



Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2022 - 2032



More seating

Café and toilet
needed for Radipole
Park & Gardens

Water play park
for children

More bins

Improve sports
facilities and play areas

More Toilets

No fountains or
water taps

More wildlife
areas

More picnic
benches

Sheltered
Areas

More edible
fruit and nut
trees

Resurface the tennis
courts at Radipole

Natural play
trails

Cut paths through
wildflowers and
benches to sit down

Bigger
noticeboards

BBQ facilities at
the Nothe Gardens

Trees labelled
with type, age
etc.,

Signage showing where
dogs can be walked on
and off leads

Play area for
dogs with
activities

An adventure park
would be good

Make play areas
more inclusive

Greater connectivity between
parks, gardens and open spaces
for walking and cycling

Recognise that
cemeteries are an
open space facility

I like that Sandsfoot has
no play area, something
for the grown ups

More public involve-
ment in decisions

Could the Bennett's
Shelter be unlocked
during the day?

More public
art

Maintain path
networks

How about an outside
'Gym' in the Nothe
Gardens?

Encourage people to cycle
rather than drive to the park

FOREWORD

Our parks and open spaces are important places to be protected, cherished and enhanced. They take great effort - and money - to maintain, but they give back so much to our community.

Weymouth is lucky to have some wonderful open spaces - from the beauty of Greenhill and Sandsfoot Gardens to the tranquillity of its cemeteries, and from our well-used allotments to the vibrancy of the seafront.

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

Margaret J Wheatley

Not only do our parks and open spaces provide social value to local residents but they contribute to the economic performance by supporting the town centre, retaining employment and attracting new businesses and skills. They also offer recreational opportunities and support active lifestyles whilst, importantly, providing a home for wildlife.

This strategic document, developed with input from the local community, sets out the Council's ambitions to ensure that our parks and open spaces are well managed and maintained to a high standard.

The document highlights the strengths and weaknesses of our current offer and looks at opportunities for the future - particularly to enhance the health and well-being of the town's residents, people who work locally and visitors. The strategy also aims to create greater accessibility to parks and open spaces and will focus on increasing Weymouth's biodiversity whilst introducing ways to offset carbon emissions.

The plan is also mindful of the financial challenges the Council will face in delivering these aspirations and meeting the needs of the community and it will give us a direction of travel for future investment decisions.



Crucial to our long-term efforts will be the involvement of the local community and its various interest groups. This strategy recognises the value and commitment already shown by Friends Groups, volunteers, residents and staff to help maintain and develop our parks and open spaces. However, there is so much more that could be achieved with greater interaction, and by building close working relationships between the Council and those that it represents.

Working together, we can accomplish so much more, and we're excited to begin this journey to create even better open spaces, that the whole of Weymouth can enjoy and be proud of.

Councillor Ann Weaving
Mayor, Weymouth Town Council 2022 / 2023

Councillor David Harris
Leader, Weymouth Town Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This document provides the strategic framework for the management and development of open spaces within the town and seeks to protect, create, enhance and connect parks, people and wildlife.

The document establishes priorities and guiding principles. It will also be used to assist securing additional investment and external funding and, importantly, helping to ensure financial resources are accurately deployed in-line with the Strategy, Corporate Plan and the Council's priorities.

Great parks and open spaces make for a better quality of life.

A network of well-designed and cared for open spaces adds to the character of places where we want to live, work, play and visit. Open spaces also provide the vital green infrastructure that enables us to adapt to climate change by reflecting the requirement for carefully planned and planted open spaces that can meet the challenge of climate change whilst providing wildlife habitats, amenity value, recreational value, sporting facilities and beautiful parks.

Parks are crucial for maintaining and improving people's health and well-being. The well-being value associated with the frequent use of local parks and green spaces is worth £34.2 billion per year to the entire UK adult population. Parks and green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year based solely on a reduction in GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.* (*Revaluing Parks & Green Spaces, Fields in Trust (2018)).

The purpose of this Parks & Open Space Strategy is to inform all residents and visitors of the value of open space and the standards we aspire to in Weymouth. On an operational level, the strategy provides a focus for the management and continued development of open spaces and it focuses on publicly accessible areas, which are owned and maintained by Weymouth Town Council [1].



In broad terms this document highlights:

- The feedback from the 2021 Parks and Open Spaces Public, Friends Groups and Councillor consultation surveys, which provided informative feedback from the park users [2].
- Whilst many things work well or quite well, there are some areas where they may not. Our challenge is to translate all this information and identified need into actions [3].
- Having identified the actions, we will seek out ways to address them. This will be a challenge, but we offer up a promise to do all we can to ensure that over the next decade we create a Weymouth where facilities and standards are as high as is practicably possible [4].
- Some of the actions within this strategy may come at a cost. We will seek to investigate all avenues available to mitigate the impact on the local taxpayer [5].

[1] Section 1, page 7

[2] Section 3, page 8

[3] Section 6, page 16

[4] Section 8, page 17

[5] Section 10, page 23

INTRODUCTION

Weymouth has a population of about 52,000 people and the Parks & Open Spaces service covers an area of around 80 hectares. We are extremely proud of our parks and open spaces and the value they bring to communities from a wide range of perspectives, including recreation, relaxation, biodiversity, economy, education, heritage and health & well-being and, in developing this strategy, we wish to recognise these benefits and develop clear priorities which will protect and enhance them in future.

There is no doubt that open space forms a vital part of Town Council service provision, offering a broad and varied range of facilities and opportunities to all its residents and visitors. It is also a highly visible service, where success is immediately apparent, but failures can provoke strong and impassioned negative reactions from its users. This level of attachment and importance within people's lives is unsurprising given the range of benefits parks and open spaces can offer. A significant body of research identifies that the benefits of providing well managed open spaces that promote diverse usage and high ecological value are widespread.



Great parks, open spaces and streets make for a better quality of life. A network of well-designed and cared for open spaces adds to the character of places where people want to live, work and visit. Open space also provides the vital green infrastructure that enables us to deal with all sorts of issues or mitigate and adapt to climate change while providing wildlife habitats, outdoor facilities and beautiful recreational areas.

Parks and open spaces are now a firm part of Dorset Council's statutory and community planning process. Comprehensive planning policies for open spaces are fundamental to social inclusion, community cohesion, health and well-being.



This document sets out the opportunities as well as the challenges facing parks and open spaces in Weymouth. It builds on the priorities and many helpful ideas and suggestions identified by all those who fully engaged and contributed to the consultation.

OUR BASELINE

7 Gardens, 1 Country Park, 4 Cemeteries,
359 Allotments, 18 Play Areas, 28 Open Spaces
(inc. some residential), 6k+ Tree Stock & a Nursery
2 Green Flags
Britain in Bloom Gold
2 Living Churchyard Awards
Support 6 formalised park user 'Friends' groups
Support volunteer groups
Awarded Parks for People Lottery Grant to invest
£1.4M in Radipole Park & Gardens
Tumbledown

88% of respondents to the 2021 Parks & Open Space consultation thought that the current condition of Weymouth's parks and open spaces was either fairly satisfactory, satisfactory or very satisfactory.

1. Purpose of our Parks & Open Space Strategy.

To conserve natural habitat and wildlife – objectives:

Protect biodiversity in parks, gardens and open spaces and preserve ecosystems, recognise the role parks, gardens and open spaces have as a positive environmental influence on noise, air quality, flooding and CO2 absorption, connect people with wildlife and promote understanding of the natural heritage.

Recognise the potential of parks, gardens and open spaces in supporting healthy living – objectives:

Secure additional investment and external funding to provide a diverse range of open spaces for recreation, relaxation and enjoyment as well as provide opportunities for physical activity in parks for the benefit of the community.

Put parks, gardens and open spaces at the centre of community identity – objectives:

Encourage participation and social inclusion by providing opportunities for voluntary and community activities within parks and open spaces. Promote community engagement by encouraging participation in the design and care of parks, open spaces and a community farm at Tumbledown. Encourage the responsible use of parks and open spaces and ensure that they are safe, clean and free from litter, graffiti and dog fouling.

To enhance the landscaping and physical appearance of parks and open spaces – objectives:

Use good design and management to create landscapes that are robust and functional as well as attractive and stimulating.

Provide a strategic framework for the provision and management of Parks & Open Spaces in Weymouth for the next 10 years:

- Establish a clear sense of direction and provide a focus for resource allocation and action on the ground.
- Maximise support for and advocate the benefits of parks & open spaces within the Town Council.
- Encourage and develop further community and stakeholder involvement and partnership working.
- Contribute to the relevant themes and outcomes of the Service Plan and link with other local and national plans and strategies.
- Develop a programme of diverse events and

activities, in parks and open spaces, by working with the Council's Events Team.

- Assist with the establishment of a community farm.

The council recognises that a clear vision is needed to deliver a whole range of benefits for people who live, work and visit the town. These benefits include:

- Set out the council's strategic direction for developing and managing its parks & open spaces.
- Provide a sense of direction to all stakeholders so that they understand their role and are able to effectively work in partnership with the council.
- Enhance the physical and mental health of residents.
- Make Weymouth a better place to live, visit, work, learn and play.
- Protect and enhance the town's cultural and natural heritage.
- Understand the role that parks, and similar open spaces, play in the wider community.
- Strive for continuous improvement.
- Manage services effectively to meet the needs of the community.

Parks have such a major part to play in community and family life. They are places for us to socialise, enjoy being active, connect with nature and wildlife, relax and reflect. Many parks contain heritage features which tell a story about the past.

They can also play a part in providing a more sustainable future, contributing towards climate change aspirations. Because of their wide variety of uses and benefits, it is important that their management and ongoing development is recognised and prioritised in a way in which everyone can understand and support.

The purpose of developing this strategy is to bring these key issues into focus and by doing so:

- Set the overarching context and direction for the management and development of our parks, open spaces.
- Outline the approach for managing, protecting and developing parks and open space, which is considerate to the council's resources, management and maintenance responsibilities and the contributions from community and interest groups.
- Highlight a set of principles which will guide future maintenance, investment, community engagement decisions and actions regarding our parks.
- Agree a set of priorities which focus effort, resources and decision making to ensure that parks and open spaces remain high quality spaces for everyone to enjoy.
- Help secure additional investment and external funding to enhance the park and open spaces' infrastructure, facilities and opportunities for the benefit of the community.
- Ensure that financial resources are accurately deployed and transparent in how they are made up and utilised to ensure value for money.

2. Scope of the Strategy.

Parks & Open Spaces in all its various guises is multi-functional so the strategy should reflect a widely shared vision. It is not just focused on parks and open spaces but should take in the wider spectrum of facilities.

The aim is to understand supply and demand for parks and open spaces, to identify deficiencies, to secure new provision, to increase quality through enhanced management and to be innovative and efficient with financial resources.

