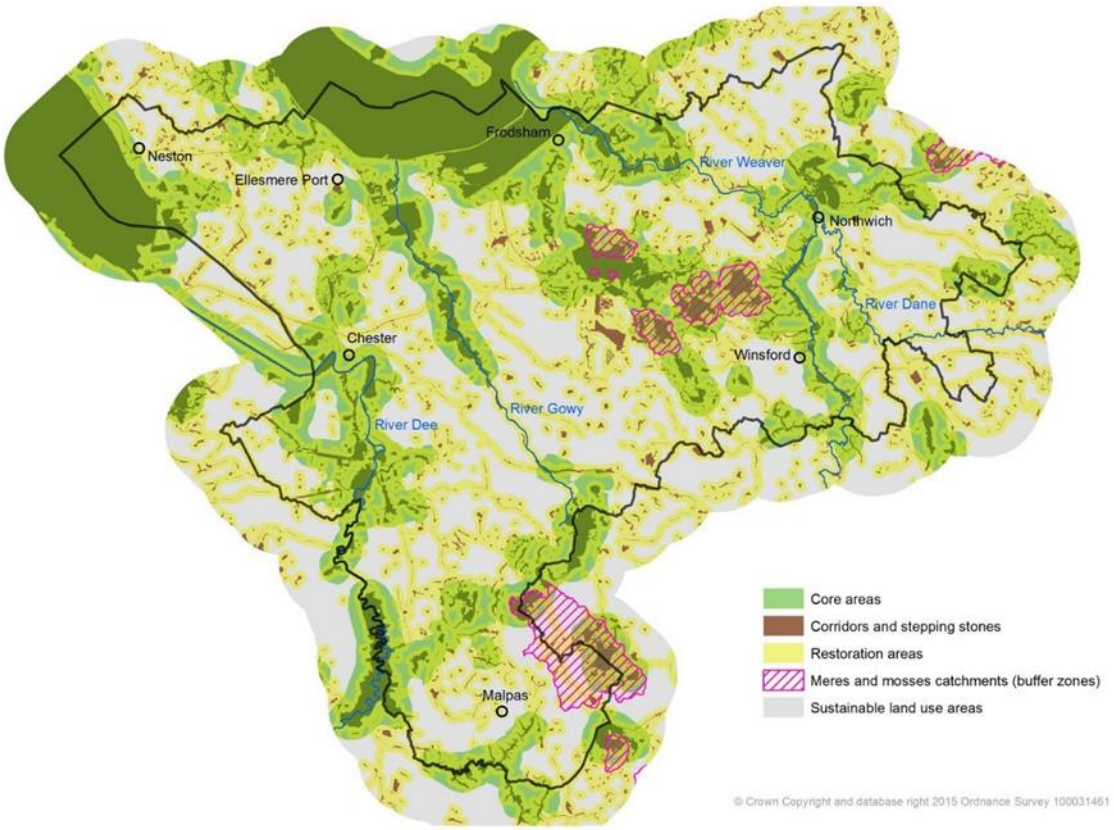


Figure 2. Ecological Network for Cheshire West and Chester 2016

The ecological network is associated with Local Plan (Part Two) Policy DM 44 and incorporates existing protected sites and priority habitats and identifies areas to restore and buffer the network. The Council aims for the ecological network to contribute towards strengthening the borough's wider green infrastructure network, natural capital and maximise gains to the natural environment as a whole. It is not intended to restrict development or growth but instead should be used as a tool to guide development and inform the strategic delivery of biodiversity net-gain.

The Local Plan (Part One) safeguards and enhances biodiversity and geodiversity through the identification and protection of sites and/or features of international, national and local importance. These sites and priority habitats are essential components of the network and need to be protected and conserved. The purpose of the Local Plan (Part Two) Policy DM 44 is to ensure that development that makes a positive contribution towards the borough's ecological network will be supported. As

stated in the CWAC Council Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecological Networks guidance note (June 2022), the primary role of the network is to identify areas of the borough in which habitat loss (such as that resulting from development) will likely cause the most negative impact, and where habitat management/creation will have the most positive impact. It will therefore be used as a tool to give greater focus on promoting habitat creation/management within the optimal places where it has most ecological benefits; both of which will allow for more resilient borough wide biodiversity net gain.

Outside the planning system the ecological network is intended to inform land management, investment decisions and priorities such as agri-environment schemes, river catchment partnership plans and NGO (non-government organisation) landscape scale initiatives. The CWAC Ecological Network identifies a broad network for the whole borough, whereas the wildlife corridors identified in this report (Map 8) are more specific to ecological networks that are important for conserving and enhancing biodiversity at a local scale.

Local Habitat Distinctiveness and Wildlife Corridor Network

Methodology

The local ecological network mapping relates directly to habitat distinctiveness; the principal component of biodiversity quality used by DEFRA to determine biodiversity net-gain. Habitat distinctiveness is based on an assessment of the distinguishing features of a habitat or linear feature, including the consideration of species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales), and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats. The distinctiveness band of each habitat is preassigned by DEFRA and the bands are based upon the UK habitat classification system. A combination of simple rules and expert judgement have been used to assign each habitat type to the appropriate distinctiveness band. While DEFRA uses five bands of distinctiveness (very high, high, medium, low and very low), for the purposes of this exercise the very high and high distinctiveness bands have been merged to leave only four bands.

Habitat data from the sources listed below was attributed to one of the four distinctiveness categories listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Habitat type bands (Defra July 2019)

Habitat Type Band	**Habitat Distinctiveness**	**Broad Habitat Type**	**Colour on Map**
Very high or high ecological value	Very High or high	• Designated nature conservation sites (statutory and non-statutory); • Endangered or Critical European red List habitats; • Priority habitat (with the exception of arable field margins) as defined in Section 41 of the NERC (Natural Environment Council) Act, and; • 'Rare' habitats in the UK with a high proportion unprotected by designation.	Red
Medium ecological value	Medium	• Arable field margin priority habitat; • Non-priority habitats with significant wildlife benefit; • Semi-natural habitats and habitats with the potential to be restored to priority quality, and; • Field ponds.	Orange
Low ecological value	Low	Agricultural and Urban land use of lower biodiversity value but may still form an important part of local ecological network	n/a
Very low ecological value	Very Low	Urban land use with artificial structures which are un-vegetated, sealed/unsealed surface or built linear features of very low biodiversity value.	n/a

