

# **Willand Neighbourhood Plan**

## **2020-2033**

### **SUBMISSION VERSION**



January 2024

Website: [Neighbourhood Plan – Willand Parish Council \(willand-pc.org.uk\)](http://willand-pc.org.uk)

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## FOREWORD

“Welcome to the Willand Neighbourhood Plan. Its policies have been developed through an extensive process of community dialogue and consultation. This started by asking villagers ‘What do you think is good about Willand?’ and ‘What do you think would make it even better?’

We held a village survey and then (following COVID) a series of displays and topic meetings. These showed that villagers value Willand’s separate identity as a rural, caring and mixed community, and want this to be protected and developed. Villagers also value and want to secure and build on all Willand’s community facilities and spirit. We are grateful to all the individuals and organisations who engaged in our neighbourhood planning and contributed to consultations over the past few years. Willand is a community rich in care and community support. There are restrictions on what the Neighbourhood Plan can do. Our plan tries to reflect the spirit of the things we value about our home village and offer a base for protecting and building on them for the future.

I would like to thank the members of the Willand Neighbourhood Plan Group of the Parish Council, ably led by Councillor Stephen Little, without whose work we would not have been able to put this plan forward.”

Barry G J Warren - Chairman Willand Parish Council

## WITH THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Willand Neighbourhood Plan Development Steering Group would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who contributed to our consultations. Willand is a community rich in care and community support, and it has been a privilege to try and reflect as much as possible of this in our work.

Core members of the Parish Council Neighbourhood Planning Group were:

Barbara Bodkin; Catherine Ennew; Stephen Little; Lisa Mastrolacasa; Jason Scott; Alan Smith; Kate Taylor; Frances Wilcox.

Photographs by Jason Scott.

Invaluable professional support was given throughout by Stuart Todd of Stuart Todd Associates.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Community’s Plan

This Neighbourhood Plan (the “Plan”) is *the community’s plan*. It represents the community’s vision and priorities for how they would like to see the local area change in the coming years and in doing so it sets out our local planning policies which will be taken into account as and when any proposals for development come forward in the Parish Council administrative area.

The Plan is not one which can cover every issue identified as being important to the community; it has a focus on responding to proposals for development, the appropriate use of land and protecting areas of local value and importance. It puts us, as a community, in the driving seat when it comes to having a say over what, how and where development should take place where it requires planning permission. The box below summarises what the Plan can and cannot do. The Plan and its policies reflect our Parish’s own characteristics while recognising the need to align with both national and local authority planning policies.

Figure 1: The “Cans and Cannots” of a Neighbourhood Plan

<b>“It can...”</b> ✓	<b>“But it cannot...”</b> ✗
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop policies specific to our area, for example, design of new development.</li> <li>✓ Protect the facilities and areas of land that the community values most such as community buildings, playing fields, etc.</li> <li>✓ Help us to get additional funding into the area, for example, through identification of projects or having a plan adopted (“made”)</li> <li>✓ Protect areas of land for conservation, biodiversity and landscape value.</li> <li>✓ Influence the type, location and design of development.</li> <li>✓ Help to secure additional funding for infrastructure and other projects.</li> <li>✓ Propose regeneration projects, transport solutions and areas of land for the allocation of housing and / or employment sites if we wish to do so.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Introduce policies which conflict with national or District Council “strategic” planning policies.</li> <li>✗ Force requirements on developers which make the delivery of development unviable.</li> <li>✗ Change regulations / legislation such as Building Regulations or Permitted Development Rights.</li> <li>✗ Simply repeat (duplicate) national or District Council planning policy.</li> <li>✗ Reduce the scale of new housing if proposed by the District Council.</li> <li>✗ Stop all development.</li> <li>✗ Deal with matters not dealt with through the planning system, for example:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change traffic speed limits</li> <li>• Increase broadband speeds</li> <li>• Enforce parking restrictions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The Plan covers the period between 2020 and 2033 and is therefore ‘in sync’ with the development plan documents produced by the District Council as the local planning authority.



