

## CHAPTER 18 - Strategy Area: Dundry and River Valleys

**This south-eastern part of the Community Forest is a complex area with a wide variety of different landscapes close together, including the Chew Valley, the southern part of the Avon Valley and the eastern part of the Dundry and Plateau landscape zones. The total woodland cover for the area is approximately 2.8%.**

The Chew Valley is one of the most attractive areas in the Forest. It is a small river valley with a lively landscape made up of an attractive tapestry of small fields, strong hedges and small woodlands on the steep slopes. The bottom of the valley contains stone-built villages beside the meandering River Chew.

The Avon Valley in this area is fragmented by the A4 and railway lines on embankments. It remains attractive immediately adjacent to the river and on the northern side, particularly to the west of Keynsham.

The ridge-top of Dundry Hill is the highest point in the Forest, giving spectacular views northwards over the city and south to the Mendips. The plateau area on which Dundry sits is generally gently sloping and open. The whole area has very little woodland.

The area is predominately grade 3 agricultural land with areas of grade 2 in the Avon Valley, a narrow band of grade 1 in the Chew Valley and grade 4 on the steep slopes of Dundry. The variety of farm ownership, sizes and types is a reflection of the complex landscape and the varied land quality. The area south-west of Keynsham was associated with cereal farming, but this has shown a marked decline in the last 10 years and there are now large areas of set-aside land. There is still some arable cropping, particularly to the south-east of Dundry. Dairying remains the primary farm type, although sheep farming is increasing, particularly in the Dundry and Chew Valley areas. Urban fringe problems on the northern side of Dundry make farming difficult.

The existing wildlife value of the area tends to focus on the river valleys and unimproved grassland on the slopes of Dundry.

The Wansdyke connects Maes Knoll and Stantonbury Hill across the area. There are many visual historic features along the length of the River Avon.

The existing recreational use tends to focus on the two river valleys, with several 'hot spots' along the Avon. The Avon Walkway and the Railway Path form excellent links from the centre of Bristol out into the countryside.

