

6. Community, Leisure & Tourism



6.1 Community, Leisure and Tourism: Key messages and aims

Context

When we began preparing the first Neighbourhood Plan, we knew that there was a strong desire to improve community, leisure and tourism facilities in the town.

Our survey in June 2018 also revealed that local people were concerned about healthcare and education provision. We therefore spoke with the organisations that run the medical centre and schools. We are told that there is no immediate need to plan for a new school or surgery based on projected population growth. However, this is not to say that the service providers would turn down an opportunity for improved provision if this were to be offered in the future.

Our research at that time also showed that the community halls had plenty of availability for their current levels of usage, with 118 groups operating from 18 different venues and providing a multitude of social and leisure activities. Venues include Shaftesbury Arts Centre, which is used by more than 20 separate groups, The Royal British Legion Hall and Shaftesbury Youth Centre. See **Appendix I** for more details

These activities include adult and young people's education, health, sport and leisure, social well-being and musical activities, including Shaftesbury Silver Band and the Ukulele Group!

However, there is a clear demand for a community facility in the east of Shaftesbury. Plans for the development of a new community

hub on land off Mampitts Lane were approved by Dorset Council in October 2024. Other projects in the pipeline include continuing improvements to the Lido, and improving youth facilities, MUGA.

We have compared the amount of outdoor recreation spaces to the suggested national standards, and we fall short. So it is important that we retain and add to these areas. A Play Spaces Appraisal was undertaken in 2022 and a Playground Masterplan has been commissioned to put in place the recommendations for each play park over the coming years

Tourism and leisure are important to Shaftesbury's economy. Each year, our town receives over 410,000-day visitors and 17,000 people stay overnight, many staying with friends and relatives, but also in serviced accommodation (2022 data).

Visitors spend £18.5 million locally each year and that supports 310 local jobs. The sector has seen a slight decline—but still plays a significant role in the town's economy. It is important that our policies help support local tourism.

We also want to make sure that we have safe and attractive walking and cycling routes around the town for both our residents and our visitors, and in 2021 the Shaftesbury Loop—a safe walking and cycling route around the town—was created. This crosses over with our Town Centre and Green Infrastructure themes.

Key feedback from initial consultation in February 2019

81% of responses indicated broad agreement with our policy intentions for this theme. 79% of people who replied said that the most important community facilities that need to be protected had been identified.



Fringe Festival



Eat Festival



*Shaftesbury
Byzant Ceremony*

Key messages

Based on what local people have told us, we developed the following aims for the town's Community, Leisure & Tourism infrastructure:

- ▶ To ensure that Shaftesbury becomes 'A historic market town with a range of high-quality sports, leisure, education and social facilities to meet the needs of the whole population, making best use of the town's qualities and the energy of the community, whilst ensuring that children can choose to walk safely to school'.
- ▶ To ensure that the required health, education, leisure and community infrastructure is in place to accommodate the needs of new residents.
- ▶ To maximise leisure opportunities for all ages, including new and improved facilities in the best locations to meet changing demand.
- ▶ To promote safe primary and secondary school walking and cycling routes and improving these routes where required.
- ▶ To ensure that the health needs of the whole population are met, and to plan for future levels of provision and service to accommodate our expanding and aging population.

i Summary findings from the Retail and Commercial Leisure Study in 2018 noted that Shaftesbury's leisure offer was below the national average.

The Study recognized that the town not only supports a good range of shops, but is also a tourist and cultural destination. Environmental quality within the town was considered to be good, but suggested there may be opportunities to increase provision of recreational open spaces, and items such as benches and litter bins.

A Playing Pitch Strategy was produced for the county in

2019, with its main recommendations highlighting the need to protect and where possible enhance the existing provision for the town, following which the Town Council has installed a 3G pitch facility at the Football Club, which has proven extremely popular, with over 200 children training weekly, a women's and men's teams, plus a VETS team and walking football.

The Retail and Leisure Study was updated in 2022, and whilst it didn't focus specifically on Shaftesbury, it did consider how the pandemic impacted on this sector and viability. It reported that the sector is recovering, but did not forecast any significant growth in leisure provision through market trends at this time.