The strategy will try to ensure that all types of parks and open spaces are considered, irrespective of who within the public sector is the owner or has responsibility for it. This will therefore include (but not necessarily limited to) such service areas as:

- **Allotments** – Weymouth Town Council owns nine allotment sites within the town council area. Two of the sites are managed by allotment societies who directly run and manage their individual sites. Demand is growing nationally, and waiting lists are in place within Weymouth, so the council needs to be conscious of this latent demand in planning for the future and strive to secure additional allotments in areas of the town where required.
- **Sports Facilities** – The green spaces which the council owns may provide an opportunity for the development of further, or better, sporting opportunities which develop fitness, health and well-being, eg. ParkRun and Park Yoga. Sports facilities within the town are provided primarily by Active Dorset, Dorset Council and / or the relevant clubs themselves and include such facilities as bowls greens, football and rugby pitches, tennis courts and so on.

The council will continue to work in partnership with these organisations to identify any future shortfalls in provision.

3. Who Has Been Involved?

It was a critical driver of this strategy that the residents, who ultimately are the “customers” of the service, are at the forefront of the formulation of such a document.

There were 482 responses to the public questionnaires and the outcomes from the various questions have been used to reflect those views.

- **Cemeteries** – The council is responsible for operational cemetery provision within the Weymouth area. The council recognises the need for providing a sensitive and responsive service and the importance of supporting bereaved families. The cemetery sites are valued for their standards of maintenance, appearance, and tranquillity, as well as their wildlife and heritage interest.
- **Children’s Play Areas** – The council recognises the value that children’s play has in the growing up process. Children learn to explore and exercise and become aware of themselves and others. The council’s play areas are maintained in safe condition through regular inspections and monitoring while opportunities are sought for updating equipment and creating new sites. Play areas are a primary opportunity for community projects in which local residents and children work with officers to develop proposals and apply for funding to achieve real tangible local gains.
- **Nursery** – The Council operates a nursery facility, which produces shrubs, perennials, annual bedding plants, hanging baskets, etc. The plants are used in open spaces throughout the town and, more widely, via supply of plants to other agencies, eg. Dorchester Town Council, We Are Weymouth, etc.
- **Tumbledown Community Farm** – The Tumbledown site is a former farm of 27 acres. The Council owns the site and is looking to develop it into a sustainable, inclusive community asset.

This strategy links to other key, connected corporate documents adopted by the council such as the communications strategy, volunteer strategy and any climate change strategies for instance.



Group representatives of the community with specific interest in open space were also consulted as part of this strategy to gain as clear a view as possible of their aspirations. 7 responses were received.

To ensure that this strategy is properly informed of the views and opinions of locally elected councillors and also meets the corporate plan aspirations, local councillors were consulted. 9 responses were received.



4. Parks & Open Space Availability.

The gardens listed below are defined as formal gardens and each of these have an individual management plan which reflects their size, key features and more complex maintenance regimes, with Green Flag standards being the target standard. Each management plan also includes a bespoke action plan to identify where local improvements can be made and that recognises the ongoing contribution of Friends Groups in delivering some of these actions with us.

- Greenhill Gardens
- Sandsfoot Gardens
- Radipole Park & Gardens

Future management plan development will include plans for Nothe Gardens, Lodmoor Country Park and Tumbledown Community Farm.

These parks and open spaces will be managed and developed using the guiding principles within this strategy and be managed by existing maintenance regimes laid out in the Town Council's Green Flag Maintenance Standard document.

Our other informal and often more localised open spaces are also extremely valuable and contribute individually to the broad benefits already highlighted. They also play an important part in community life and are extremely valuable to the residents and visitors that use them.



As in many cases, these sites are smaller and often contain fewer natural features, heritage aspects and play facilities, they do not necessarily require their own management plan as such, but it is important to state that this will not exclude them from future development, including working with community or interest groups to improve or care for them.

Parks and open space availability and function can also be split into a number of component parts which are occasionally standalone or more often than not, interconnected with each other as follows:

- **Children's Play Space** - Providing outdoor play facilities for children and young people is important because they provide physical, social and emotional development opportunities. Current provision for children consists of equipped play areas and specialised provision for young people, including skate parks, a pump track and multi-use games areas (MUGAs), which are mainly situated in parks, gardens and housing developments.

CONT...

- **Children's Play Space CONT.** - While Weymouth has some wonderful play spaces it also has a number of smaller and poorer equipped playgrounds, often determined by localised funding or housing development. Over the next 10 years a streamlining of these play facilities will be assessed against the need to provide a network of larger better equipped play spaces that offer a wider range of experiences and challenges. Creating diversity and stimulating imaginative play are essential for children to grow and learn, natural play opportunities within a safe environment will be considered instead of an over-reliance on equipment.
- **Space for Young People** – Spaces for young people have often been a secondary consideration, although good examples do exist of pump tracks, skateparks, multi-use games areas and challenging play equipment. The introduction of a skatepark and parkour at the Marsh, which has been designed with input from young people, will extend that provision.

Research with young people shows that somewhere which is 'their' space to meet is sometimes all that is needed. Opportunities will be sought to improve the provision of facilities for young people, ensuring their involvement in choosing what they want is at the heart of that provision.

- **Trees** – Provide shade and protection from the elements, remove pollutants from the air, reduce noise, and provide shelter for wildlife. To improve the environment, we need to conserve and plant more trees where space allows especially where there is a deficit. This strategy covers trees in accessible open space and supports the Town Council's adopted Tree Management Policy.

- **Increasing Use** – Parks and open spaces are about people. They provide a focal point for the community and many cultural activities. Involving local people in the management of their parks and encouraging them to use them more often are important objectives of this strategy.

This can be achieved in many ways:

- Tackling key barriers that prevent access and use of public open space.
- Antisocial policy development covering issues, such as dog fouling.
- Consider measures to reduce the perceived fear of crime felt by some members of the community.
- Working with our partner organisations to improve access to all parks and open spaces.
- **Events and Festivals** - Events in parks and open spaces are always popular with local residents and users and a programme of diverse, appealing and different events should be considered each year to meet this clear demand and need. Any enhancement of spaces should be planned with future event organising in mind allowing for adequate infrastructure in those sites which will attract the larger, or more frequent, events where appropriate. Equally, small-scale more localised community events are also important for promoting and "selling" the benefits and advantages that local spaces bring as well as increasing their use. Hand in hand with such events are also events organised and managed by local community groups or third parties using the council's parks and open spaces as their location and this approach should also be fully supported and encouraged.

Weymouth Town Council has pledged to reduce its carbon footprint to zero by 2030 and to offset its emissions, the Council will increase its tree stock by 1000 from 2021 to 2025.



- **Engagement** – Public engagement is essential to ensure that fully informed decisions can be reached, which understand the views of residents. Engagement may be built into the development of any major Parks & Open Space plans. Special efforts should be made to reach children, young people and other under-represented groups.
- **Involvement** - Many successful Friends Groups exist across the town, pro-actively working in partnership to improve their local areas and they should be given every encouragement and opportunity to thrive and grow, as well as offer up a source for consultation for the parks service in decision making.
- **Health and Exercise** – Parks and open spaces have well documented health benefits both in improving physical fitness and improving mental health. Many of the proposals contained in this document support increased health and exercise opportunities. In addition, there are now considerable numbers of initiatives and activities, some locally based, some more national in their structure which provide opportunities for organised exercise in some of Weymouth's parks and open spaces, and groups and clubs organising these should be actively encouraged and supported, eg. ParkRun or Park Yoga.
- **Climate Change and Sustainability** – Mitigating and adapting to the whole climate agenda is already a high priority for Weymouth Town Council. The council will assess and review its own management practices to make them as sustainable as possible, eg. recycling materials, energy efficient transport and renewable energy production. In general, it is predicted that summers will be warmer and drier, and winters milder and wetter, but there will also be more extreme weather events such as heat waves, intense downpours of rain and storms. Parks and open spaces will be directly affected by the changing climate but also have a vital role to play in reducing the effects of climate change on Weymouth's residents and its wildlife. Increasing temperatures are likely to result in greater, more intense use of public open spaces for longer periods of the year. An extended growing season will require changes in management, such as potentially more grass cutting, and potentially therefore increased costs.

Climate change will be a key factor in future development and design of public open spaces, eg. in the choice of trees to withstand more extreme weather conditions, and in water storage, recycling and efficiency measures.

Appendix A at the end of this document highlights the various publicly available parks, open spaces, sports and play spaces available in Weymouth, which are maintained by Weymouth Town Council.

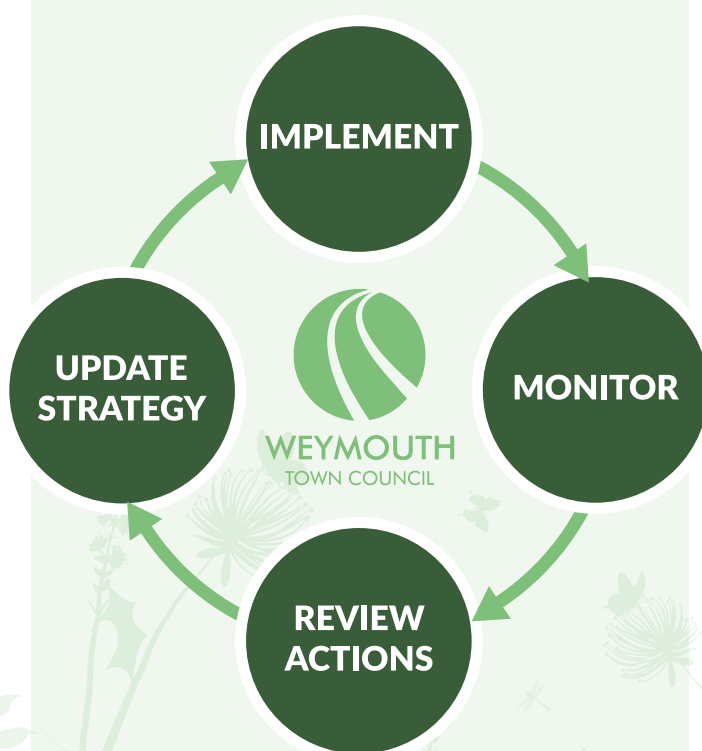
Appendix A also highlights a quirk of local government that, in Weymouth's case, there are two local authorities each looking after open space and facilities within the Weymouth town area, sometimes close by to each other. Weymouth Town Council will seek to do all it can to resolve this confusion to ensure residents are both best served and clear on which agency is responsible.

5. The Strategy Lifecycle

All strategy documents are living entities, changing as each month passes by. It is imperative therefore that this strategy document is reviewed and updated bi-annually by the Council.

