

Welcome and planning history

Welcome to the consultation on reconsidered proposals for Sulis Down.

Welbeck Land, working with the Hignett Family Trust, is bringing forward updated proposals for new homes, green space and community facilities at Sulis Down, on the southern edge of Bath.

The site was removed from the Green Belt and allocated in Bath & North East Somerset's Local Plan over a decade ago for around 300 homes. Phase 1, which is near completion, has provided 171 new homes, including 40% affordable housing, and is now home to a thriving community.

We are now consulting on reconsidered proposals for around 200 homes on Phases 3 and 4.

This shows the proposed phases of development. Phase 1 is near complete. Phase 2 will be brought forward in due course, but in the meantime, Phases 3 and 4, will come forward.



Last year, an outline application for 290 homes on Phases 3 and 4 was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate following the appeal against the Council's refusal to grant the planning permission for the previous application on the site (appeal ref. APP/F0114/W/24/3349501).

We are now consulting on refreshed proposals for around 200 homes. These new plans respond directly to the appeal decision, to community feedback, and to adopted planning policy. Your comments will help refine the plans before a planning application is submitted.



Site allocation and local plan context

Land at Sulis Down is identified in the Council's Local Plan as a sustainable location for new homes.

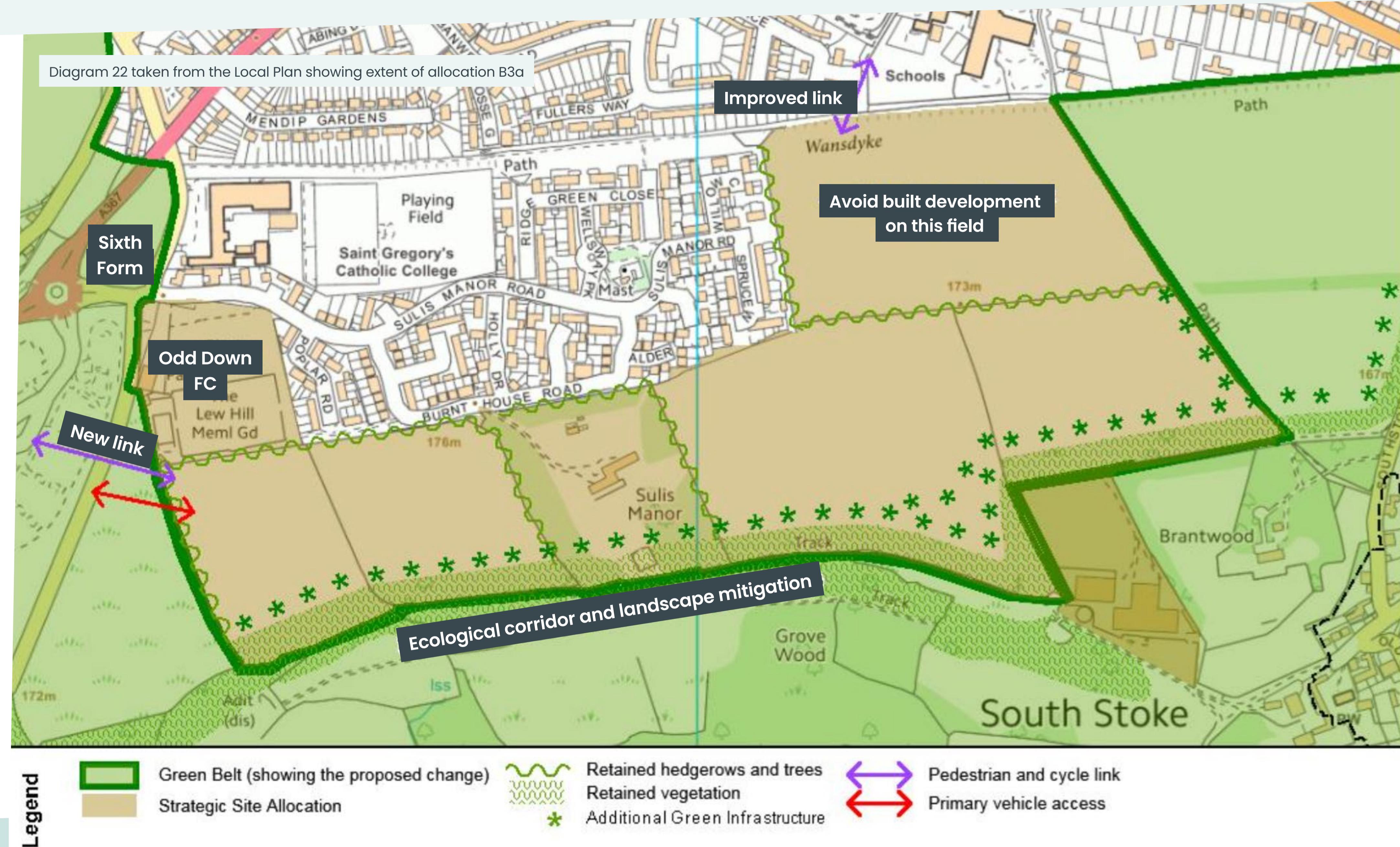
The site forms part of Strategic Allocation Policy B3a (Land adjoining Odd Down), which has been allocated for development for more than a decade.