### **1.2.2 Summary Parish Characteristics**

Willand is a small Parish in a rural part of Mid-Devon district with a population of around 3,415 people<sup>2</sup>. At its heart is Willand village, around 15 miles from Exeter to the south and to Taunton to the north and 6 miles south-east of the market town of Tiverton and two miles north of Cullompton. It is situated between Junctions 27 and 28 of the M5 motorway with the B3181 running through the centre of the village.

The village has four dispersed village stores catering for everyday shopping needs. It is fortunate to retain its Primary School, Preschool and Nursery, Post Office, GP surgery, residential home, pharmacy, hairdresser, chip shop, a pub, a filling station and a café. Community facilities include a well-used Village Hall and Health and Community Centre. There is a recreation ground, tennis courts and football club ground and allotments, as well as a good number of small local play and recreation areas.

The Parish has a good balance of housing and employment, with the growing Mid-Devon Business Park providing both local and strategic employment opportunities, in addition to the older South View Road industrial estate area and Lloyd Maunder Road employment area, predominantly occupied by the 2 Sisters Food Group. There is Tanyard's Farm & Diggerland to the south. Just outside the Parish boundary (to the north) Hitchcocks Business Park and Langlands provide further employment, as do other businesses and facilities at Junction 27 of the M5 and at Waterloo Cross.

The village of Willand comprises a wide variety of built forms and characters, as the following map shows, taken from the Mid-Devon Settlement Character Assessment. While the assessment was produced in 2012, the village's character areas remain much the same.

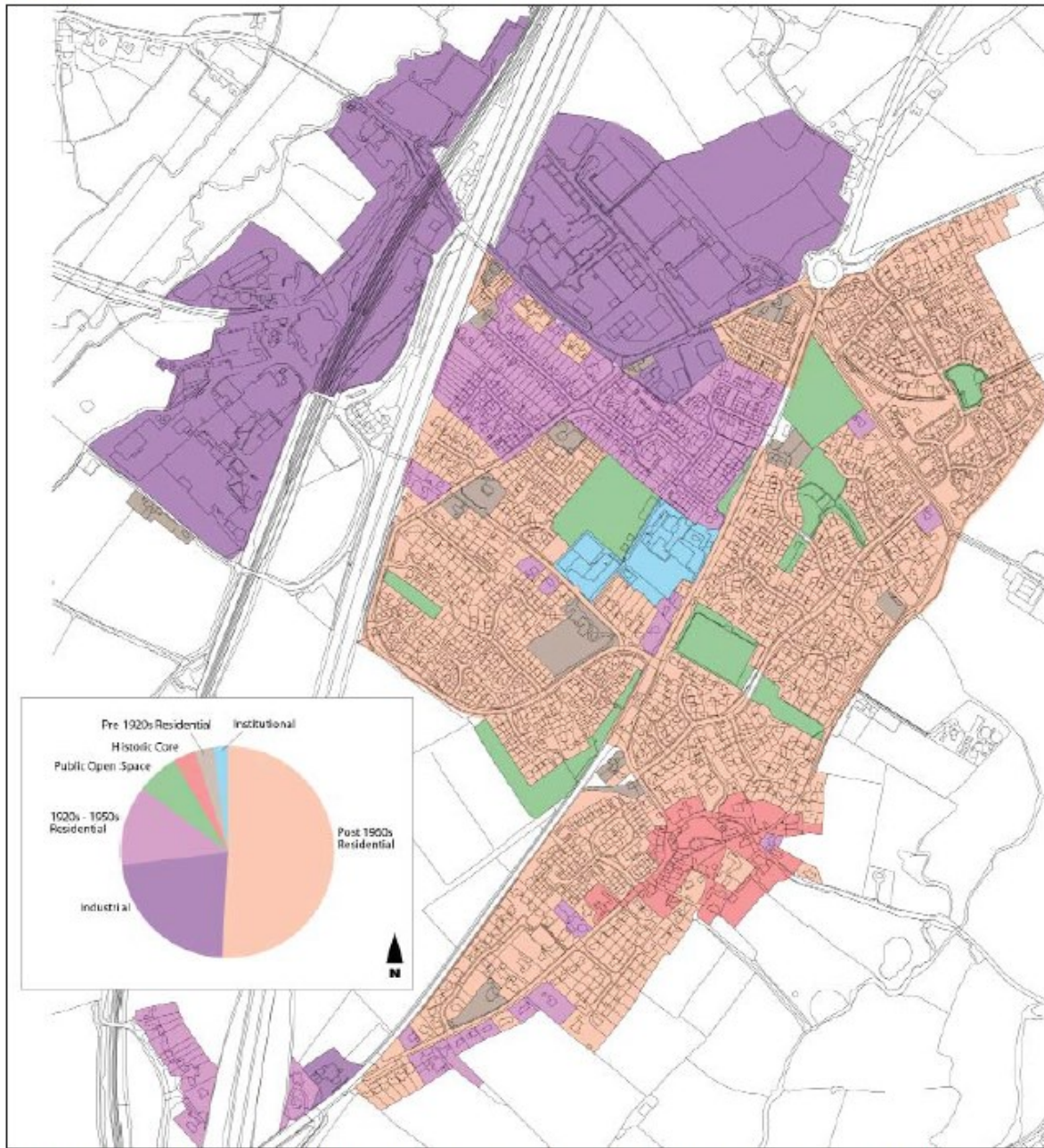
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<sup>2</sup> Source: NOMIS, ONS 2019 mid-year estimates. Best fit of output areas to parish boundaries. Up-to-date data from the 2021 census should be published soon. See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/adhocs/12324parishpopulationestimatesformid2001tomid2019basedonbestfittingofoutputareastoparishes>