As a guide the lifecycle is as follows:

PREPARE & ADOPT PARKS & OPEN SPACE STRATEGY



6. Policy Context.

The overall national policy context is set out in the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (amended in 2010) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/23/contents>) which, in its most basic form, promotes the sustainability of local communities through a broad agenda for working at the local level. It states that “Local people are the experts on their own problems and the solutions to them. They should, therefore, be driving the help that central government gives”. The Act is designed to be a bottom-up process, stated as “This process is ‘bottom-up’ – because what people want at community level drives what government does”.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/40>) places a duty on all public authorities to conserve biodiversity. A Parks & Open Space strategy that incorporates biodiversity as a key, overarching theme that will enable the local authority to demonstrate that it is complying with the act.

Whilst Weymouth Town Council is not a planning authority, the impacts of development are obviously most keenly felt in Weymouth by the residents and, by extension, the Town Council. The primary legislation is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Government updated this most recently in February 2019 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>). This outlines the national approach to delivering sustainable development in any given area. Insofar as it relates to open spaces, parts 8 and 15 of the Framework can be summarised as follows (this is the successor to Planning Policy Guidance 17 – often known as PPG 17). As a broad outline, local authorities are urged to:

- Avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain and enhance the character of open spaces.
- Ensure that open spaces do not suffer from encroachment (from traffic flows, etc.).
- Protect and enhance rights of way.
- Consider the impacts of development on biodiversity and nature conservation.
- Promote accessibility to open space and the countryside.
- Carefully consider safety and security in open spaces.
- Improve their quality.
- Meet regeneration needs through the provision of open space.
- Consider using surplus land for open space purposes.
- Consider the needs of visitors and tourists through open space provision.

The National Playing Field Association, which used a 6 Acre Standard guide for many years as an indicator to local authorities as to open space requirements, has now been superseded by the Fields in Trust organisation (FIT) (<http://www.fieldsintrust.org>). Their revised open space standards are now used by most local authorities when assessing open space needs.

FIT quality guidelines for open space includes:

- Quality appropriate to the intended performance, designed to appropriate standards.
- Located where they are of most value to the community to be served.
- Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community.
- Appropriately landscaped.
- Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance.
- Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time.
- Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment.
- Provision of footpaths.
- Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime.
- Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, considering the level of play, topography and necessary safety margins, etc.
- Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Children's Play Council's Quality Assessment Tool.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf>.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>), most recently updated in 2019, is a method of collecting funds from development to pay for necessary delivery and maintenance of infrastructure. Local authorities have the freedom to set their own priorities for what the money should be spent on. A portion of the CIL funds (up to 15%) will be payable to local communities with Neighbourhood Plans in place, for the purpose of localised spending on priority projects. CIL funds are capable of being used to fund local sport and recreation facilities.

In April 2017 the Government introduced the National Cycling and Walking Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy>) which outlines the Government's ambition 'to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys by 2040.' This strategy aims to improve safety for cyclists and walkers and increase levels of physical activity, and complements the Government's long running 'Change 4 Life' programme.

Current national levels of physical activity in the UK are low, recent studies suggest that only 40% of men and 28% of women achieve the minimum recommended 2.5 hours of moderate physical activity per week. Physical activity has been demonstrated to improve both physical and mental health and reduces the likelihood of serious diseases including heart disease and cancers.

It is suggested that by improving the quality and provision of parks and open spaces in an area, Weymouth Town Council can make a positive impact on the overall health and physical activity of its residents.

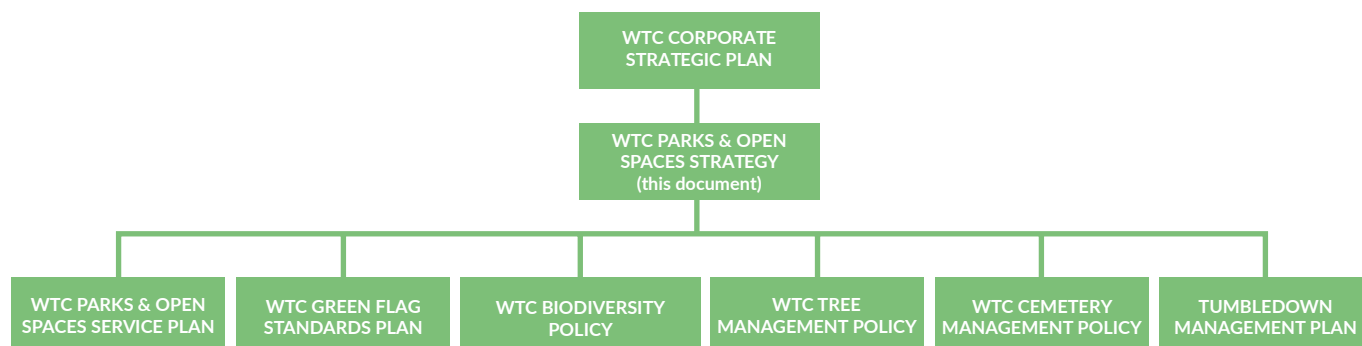
The Localism Act (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localism-act-2011-overview>) paved the way for planning powers to be passed down to local communities through the production of Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by community groups, guided by Local Planning Authorities, and plan for a range of land uses, including outdoor sports and recreation uses.



7. Internal Policy Documents & Structure

Weymouth Town Council already has a number of supporting policy documents in place to assist in informing this strategy.

This strategy document is at the head of the Parks & Open Spaces policy hierarchy, pulling together those other documents under one strategic vision.



WTC Corporate Plan: This document sits at the highest level within Weymouth Town Council and outlines the Council's aspirations, aims and objectives for the Council as a whole, not just the Parks & Open Spaces service area, in the short, medium, and longer term. It brings together all strategic plans, across all service areas adopted within the Council.

The WTC Corporate Plan expects the Council to look for continuous improvement in our activities, looking for efficiencies, value for money and the use of modern green and digital technology. The action plan will reflect this and ensure that communities are engaged with us whilst we continue to take responsibility for all our assets.

Climate Change: In 2019, the Council declared a climate and ecological emergency and is committed to become carbon neutral in its internal operations and the services it delivers by 2030. The environmental impacts of all planning and decision making relating to the delivery of this strategy will be considered, so that our parks and open spaces contribute towards the Council's targets for zero carbon emissions.

WTC Parks & Open Spaces Strategy: This document brings together all the associated policy documents adopted within the Parks & Open Spaces Service and acts as the department's vision and direction for the future.

WTC Parks & Open Spaces Service Plan: This document outlines in more detail what the service is responsible for and how it will go about looking after those services and facilities, noting the strengths and weaknesses as well as risks and opportunities.

WTC Green Flag Management Plans: The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well-managed parks and open spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces. The management plans outline the approach of the service toward achieving and maintaining of

Green Flag status for Greenhill Gardens and Sandsfoot Gardens.

WTC Green Flag Standards Plan: This document outlines the approach of the service toward managing open spaces across Weymouth to Green Flag standards.

WTC Biodiversity Policy: This document highlights Weymouth Town Council's approach to managing and enhancing parks and open spaces to benefit wildlife and priorities from it will feed into the Parks & Open Space Strategy.

WTC Tree Management Policy: This document outlines and gives guidance on how WTC will manage and maintain its tree stock and priorities from it will feed into the Parks & Open Space Strategy.

WTC Cemetery Management Policy: This document outlines and gives guidance on how WTC will manage and maintain its cemeteries.

Tumbledown Management Plan: This document sets out the delivery of a community farm and the responsible management over the natural environment to support community life, learning and well being in a sustainable and economic way. The Parks and Open Spaces team will assist in meeting these objectives.

Friends Group Insurance: The Town Council has agreed to provide financial assistance to the Friends Group to cover the cost of insurance at Finance & Governance Committee on 12th May 2021. This funding will be made available each year with a review every 5 years.

It should be noted that each of the documents outlined above often interact with each other, sometimes overlapping on subject matters. They should not therefore be seen in isolation from each other.



8. How We Will Measure Success.

- The Parks & Open Spaces Strategy will directly link to the annual Service Plan, which will show a range of performance indicators to lead us to delivering this strategy.
- Use a two-yearly survey to monitor residents' satisfaction with open spaces.
- Regular monitoring of progress of this strategy against the action plan.
- Monitor visitor numbers in key public open spaces.
- Retain and secure Green Flags.
- Carry out informal park bench chats.
- Plant 1000 native trees by 2026.
- Increase the number of events and activities in parks and open spaces.



9. Developing A Vision For The Parks, Cemeteries & Open Spaces.

In Weymouth, open spaces are owned and managed by different organisations but primarily it is Weymouth Town Council and Dorset Council. In addition, there are bodies such as housing associations, schools, community groups and the private sector. These days, new parks and/or open spaces are mostly delivered alongside new development.

Weymouth Town Council's aim for its parks and open spaces is:

“To deliver high quality public open spaces for a variety of active leisure pursuits and quiet reflection, which meet local needs, aspirations and connect parks, people and wildlife.”



In drawing together the findings of the consultation, some key aims emerged, which were considered to be important for the Parks & Open Space strategy to address:

- Enhance the biodiversity value of our green spaces, with a specific focus on wildlife conservation and habitat management, tree planting and care. By monitoring the latest available research, we will design and manage our open spaces to meet the forthcoming challenge of climate change.
- Maintain quality green spaces, which are protected for future generations.
- Ensure our open spaces are clean and safe.
- Encourage local people to use our open spaces to benefit mental and physical health and well-being.
- Maximise the income potential of our open space assets.
- Support, encourage and mentor Friends/volunteer groups/allotment associations.
- Deliver excellent value and performance while keeping the customer at the heart of what we do.
- Develop our cemeteries to offer special places for quiet reflection and contemplation and, like other green spaces, they have an important role in mitigating the effects of climate change.
- Deliver facilities that can be used by children and young people of varying abilities to develop physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills.
- Assist with the development of Tumbledown to a care farm.

10. Delivering the Vision.

The aims from the Parks & Open Spaces surveys have been broken down into three broad themes or areas of benefit that our parks and open spaces deliver for our residents and visitors:

- Social
- Economic
- Environmental

Public consultation indicates that a quality experience is broadly dependent on the following factors:

- There being a comprehensive maintenance regime.
- The timely repair or replacement of run down, damaged and vandalised facilities.
- There being a variety of facilities.
- Open spaces being and feeling safe to use.
- There being no dog mess in parks and the issue of dogs exercised off a lead being managed.
- The provision of a variety of types of spaces, e.g. play space or wildlife space, that may be used in different ways.
- The provision of multifunctional parks that may provide a broad range of experiences in one place.

Following evaluation of the survey, the strategy sets out:

Priority statements – these statements provide the direction of travel that, if achieved, will deliver the positive social, economic and environmental aims and benefits.