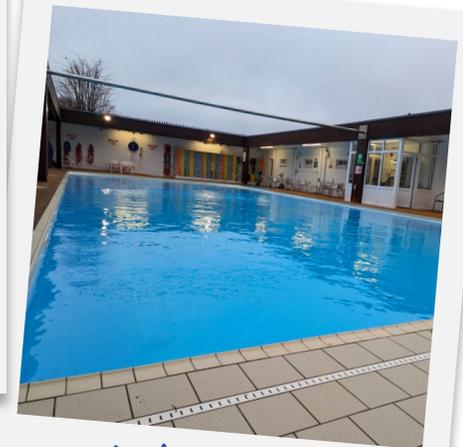
i Developers can be required to make financial contributions to key local services and infrastructure improvement projects after they gain planning permission. This levy can result in payments of hundreds of thousands of pounds, according to the scale of development.



Shaftesbury Arts Centre



Shaftesbury Football Club



Shaftesbury Lido



Royal British Legion Hall

6.2 The range and availability of community facilities

What does Policy SFCL1 set out to do?

To improve and increase the range and availability of community facilities, sports, and leisure opportunities where these bring benefits to the community.

Everyone should have easy access to such facilities—and although the number of places which are available is generally good, some facilities are lacking (such as youth facilities), some could be better advertised (and the Town Council is hoping to work collaboratively on a Marketing Strategy for tourism), and facilities in easy walking distance of the area to the east of Christy's Lane are extremely limited (for which plans are underway).



Outdoor Circuit Training

POLICY SFCL1

Locally important community buildings and facilities for sports (as shown on [Map SFCL1](#)) and the land associated with recreation should be retained and allowed to modernise and adapt to continue to meet the community's needs. This could be either in their current location or on a suitable alternative site in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Their loss (in whole or part) will be resisted, unless it can be shown that the current site is no longer suitable or viable to retain and that any loss is offset by equal or better improvements elsewhere.

New community facilities, including recreation facilities, local shops, pubs and education and health services, will be strongly supported, particularly in the eastern area of the town, where they meet the identified needs of the community and are in line with the wider provisions of this Neighbourhood Plan.

New housing developments will be expected to have access to outdoor green space for sports, play and recreation, at least in line with the standards and recommended distances defined by the Local Plan/Fields-in-Trust, which means that these spaces should be within easy reach of homes. These should be provided either at the same time as the development is built or beforehand.

Shaftesbury Town Council has been awarded £876,278 (October 2024) in S106 developer contributions to establish a Community Hub in East Shaftesbury, known as the Mampitts Hub. This funding, facilitated by Dorset Council, will support the creation of community facilities aimed at addressing the needs identified through extensive community consultation. The proposed Community Hub will feature spaces dedicated to social

activities, a coffee shop or café, fitness facilities, and adaptable community space.

Additionally, the project includes outdoor recreational spaces, such as a walking trail, community gardens, wildlife areas, and a picnic space. Other play facilities throughout Shaftesbury are also being enhanced as part of the Town Council's Play Master Plan.

A new primary school site is also proposed on land just outside of the Neighbourhood Area in Cann Parish, as part of the development to the south of the A30.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The existing community facilities in Shaftesbury are valued by the majority of local people.

59% of the residents who responded to the first consultation felt that improving the existing community halls in Shaftesbury should be prioritised over providing a new venue.

The first part of our community consultation highlighted that there are more community facilities on the west of Christy's Lane than the eastern side. This imbalance is being addressed by the creation of the Mampitts Hub in the east of the town.

This will help boost the number of public green spaces in our town, to bring it more in line with government standards (known as the FiT standard).

Map of community facilities

This map illustrates all the community venues and social infrastructure facilities.

In our initial consultation in February 2019, 78% of the community felt that more community facilities should be provided in the eastern part of the town. The location for the new community hub, off Mampitts Lane, is now indicated on the map.

You will see from the map that there are many more community services and facilities on the western side, than on the eastern side of Shaftesbury.