Map 2: Settlement Character

## Willand



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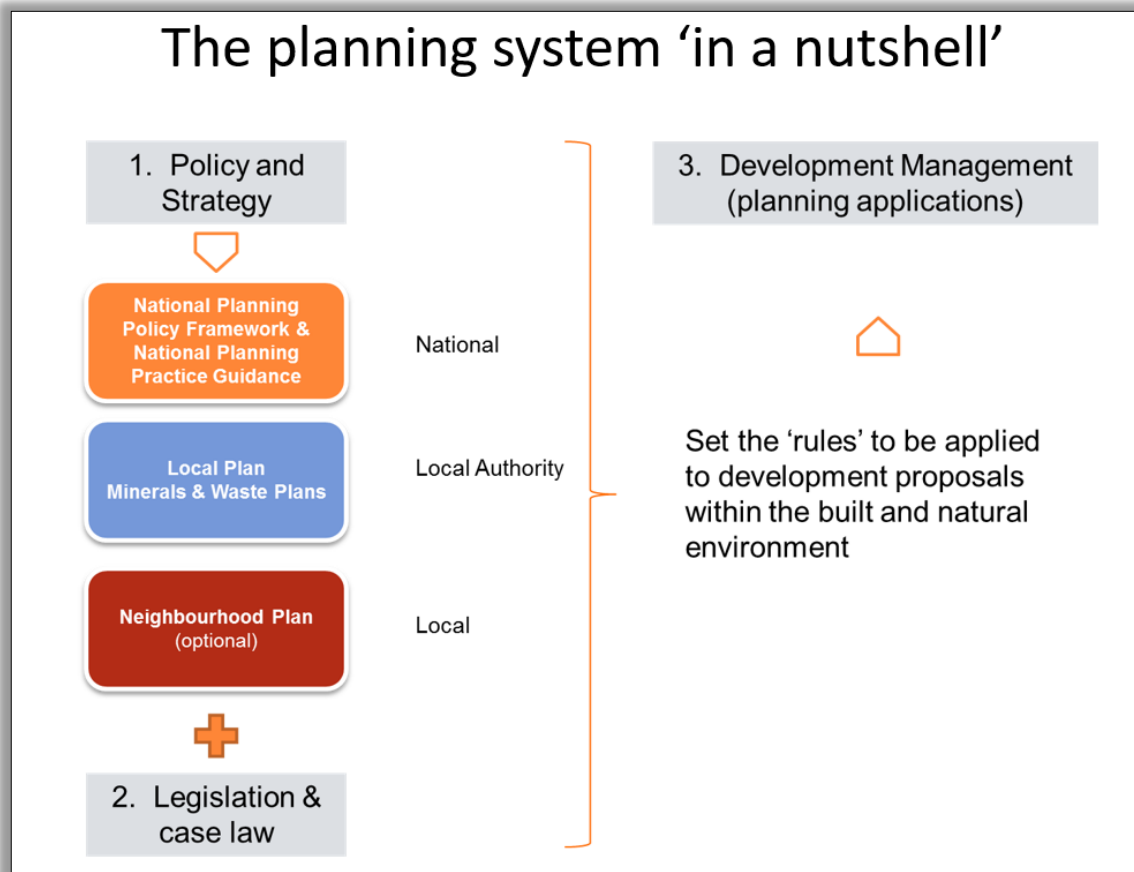
Source: Mid-Devon Settlement Character Assessment, Mid-Devon District Council, 2012