Actions – these are identified actions that provide the finer details of what this strategy aspires to achieve. These actions will then be monitored and tracked, to demonstrate progress or identify where further work is required to ensure our parks and open spaces meet our future needs.

The word cloud below represents what Weymouth residents think are the most important features that should be maintained and enhanced in our parks and open spaces, according to the Parks & Opens Space survey in Jan/June 2021.





STRATEGIC SOCIAL AIMS

Feeling safe, providing a range of sporting and community activities, offering facilities such as toilets, cafés, etc. plus good infrastructure, eg. bins and seats, delivering community events and good play provision for children were all highly important and deemed to encourage greater use by the whole community. Overall, the value of the parks as places for quiet relaxation and access to nature and wildlife was the most significant comment from respondents.

Priorities

- To balance functionality and local needs for parks and open spaces to serve the broadest diversity of people without compromising their value as a place to relax and enjoy being in nature.
- To continue to strive for increased number of Green Flag Award Gardens.
- To develop, protect and provide clean and safe parks and open space, allotments, play areas and cemeteries by seeking inward and external investment prioritising neglected areas.
- To deliver 'well-being' by putting parks and open spaces at the heart of outdoor activities and healthy lifestyles for all.
- To get nature to people and people to nature in our parks and open spaces by creating wildlife habitats and hosting nature events.
- To use the heritage features within Parks and Open Spaces to enhance the visitor experience.
- To assist in the development of a care farm at Tumbledown.



Actions

- To retain and expand Green Flag Award status at key sites across Weymouth to maintain high standards.
- To improve and maintain other parks and open spaces to Green Flag standards of maintenance to maximise their use and appeal.
- To prioritise investment and revenue budgets for parks and open spaces to raise overall standards.
- To work in partnership with Friends Groups and volunteers to provide additional facilities and make improvements to parks and open spaces.
- To promote more public involvement and engagement with Friends Groups so that they can broaden their appeal and capacity.
- To work with Dorset Public Health and colleagues in Community Development to support and encourage walking, cycling and other active travel modes that link open spaces, such as Tumbledown.
- To engage people with nature by enhancing our parks and open spaces for wildlife, and to offer opportunities to connect with nature through volunteering, activities and interpretation.
- To respond to antisocial behavioural (ASB) issues in parks and open spaces by working in partnership with formal user groups, the Neighbourhood Policing Team and Weymouth's enforcement officers to promote the byelaws and encourage respectful use.
- To seek advice from the Weymouth & Portland Access Group to ensure that maximising accessibility to all our parks and open spaces for all is key to investment and development decisions.
- To ensure that all parks and open space upgrades and projects are designed with safety as a key element.
- To consult with and seek the views of young people and hard to reach groups via available networks to ensure that parks and open space improvements deliver safe, well-used and respected spaces.
- To support and encourage the cultural, physical and mental health benefits and opportunities that our parks and open spaces offer.
- To actively support partnership working with local sports and leisure providers to maximise provision and introduce activities to support health and well-being, such as Rugbytots, Cougars, etc.

STRATEGIC SOCIAL AIMS (cont)

- To identify the features of cultural and natural heritage and to create a maintenance and management plan for each to ensure their continued conservation.
- Commit to giving the best possible service to those buried in our cemeteries and those mourning their loss.
- To ensure that maintenance regimes are managed appropriately and set to a suitable standard which is aligned to the location and facility.
- To provide a range of infrastructure aimed at all age groups and as many differing types of facility as is feasible.
- To provide a service that inspects parks and open spaces regularly and deals with issues and anti-social behaviour effectively through developing partnerships with other internal services and external agencies.
- To assist with corporate projects, such as connecting footpaths and cycle paths to Tumbledown.
- To produce site specific maintenance and management plans for Nothe Gardens and Lodmoor Country Park.
- To work with colleagues in Community Development and Events to develop a programme of diverse events and activities in parks and open spaces.
- To challenge out-dated working practices and seek to modernise and use technologies to improve efficiency, productivity and provide better value for money for residents.
- To strive to secure additional land for allotments in areas of the town where required.
- To support allotment tenants in land management practices, composting, mulching and wildlife friendly production.



STRATEGIC ECONOMIC AIMS

Improving the quality of parks and open spaces and providing robust, diverse spaces that can deliver a range of economic, social and environmental outcomes will be essential, as will adopting measures to enhance the multi-functionality of green spaces.

Priorities

- To protect parks and open spaces.
- To preserve and, where possible, enhance the quality of existing parks and open spaces, to deliver eco-system services and a range of public benefits – including play, health and well-being, habitat creation, landscape improvements and flood storage.
- To ensure Weymouth's parks, gardens and esplanade planters continue to deliver a positive experience to visitors and thus contribute to the town's tourist revenue, and reflect climate change adaptations, such as greater use of perennial plants.
- To achieve a cost-effective, high-quality service that delivers continuous improvement.
- To make parks and open spaces accessible to all, as far as is reasonably practical.



Actions

- To support sustainable development and urban regeneration that delivers enhancements to the quality of existing open spaces to deliver a range of benefits and uses.
- To assess all that we do to ensure value for money, flexibility and adaptability for the residents of Weymouth.
- To investigate funding opportunities and support available from third parties such as grants, lottery funding, Esme Fairburn Foundation, etc.
- To work with Friends Groups to find innovative fund-raising methods.
- To work in partnership with local clubs, associations, and providers to maximise improvements and investment opportunities.
- To offer grant opportunities, where suitable, to third party groups and associations in order to achieve the vision of this strategy.
- To offer assistance and advice to third party groups and associations, wherever possible, to enable them to enhance open space.
- To assess the need for rationalisation of smaller play areas in favour of a modern portfolio of challenging, diverse play facilities to improve play development for all ages.
- To ensure that there is suitable corporate provision of supporting infra-structure available, such as litter bins, seating, notice boards and path networks.
- To make investment decisions which encourage people to improve their health by increasing their use of parks and open spaces.
- To carry out site surveys of parks and open spaces to establish priority expenditure to create a critical action plan.
- To ring fence budget for the electrification of the Parks fleet vehicles.
- To explore options to relocate the nursery from Lynch Lane commercial site to an alternative Council owned site.
- Support the Town Council's overall strategic aim of getting value for money by undertaking a cost analysis of growing our own plants against purchasing them direct from a supplier.
- To review current practices at the Council's nursery in light of changing needs.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS

It is clear that supporting biodiversity is a principle function of our parks and open spaces.

Weymouth's parks and open spaces are already an important part of the ecological network and will continue to be enhanced to benefit wildlife. Although the priority is to provide safe, aesthetically pleasing recreational spaces for the community, incorporating biodiversity features will benefit both people and wildlife using the park. A wealth of research indicates that nature benefits our wellbeing so we need to strive to enhance both the biodiversity of, and public engagement with, our parks and open spaces.

Spending more money on managing sites for wildlife and nature conservation was endorsed by consultation undertaken as part of this document's development.

Priorities

- To seek to manage our parks and open spaces to benefit both people and wildlife, and to seek to create new wildlife habitats where possible. This will include planting trees, hedgerows and wildflower areas.
- To manage the spaces sustainably and recycle wherever reasonably practical and as close to the source as possible.
- To aim for a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and peat use where practical and economically viable.
- To develop, with user groups, management and improvement plans that seek to enhance nature and people's connection with it.
- To reduce carbon emissions and the reliance on fossil fuels by using electric vehicles and machinery where reasonably practical and available.
- To increase the resilience of our parks and open spaces to climate change through planning, decision making and operations.

Actions

- To create and enhance habitats for wildlife. This includes diversification of grassland by sowing wild flowers, planting native and fruit trees and restoring hedges.
- To work in partnership with Dorset Council and Butterfly Conservation to create wildflower strips throughout our parks and open spaces.
- To improve the local ecological networks through the development of wildlife corridors.
- To raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and how people can help to support its conservation both within the parks and through our wider communications.
- To connect people with nature in our parks by enhancing them for wildlife and offering opportunities for engagement including activities, volunteering and education.
- To promote the different features and facilities available in Weymouth's parks and open spaces, including via the Council's website.
- To encourage recycling and discourage single use plastic by designing waste contracts with Dorset Council which consider the environmental aims of the parks and open spaces.
- To compost green waste in the park it was generated in, leave fallen leaves and standing dead wood in situ, where appropriate and safe to do so.
- To develop and trial an integrated weed control policy to avoid, explore alternatives to and reduce the use of herbicide and pesticides.
- To work with the local community and Friends groups to support the implementation of projects designed to benefit locally appropriate biodiversity and engagement.
- To trial electric machinery to understand it's performance and cost-benefits.
- Work towards installing electric points to improve air quality in and around parks.

11. Partner Organisations

There are a considerable number of potential partner organisations with whom Weymouth Town Council can work, consult with, and seek professional and specialist advice from, such as:

- Sport England
- Environment Agency
- Play England
- Historic England
- Dorset Football Association
- Lawn Tennis Association
- Housing Developers
- National Allotment Association
- Local Businesses
- Local Residents
- Other Tiers of Local Government
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Public Health Dorset
- Butterfly Conservation
- Friends Groups
- We Are Weymouth
- Weymouth & Portland Access Group
- Dog Friendly - Weymouth & Portland
- Lantern Trust
- Mind
- Shelter Bus
- God's Green Fingers

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list but gives an indication of the assistance potentially available.

12. Funding Opportunities

Alongside the Council's ability to raise funding via its own precept setting abilities, there are several other options potentially available such as:

- Income generation
- Public Works Loans Board – Government backed loans at extremely competitive low interest rates aimed primarily at the Parish sector
- S106 and / or CIL contributions – Monies collected by the Planning Authority from developers because of development in an area for spending (usually) by the relevant Parish Council
- The Football Association
- The Lawn Tennis Association
- National Lottery (various differing elements)
- Local Enterprise Partnership

However, policies and actions developed in the strategy need to account for a range of factors in addition to the consultation, such as the Council's medium term financial plan, existing policies and strategies, and external and internal consultations. This broad evidence base should provide the Council with a robust and considered foundation to give the public and other stakeholders greater confidence in the process.

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list but gives an indication of the amount of assistance potentially available.