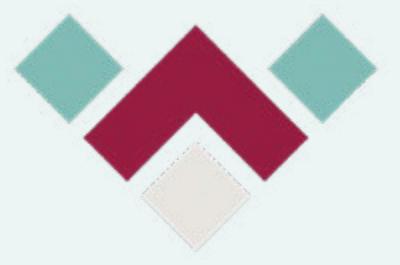
This allocation covers a wider area of land, parts of which have already been developed, including housing on Phase 1 and local employment at Sulis Down Business Village. The Local Plan sets out a series of placemaking principles to guide how development should come forward, covering landscape, heritage, green infrastructure, transport, connections and community facilities.

This consultation updates the Comprehensive Masterplan for the allocation, with a focus on a new Outline Planning Application on Phases 3 and 4. The aim is to ensure development responds appropriately to its sensitive landscape setting while delivering much-needed homes.

This is the second proposal for the site, with the previous scheme being refused by the Council.

Following the Planning Inspector's dismissal of the appeal against the refusal to grant the planning permission for the previous application on the site (appeal ref. APP/F0114/W/24/3349501), we have reconsidered the proposals in the context of the Inspector's decision. Our approach is landscape-led, with fewer homes than previously proposed, increased planting and green buffers, and a focus on delivering community benefits.





Planning background and appeal decision

Welbeck Land and the Hignett Family Trust are preparing reconsidered proposals for Phases 3 and 4 of Sulis Down.