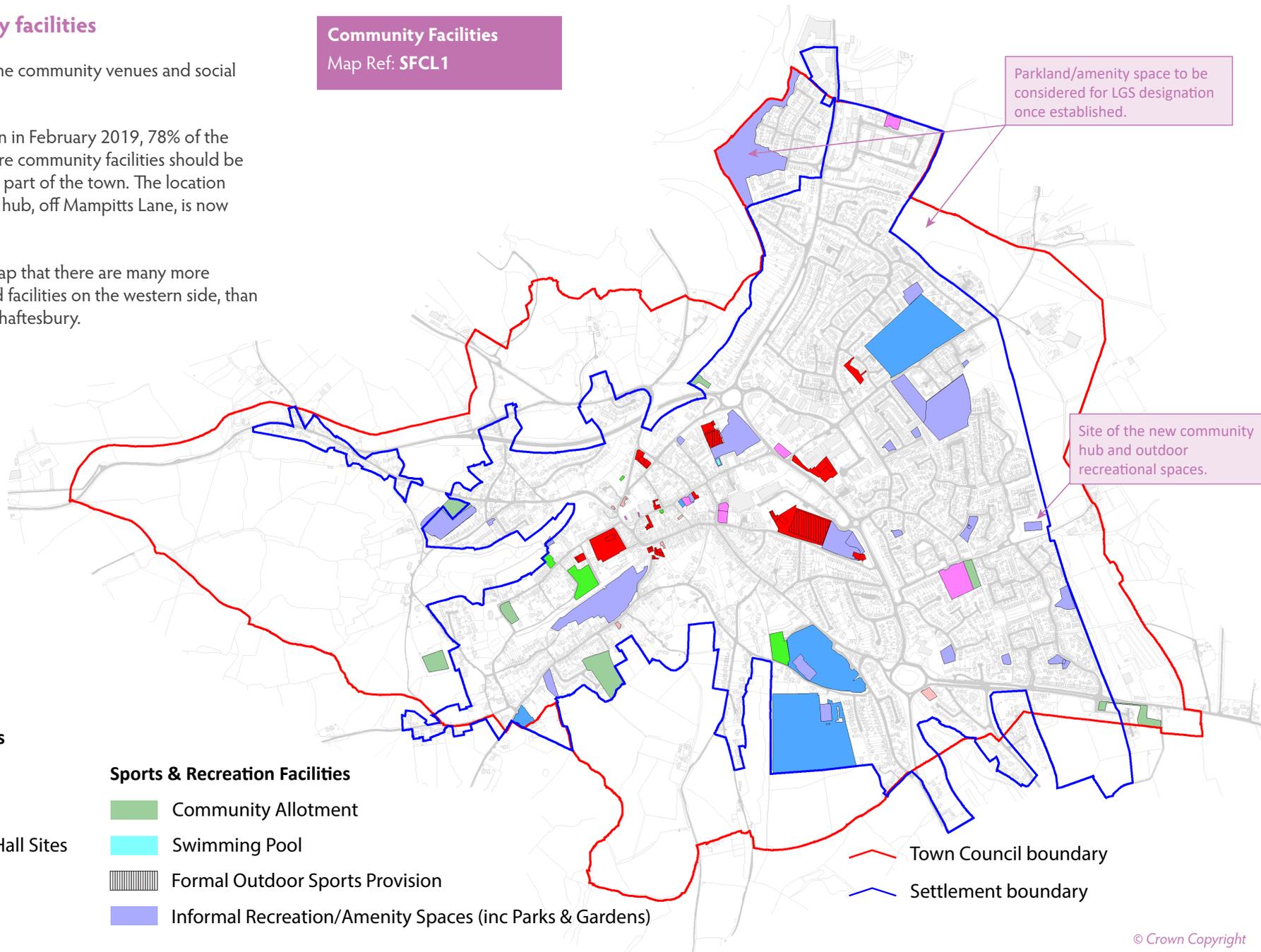
Community Facilities
Map Ref: SFCL1

Locally Important Community Buildings

- Pubs
- Schools
- Community Hall Sites
- Services
- Healthcare

Sports & Recreation Facilities

- Community Allotment
- Swimming Pool
- Formal Outdoor Sports Provision
- Informal Recreation/Amenity Spaces (inc Parks & Gardens)