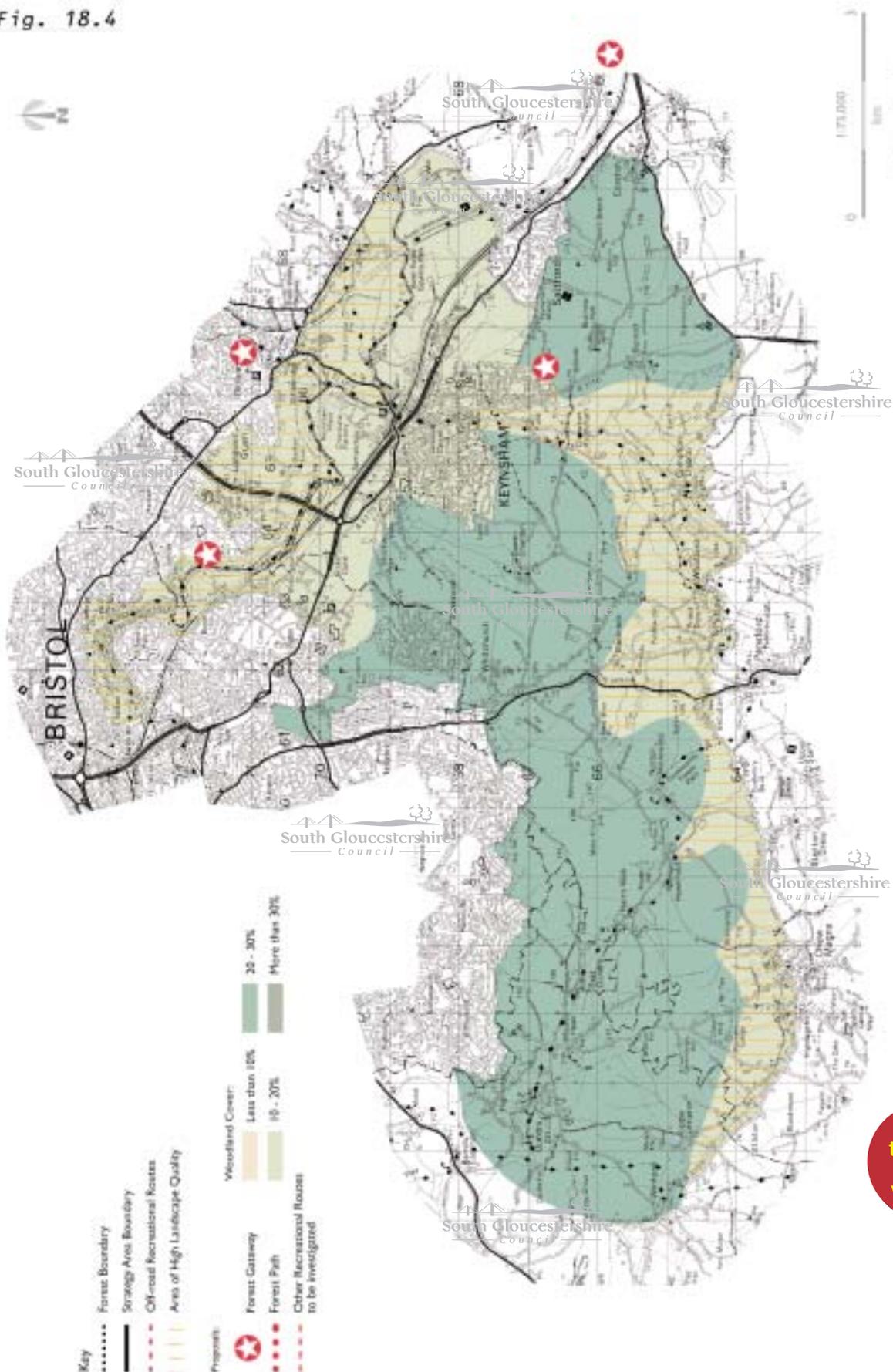
**The priorities in this area will be to:**

- create new areas of woodland to improve the urban edges visually and strengthen existing landscape features;
- improve the management of existing woodland and other landscape features, particularly hedgerows;
- investigate a management service to help relieve urban fringe problems and to provide information and education as a means of helping people to enjoy the attractive countryside;
- establish a comprehensive network of recreational routes to enhance links out from the city and to relieve existing 'hot spots' in the Avon Valley, by spreading recreational use more evenly through the area;
- create new areas of woodland for recreational use, particularly on the southern edges of Keynsham and Saltford;
- implement management proposals for the northern slopes of Dundry and for the Avon Valley and encourage community involvement in all schemes.

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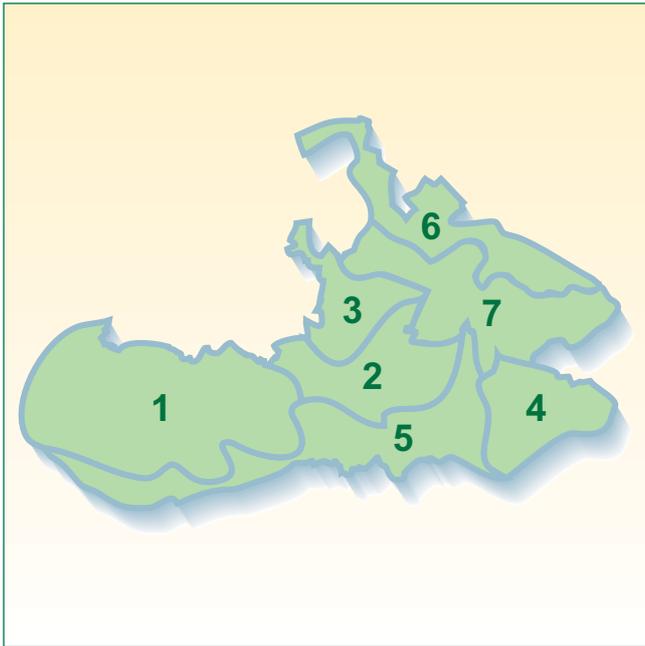
Fig. 18.4