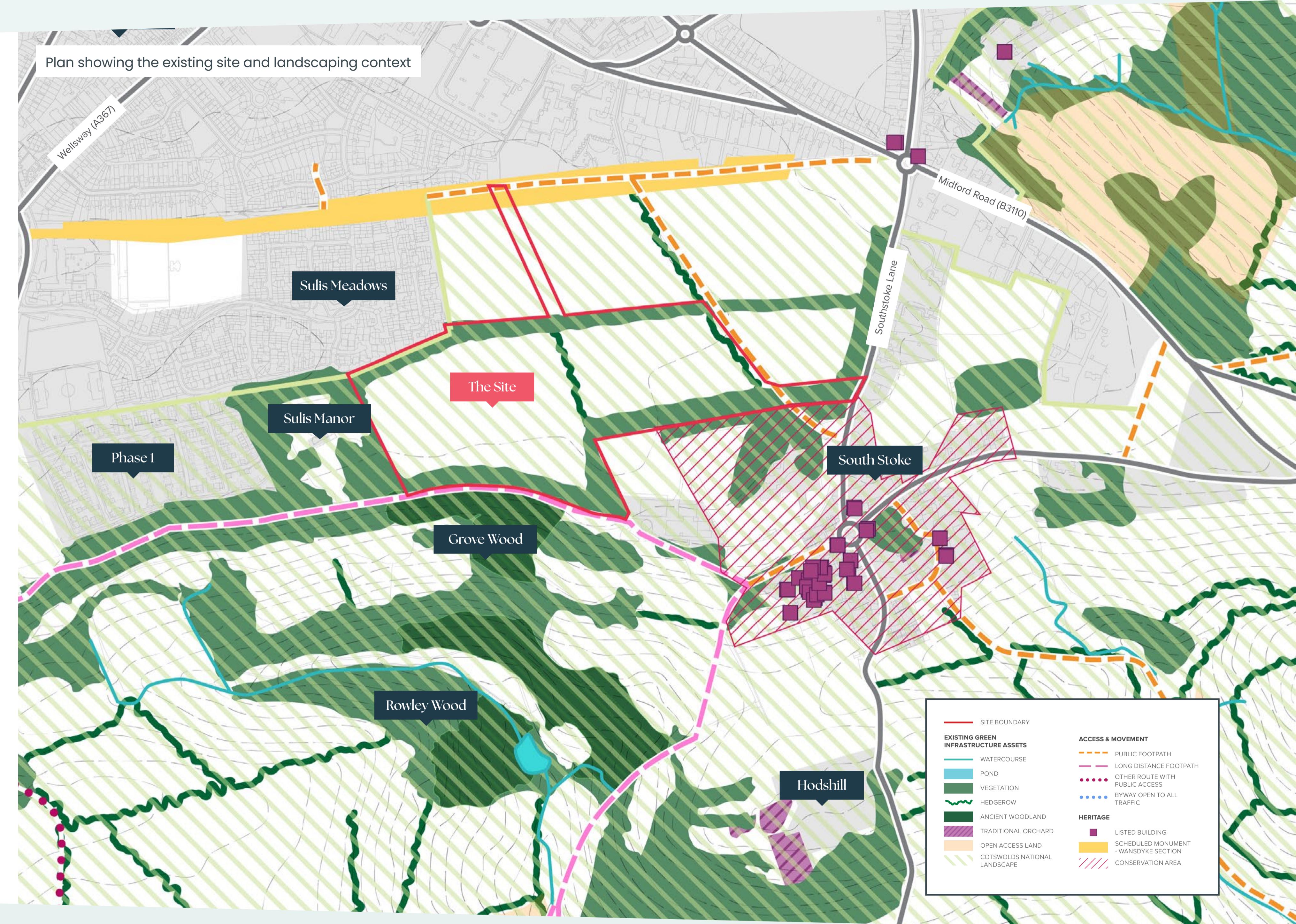
This will take the form of a new 'hybrid' application, that is to say the roadway through Sulis Manor from Phase 1 to Phases 3 and 4 will be in detail. The proposed residential Phases, Phases 3 and 4, will be in Outline accompanied by a series of Parameter plans. These proposals have been informed by the Planning Inspector's decision to dismiss the previous appeal.

The Inspector recognised that Sulis Down is an allocated site for housing and that there is a clear need for new homes in Bath. However, he concluded that the previous proposals caused unacceptable harm to the landscape and long-distance views within the Cotswolds National Landscape.

In particular, the Inspector found the previous scheme did not do enough to reduce visual impact. He noted that alternative approaches, including fewer homes, lower building heights and layout changes, had not been sufficiently explored and that these could have reduced harm.

The Inspector set out a number of clear points that should guide any future proposals for the site. These key points have directly shaped the refreshed plans now being consulted on.

The reconsidered proposals respond directly to these points. Landscape considerations now lead the design, with a reduced number of homes, lower building heights, stronger green infrastructure and a layout that better respects views and surrounding communities.