WEYMOUTH
TOWN COUNCIL

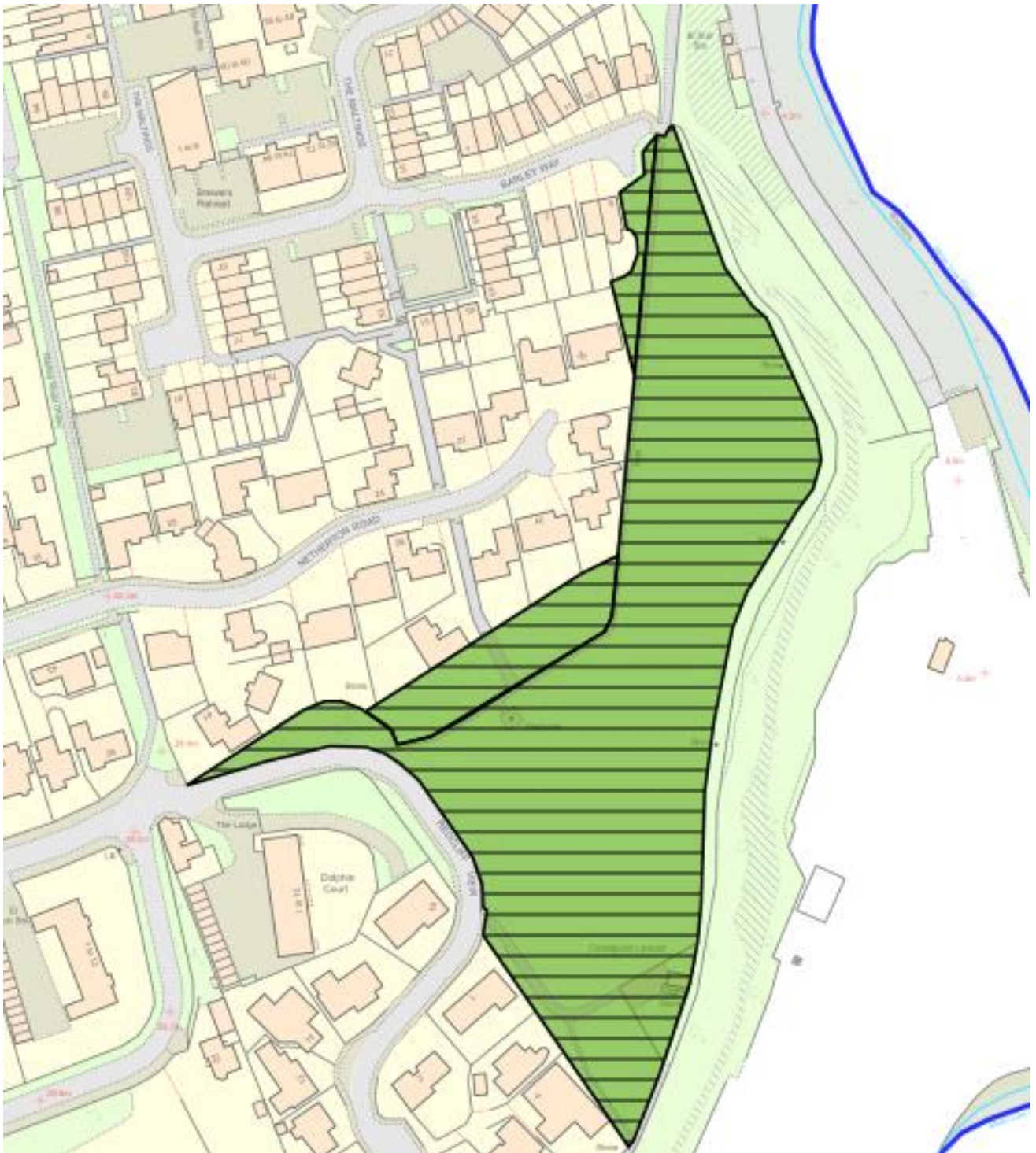


Appendix 1.

Green shaded areas on the attached maps show Weymouth Town Council parks & open space assets.



Bincleaves Open Space



Bowleaze Cove Open Space



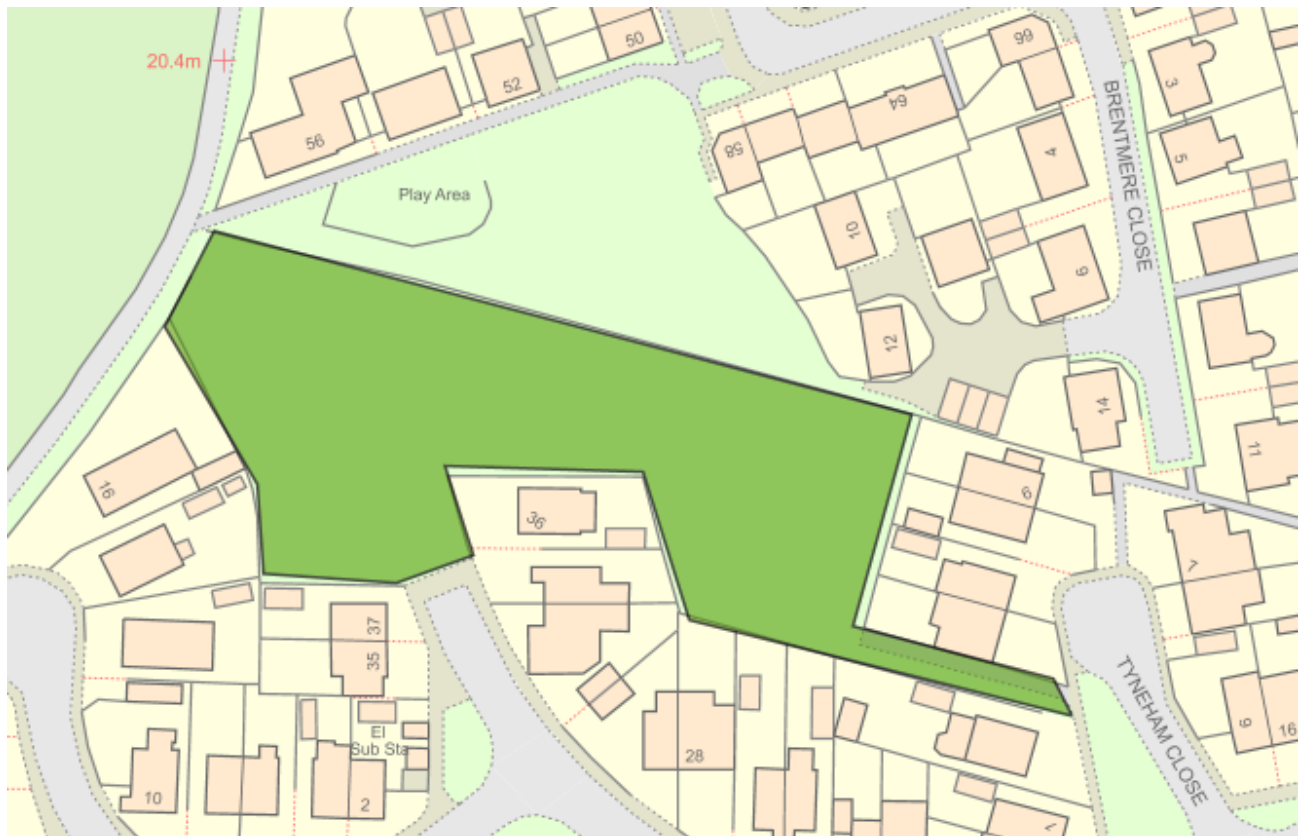
Carlton Road North Open Space



Coleridge Place Play Area



Corfe Road Open Space



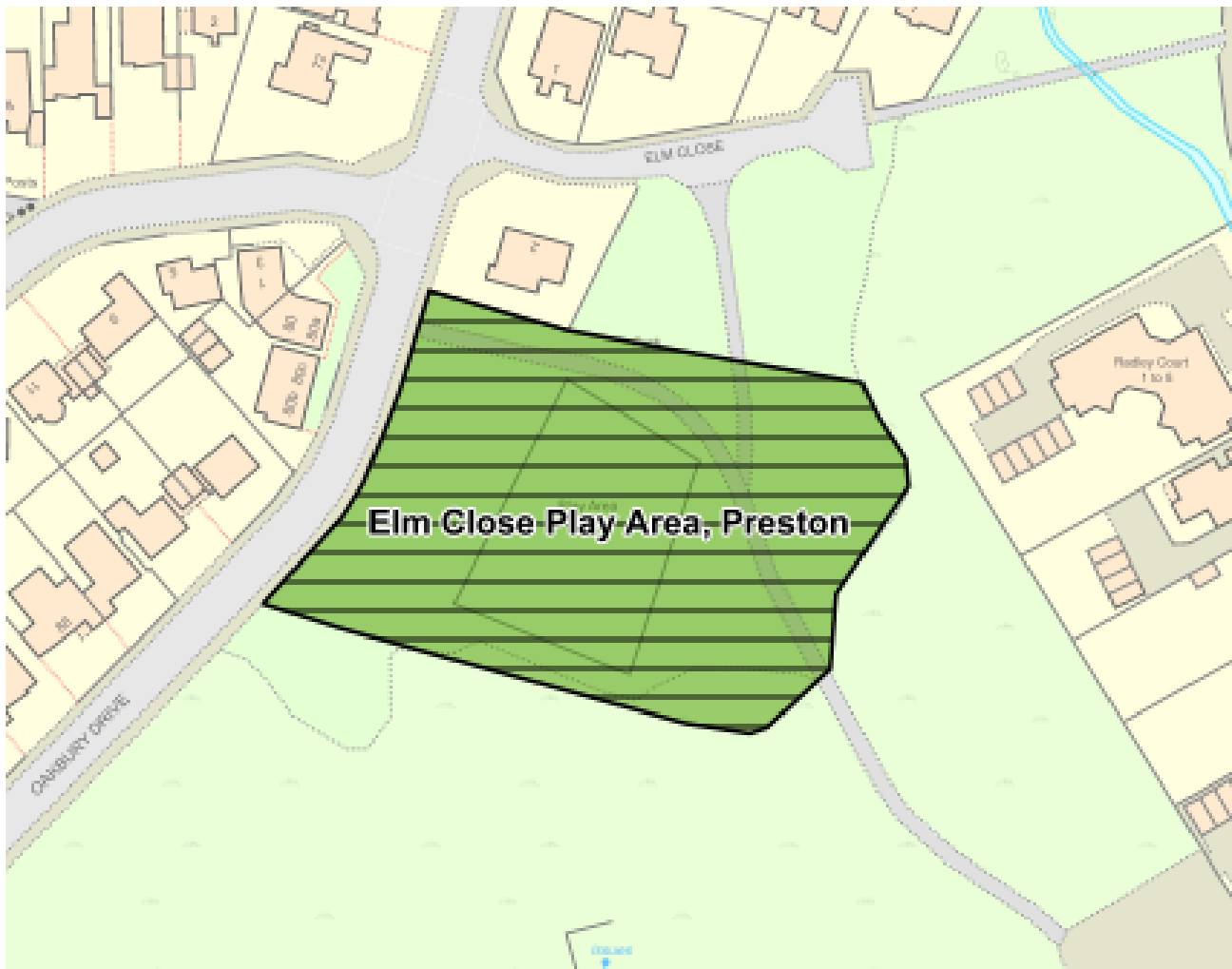
Doulton Close Play Area



Douglas Road Open Space and Play Area



Elm Close Play Area



Elveroakes Play Area



Faircross Allotments (Managed by Faircross Allotment Association)