### 1.3 The Plan's Status

This Neighbourhood Plan, once made, will be part of the “statutory development plan”. That means that its policies will have significant weight (or ‘real teeth’) when it comes to being used by the local authority to help determine proposals for development submitted through planning applications. It will form the local tier of planning policy in our Parish. It sits with the District-wide Local Plan, produced by Mid-Devon District Council (also a statutory development plan) and underneath the umbrella of national planning policy in the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), as the main planning policy documents relevant to our area. Other important planning documents which govern specific issues are the Minerals and Waste Plans produced at the county-wide level by Devon County Council.

Figure 2: The Planning System’s Key Elements



The relationship between our Neighbourhood Plan and other planning policy documents is summarised in the illustration “The planning system ‘in a nutshell’”.

However, this Plan should not be treated as a blueprint. When this Plan is made (adopted) policies will need to be used by the local planning authority when it considers decisions that need to be made about development proposals submitted through the planning application process. The Plan’s policies, however, cannot guarantee that a proposal will be refused nor be granted permission, but the policies will carry significant weight, alongside policies of the NPPF, NPPG and the adopted Local Plan when weighing up the appropriateness of the proposal in question.

## 1.4 Mid-Devon District Council Planning Policies of Relevance

Mid Devon District Council’s Local Plan, which provides the strategic planning policy framework for the area was adopted in July 2020 and covers the period to 2033. It is important to be cognisant of these policies, particularly those which relate to Willand, as the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan must be in “general conformity” (or alignment) with them, according to Government planning rules. The policies in this Neighbourhood Plan must be complementary to, and not simply repeat, policies already set out in the adopted Local Plan and they should not contradict the Local Plan’s policies.

Appendix 1 reproduces some of the key parts of the Local Plan which relate to Willand, for ease of reference and to help contextualise our Plan. However, they are not meant to provide the complete list of all relevant policies and the Local Plan itself should be read to understand fully which policies might apply to particular development proposals. Our policies in this Plan reference Local Plan policies where necessary to provide context and help demonstrate policies justification.