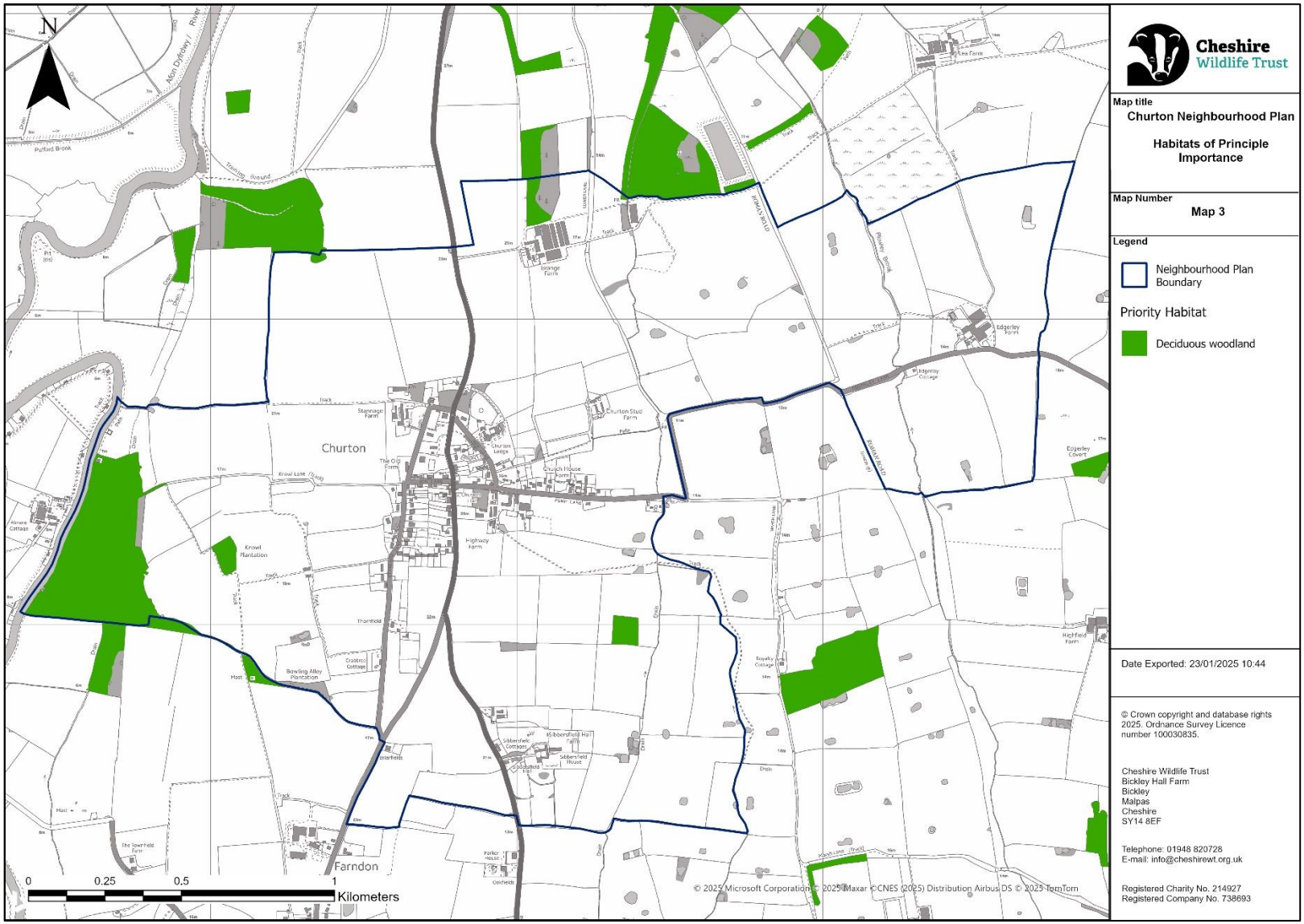
Data sources used to produce the habitat distinctiveness maps included:

1. Several licensed and open data sets:
    a. Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) – Natural England 2019 (last updated 20 October 2020) – High and medium confidence habitats (as defined on the PHI by NE) were classified as high distinctiveness. Low confidence habitats were classified as medium distinctiveness unless other supporting data was available.
    b. Land Cover Map (LCM2019) – Centre for Ecology and Hydrology 2019. Priority habitats (principal importance) and semi-natural habitats classified as medium distinctiveness (data included in Appendix 1).
    c. Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) – Natural England 2017 (last updated 19 February 2019) – Grade 4 classified as medium distinctiveness, Grade 5 classified as high distinctiveness (adjusted where other supporting data was available).
    d. Designated Sites of Nature Conservation (including International Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Wildlife Sites/Sites of Biological Importance and Local Nature Reserves) – Natural England and CWT/CE Local Authority. All were classified as high distinctiveness.
    e. Cheshire Tithe Maps Online – Using maps from Cheshire Archives looking for woodlands that could be potential Ancient Woodlands due to presence over a long period of time but haven't been formally identified. Classed as medium distinctiveness.
2. Open source aerial imagery (Microsoft Bing ™ Imagery and Google Earth) was used to validate and review the habitats by eye.
3. The Churton Land Character Assessment and Natural England's National Habitat Network categories were mapped and the results were used to inform the conclusions.
4. Information from recent planning applications in Churton were researched and species records have been incorporated where appropriate. Ecological records were also obtained (where available) from, the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) (accessed 12/2024).

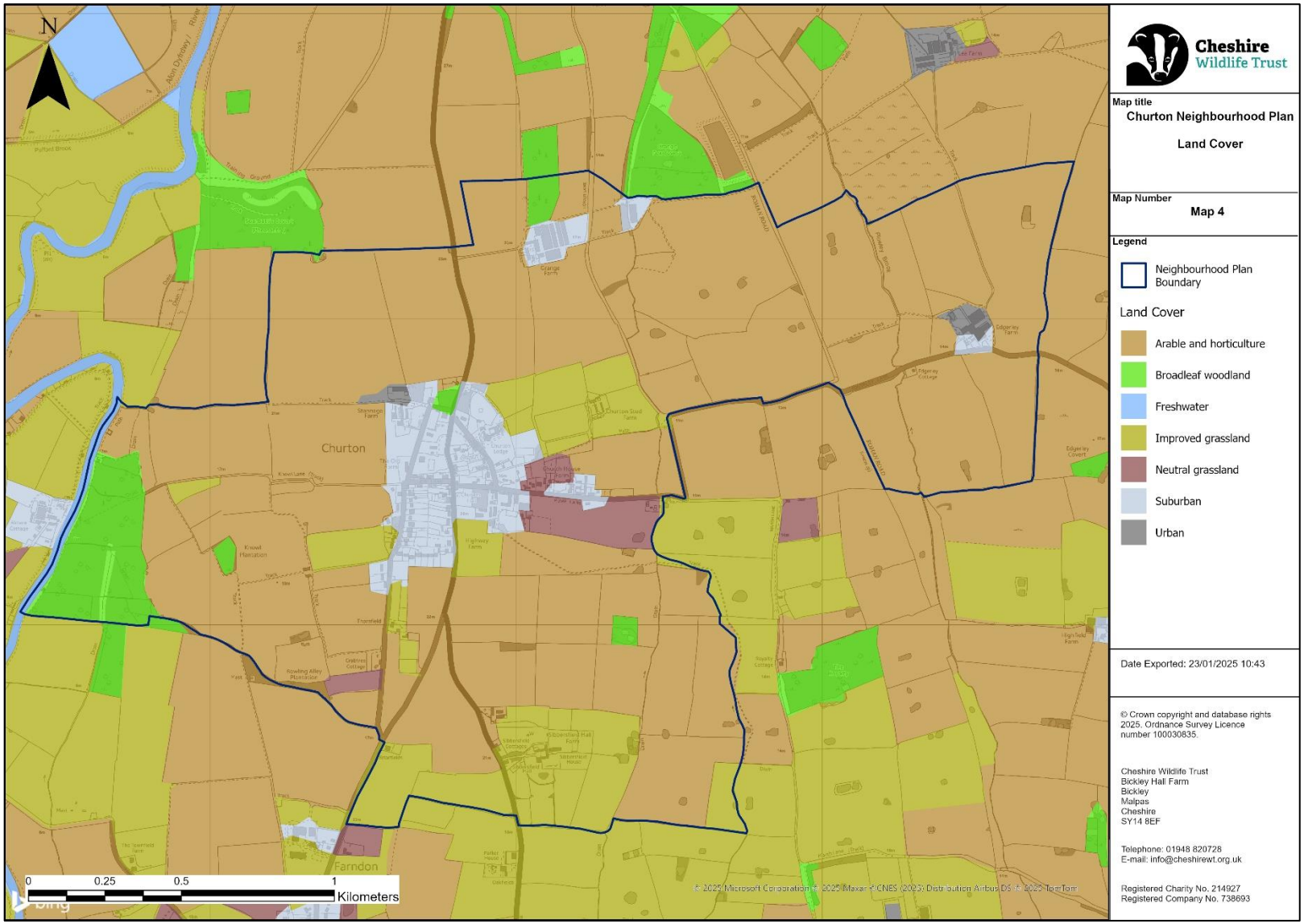
Maps

The suite of maps produced during the local ecological network mapping exercise are included below.