Inspector's key points:



Maintain clear visual separation from South Stoke and protect the rural character of the plateau.



Strengthen and extend woodland belts to help screen development and enhance biodiversity.



Avoid intrusive massing at sensitive edges, keeping building heights low and carefully controlled.



Protect and frame key views, including views from public footpaths, the Wansdyke and the wider World Heritage setting of Bath.



Safeguard the setting of Sulis Manor through the use of generous green buffers and sensitive layout.



Minimise adverse landscape impacts through the exploration and assessment of different building heights.

Landscape and Visual Context

Understanding the landscape and views

Sulis Down sits on the Sulis Plateau, an elevated area on the southern edge of Bath. The site lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape and forms part of the setting of Bath's World Heritage Site. Because of this location, changes to the landscape and skyline can be visible from a wide area and must be handled with great care.

The landscape around the site is characterised by:

- Open plateau farmland with long-distance views across surrounding valleys.
- Woodland belts that define the edge of the plateau and help screen development.
- Public footpaths and recreational routes, including the Wansdyke.
- The rural setting of South Stoke village on the slopes below.
- Existing development at Sulis Down Phase 1 and other skyline features.

From some viewpoints, particularly across the valley and from higher ground, parts of the site can be seen against the skyline. In these locations, taller buildings or development placed too close to the edge of the plateau can appear prominent and visually intrusive.

The Planning Inspector highlighted that, while some development is already visible on the skyline, additional housing must avoid breaking the skyline or creating the impression that Bath and South Stoke are merging together.

Green Infrastructure Influences plan



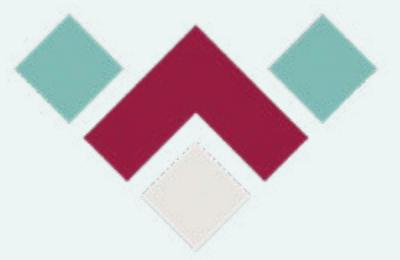
How this has shaped the proposals

The reconsidered proposals have been shaped by a detailed assessment of both long-distance and closer views. This includes views from public footpaths, nearby roads and the surrounding hills, as well as the relationship with South Stoke and the wider countryside.

As a result:

- Development is focused away from the most visually sensitive edges of the plateau.
- Building heights are kept low to reduce visibility in longer-distance views.
- Woodland belts along the southern edge are retained and strengthened to help screen new homes.
- Open green buffers are used to maintain a clear visual and physical separation from South Stoke.
- The layout avoids placing built form where it would be most noticeable in views from key routes and viewpoints.

This landscape-led approach helps ensure that new development sits comfortably within its surroundings, respects the rural character of nearby areas, and minimises its impact on important views across the Cotswolds National Landscape and the setting of Bath.