Some policy areas of particular significance to the Parish include:

- Land allocation for housing (policy WI1: Land east of M5) for 125 houses approved and started;
- Land allocation for strategic employment development (9.2 ha) (policy WI2: Willand Industrial Estate), which is within the Parish boundary and part of which has already been developed<sup>3</sup>;
- The definition of the village “Settlement Limit”, within which limited development is acceptable (subject to other applicable policies) (policy S13: Villages);
- A policy which specifies what types of proposals are appropriate in the countryside (i.e. outside of the Willand settlement limit (policy S14: Countryside);
- The identification of several priority habitats in the Parish (policy DM28: Other Protected Sites);
- The proposals for major development of Cullompton Garden Village at Junction 28 of the M5 (Policies S11: Cullompton, CU policies relating to the major development at North West Cullompton).



The Mid-Devon Local Plan is currently being reviewed<sup>4</sup> and there will be opportunities for the content of this Plan to influence its development and also for the Local Plan Review to provide strategic policies which cover some matters considered as wider than local to Willand. This is of particular note as some of the issues important to the local community raised during consultation are those over which the

<sup>3</sup> With the other part having approval for reserved matters.

<sup>4</sup> For the period 2023-2043. See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/plan-mid-devon/> for further details.

Neighbourhood Plan can have little or no control, given that the Plan can only have jurisdiction within the Plan area.

## 1.5 How Have We Got Here?

In order to produce the Plan, its development has been driven by a steering group, comprised of residents and Parish Councillors. It was recognised at an early stage that for the Plan to be truly representative of the planning issues of relevance in the Parish and to be *the community’s plan*, we would need to conduct engagement with those who live and work in the Parish. We continued this engagement up to the creation of this Submission Plan. We have also liaised with Mid-Devon District Council officers as the Plan has been developed, to ensure alignment with Local Plan and national planning policies.

The process and types of consultation that we have gone through will be fully documented in detail in our Consultation Statement which will accompany this Plan at Submission stage.

However, the key methods we have used have focused on a short community survey in 2020, Primary School survey, public, topic focused and community group meetings during 2021, 2022 and 2023.

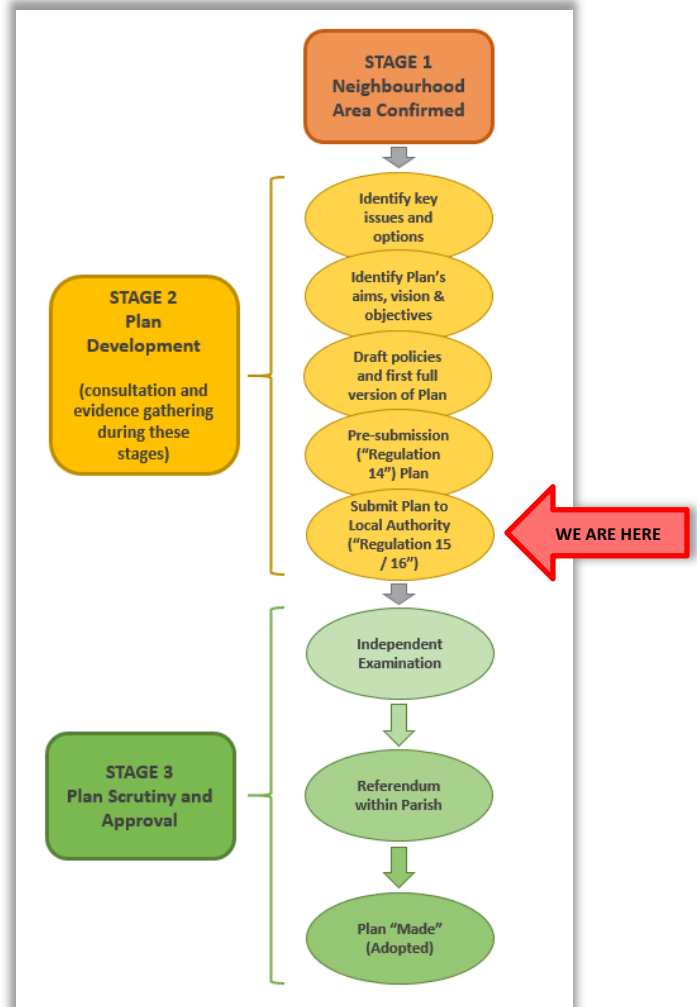
Where possible we have had a presence to discuss the Plan and key local issues at other events taking place such as the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations in the village.