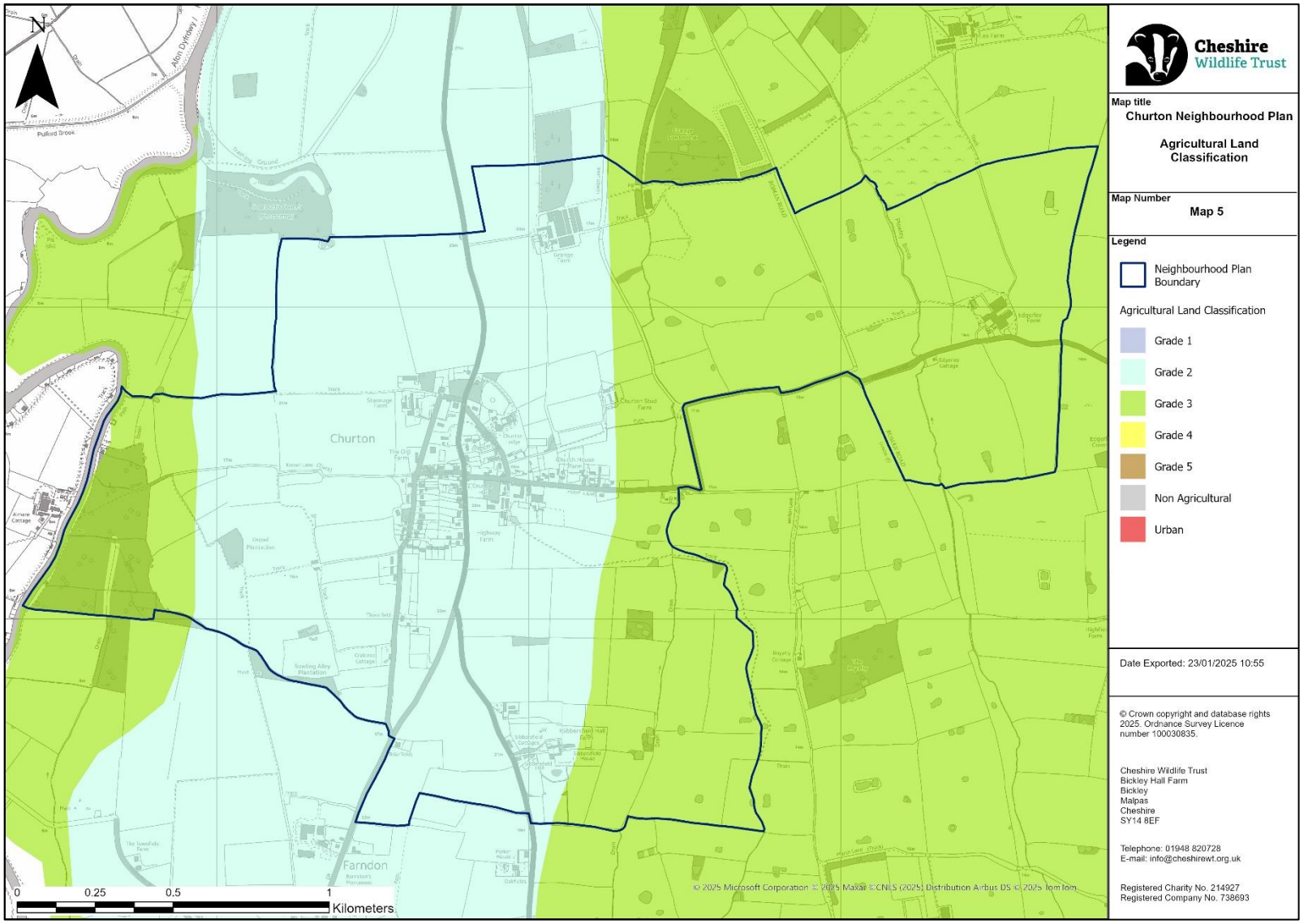
Map 3 – Terrestrial Habitats of Principal Importance