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## CHAPTER 18 - Strategy Area: Dundry and River Valleys



1. Dundry Hill



2. Queen Charlton



3. Stockwood Edge



4. Burnett Plateau



5. Chew Valley



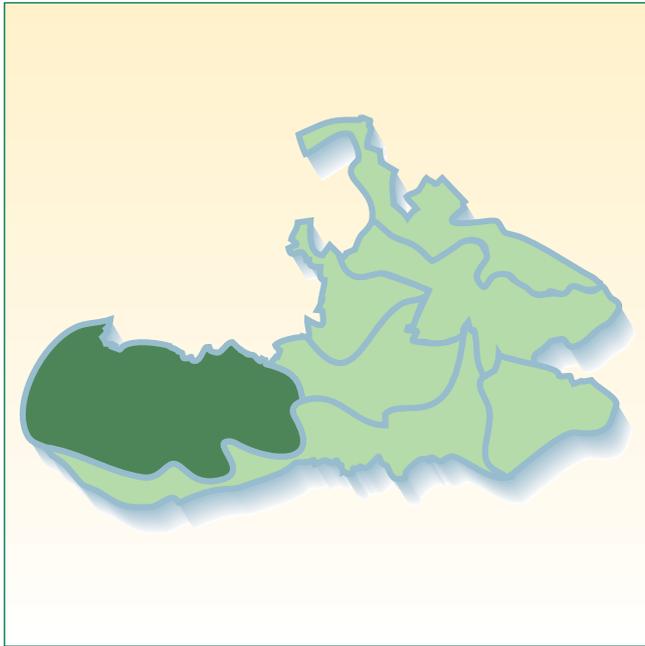
6. Netham to Bitton



7. Somerdale

## CHAPTER 18 - Strategy Area: Dundry and River Valleys

### Dundry Hill



#### Description

A well-defined hill immediately to the south of Bristol, rising to a height of 230 m (695 ft) with steep sides and a ridge top, which has an exposed upland character, with a few stunted trees and dramatic views. The steep slopes are covered by small fields with strong hedges and woodland in gullies. Residential development on the northern side stops at the base of the steep slopes but the burnt-out cars, fly-tipping and blocked gateways emphasise the urban pressure to the top of the ridge. South-east of the hill, on the gently sloping ground and the plateau area around Norton Malreward, there has been extensive hedgerow removal and more intensive agricultural use.

**Existing woodland cover: 0.5%.**

#### Local strategy

Landscape improvements to create a wooded agricultural landscape with increased tree cover on the lower parts of the steep slopes, within a strengthened field pattern. New planting to be related to the detail of local topography to soften the urban edge, whilst retaining the open character of the top of the ridge and the views.

**Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.**

#### Woodlands

- Promote continued management and enhancement of existing woods and trees.
- Aim to create a network of small woods around the hill, concentrated on the lower parts of the steep slopes and on the lower plateau area in the south-east of the zone, where farming is more intensive. Planting should be predominantly of broadleaved species.
- Opportunities for community woodland adjacent to the residential area, which will help to establish a buffer zone, to reduce pressure on the agricultural area.

#### Wildlife

- Protect and enhance existing conservation interest in the grassland and wetland sites.
- Restore hedgerow pattern in areas where it has been lost.

#### Heritage

- From Maes Knoll Fort at the eastern end of Dundry, the Wansdyke runs south-east to Bath via Stantonbury Hill. There is an opportunity to link Maes Knoll to the Community Forest Path; the Knoll and the Wansdyke may justify further interpretation at a later date by agreement with the landowner.
- Restoration of the hedgerow pattern in the south-east of the area would strengthen historic associations.
- Orchards were once a feature of the area, especially close to settlements and could be re-established as community areas.
- Reinstating the railway line on the east side of Dundry as a recreational route would stop it disappearing into the landscape.