It is important to note, however, that we did not have to start from a “blank sheet of paper” as the Parish has had a Parish Plan in place since 2005 which provided a good basis for understanding a community view of the main issues and challenges in Willand. This was, of course, checked and challenged during the aforementioned consultation held between 2020 and 2023.

## 1.6 Next Steps

This Plan is the “Submission” version of the Plan and has been submitted to Mid-Devon District Council for further consultation and independent Examination. If the Examination finds that the Plan meets the required tests (called “Basic Conditions”) the Plan can then proceed to a local Referendum in the Parish which will determine whether the Plan should be made (or adopted) for use in the planning system.

Figure 3: Neighbourhood Plan Process



## 1.7 The Structure of Our Plan

Our Plan sets out the vision, aims and objectives for our area, which have been developed, based on dialogue with the community, and shaped by existing planning policies and other plans. The main policy sections of this Plan have been derived by pulling together common aims and common key issues arising from consultation and considering the evidence base. Each policy is supported by justification text to demonstrate why the policy is necessary. There are several issues raised during development of this Plan which are non-planning matters and which can be pursued outside of this Plan’s policies. These are set out at the end of each policy section as “community projects and actions”.

## 1.8 Community projects and actions

We have identified several community projects and actions during the development of the Plan. Some of these can only be delivered outside of the planning system or only in part and most will have supportive policies in this Plan to help enable them to be delivered if they need planning permission. These projects and actions are likely to be explored and / or delivered by more than one responsible organisation, authority, agency or association and will require partner working. The Parish Council will help to facilitate the projects and action where possible and appropriate where there is not already a lead organisation pursuing them, or the lead organisation is not identified in the action or project.



## 1.9 Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) set out the Government's planning policy to which all plans and proposals for development should comply. The NPPF includes, at its heart, a "presumption in favour of sustainable development". It is important to understand what that means for our Plan as it sets the parameters within which we can make proposals and set policies.

When taking decisions on proposals for development this means that proposals should be approved where they accord with the development plan without delay; and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF or specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted. Translating this to what it means for our neighbourhood plan, it states that "Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies"<sup>5</sup>. The NPPF goes on to say that "Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies<sup>6</sup>. Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently."<sup>7</sup>

Following this consultation, we will approach Mid-Devon District Council to request their formal view (or screening opinion) as to whether the Plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). This is a requirement of the process set by the Government. In the meantime, we have been mindful of a need to consider the Plan's policies against the ability to deliver sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

Our Plan also responds directly to a need for more sustainable development, in part, because it is appropriate to react to the issue of climate change and the need to meet and play a part in contributing towards net zero carbon dioxide emission targets.

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<sup>5</sup> See paragraph 13, National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area.

<sup>7</sup> See paragraphs 29 and 30, National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf)

## 2. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The vision and objectives which follow have been developed from the consultation held with the community between 2020 and 2022. This has been important as it has given confidence to develop the policies and community actions set out in this Plan.

### 2.1 The Future Vision for Willand

Our vision for the Parish represents our view of what we would like the Parish to be like in the future by the time that the plan reaches its end date. The objectives amplify and describe where we want to get to and the things we would like to achieve, which have been derived from local community consultation.

#### Future Vision for Willand

- 1. Sustaining its identity, facilities and considerable community strengths both as a rural and as a mixed community.**
- 2. Securing sustainability now and for the long-term future.**
- 3. Engaging with its rural context.**



## 2.2 Objectives and Plan Topics

Our objectives set out how we are going to respond to and achieve the vision. The objectives present both issues which can be addressed, in whole or in part through this Plan and the wider planning system, and also issues which cannot be delivered through this Plan and its policies. The objectives therefore present “real-world” matters. The Plan then uses these objectives to identify:

- i) planning policies which can be used in the planning system to help determine proposals for development (planning applications) and protect key areas of land and assets.
- ii) non-land-use planning matters which have been identified as important by the community during the plan-making process and which can be dealt with outside of this Plan and the planning system and which are presented as community actions or projects.