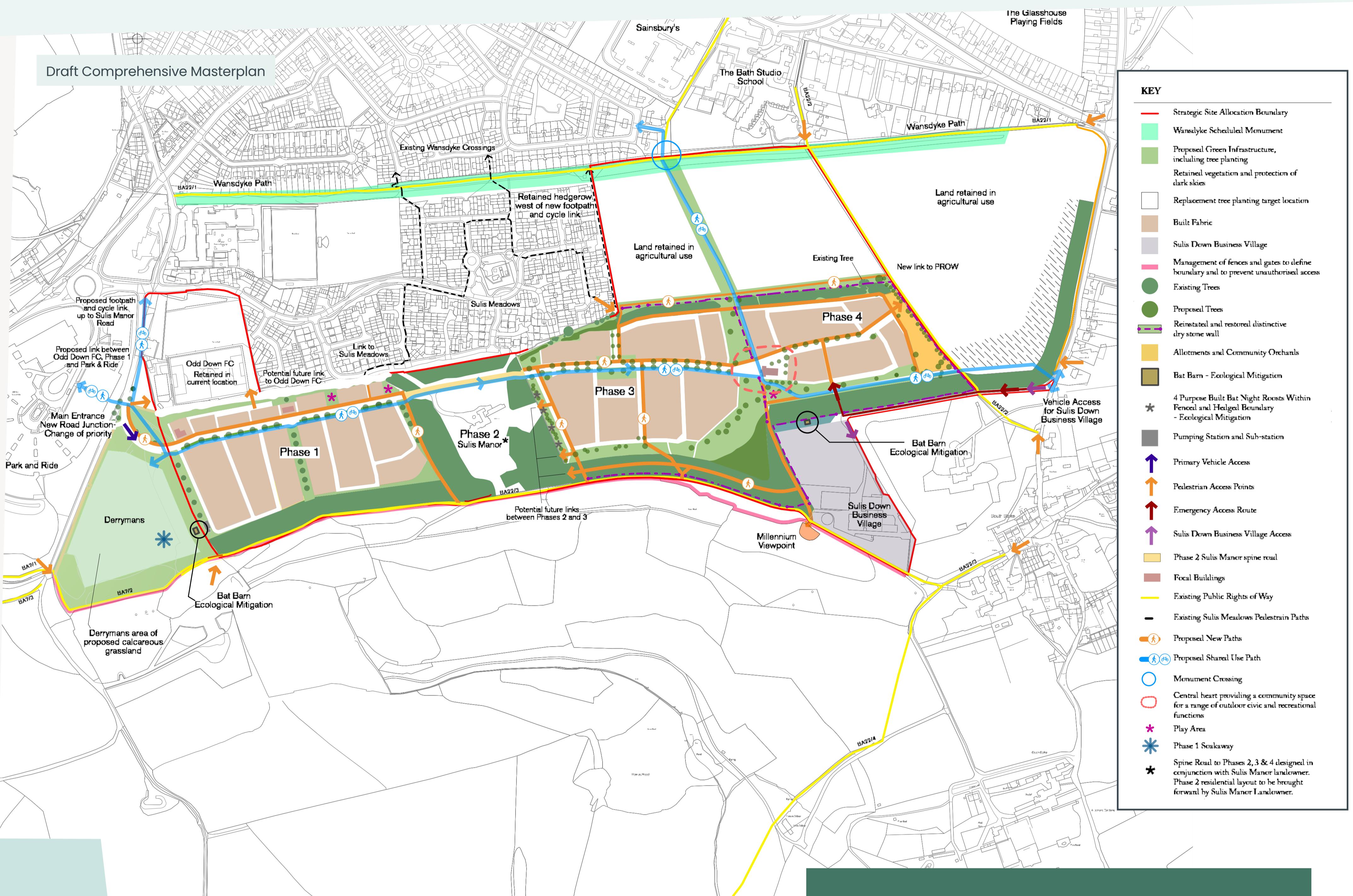
Comprehensive Masterplan

A long-term vision for Sulis Down

A Comprehensive Masterplan was originally prepared and submitted alongside Phase 1 of Sulis Down. It provided an overall framework for how the wider site can be developed over time in a coordinated and well-planned way.

The masterplan sets out how housing, employment, green spaces, roads and community facilities should work together to create a high-quality place that responds to, and is well integrated into, its surroundings.

Following the completion of Phase 1 and the appeal decision on later phases, the masterplan has been updated and a new emerging draft comprehensive masterplan is set out in the image to the right.



The shared vision for Sulis Down is to:

"Create a landscape-led neighbourhood that strengthens the green edge of Bath and contributes to the Cotswold National Landscape. It will respect the skyline of the Sulis Manor plateau, respect the rural setting of South Stoke and the heritage setting of Sulis Manor, and deliver connected, biodiverse spaces that promote health and community engagement"

The refreshed proposals for Phases 3 and 4 sit within this wider vision and are designed to complement what has already been delivered.