Forehill Close Open Space



Goldcroft Allotments



Greenhill Gardens



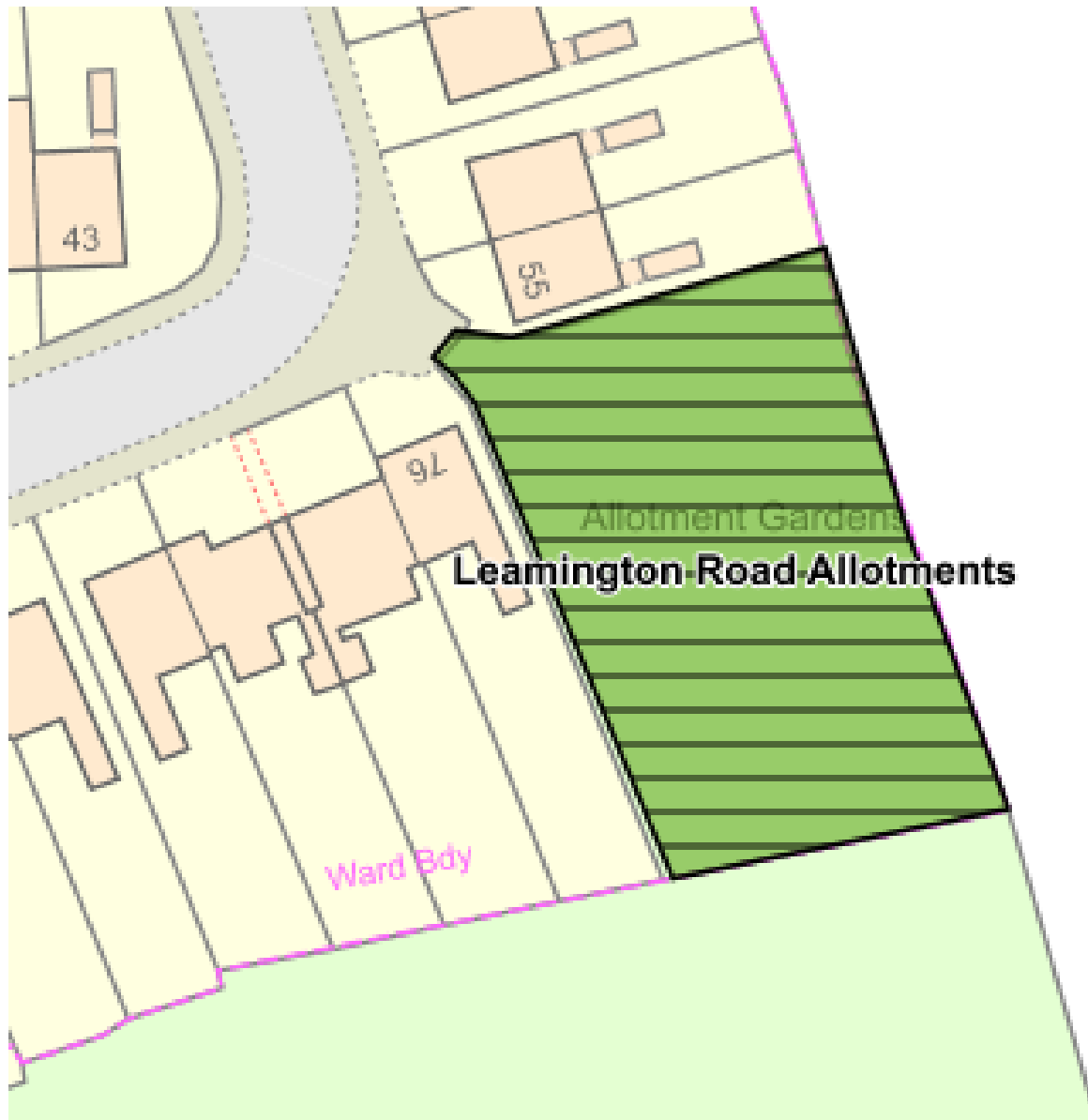
Green Lane Allotments (Managed by Green Lane Allotment Association)