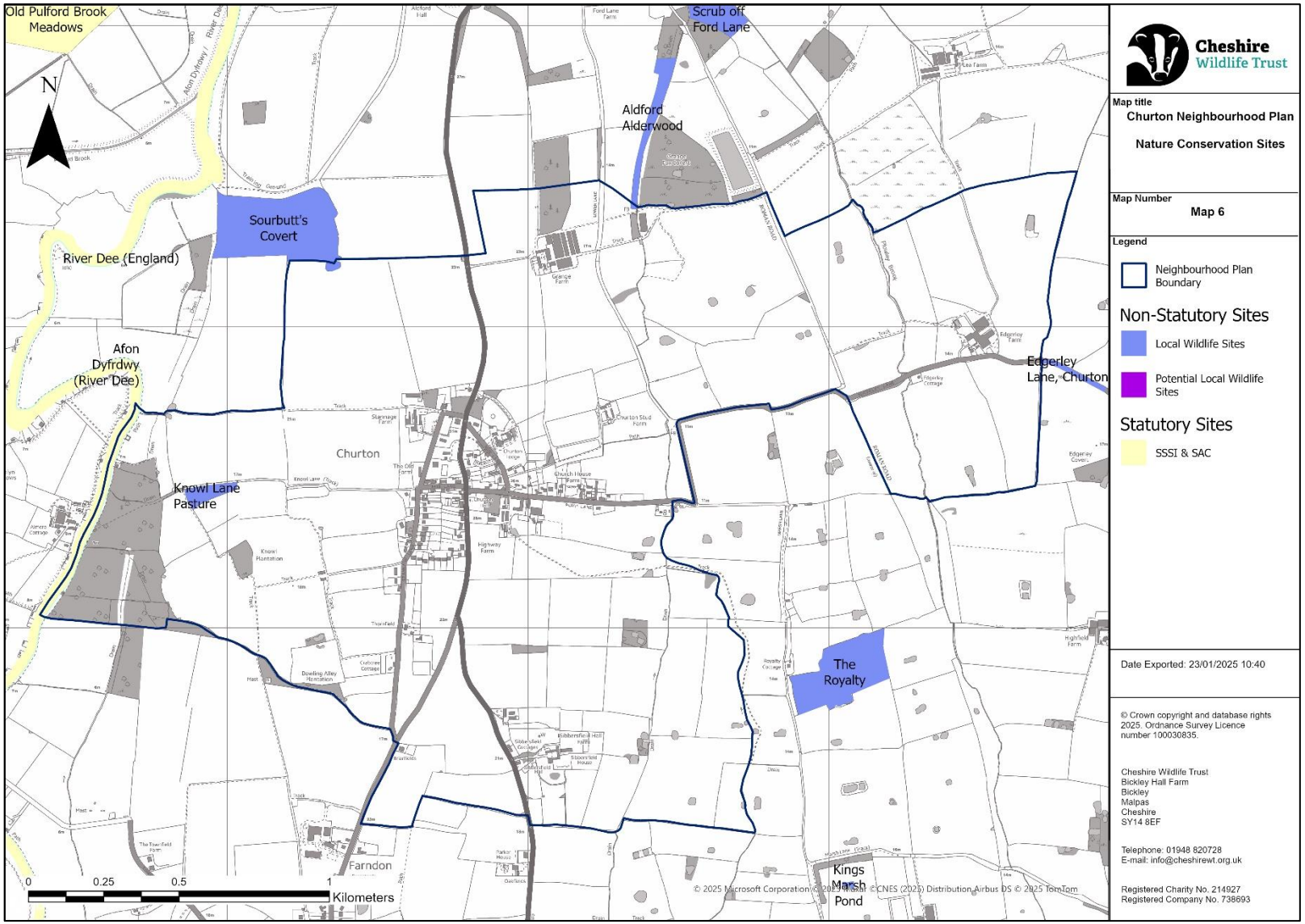
Map 4 – Land Cover



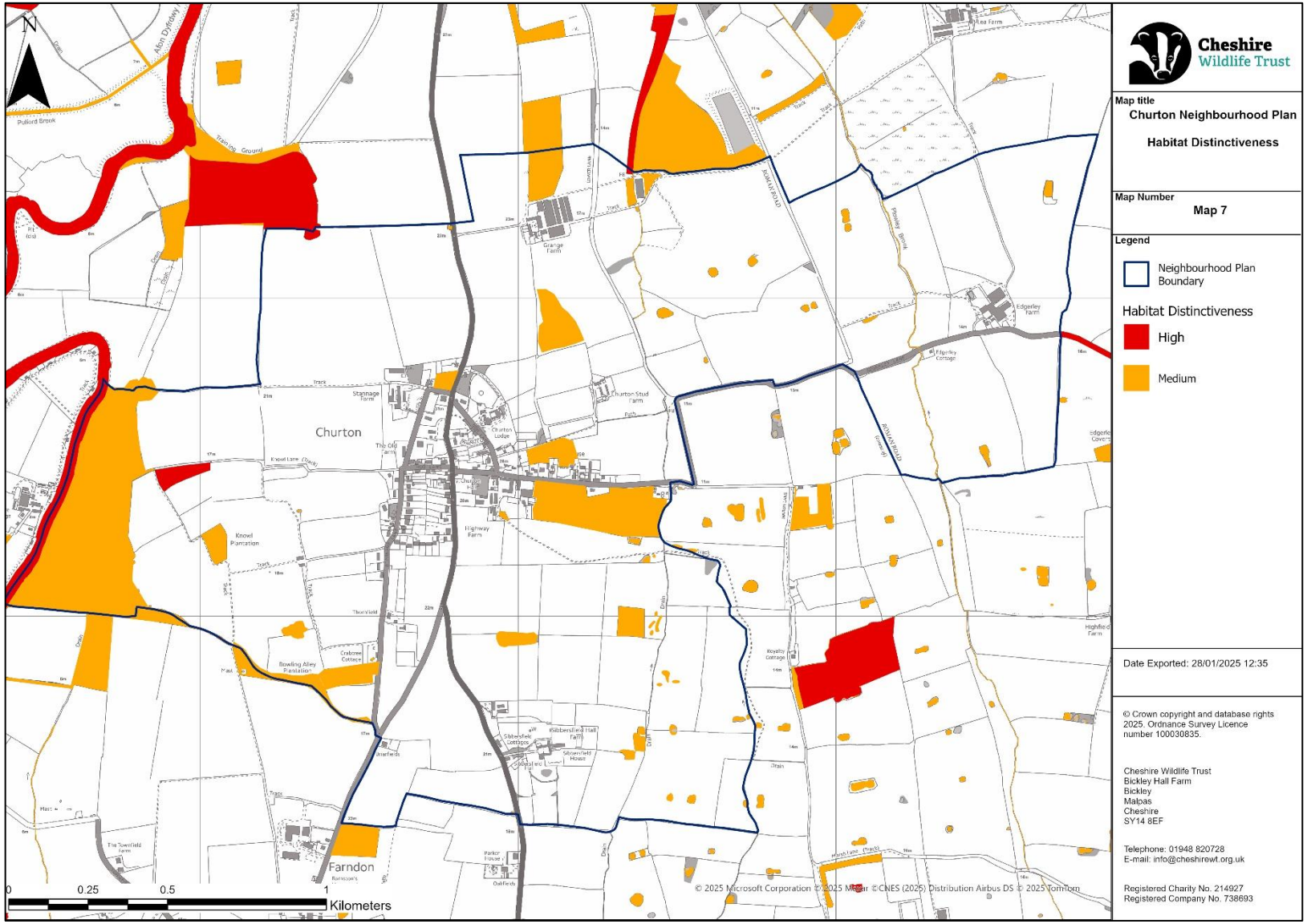
Map 5 – Agricultural Land Classification



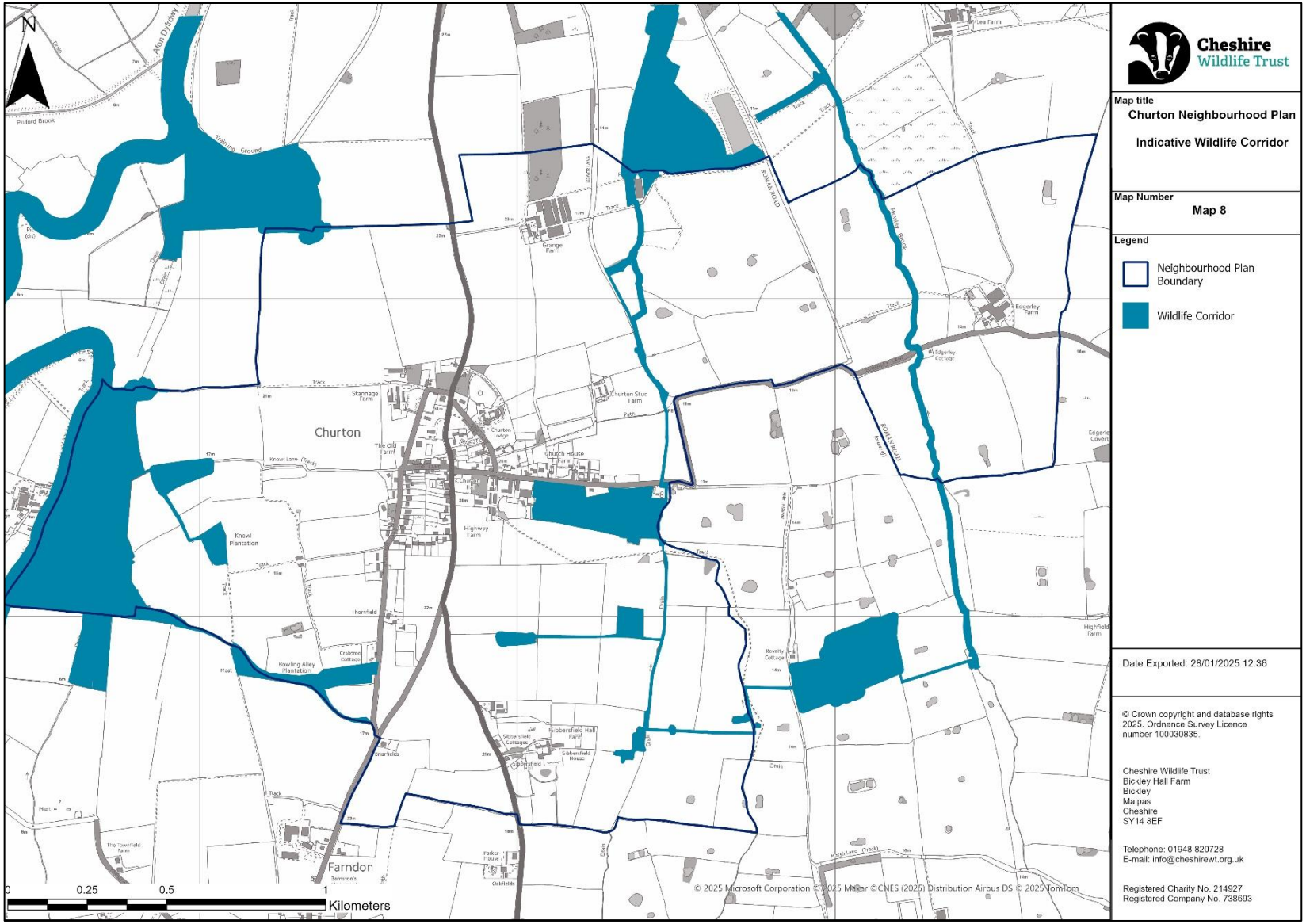
Map 6 – Designated Sites of Nature Conservation