Masterplan Principles

The design of Phases 3 and 4 is guided by a clear set of principles that ensure new development responds to the landscape and creates a high-quality place to live.

These principles include:



A clear community heart

Open spaces and streets are arranged around a central area that can support community life, including a new community building.



Strong landscape protection

The southern woodland belt is retained and strengthened to provide screening, protect wildlife and maintain the site's landscape edge.



Extensive tree planting

New trees are planted along streets, open spaces and site edges to soften views, improve biodiversity and help the development blend into the landscape.



A north-south green corridor

A continuous green route runs through the site, linking to the Millennium Viewpoint and helping break up built form.



Walking and cycling connections

New paths link the development to surrounding areas, encouraging active travel and access to the countryside.

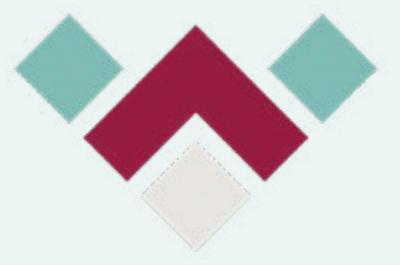


Respect for local character

Existing dry-stone walls are retained and enhanced, and building materials are chosen to be appropriate to the local area and landscape.

Together, these principles ensure that new homes are well-integrated, carefully designed and landscape-led.





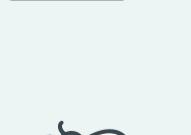
Masterplan overview

A landscape-led illustrative masterplan

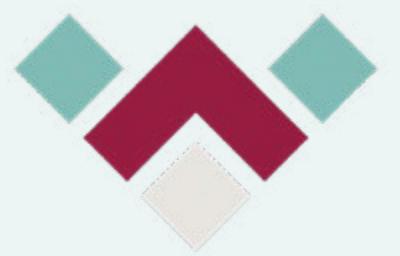
The illustrative masterplan has been shaped by the landscape, ecology and heritage of the site, reflecting the importance of the Cotswolds National Landscape and the World Heritage setting of Bath.

These features will be set out in a series of parameters contained in the Outline Planning Application, which will help to define the development to be brought forward in a Planning Permission, such as land use, building heights, green infrastructure and access and movement. A subsequent detailed or reserve matters permission will fix the final layout, scale, design and materials to be used on site. Some of these key parameters are the subject of this consultation:

Key features of the emerging proposals:

-  **Around 200 new homes**, including 40% affordable housing.
-  **A new community space** located at the heart of the neighbourhood.
-  **Lower building heights**, with a maximum of 2-2.5 storeys, to reduce visibility in long-distance views.
-  **Improved walking and cycling routes** connecting the site to Odd Down, local schools and the wider area.
-  **A north-south green corridor** linking into the surrounding landscape.
-  **A layout designed to maintain separation** from South Stoke and protect key views.
-  **More than 5 hectares of green infrastructure**, including strengthened woodland belts, new habitats and enhanced biodiversity.





Community building

A new community space shaped by local input.

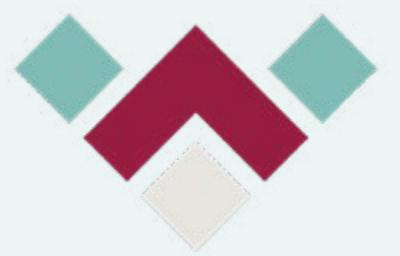
Alongside new homes and green space, the proposals include a new community facility designed to benefit both existing and new residents.

The building could include:

-  Flexible hall space for community meetings, events or activities.
-  Informal meeting area.
-  Spaces suitable for classes, wellbeing sessions or local groups.
-  Potential space for co-working, childcare or other community uses.
-  Outdoor areas and play spaces integrated into the wider village heart.

We are seeking views on what type of community space would be most valuable locally.





Comparison: Previous vs reconsidered proposals

Whilst focusing on key parameters of the new development, an illustrative layout such as set out below, helps to show what the reconsidered proposals for Phases 3 and 4 would look like.