Honeysuckle Close Play Area



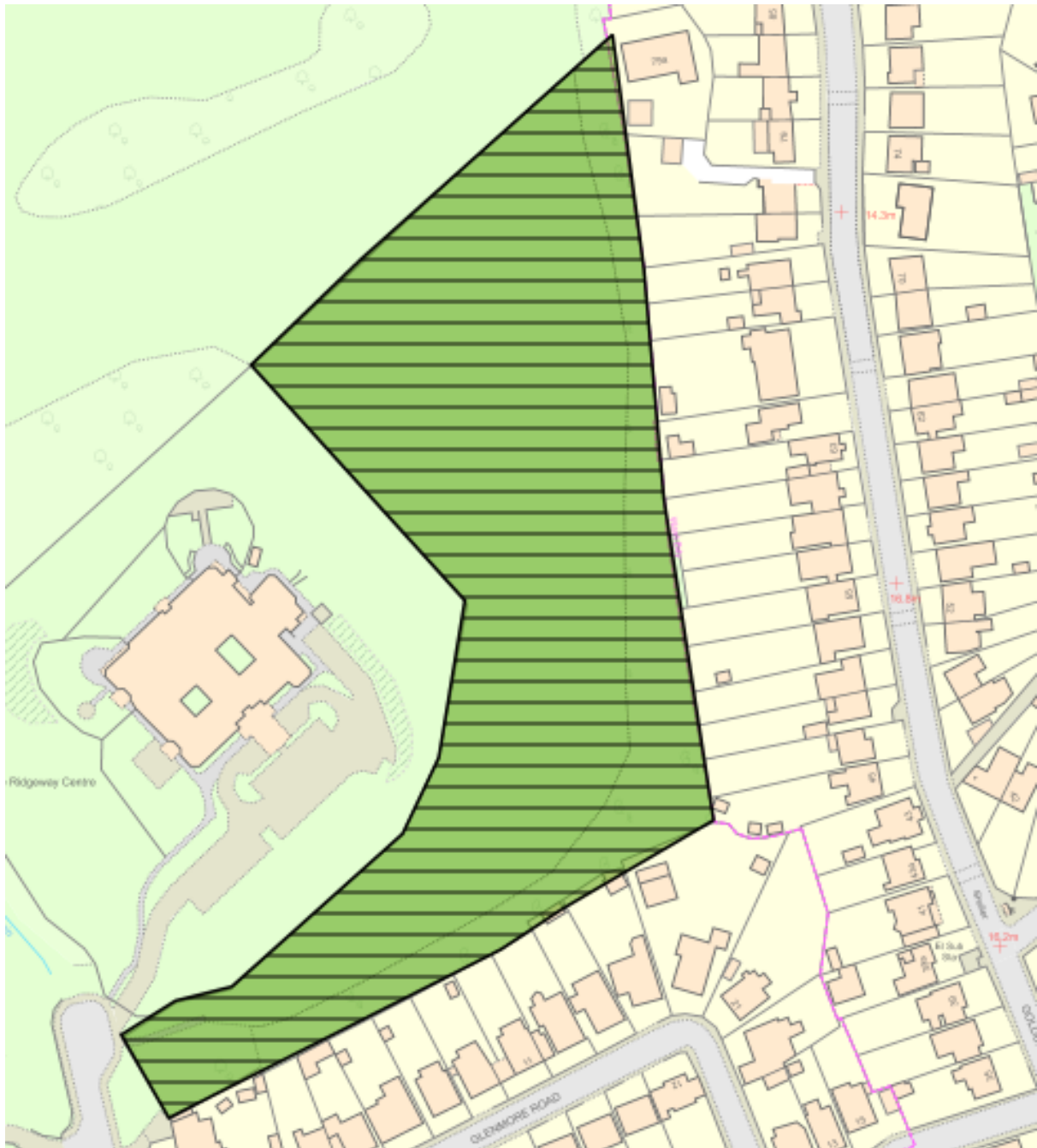
Lanehouse Allotments



Larkspur Close Open Space



Links Road Open Space



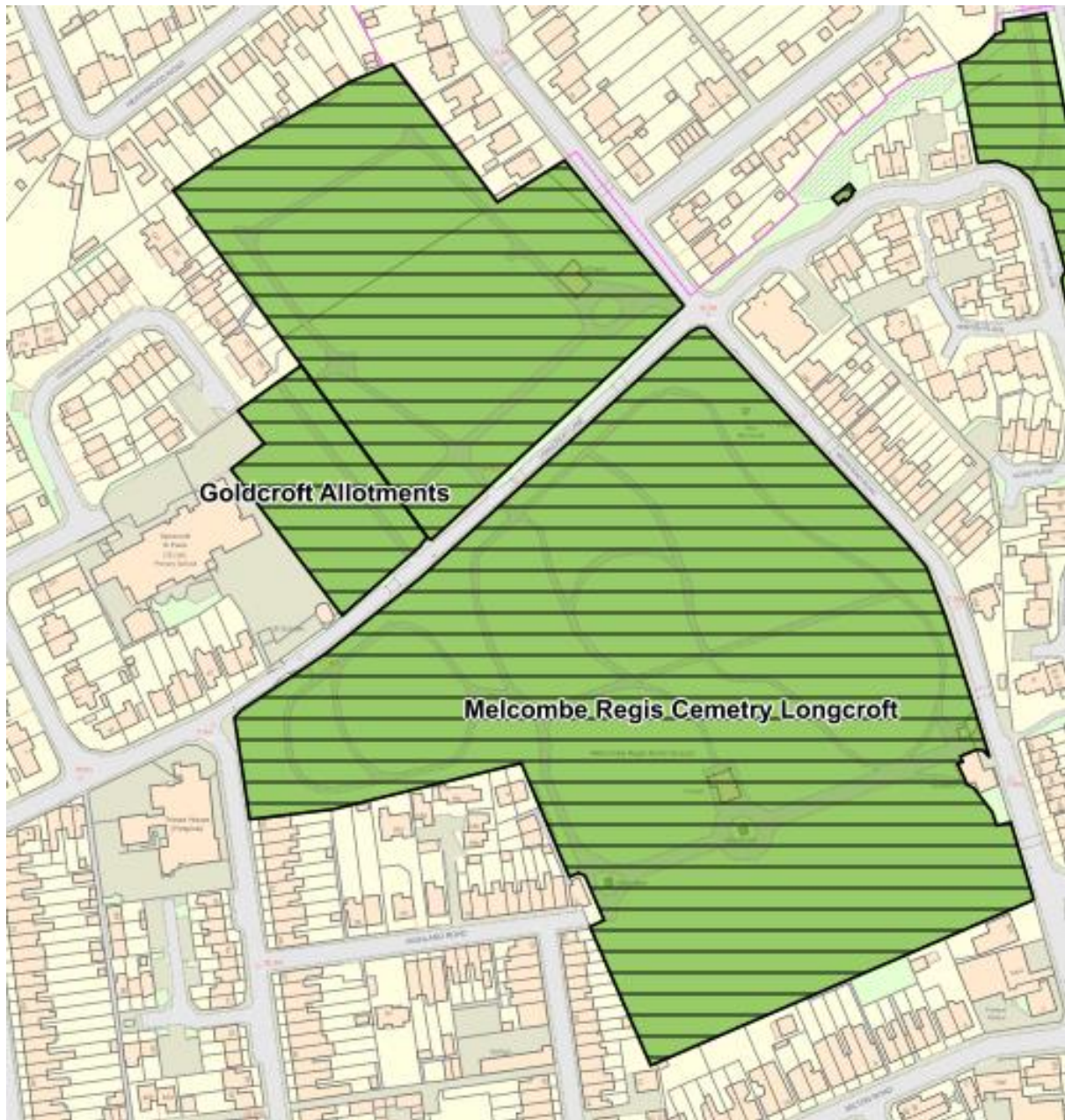
Lodmoor Country Park



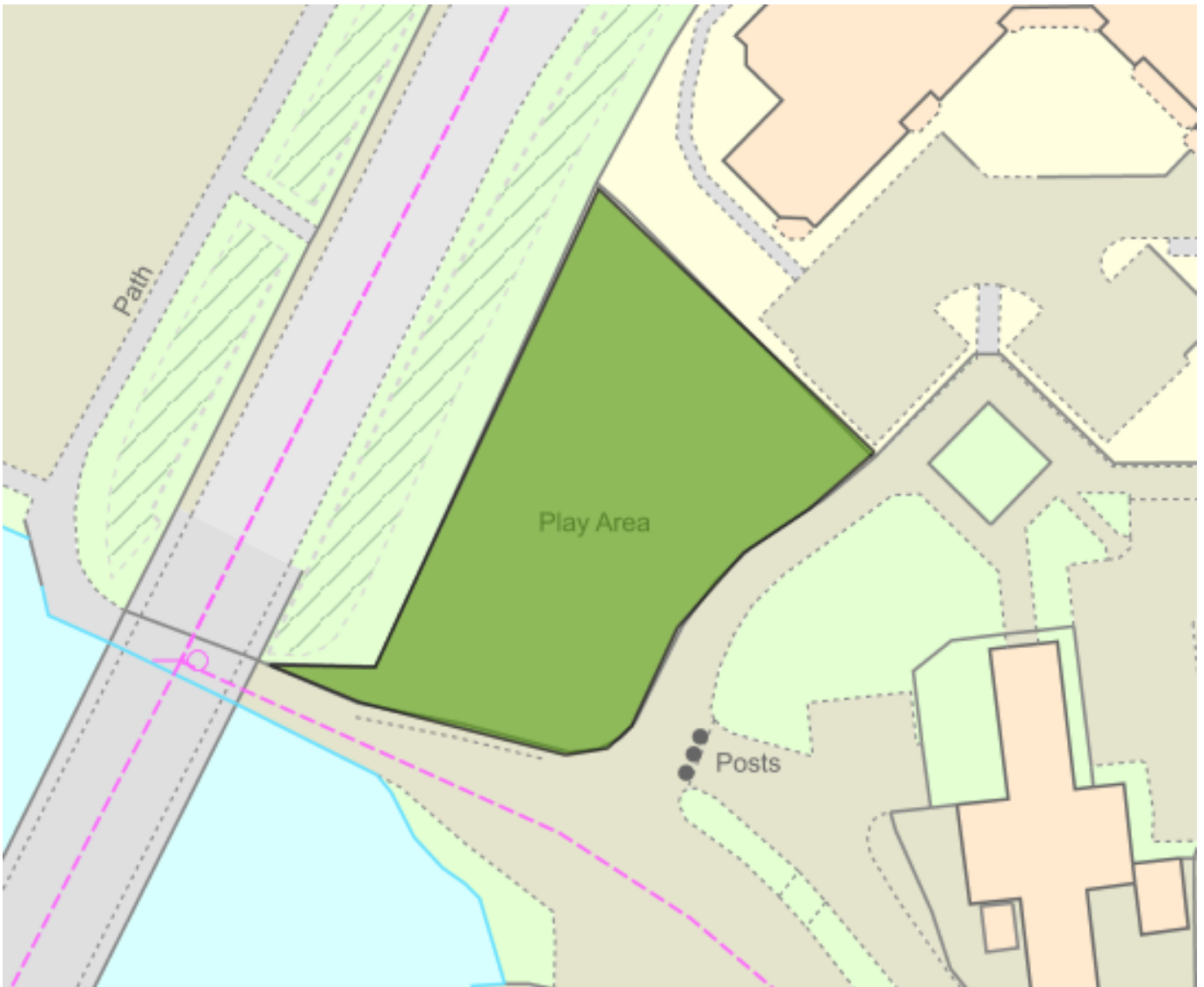
Louviers Road Open Space and Play Area



Melcombe Regis Cemetery



Melcombe Regis Play Area



Miles Garden Play Area and Open Space



Milton Close Open Space



Nothe Gardens



Parsons Close Allotments



Pottery Lane Open Space and Play Area



Purbeck Close Open Space



Quibo Lane Allotments



Rodwell and Longhill Allotments



Radipole Park and Gardens



Ryemead Lane Open Space



Sandsfoot Allotments