Map 7 – Habitat Distinctiveness



Map 8 – Wildlife Corridor Network



Results & Discussion

High Distinctiveness Habitats

Areas of high distinctiveness habitat are shown on Map 7 – Habitat Distinctiveness (mapped in red). These are natural or semi-natural habitats which are of significant or critical importance to wildlife due to their high biodiversity and ecological value. They should be a priority for conservation and appropriately managed in order to maintain or enhance their ecological features. Habitats of high distinctiveness within the Churton NP area are discussed in detail below.

River Dee SSSI and SAC

The River Dee Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) comprises a section of the Dee which meanders downstream across the Cheshire plain from Shocklach, at the border between England and Wales, northwards through Chester. The SSSI was designated in 1996 for its nationally important river habitats, fluvial geomorphology and wildlife, such as Atlantic salmon, otter, water vole and club-tailed dragonfly. The club-tailed dragonfly is a nationally scarce species which is found along the Lower Dee, particularly in areas of slow flowing waters adjacent to woodland habitat or other bankside vegetation, which provides cover for adults.

The River Dee SSSI also supports a large number of breeding birds, including kingfisher and sand martin which use the eroding riverbanks as nesting habitat. The stretches of river with fast flowing waters provide excellent feeding habitat for dipper and grey wagtail, whereas the Lower Dee floodplains provide significant breeding grounds for many wader species including lapwing and when flooded, they provide over-wintering sites for the pintail[1]. Additionally, the River Dee and Lake Bala Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was designated in 2005, mainly for its Atlantic salmon and floating water-plantain populations, as well as the presence of sea lamprey, brook lamprey, river lamprey, bullhead, and otter[2].

This internationally important site forms the western boundary of the Churton NP area (Map 6), where some of these key species have been recently recorded, such as sand martin, river lamprey and common club-tail dragonfly. The River Dee is also home to a number of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), some of which have been recently recorded in the area including Chinese mitten crab and Japanese knotweed[3]. These invasive species colonise rapidly and will outcompete native flora and fauna if left unmanaged.

Woodland

Many woodlands in Cheshire are isolated, fragmented and impoverished, which makes the woodlands that are present particularly important features for biodiversity in the region. This vital habitat represents all of the Habitats of Principal Importance (listed on the Priority Habitats Inventory; PHI) recognised by Natural England within and in close proximity to the Churton NP area (Map 3), and three of these high distinctiveness woodlands are also designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS; Map 6).

[1] Natural England's River Dee (England) SSSI Citation, last revised May 2002.
[2] JNCC website, accessed December 2024.
[3] NBN Atlas data, accessed January 2025.

Sourbutt's Covert LWS is located at the north-west corner of Churton parish and is home to an area of mixed plantation and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. The woodland canopy consists of beech, larch and common lime, with some hawthorn and elder in the understorey. There are bluebells present in the ground flora, and wetter parts of the site are dominated by alder and crack-willow. The Royality LWS is a plantation woodland, which lies just outside the south-east parish boundary, with ash, pedunculate oak and silver birch dominating the canopy. This site also contains a large pond which is used by anglers, and the southern area of the pond has a diverse marginal vegetation[4].

Aldford Alderwood LWS is located at the northern parish boundary and is home to a mixture of semi-natural and plantation woodland with a stream along its eastern edge. The woodland canopy includes pedunculate oak, ash, wych elm, sycamore, beech, Scots pine, alder and white poplar. There is also a rare occurrence of Bird cherry, a Cheshire ancient woodland indicator species, and of particular note in the ground flora is the presence of field pepperwort, a locally scarce species in Cheshire. The eutrophic stream is densely vegetated in places with hemlock water-dropwort, yellow iris, reed canary-grass, lesser water-parsnip and meadowsweet[5].

These high-quality woodlands support many species of wildlife, including important assemblages of woodland birds such as the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red listed fieldfare, greenfinch, marsh tit, mistle thrush, spotted flycatcher, tree sparrow and woodcock, as well as the amber listed dunnock, song thrush, sparrowhawk and willow warbler which have recently been recorded nearby[6].

Grassland

Species-rich grasslands are the fastest disappearing semi-natural habitat in the UK. Similar to other counties, the vast majority of the grassland found on farms in Cheshire is now species poor "improved" grassland which has been modified by extensive fertiliser use and reseeding, resulting in very low biodiversity levels. In contrast, areas of species-rich grassland will support populations of declining pollinators including moths, specialist grassland butterflies and solitary bees and hoverflies. There are two LWS within, and in close proximity to, the Churton NP area which are home to high distinctiveness grassland habitats.

Knowl Lane Pasture LWS is home to good semi-improved grassland habitat with many species present including autumn hawkbit, common knapweed, harebell, red fescue, and sweet vernal-grass. The site is enclosed by hedgerows, some of which are species-rich, and is surrounded by intensive arable farmland. Edgerley Lane, Churton LWS is located at the eastern parish boundary; this LWS is a 2-5m wide roadside verge, along both sides of the road, bordered by mature hedgerows with pedunculate oak trees. This roadside verge is a mosaic of unimproved and semi-improved grassland with a diverse flora including common bird's-foot-trefoil, red clover, goat's-beard, and of particular note thrift (a locally scarce species)[7]. These grassland sites provide a vital resource for numerous grassland and farmland bird species which have been recently recorded in the area, including many BoCC red listed species (cuckoo, curlew, grasshopper warbler, house martin, lapwing, linnet, skylark, starling, swift and yellowhammer)[8].

[4] Sourbutt's Covert LWS and Royality LWS citations, last surveyed 2010.
[5] Aldford Alderwood LWS, last surveyed 2010.
[6] NBN Atlas data, accessed January 2025.
[7] Knowl Lane Pasture LWS and Edgerley Lane, Churton LWS citations, last surveyed 2010.
[8] NBN Atlas data, accessed January 2025.

Medium Distinctiveness Habitats

Woodland

The majority of the woodlands within, and in close proximity to, the Churton NP area have been classified as high distinctiveness habitats, as discussed above, because they occur within a LWS and/or are listed on the Priority Habitat inventory. There are other important woodlands in the area which will also support many species of wildlife, such as those woodland compartments which are immediately adjacent to the PHI habitats around the northern parish boundary (Map 4). There are two further woodland parcels, found using Google Satellite imagery, located alongside intensively managed arable farmland to the north and south of Churton village (Map 7), providing highly important habitat and refuges for local wildlife such as small mammals and birds.

Grassland

There are pockets of neutral grassland in the parish, which are not designated (Map 6), that have been identified using land cover information (Map 4) and subsequently refined using Google Satellite imagery. It is therefore advisable for surveys to be undertaken to ascertain the condition of these grassland habitats; it is possible that some areas could be species-rich and/or have locally or nationally rare species present, which could make them high distinctiveness habitats. The majority of these medium distinctiveness grasslands are located to the east of Churton village (Map 4 and 7). Good quality and rough grasslands such as these provide essential foraging habitat for highly threatened bird species and are crucial for their conservation, including the BoCC red listed lapwing and house martin which have been recently recorded nearby[9].