Previous proposals

- Up to 290 homes.
- Building heights up to 14m / 3 storeys.
- Greater visibility in long-distance views.
- Reduced landscape buffers and less space for habitat creation.
- Increased proximity to South Stoke.

Reconsidered proposals

- Landscape and views are being carefully assessed and used to shape and refine the design as it develops.
- Around 200 homes – a significantly reduced scale.
- Lower building heights, with a maximum of 10m / 2.5 storeys.
- More than 5 hectares of green infrastructure, including new planting and habitat creation.
- Strengthened woodland belts providing improved screening and ecological value.
- Better walking, cycling and public transport connections.
- A new community building, play areas and allotments.
- A layout refined to protect views, enhance landscape character and maintain separation from South Stoke.

Landscape and biodiversity

A sustainable, landscape-led scheme.

The landscape strategy seeks to enhance biodiversity, create accessible green spaces and strengthen ecological networks across the site.

Key elements include:

-  Strengthening the southern woodland belt to reinforce the landscape edge and provide habitat for wildlife.
-  New calcareous grassland, wildflower meadows and orchard planting.
-  Restoration of dry-stone walls and enhancement of existing hedgerows.
-  Creation of new habitats and ecological corridors that support biodiversity net gain.
-  A central village green offering space for recreation, play and community activity.
-  Allotments, pocket greens and a connected network of walking routes.



1. Southern tree belt

Retained and widened to strengthen the horseshoe bat flyway. Around 2ha of additional woodland planting in the field known as 30 Acres to the south-east of the Site compensates for lost trees in Sulis Manor grounds and follows Council woodland planting guidance.

2. Dark skies

Lighting designed to meet Environmental Zone E1 standards, with stricter controls along the Southern Tree Belt and near new bat roosts to protect light-sensitive horseshoe bats.

3. Bat roosts

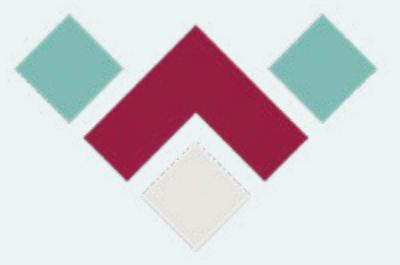
A new bat barn south of the site (already occupied in 2025) supports breeding horseshoe bats. Additional night roosts are proposed along the Sulis Manor boundary for horseshoe and other bat species.

4. Hedgerows and walls

The southern boundary hedgerow will be retained, and derelict dry-stone walls restored to enhance landscape character and support small reptile populations.

5. Skylark mitigation

Although only one pair of Skylarks bred north of the site in 2024, a quiet off-site compensation area in South Stoke Valley has been identified and will be managed with skylark plots to encourage breeding.