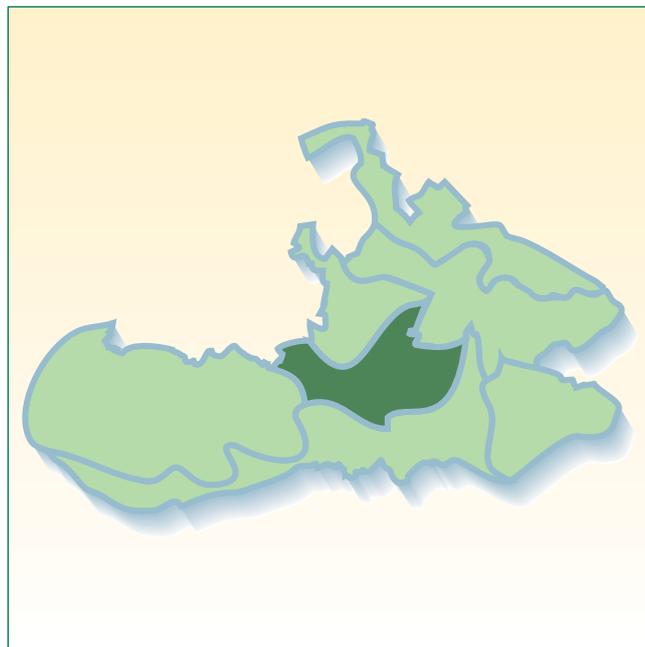
#### Recreation

- The Community Forest Path runs east-west across this area, as does the Round Avon Ride. There will be an aim to develop pedestrian links into the residential areas and create circular walks.
- Community woods could offer informal recreation close to local people.
- There is a great opportunity to develop the existing educational and recreational facilities at Hartcliffe Community Farm into a major gateway site.
- Where the Malago Greenway leaves the urban area, there will also be an opportunity to provide minor gateway facilities.

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- Pedestrian access to Maes Knoll from the Community Forest Path will be clearly signed.
- The creation of a recreational route along the disused railway line between Stockwood and Pensford will be investigated; this would create a valuable link with current proposals for a cycle route on the old railway line between Pensford and Midsomer Norton.

### Queen Charlton



#### Description

A plateau to the east of Dundry Hill sloping gently towards the Avon valley, of mixed farmland with degraded hedgerows, few hedgerow trees and less than 2% woodland cover. The plateau separates Keynsham from Bristol and retains a rural character. Queen Charlton is the only settlement of any size. Elms used to be the dominant hedgerow tree; now they have gone, only poor, gappy hedges remain, giving an open character to much of the area.

**Existing woodland cover: 1.2%.**

#### Local strategy

Landscape improvements towards a well-wooded agricultural landscape with a reinforced field pattern and a new woodland framework to soften the urban edges of Keynsham and Bristol.

**Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.**

#### Woodlands

- Extensive areas of new woodland to create a matrix of medium-sized and small woods and strengthened hedgerow patterns.
- There is an opportunity to develop new planting around Keynsham and the southern edge of Bristol as local community woodlands.

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### Wildlife

- Opportunities to create a mosaic of woodland and scrub.
- Encourage a network of woods and hedgerows to create wildlife links between the Chew and Avon Valleys and urban areas.