- Town Council boundary
- Settlement boundary

6.2 The range and availability of community facilities (continued)

Shaftesbury Open Space Provision

	Recommended Standard (area and/or accessibility)	Shaftesbury Provision Based on 2021 population: 9,158, Projection for 2031: 10,556
Formal outdoor sports provision, primarily (75%) as sports pitches but also games courts, bowling greens, running tracks and trails.	1.60ha per 1,000 people, within 1,200m of people's homes Current target: 14.2ha 2031 target: 16.9ha	Current target: 14.2ha 2031 target: 16.9ha Current provision: 8.7ha The current provision covers only facilities within the town and includes the pool (0.02ha) and Shaftesbury School (5.49ha, currently restricted access). The shortage of flat land has led the Cricket Club to be based southwest of the town, more than 2,500m away.
Equipped play areas and informal play spaces	0.55ha per 1,000 people, with about half as equipped play areas For very young children: Small play area within 100m For children who can go out to play independently: Locally equipped area for play (LEAP) within 400m Other provision for young people: (e.g. skateboard park, MUGA) within 700m	Current target: 5.0ha 2031 target: 5.8ha Current provision: 3.3ha Provision for very young children is patchy but most areas have adequate access to a LEAP. Other provision for young people is concentrated at Barton Hill and Wincombe Rec, which are more than 700m from housing south of Meles Mead or southwest of Stoney Path. The measured size of play areas that are within a larger amenity space has been subtracted from the amenity area given below.
Informal recreation/amenity spaces	1.4ha per 1,000 people of parks, gardens and amenity green space, within 700m of people's homes	Current target: 12.4ha 2031 target: 14.8ha Current provision: 8.4ha Accessibility is adequate
Allotments	At least 16 allotments (about 0.4ha) per 1,000 people	Current target: 3.5ha 2031 target: 4.2ha Current provision: 3.1ha Includes all current allotments plus the additional capacity for local food growing at the Community Farm (0.4ha). Includes the new allotment site south of A30 (0.4ha).
Accessible natural green space	1.8ha per 1,000 people, within 700m of people's homes	Current target: 15.9ha 2031 target: 19.0ha Current provision: 23.2ha This total provision excludes the two natural spaces in the GI audit that are not publicly accessible: The Cliff, Pensbury Plantation and Meles Mead wildlife corridor. Most of the accessible natural green space within the town is concentrated to the west. There is accessible open countryside beyond the town boundaries, particularly to the north and east, but this is more than 700m from dwellings and there are issues with some of the rights of way at certain times of year.

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

Parks and green spaces are proven to help people stay physically and mentally well—places where we can all move, breathe, run and play.

National guidance greenspace standards for play and recreation, as produced by Fields in Trust, aims to help land use planners ensure a sufficient level of open space to enable residents of all ages to participate in sports and games with an emphasis on access for children to playgrounds and other play space.

The main shortfall in green infrastructure is formal outdoor sports provision and informal recreation and green spaces (such as small greens and dog-walking areas) closer to people's homes.

6.3 Tourist facilities and attractions

What does Policy SFCL2 set out to do?

To support the growth of the tourist economy by encouraging development proposals that are likely to have a positive impact on tourism and that respect and reinforce the different character areas of the town.

Details:

The Abbey Museum, Gold Hill Museum, and Shaftesbury Arts Centre are key tourist facilities, together with the main hotels, such as the Grosvenor Arms and Royal Chase, as well as numerous smaller hotels and bed and breakfast providers such as the Fleur de Lys. The various long-distance recreational trails that run from and through the town are also important visitor attractions.



Gold Hill Museum Garden



Gold Hill Museum

POLICY SFCL2

Existing key tourist facilities (as shown on Map SFCL2) should be protected. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing hotels, large guesthouses, pubs and tourist attractions will be resisted, unless it can be demonstrated that their continued use is no longer viable.

The development of new tourist attractions and serviced tourist accommodation (such as a hotel) is supported, provided that:

- ▶ The development is in keeping with or enhances the area's character.
 - ▶ Any new buildings are within the settlement boundary.
 - ▶ The site is readily accessible by sustainable modes of transport (a travel plan is likely to be required in most cases).
- ▶ The proposed use would not adversely impact on the amenities of the occupants of nearby properties.



Grosvenor Arms Hotel

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

Tourism brings employment and ensures that the High Street remains as vibrant as possible

We want to protect what we have and keep our tourists coming back, as it helps our town to be healthy and economically viable.