Field Ponds, Drains, Scrapes and Watercourses

Aquatic habitats contribute to the permeability of the landscape for wildlife; they are essential for the survival of aquatic invertebrates, riparian mammals and provide breeding habitat for amphibians. Larger waterbodies are likely to be valuable for both breeding and overwintering birds as well as foraging bats. The rivers and streams which flow through Churton, with sources and tributaries outside the parish, help to create links to the wider landscape which are highly important for many species of wildlife. The non-designated aquatic habitats within the NP area have been highlighted as medium distinctiveness habitats (Map 7) and should always be retained and buffered where possible when land is developed, including the numerous field ponds which are particularly concentrated in the east of the parish.

Hedgerows and Scattered Trees

Hedgerows are rarely included in the habitat distinctiveness mapping as it is difficult to gauge the wildlife value of a hedge from aerial mapping. However, many of the field parcels within Churton are bounded by a significant network of hedgerows, which form important corridors for foraging bats, small mammals, amphibians and many invertebrate species including pollinators, as well as providing valuable nesting and foraging habitat for many woodland and farmland bird species.

[9] NBN Atlas data.

Wildlife Corridor Network

Wildlife corridors are a key component of wider ecological networks as they provide connectivity between core areas of high wildlife value and habitats of high distinctiveness and enable species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate and reproduce. The results of the National Habitat Network Mapping project (2018) and Ecological Network for CWAC (2016) provide a broad map of the networks across England and Cheshire West respectively. The Wildlife Corridor Network identified in this report (Map 8) supplement these, while also being more specific to ecological networks that are important for conserving and enhancing biodiversity at a local scale.

The Wildlife Corridor Network for Churton links areas of valuable habitat with good connectivity within the NP area, including woodlands, watercourses and grasslands. Some of the mapped corridors do cross over roads where direct connectivity will not be maintained, however the maximum gap is less than 30 metres meaning more mobile species should not be affected. Some of the hedgerows within identified corridors may not be species rich as they run through intensively farmed land, and high inputs of agrochemicals associated with intensively managed land could potentially be negatively affecting the species composition, particularly at ground level. Increasing hedgerow diversity and implementing wildlife friendly management regimes, as well as creating rough grassland buffers would help improve the ecological connectivity of the hedgerow network.

The network of field boundary hedgerows and agricultural drainage ditches within Churton provide linear connectivity between high and medium distinctiveness habitats, which would otherwise be separated by extensive areas of land predominantly of low habitat distinctiveness and potentially restrict the ability of wildlife to disperse. In addition to their intrinsic ecological value a good hedgerow network also adds to the landscape character value. This study has identified other areas of high or medium habitat distinctiveness (Map 7) that lie outside the Wildlife Corridor Network but form essential ecological stepping stones. These areas primarily comprise ponds and semi-natural woodlands and facilitate the movement of more mobile species throughout the wider landscape.

Protecting the Ecological Network

The indicative boundary of the Wildlife Corridor Network shown in Map 8 is likely to require refinement should detailed survey work be undertaken. A 15-metre-wide buffer has been incorporated around any high distinctiveness habitat in order to ensure the corridors are substantial enough to protect the valuable habitats identified in Map 7. This buffer protects vulnerable habitats from the effects of encroachment by external pressures such as increased anthropogenic disturbance, light pollution, ground water/aquatic pollution, domestic pet predation and the spread of invasive non-native plant species or garden cultivars.

Any potential development proposals in the NP area **must avoid high distinctiveness habitats, core wildlife areas and the wildlife corridor network**. Any development adjacent or in close proximity to these areas must incorporate substantial mitigation to minimise the residual effects on wildlife while also seeking to enhance the overall condition of habitats in order to achieve a measurable net-gain for biodiversity. This can be achieved by:

- Prioritising a scheme design that retains and enhances important semi-natural habitats and key features for biodiversity, whilst improving the permeability and function of the site for wildlife by creating new resources within and new connections to the wider landscape.

- Embedding out of bounds areas and dark corridors along watercourses, woodland edges and hedgerows into the environmental design of the scheme.
- Ensuring all external lighting is directional, low spillage and wildlife friendly.
- Ensuring the scheme drainage strategy directs run-off away from sensitive environmental assets and does not promote pollution propagation pathways; especially for habitats that are dependent on hydrology (i.e. running/standing water, peatlands, floodplain grazing marshes).
- Incorporating Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) which can provide additional wildlife habitat, provide measurable net-gains for biodiversity and prevent flooding. However, SuDs may hold polluted water so should not drain directly into running or standing water unless an extensive filtration or settlement system is in place.
- Ensuring only UK and Northern Ireland sourced and grown nursery stock of native plant and tree species be used in the landscaping of developments.
- Incorporating species specific mitigation measures where appropriate such as:
    - Hedgehog-friendly fencing, to allow hedgehogs to move from one area to another;
    - South facing banks or bunds for reptiles, butterflies and other invertebrates, and;
    - Bee bricks, bat or bird boxes, ideally made of highly durable material e.g. woodcrete.

It is extremely important that the highlighted 'medium distinctiveness' areas should be thoroughly evaluated in the development process. They should be re-classified as 'high distinctiveness' habitat where appropriate and should not be built on (as stipulated in the Local Plan and the NPPF). In order to achieve a 'net gain' for biodiversity, significant compensation will likely be required (and difficult to achieve) if these areas are lost to development, assuming avoidance and mitigation strategies have been applied in line with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendations for Creating a Coherent Ecological Network

Not all sections of the Churton wildlife corridor provide high quality habitat, and measures to improve its ability to support the movement of species is a priority. Enhancement of the corridor may be facilitated by opportunities arising through the planning process (e.g. BNG or other ecological compensation via Section 106 Agreements or Planning Conditions), government incentives (such as agri-environment schemes) or the aspirations of the local community working with local businesses and landowners. Following adoption of the Churton Neighbourhood Plan, CWT advises that the following recommendations should be actioned in order to protect and enhance habitats which contribute to the creation of a coherent ecological network:

1. Create and expand links between the existing wildlife corridor network

There is currently good connectivity between nature conservation sites across the Neighbourhood Planning area. It is recommended that the wildlife value of existing hedgerows, agricultural drainage ditches and field ponds are enhanced to extend and join these existing corridors to other identified areas of medium and high distinctiveness habitats. To achieve this, hedgerows could be managed less intensively including; less frequent cutting or cutting on rotation with additional trees planted or managed as standards in order to increase species and structural diversity. Drainage channels that regularly contain standing or flowing water can be specifically managed for wildlife under Countryside Stewardship, BNG and Environmental Land Management (ELMs). Semi-natural woodlands can be left to expand and regenerate naturally, increasing coverage and connectivity across the NP area while also providing biodiversity benefits arising as a result of the diverse structure of natural tree growth.

2. Improve the quality of the wildlife corridor network and assess against Local Wildlife Site selection criteria

The areas within the wildlife corridor network shown on Map 8 incorporate, where possible, all of the locally designated Local Wildlife Sites for CWAC, however it is highly likely that other land within the network will also meet the criteria for LWS selection. These areas should be designated if the selection criteria[10] are met, as LWS designation will provide a greater level of protection within the planning system. The wildlife corridor network should also ideally be in 'favourable condition'[11] in order to provide optimal breeding, foraging and commuting opportunities for the native species that currently utilise the network, and those that may subsequently colonise it. These areas should be surveyed by a qualified ecologist to identify specific management priorities; however general priorities are below:

- Drainage ditches and watercourses within intensively farmed land should be buffered by semi-natural areas to provide riparian habitat and reduce pollution runoff (1 metre from the top of the bank of a watercourse is the minimum requirement under cross compliance regulations, however 4 - 6 metres is recommended). This will benefit any populations of otter using the watercourses, as well as provide breeding, foraging and commuting areas for other species. It will also improve water quality and bank stability while decreasing siltation resulting in a reduction in the need to dredge.