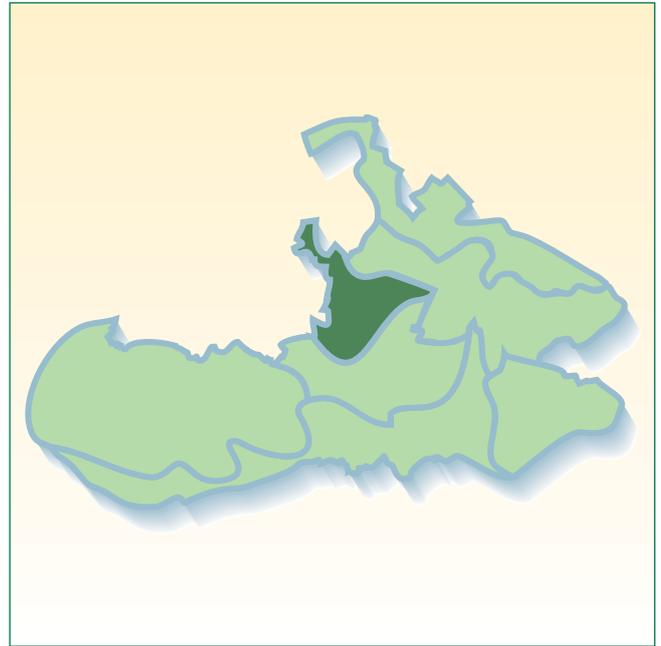
### Heritage

- Queen Charlton is a very attractive village and a conservation area.

### Recreation

- This area can potentially provide local informal recreation for the surrounding urban areas with links out to the Chew and Avon Valleys beyond.
- There is a need for a gateway site on the edge of Keynsham; Abbots Wood near Charlton Road may be a good location.
- The creation of a recreational route along the disused railway line between Stockwood and Pensford will be investigated; this would create a valuable link with current proposals for a cycle route along the old railway line between Pensford and Midsomer Norton.

### Stockwood Edge



### Description

This is part of the Dundry and Plateau landscape zone. The land sloping away from the urban edge of Stockwood is of mixed urban fringe and agricultural uses, including a golf course, playing fields, old tips, horticulture and horse pasture. Stockwood open space is a prominent feature on the steep slopes. Hedgerows are either overgrown or gappy, with scattered areas of scrub regeneration on waste ground and few mature trees. Being on steep ground, it is a very visible edge of Bristol with a neglected and disturbed structure.

**Existing woodland cover: 0.5%.**

### Local strategy

Significant landscape change towards an informal, wooded recreational area whilst maintaining and extending the valuable grassland habitats. Dense, small-scale woodland planting will be used to soften the intrusive urban edge and enclose space for informal activity.

**Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.**

### Woodlands

- Small-scale amenity planting within the existing field pattern.
- Considerable opportunities for community woodland planned and managed by local people.

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### Wildlife

- Protect and enhance existing conservation sites to the north-west of Stockwood, with improved management and new planting linking this area through to the valuable wetland site at Charlton Bottom.
- Encourage lower intensity management of farmland beside streamlines.

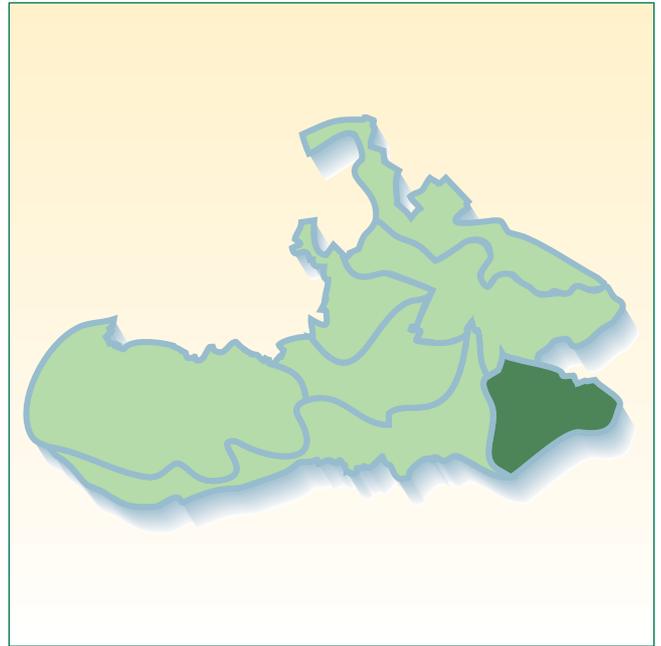
### Heritage

- The buildings in and around Whitchurch retain the strongest sense of history in the area.