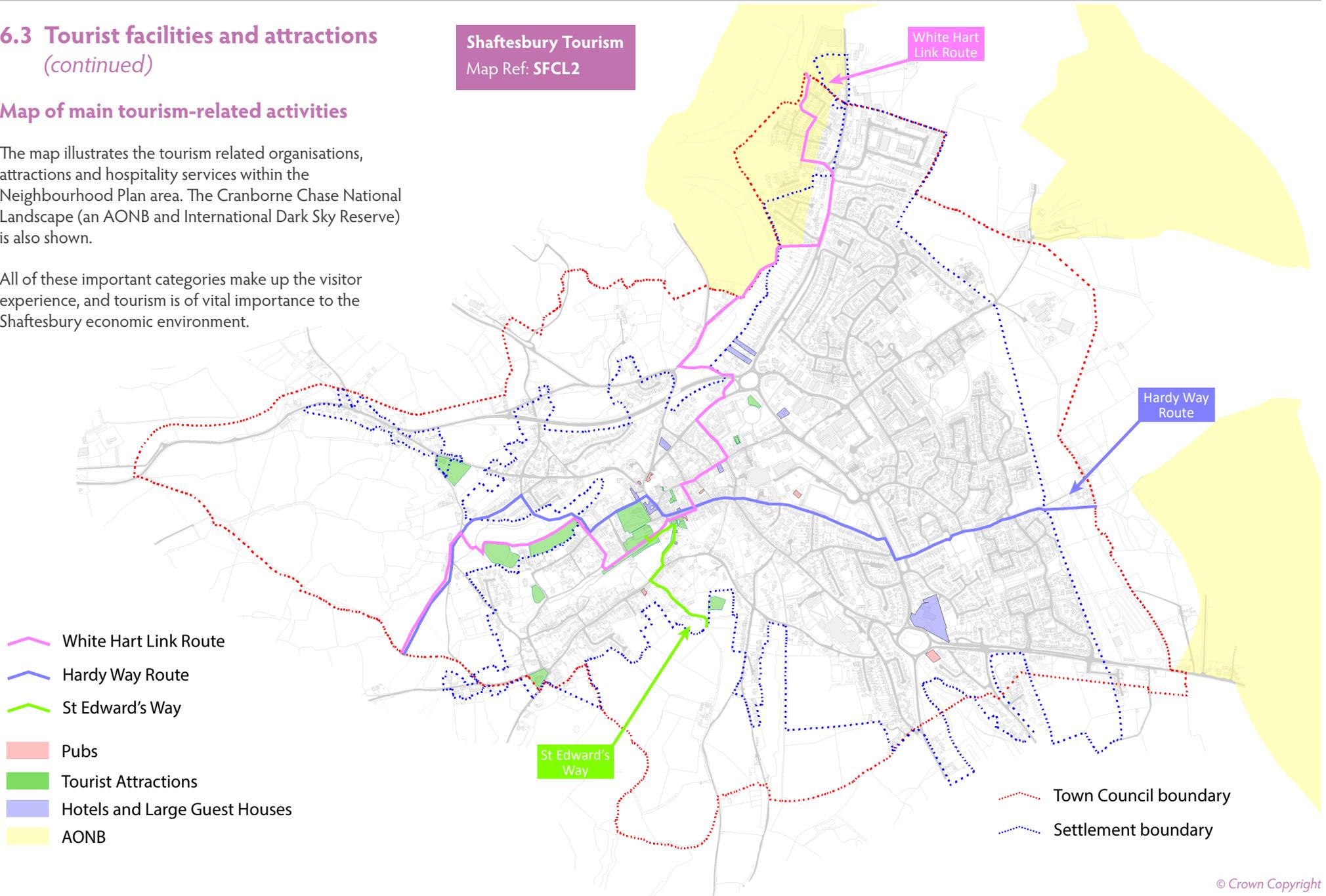
77% of responses from the initial consultation in February 2019 highlighted that our community feel that the Neighbourhood Plan needs to feature policies to encourage new tourist attractions that would respect Shaftesbury's character.

6.3 Tourist facilities and attractions (continued)

Map of main tourism-related activities

The map illustrates the tourism related organisations, attractions and hospitality services within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (an AONB and International Dark Sky Reserve) is also shown.

All of these important categories make up the visitor experience, and tourism is of vital importance to the Shaftesbury economic environment.



6.4 Provision of walking and cycling routes

What does Policy SFCL3 set out to do?

To support safe walking and cycling routes that are well connected with the town centre and other key areas or that provide access to the countryside, and encourage improvements to this network, including where opportunities arise within developments to create new links or make existing routes more attractive.