[10] Giles, R. (2012) Local Wildlife Site Selection Criteria for the Cheshire region. Covering the districts of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Wirral Halton and Warrington. Updated February 2014. Cheshire Wildlife Trust. [https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/our-work-wildlife/our-work-wildlife/local-wildlife-sites]

[11] The definition of 'favourable condition' for various habitats is provided in the Farm Environment Plan (FEP) Manual (Natural England 2010). The definition of 'positive management' for Local Wildlife Sites is provided in Appendix 2.

- Hedgerows that are not already in good condition (particularly those that form part of the wildlife corridor) should be restored or re-instated using locally native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and holly (using 60-90cm high 'whips' which have a good rate of survival and tree guards or stock fencing). New sections of hedgerow should incorporate a tree every 30m (on average) which can be demarked so as not to be inadvertently flailed. Non-native invasive plant species should be removed by a specialist contractor and a bespoke management plan put in place to ensure they do not return.
- Hedgerows in intensively farmed land should be buffered by semi-natural areas to provide additional wildlife friendly habitat (2 metres from the centre of the hedge is the minimum requirement under cross compliance regulations, however 4 - 6 m is recommended) and improve the diversity of ground flora species.
- Cutting or grazing of all semi-natural grassland should be carried out to retain the wildlife value. This will enable more herb growth within the sward, prevent more competitive species from taking hold and prevent grasslands from eventually scrubbing over. Where cutting is used as a method of management it should be carried out after flowering plants have set seed. Where farmland birds such as skylark are breeding, cutting outside of the nesting season (March to September inclusive) will avoid the destruction or abandonment of nests. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. Conversion of semi-natural grassland to arable land should be avoided.
- Field ponds which have become overgrown and choked with vegetation should be cleared out to allow light to penetrate, to provide areas of open water and allow a more diverse marginal flora to develop (with the remaining tree/scrub cover around 10 - 15%). These measures will also benefit amphibians, invertebrates and mammals. Ideally no more than one third of the pond should be dredged in a single year so that existing biodiversity is retained and enhanced. Waste vegetation should be left at the side of the ditch for 24 hours before removal to allow any fauna to return to the water. **Prior to any work professional advice should be sought and ponds should be assessed to ensure existing wildlife is not impacted, including great crested newts which use ponds for breeding and may also be present in rank vegetation or under brash piles around the banks, or roosting bats which may be roosting in trees surrounding ponds.**
- Invasive non-native species (listed on Schedule 9 of the WACA) should be prevented from colonising Churton's semi-natural habitats. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause these species to grow in the wild. NBN Atlas returned confirmed records of the invasive non-native plant species (INNPS) Japanese Knotweed in Churton. INNPS colonise rapidly and will outcompete flora and any existing or future stands should be managed by a specialist contractor to control their spread.
- It is also likely that other Schedule 9 INNPS such as variegated yellow archangel, montbretia and Spanish hybrid bluebells are present in the area, as they easily spread from domestic gardens. If present they should be eradicated by, or under the supervision of, a specialist contractor. New and existing householders should be educated of the problems with the encroachment of INNPS or non-native garden cultivars into semi-natural habitats and avoid inadvertently planting any invasive species in their gardens, especially where they adjoin open areas, semi-natural habitats, or watercourses.

3. Protect, enhance, and connect areas of high/medium value which lie outside the wildlife corridor

Opportunities should be explored to restore, expand, and create more wildlife friendly habitat, especially where connectivity with other areas of valuable habitat can be achieved or where important sites can be buffered. Larger areas of better-connected habitat support larger and more resilient species populations while helping to prevent local extinctions.

Ways to enhance connections or to buffer sites could include the restoration of hedgerows, allowing semi-natural woodland to expand through natural regeneration, creation of wetland scrapes or ponds, creation of low maintenance field margins and sowing locally sourced (local genetic stock) wildflower meadows[12]. These should be focused on connecting the corridor laterally (east to west connection) to close the gaps between high value habitats and break up large areas of low distinctiveness.

Woodland expansion is desirable to buffer Churton's existing woodlands. New plantations that are isolated from existing woodland are of limited value due to slow colonisation by woodland species, whereas planting woodland corridors between existing woodlands (or letting woodlands expand and merge naturally) creates valuable habitat links for the dispersal of species. The creation, expansion or enhancement of woodland stepping stones between existing core woodland areas also enhances links across the landscape for more mobile species.

There are opportunities to enhance the wildlife corridor, such as those set out in the UK Government England Trees Action Plan. **However, it is vitally important that tree planting should only occur on species-poor habitats away from existing (non-woodland) priority or semi-natural habitats, watercourses or aquatic habitats such as ditches and ponds and any other habitats of value to specific wildlife. Specialist ecological advice should always be sought before any tree planting is undertaken to ensure no unintended negative effects to biodiversity arise as a result.**

Professional advice should **always** be sought when creating new habitat particularly when designing a new woodland and how to use local woodlands as a reference. Well-designed new woodlands contain up to 40% open space (in the form of glades and rides) and up to 25% shrub species. For maximum benefit biodiversity rides should be east-west oriented (to maximise sunlight penetration) and at least 30 metres wide to avoid over-shading when the canopy closes. It is recommended that trees and shrubs should be sourced from the Forestry Commission seed zone, from seed collected from local stands or from the local seed zone (collections should be made under the Voluntary Scheme for Certification of Native Trees and Shrubs, endorsed by the Forestry Commission).

4. Protect the existing hedgerow network

Hedgerows that meet certain criteria are protected by The Hedgerow Regulations (1997). Under the regulations it is against the law to remove or destroy 'Important' hedgerows without permission from the Local Planning Authority and the removal of a hedgerow in contravention of The Hedgerow Regulations is a criminal offence. The criteria used to assess hedgerows relate to their value from an archaeological, historical, landscape or wildlife perspective. The regulations exclude hedgerows that have been in existence for less than 30 years, garden hedges and some hedgerows which are less than

[12] Cheshire Wildlife Trust can provide advice and seeds for locally sourced wildflower meadow creation.

20 metres in length. The aim of the regulations is to protect 'Important' hedgerows in the countryside by controlling their removal through a system of notification.

Any proposals that involve the removal of hedgerows, sections of hedgerows or their associated features (e.g. ditches, banks and standard trees) should be supported by an assessment to ascertain their status in relation to The Hedgerow Regulations. Should the Local Planning Authority grant permission for removal, compensatory hedgerows will be required; however, it is good practice to compensate for the loss of all hedgerows whether the hedgerow regulations apply or not. Like-for-like replacement is considered the minimum level of compensation, but it is likely that high value hedges in good condition will require a 3:1 replacement ratio.

Any new sections of hedgerow should be created following the guidance provided above. In-filling of gappy hedgerows will ensure greater connectivity, which will be of particular advantage to bats and small mammals. Ideally hedgerows should be cut on rotation (outside the nesting bird season) every three years towards the end of winter. This leads to increased flowering and allows plants to fruit and/or set seed, providing a greater food resource for wildlife. Some butterfly and moth species overwinter as eggs on shoots and twigs and are therefore severely impacted by annual flailing.