Sandsfoot Gardens



Seven Acres Road Open Space



South Down Farm Allotments



Southill Open Spaces and Play Area



Sprague Close Open Space



St John's Garden



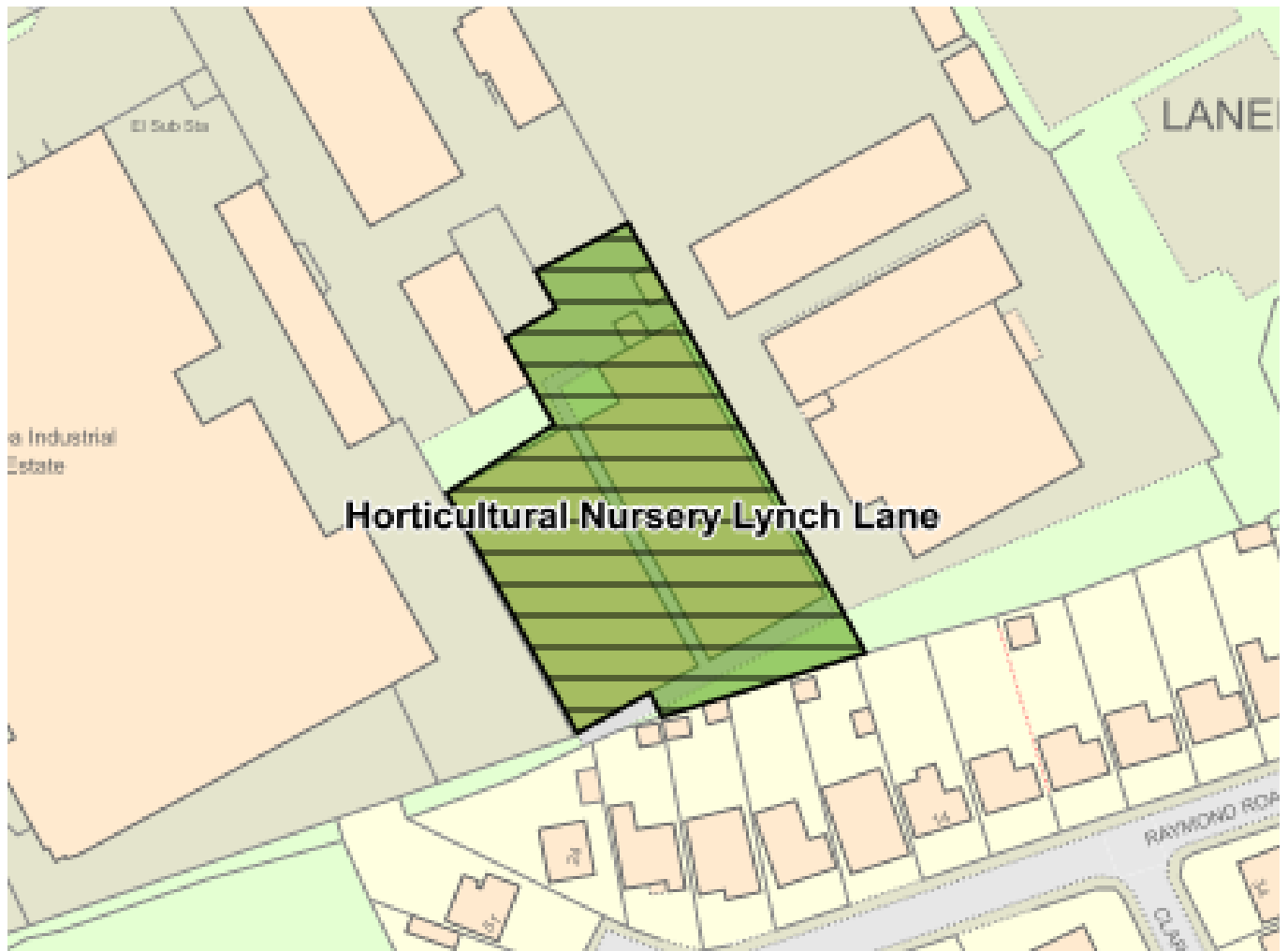
Telford Close Open Space and Play Area



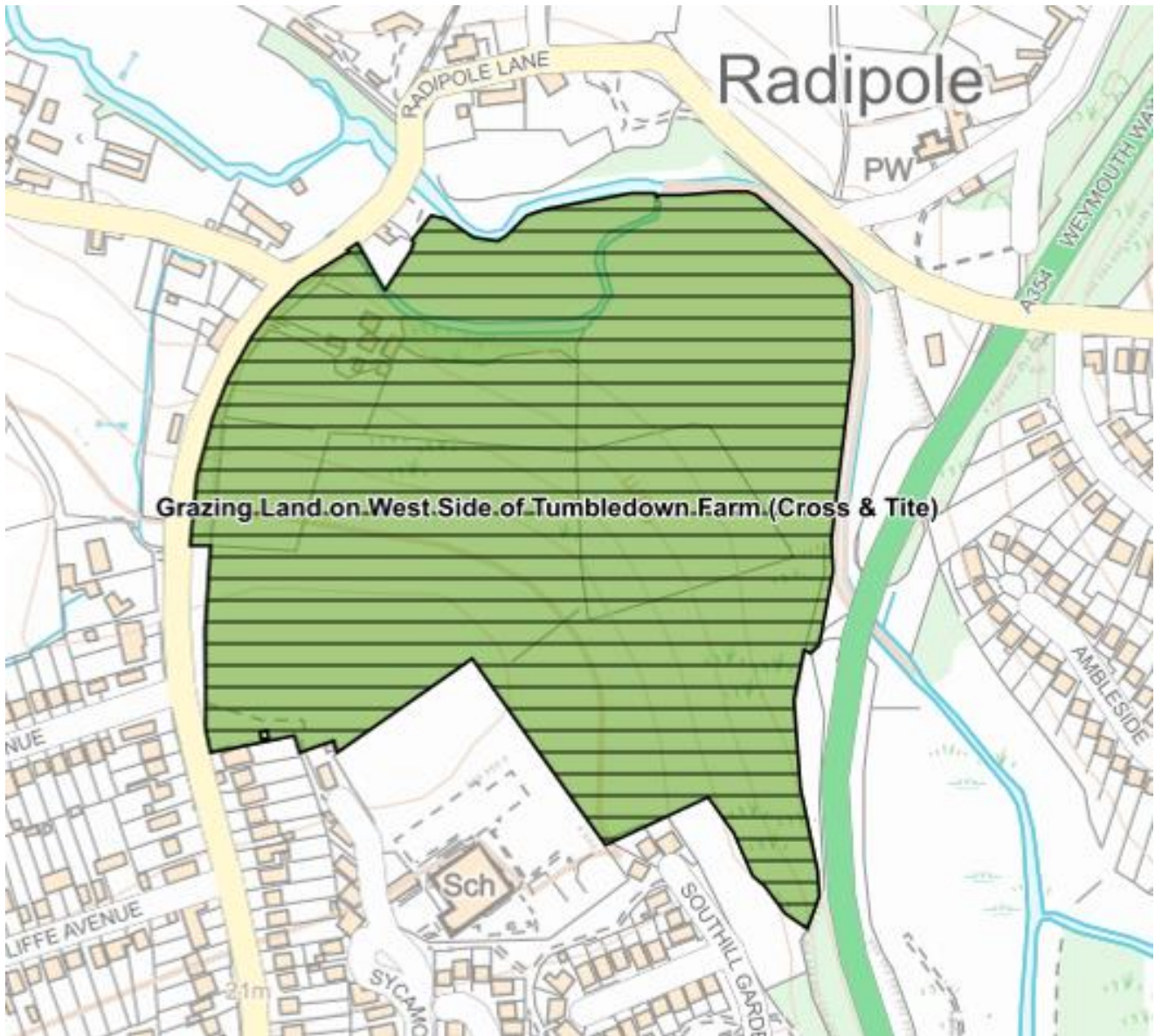
The Marsh



The Nursery



Tumbledown Farm



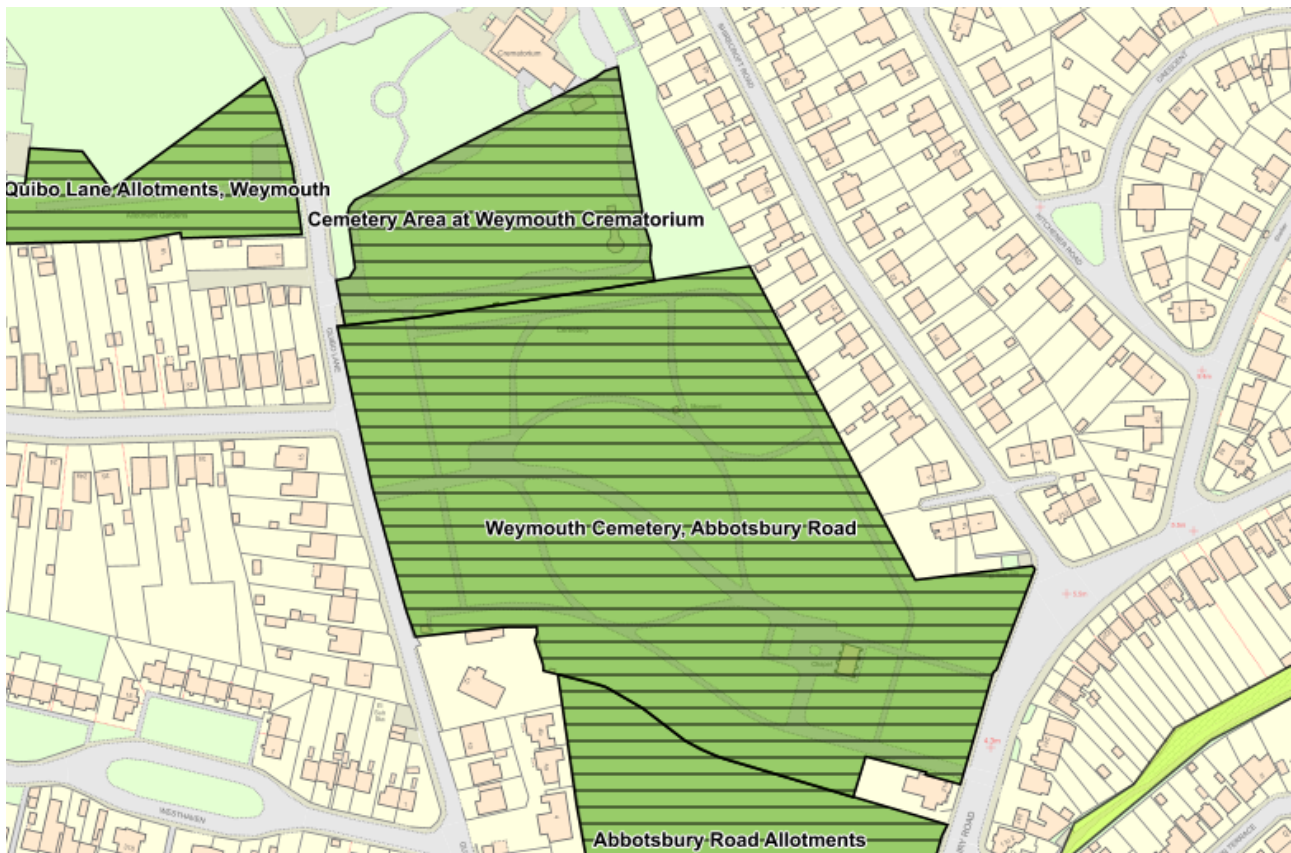
Westham Crossroads Allotments



Westmacott Play Area



Weymouth Cemetery



White Roughet Allotments



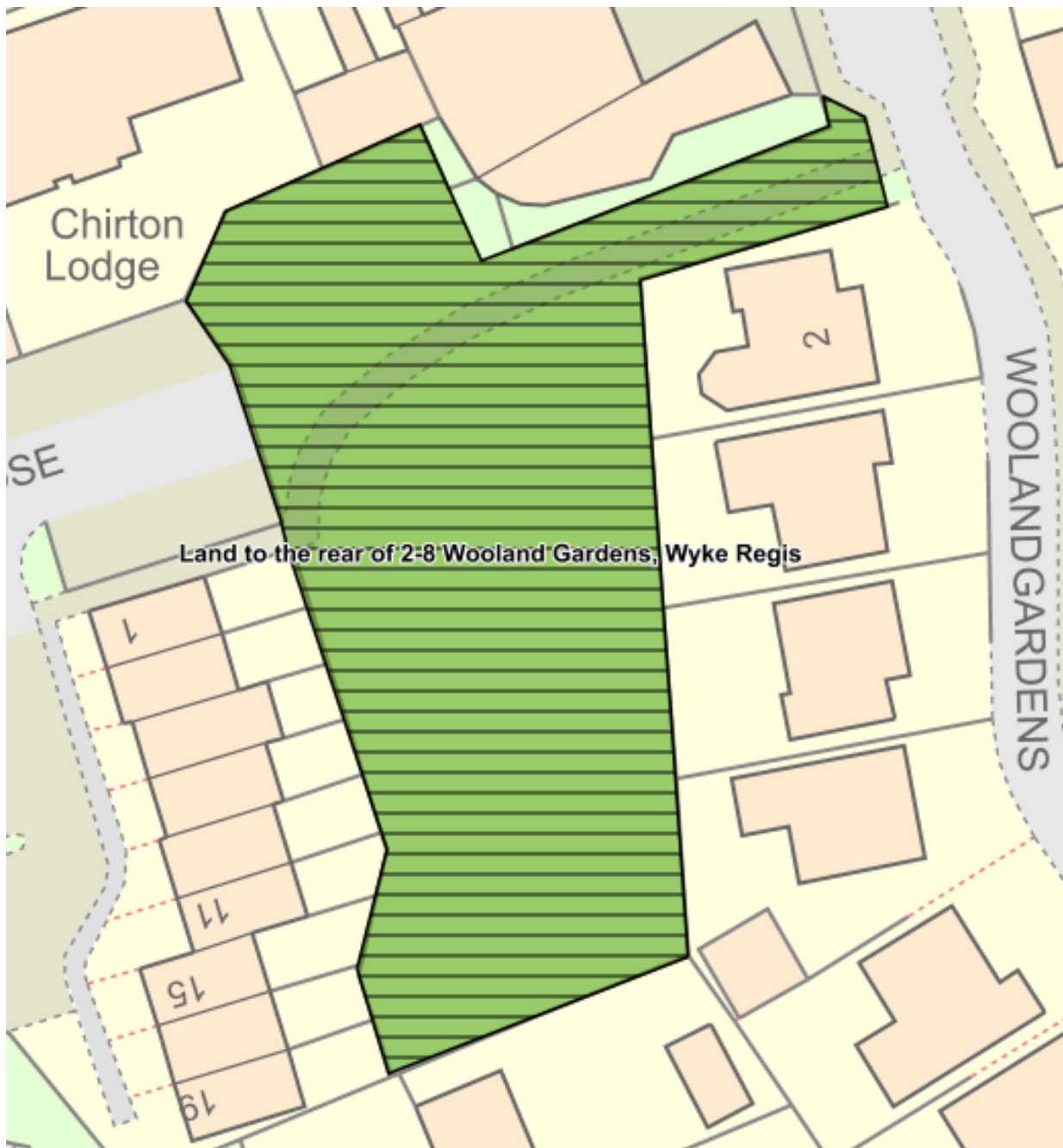
Whitecross Drive Open Space



Windsor Road Open Space



Wooland Gardens Open Space



Wyke Gardens



Wyke Playing Field and Play Area



Wyke Cemetery