The compact size of Shaftesbury means that almost all of the town is within 15 minutes walking distance of the town centre. Many daily journeys have the potential to be made on foot or by cycle, reducing road traffic, pollution and helping us keep healthy.

In the initial consultation in February 2019, 75% of respondents felt the need for safer walking and cycling routes through the town. 71% of residents felt that there is a need to improve cycle and footpath networks which link to other towns and villages.



Jubilee Steps, St James Park

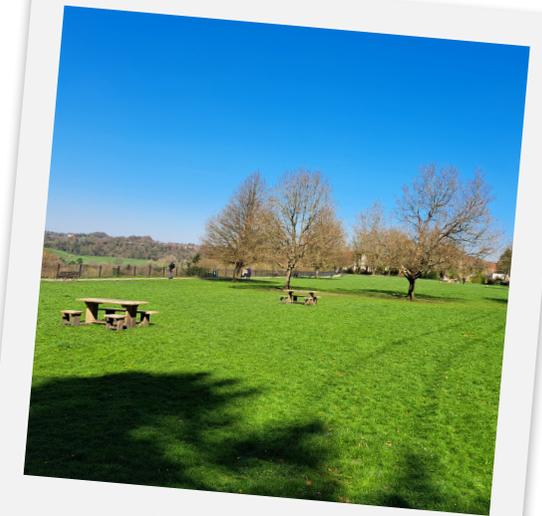


Castle Hill Green

POLICY SFCL3

Support will be given to proposals that improve and extend the existing footpath and cycle path network (as indicated on **Map SFCL3**). This will allow better access between housing areas and to the town, recreation areas and the wider countryside on paths that are safe, attractive and easy to navigate. Proposals that fail to provide reasonable footpath and cycle path network connections through a site, connecting to/from the town centre and other community facilities and to the wider countryside, or that result in the loss or downgrading of existing paths, should be resisted.

New developments will be expected to link into the existing footpath and cycle path network and provide connections through the site. This would help to create a wider walking and cycling network. Contributions towards the costs of maintaining and improving the network of footpaths and cycle paths will be sought from developers where reasonable and related to that development.



Castle Hill Green

Quick Read

What does this policy mean and why is it important?

The current cycle network is limited to main roads. There is currently no safe route for children to cycle to school.

Proposals to add routes to the proposed network will be encouraged.

The Neighbourhood Plan group has worked with walking and cycling experts to help shape the proposed plan using a comprehensive audit of the existing footpaths and shaping the proposals based on local in-depth knowledge.

The proposals would use funding that developers are required to offer the community when their planned developments are approved.

6.4 Provision of walking and cycling routes (continued)

Map of existing and proposed networks of footpaths and cycle routes

The **orange line** illustrates the existing footpath and cycleway network. This includes the public footpaths (as indicated on Dorset Explorer, please refer to the definitive map for their exact route), the on-road advisory cycle routes suggested by Dorset Council, and the Shaftesbury Loop, which is a waymarked route promoted by the Town Council to residents and visitors. The aim of the Shaftesbury Loop is to provide a safe and attractive network for walking and cycling around the town, for recreation and to see many of the historic sites and places of interest.

The **green line** illustrates the public bridleways— which are limited within the town council area.