### Recreation

- There is an opportunity to create a gateway from the edge of Stockwood through the wider countryside; this could be based on the land managed by the Wildlife Trust. The Friends of Bristol Horses Society at Whitchurch is also an opportunity.
- There is also an opportunity to extend improved recreational access out into the countryside from Whitchurch.
- The opportunity to connect with the disused railway line and current proposals to create a recreational route between Pensford and Midsomer Norton will be investigated.
- The creation of informal, small open spaces, with a good network of access to the Avon and Chew Valleys and Dundry Hill will be one of the aims.
- Community woodland around the south-east of Stockwood could be created.

### Burnett Plateau



### Description

This is part of the Dundry Hill and Plateau landscape zone. It is an open arable plateau area with large fields, poor hedgerows, sparse tree cover, scattered farms, dramatic views to the Cotswold edge and the small hamlet of Burnett. Landscape structure is generally intact, but field boundaries are poor due to loss of elms and dilapidated stone walls. The edges of Keynsham and Saltford are visually intrusive.

**Existing woodland cover: 4.5%.**

### Local strategy

Landscape improvements towards farmland framed by large areas of woodland on the edges of Keynsham and Saltford, which have public recreational use. Improvement needed for hedges and walls throughout the area. Small woodlands may also be appropriate in other areas, particularly to extend the existing woodland on the steep slopes on the western edge of the area and to the north of the A39, leaving the higher ground open to retain views.

**Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.**

### Woodland

- Medium-scale planting to create additional recreational resources, particularly along the built-up edges of Saltford and Keynsham, where community woodlands are appropriate, extending the Manor Road planting.
- Retain views up to the Cotswold edge.

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### Wildlife

- Encourage the release of agricultural land into lower intensity management in association with new woodland planting to increase habitat diversity with a landscape that includes more trees.

### Heritage

- The Wansdyke crosses the south of this area.

### Recreation

- This area could have an increased role for informal countryside recreation with community woodland close to Keynsham and Salford. There is an opportunity for landscape improvements in association with the existing golf course.

### Chew Valley



### Description

The Chew Valley is a well-defined, small river valley of undulating land-form, creating an interesting, lively landscape with high wildlife value. It is mainly pastoral, with a rich mosaic of small fields, good hedges, copses and ancient woodland on the steeper slopes. The strong hedgerows make the area appear more well-wooded than it is. The valley bottom contains stone-built villages beside the meandering River Chew. This is a high quality intimate landscape, with good views from the upper slopes.

**Existing woodland cover: 3.5%.**

### Local strategy

Conservation and enhancement of the existing well-wooded farmland character through careful new woodland establishment to integrate and extend the existing mosaic of tree cover. Extension of farm woodland is particularly appropriate in areas which have in the past been used for arable crops but are now being set-aside. New planting will be predominantly on the steeper slopes. Views towards and from the A37 will be enhanced.

**Proposed woodland cover: 10-20%.**

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### Woodlands

- Promote management of existing woodlands.
- New small-scale, predominantly broadleaved, woodland will be concentrated on the steep slopes and managed towards a diverse age structure within an extended network of woods, fields and hedgerow trees.
- Encourage the replacement of willows along the river and the re-pollarding of existing trees.

### Wildlife

- Protect and enhance existing riverside habitats.
- Investigate opportunities to improve the habitat of the Chew between Compton Dando and the River Avon.
- Encourage lower intensity management of farmland adjacent to the Chew.
- Nearly half the woodland in this area is ancient. Consider the option of natural regeneration when extending ancient semi-natural woodland.
- Aim to use planting to enrich the wildlife networks that exist within the agricultural landscape.