Transport and movement

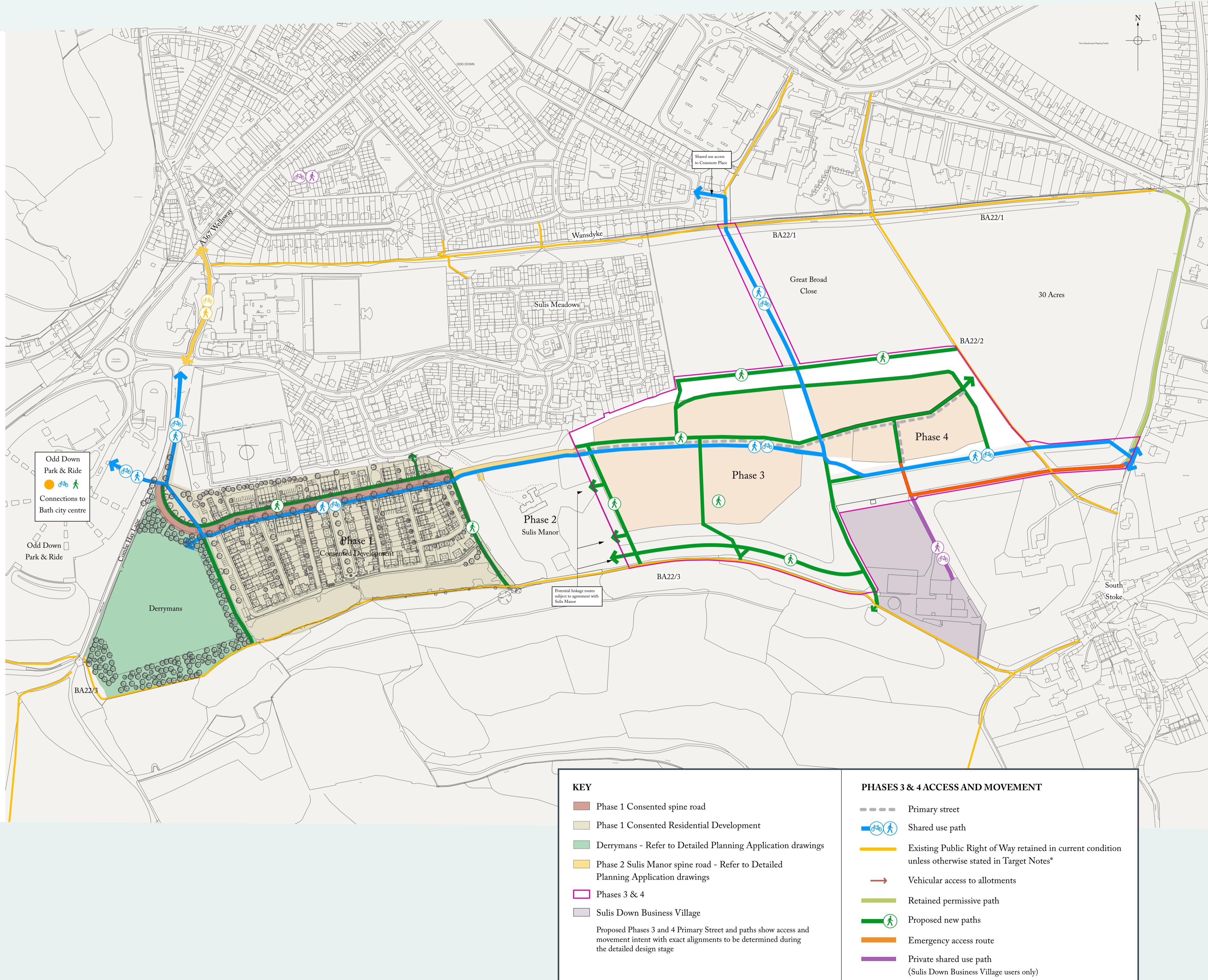
Supporting sustainable travel.

The proposals include improvements to local transport and sustainable travel connections.

Key features include:

- Extension of the approved spine road through Sulis Manor to serve the new homes.
- Improved walking and cycling routes linking the site with Odd Down, local schools and the wider network.
- Safer pedestrian connections and shared-use paths throughout the development.
- Appropriate access for emergency and service vehicles.
- Contributions through planning obligations to support local transport, education, health and community infrastructure.

These measures aim to reduce car dependency and make it easier to travel sustainably.



Next steps

Thank you for attending today's consultation. Your feedback will help shape the proposals before the planning application is submitted.

How to have your say

- Fill in a feedback form and hand it to a member of the team or return it via the free post address below.
- Visit our website to complete the online survey.

Get in touch

If you have any questions on the proposed development, then please do get in touch using the following ways:

 info@sulisdown.info

 www.sulisdown.info

 **0808 143 4781** (freephone)
Monday-Friday, 9:00am-5:30pm

 **Freepost MEETING PLACE CONSULTATION**
(no stamp required)