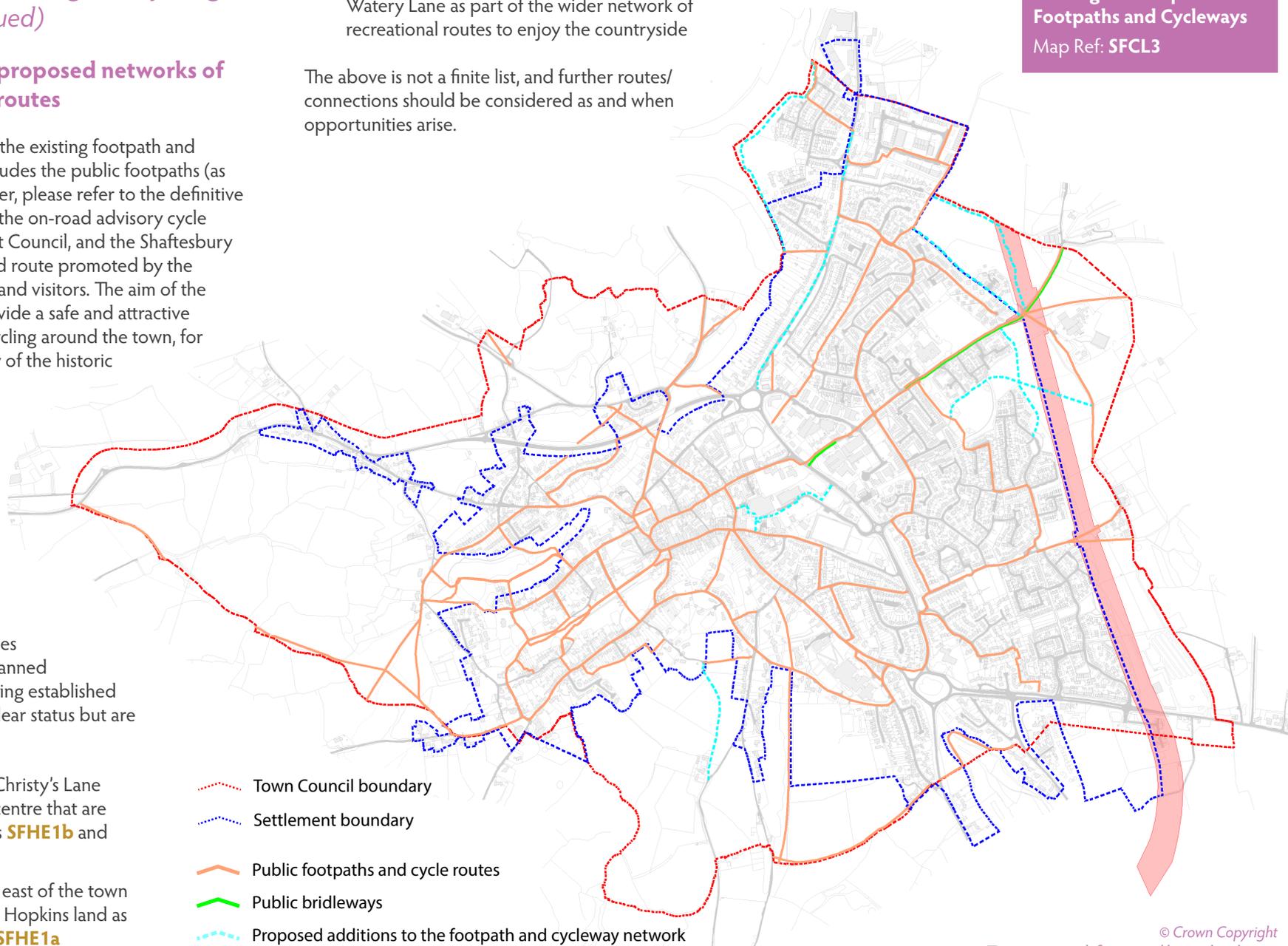
The **light blue broken line** highlights how the footpath and cycleway network can be enhanced to create more opportunities for connections through planned developments and confirming established routes that do not have a clear status but are well-used. This includes:

- ▶ Improved links from Christy’s Lane through to the town centre that are highlighted in policies **SFHE1b** and **SFHE1d**
- ▶ Improved links to the east of the town including through the Hopkins land as highlighted in policy **SFHE1a**

- ▶ Confirming the established public right to use Watery Lane as part of the wider network of recreational routes to enjoy the countryside

The above is not a finite list, and further routes/ connections should be considered as and when opportunities arise.

Existing and Proposed Footpaths and Cycleways
Map Ref: SFCL3



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This map is not definitive and has no legal status

Monitoring and Review

Shaftesbury Town Council, as the body responsible for leading the Neighbourhood Plan process, will consider the need to update this plan on a yearly basis. As part of this process the Town Council will consider the progress made on the preparation of the Dorset Council Local Plan; whether there have been any significant changes to National Planning Policy; and the views of local residents and businesses.

Progress on the various projects identified in this Plan, together with the effectiveness of the policies, will also be assessed in correlation with the Town Council's Strategic Plan and Sustainable Shaftesbury Plan. It is likely that a review of this Plan in partnership with Dorset Council will commence when the new Dorset Council Local Plan has been adopted, as this will update the overarching strategy for how Shaftesbury will develop in the future.