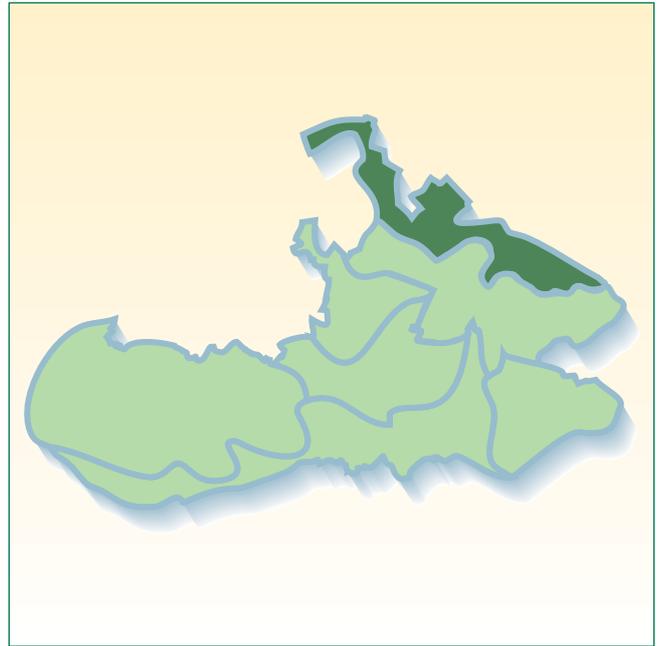
### Heritage

- The Wansdyke runs across the valley near Compton Dando; there may be an opportunity in the long term to develop a walk along its route. In the short term, the Community Forest Path should identify where it crosses the Dyke and an interpretation of its history should be provided. Other points of interest should be identified along the route of the path.
- Chew Magna is a conservation area.

### Recreation

- The Community Forest Path follows the route of the Chew through part of the valley, as does the Two Rivers Walk.
- This very attractive small river valley should be retained as an area for informal recreational uses, by improving access for walking and riding whilst providing the facilities these users are likely to need.
- There is an opportunity to develop a circular walk from Keynsham and other circular walks from the villages along the Chew.
- The creation of a recreational route along the disused railway line between Stockwood and Pensford will be investigated; this would create a valuable link with current proposals for a cycle route between Pensford and Midsomer Norton.

### Netham to Bitton



### Description

A small, well-wooded section of the Avon Valley, with steep sides and small fields. This very attractive area, penetrating a long way into the heart of the city, has retained its secluded character whilst being surrounded by urban development. The Hanham Hills have a special character which should be conserved with limited tree planting. The Avon Ring Road bisects the area and has opened it up to new views.

**Existing woodland cover: 11.9%.**

### Local strategy

Conservation of secluded, well-wooded valley character. Particular attention will be given to reducing the impact of the new ring road and improving the field pattern by restoring hedgerows.

**Proposed woodland cover: up to 20%**

### Woodlands

- A priority in this area is to encourage the management of the existing woodland and explore opportunities for extending and enhancing the recreational use of the woods.
- The involvement of local people in management and transition of areas to become community woodlands will also be promoted.

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### Wildlife

- Protect and enhance existing woodland, river and grassland sites.
- Encourage the use of locally occurring species in the establishment of new woodlands.
- Investigate promoting the area as a seed source for tree nurseries to generate locally occurring species stock for new community forest planting.
- Investigate opportunities to create and improve wetland habitats.
- Promote the establishment of new pollarded willows adjacent to the river, along with the management of existing ones.

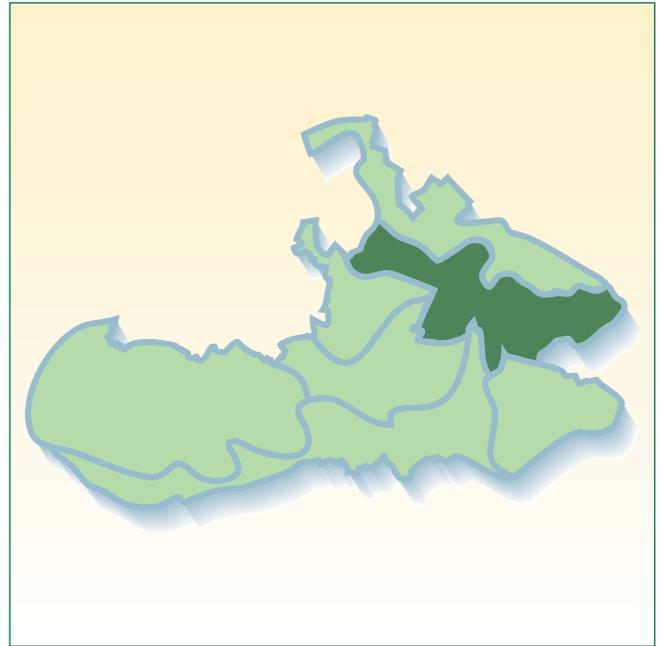
### Heritage

- Interpretation of the importance of the river in the history of the area, with particular attention to locks and industrial archaeology.