5. Measures to protect other species

It is advisable that developments provide wildlife permeable fencing as standard and encouraging householders to make holes in the bottom of their fences will also increase the permeability of the more urbanised areas in Churton. This simple measure will help hedgehogs that could travel an average of 1 mile every night were their movement through suburban landscapes not impeded by impenetrable garden fences. Increasing the permeability of suburban landscapes in this way will also provide benefits for other species such as newts, toads and frogs. Wildlife permeable fencing should be complemented by educating and advocating for the use of non-toxic slug pellets by residents.

6. Ensure the requirement to secure a measurable biodiversity net gain is embedded in Neighbourhood Planning policies

Providing a measurable net gain for biodiversity is now mandatory for larger developments and also required under policies ENV 4 and DM 44 of the CWAC Local Plan. In order to protect local natural assets, it is advisable that biodiversity net gain delivery policies form part of the Neighbourhood Plan. Any new green infrastructure arising as a result of biodiversity net-gain should take consideration of the recommendations set out in this report and how it can contribute to the wider ecological network.

7. Habitat mapping

It is strongly recommended that Churton's Neighbourhood Planning area is mapped in detail using either the Phase 1 Habitat or the UK Habitat Classification System methodologies. This will provide an accurate, detailed picture of the habitats within the Neighbourhood Planning area and could be used to verify the results of the habitat distinctiveness mapping (Map 7) undertaken in this study. Detailed survey may identify additional habitats of principal importance or priority, high or medium distinctiveness habitat that have not been identified in this assessment. Areas identified as having medium value habitat in this report should be targeted for survey as a priority, to ensure they are not under or over-valued. On the ground surveys are advisable to help inform the exact position of the wildlife corridor network so that it can be properly protected under Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted that the important wildlife habitat in Churton is predominantly associated with woodland, wetland and grassland habitats. By attributing habitat distinctiveness values to all land parcels in the Neighbourhood Planning area the study has provided important evidence that should be taken into consideration when planning decisions are made. However, it is strongly recommended that further (phase 1/UK Habitat Classification) habitat survey work is undertaken at the appropriate time of year, in order to supplement this study and to verify that 'medium value' habitats have not been over or under-valued.

Most importantly the study has highlighted a Wildlife Corridor Network which provides ecological connectivity between woodland, grassland and wetland habitats throughout and beyond the Churton Neighbourhood Planning area. The Wildlife Corridor Network is likely to support a wide range of species including birds, amphibians (including protected and priority newt species), mammals (including protected and priority bat species), plants and invertebrates that are in decline both locally and nationally. These species depend on the existence and connectivity of semi-natural habitats highlighted in this report.

We recommend that the Wildlife Corridor Network (Map 8) is incorporated into the Churton Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development, to ensure the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in NPPF (2024; paragraphs 187d, 188, 192a, 192b) is implemented at the local level in Churton. The Wildlife Corridor Network includes a buffer zone of up to 15 metres in places to protect the notable habitats shown in Map 7. If new habitats of high distinctiveness are subsequently identified in the Neighbourhood Planning area, or identified habitats of medium distinctiveness are shown to be undervalued, these areas should also be protected by a 15-metre buffer zone to protect from development. Following adoption of the Churton Neighbourhood Plan, CWT advises that a number of recommendations should be actioned in order to protect and enhance habitats which contribute to the creation of a coherent ecological network.

Any future development of sites which lie adjacent to a high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor will need to demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any potential impacts on wildlife (in line with NPPF Para 193a; the avoidance, mitigation and compensation hierarchy), and seek to enhance these features where reasonable to do so (in line with NPPF Para 159, 192; the provision of measurable biodiversity net gains and Local Nature Recovery Strategies). This can be achieved by prioritising a scheme design that retains and enhances the sites important semi-natural habitats and key features for biodiversity, while also improving the permeability and function of the site for wildlife by creating new resources within and new connections to the wider landscape. This should then be supplemented with bespoke mitigation where appropriate and with additional protective measures such as sensitive lighting designs, the provision of dark corridors and appropriate drainage strategies.

Protection and enhancement of Churton's natural assets is of the utmost importance for nature conservation, ecosystem services and for the enjoyment of future generations. Therefore, future development in Churton should respect and prioritise the natural environment with the most intact landscapes, in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical/cultural associations valued highly when planning decisions are made.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Habitats, LCM2007 Classes and Broad Habitat Sub-classes for LCM2007 (CEH)

LCM2007 class	LCM2007 class number	Broad Habitat sub-class	Broad habitat sub-class code	Habitat Score
Broadleaved woodland	1	Deciduous	D	Medium
		Recent (<10yrs)	Dn	Medium
		Mixed	M	Medium
		Scrub	Sc	Medium
Coniferous Woodland	2	Conifer	C	Low
		Larch	Cl	Low
		Recent (<10yrs)	Cn	Low
		Evergreen	E	Low/Medium
		Felled	Fd	Medium
Arable and Horticulture	3	Arable bare	Aba	Low
		Arable Unknown	Aun	Low
		Unknown non-cereal	Aun	Low
		Orchard	O	Medium
		Arable barley	Aba	Low
		Arable wheat	Aw	Low
		Arable stubble	Ast	Low
Improved Grassland	4	Improved grassland	Gi	Low
		Ley	Gl	Low
		Hay	Gh	Low
Rough Grassland	5	Rough / unmanaged grassland	Gr	Medium
Neutral Grassland	6	Neutral	Gn	Medium
Calcareous Grassland	7	Calcareous	Gc	Medium
Acid Grassland	8	Acid	Ga	Medium

		Bracken	Br	Medium
Fen, Marsh and Swamp	9	Fen / swamp	F	Medium
Heather	10	Heather & dwarf shrub	H	Medium
		Burnt heather	Hb	Medium
		Gorse	Hg	Medium
		Dry heath	Hd	Medium
Heather grassland	11	Heather grass	Hga	Medium
Bog	12	Bog	Bo	Medium
		Blanket bog	Bb	Medium
		Bog (Grass dom.)	Bg	Medium
		Bog (Heather dom.)	Bh	Medium
Montane Habitats	13	Montane habitats	Z	Medium
Inland Rock	14	Inland rock	Ib	Medium
		Despoiled land	Ud	Medium
Salt water	15	Water sea	Ws	Medium
		Water estuary	We	Medium
Freshwater	16	Water flooded	Wf	Medium
		Water lake	Wl	Medium
		Water River	Wr	Medium
Supra-littoral Rock	17	Supra littoral rocks	Sr	Medium
Supra-littoral Sediment	18	Sand dune	Sd	Medium
		Sand dune with shrubs	Sds	Medium
		Shingle	Sh	Medium
		Shingle vegetated	Shv	Medium
Littoral Rock	19	Littoral rock	Lr	Medium
		Littoral rock / algae	Lra	Medium
Littoral sediment	20	Littoral mud	Lm	Medium

		Littoral mud / algae	Lma	Medium
		Littoral sand	Ls	Medium
Saltmarsh	21	Saltmarsh	Sm	Medium
		Saltmarsh grazing	Smg	Medium
Urban	22	Bare	Ba	Low
		Urban	U	Low
		Urban industrial	Ui	Low
Suburban	23	Urban suburban	Us	Low

Appendix 2 – Local Wildlife Site Definition of Positive Management

In order for a Local Wildlife Site to be recorded as in positive management all four of the following should be met:

1. The conservation features for which the site has been selected are clearly documented.
2. There is documented evidence of a management plan/management scheme/advisory document which is sufficiently targeted to maintain or enhance the above features.
3. The management requirements set out in the document are being met sufficiently in order to maintain the above features. This should be assessed at 5-year intervals (minimum) and recorded 'not known' if the interval is greater than 5 years.
4. The Local Sites Partnership has verified the above evidence.