### Recreation

- There is an urgent need to review the recreational use of the area, to relieve existing 'hot spots' and ensure that the valuable character of the valley is conserved and enjoyed. Reviewing access to the area will be an important part of the process and is being considered as part of the Avon Valley Partnership.
- The Avon Walkway links the area through to the centre of Bristol, but is currently in need of maintenance and enhanced signing. New links from the city centre and other urban areas out onto the Walkway will be encouraged.
- The railway station at Keynsham will be promoted for access to the area.
- A need has been identified to create a cycle route into the city via this corridor; this could join with the Bristol-Bath railway path and create a circular off-road route. This would need careful alignment to ensure that it does not adversely affect the small-scale character of the valley.
- A bridge over the Avon near Eastwood Farm would increase the recreational use of the area.
- The Wildlife Trust's Centre at Willsbridge Mill could be developed as a major gateway site by enhancing footpath connections into the countryside; the route of the proposed Community Forest Path will also help to create a valuable link.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the existing facilities at Conham Park into a minor gateway, largely by improved signage and interpretative information.

### Somerdale



### Description

An Avon Valley landscape of flat, open arable fields with poor hedges and little woodland beside the meandering river. It is a major transport corridor, with two 'A' roads and two railways on embankment (one of which is now the Bristol-Bath railway path). The transport routes, along with industrial development, have resulted in this area appearing busy and fragmented, although immediately adjacent to the river it remains attractive and tranquil. The area also forms the important green gap between Brislington and Keynsham and between Keynsham and Salford. Views to the well-wooded Cotswold edge are a notable feature.

**Existing woodland cover: 1.2 %.**

### Local strategy

Significant landscape change to create a well-wooded river valley landscape, with woodland planting softening the intrusive urban edges and planting on the steeper higher ground enhancing the valley sides. Riverside planting and hedgerow improvements will enhance the valley bottom, whilst retaining open water meadows with limited tree planting. Views up to the Cotswold edge will be maintained and enhanced.

**Proposed woodland cover: 10-20%.**

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### Woodlands

- Small-scale planting of predominantly broadleaved woodland linking with adjacent woodland in other zones and aiming to reduce the impact of intrusive elements whilst retaining views along the valley.
- There are opportunities for the development of community woodland.

### Wildlife

- Protect and enhance riverside habitats.
- Encourage lower intensity management of farmland adjacent to river.
- Enhance and extend hedgerow networks between woodlands.
- Look at opportunities to extend green corridors in Bristol and Keynsham out into the countryside.
- Encourage establishment of new pollarded willows adjacent to the river, along with the management of existing ones.

### Heritage

- Maximise the potential of the Avon Valley Walkway and the Community Forest Path to interpret the significance of the river in the history of the area.
- Salford village is a conservation area.

### Recreation

- This area is already one of the main areas used for recreation around Bristol. There is the Avon Valley Walkway, the Community Forest Path, the Bristol-Bath Railway path, a private country park, fishing and boating activities along the Avon. Future emphasis should be on enhancing access and circulation for walking, riding and cycling, and improving connections into the valley from urban areas, particularly by train, bus and packet boat.
- There is some scope to provide more areas with free public access close to the river for picnicking and informal activities.
- There is an opportunity to use the new park-and-ride at Brislington in reverse to give residents from the centre of Bristol easy access to the countryside. The park-and-ride should therefore be connected to footpath and, ideally, cycling networks.