The planning policies are clearly distinguishable from other text, and non-land-use planning actions and projects. It is important to the community to present the “whole picture” in relation to key issues, hence the identification of the community actions and projects. Without doing this, the Parish Council, Plan and its Steering Group could be accused of not including matters which are important to the community which were raised during consultation.

Our objectives are set out in the following table. Alongside them, we have identified the land-use planning topic in this Plan where policies and / or other non-planning actions are specified.





<b>1. Sustaining its identity, facilities and considerable community strengths both as a rural and as a mixed community</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Topic(s) in this Plan</b>		
a) Historically Willand has had a mix of social, affordable and private housing, with local employment. This has been an important ingredient in creating a distinctive and vibrant community. This balance should be enhanced by any future development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Economy and Employment</li> </ul>		
b) We need a greater variety of social, affordable and private housing types, particularly for younger people and older ones to keep them in the village. Members of village families in social, affordable housing within Willand should have suitable housing available within Willand when their housing needs change rather than having to move elsewhere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> </ul>		
c) The recent industrial estate at Mid Devon Business Park evidences the continued appetite for commercial development which provides local employment. Proximity to the motorway exit and Tiverton Parkway means that the land north of the Parish boundary has already begun to be considered for development (Hitchcock’s Business Park, Willand Business Park and Pitt Farm etc.). There is already a specific plan for development currently coming down to Mount Stephen Farm from Waterloo Cross. All of this area is the primary human zone of Willand. Any future development within and without the current Parish boundary must be consistent with and enhance the distinctive characteristics of Willand’s identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy and Employment</li> </ul>		
d) Any future plans within and beyond the current Parish boundary should retain spatial differentiation between Willand and existing neighbouring settlements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>		
e) In the MDDC Design Guide Willand is uniquely described amongst Mid Devon villages as a Patchwork, which also offers a model for future development along the B3181 if it occurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Development</li> </ul>		
f) Willand’s identity is bound up with its network of accessible non-residential facilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The area including the Willand Rovers football field through to the Methodist Church and across to the Jubilee Field contains an important range of community facilities which must all be conserved, and pedestrian and vehicle access protected and improved.</li> <li>ii) The area including the Parish Church, the Hall and the Post Office contains a range of community facilities which must be conserved and pedestrian and vehicle access protected and improved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>		
g) All existing leisure and green areas and community facilities must be protected. <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) All existing play areas, green spaces and woodlands</li> <li>ii) Existing cycleways and pathways</li> <li>iii) Willand Football Ground</li> <li>iv) Village Hall Complex</li> <li>v) Church Hall</li> <li>vi) Cemetery</li> <li>vii) Parish Church area</li> <li>viii) Methodist Church area</li> </ul> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ix) Willand Health and Community Centre</li> <li>x) GP Surgery</li> <li>xi) Halfway House</li> <li>xii) Garage, hairdresser, Bluebell Cafe</li> <li>xiii) Pharmacy</li> <li>xiv) Diggerland area + Fishing Lakes</li> <li>xv) Elmside down to the river</li> <li>xvi) Willand School</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) All existing play areas, green spaces and woodlands</li> <li>ii) Existing cycleways and pathways</li> <li>iii) Willand Football Ground</li> <li>iv) Village Hall Complex</li> <li>v) Church Hall</li> <li>vi) Cemetery</li> <li>vii) Parish Church area</li> <li>viii) Methodist Church area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ix) Willand Health and Community Centre</li> <li>x) GP Surgery</li> <li>xi) Halfway House</li> <li>xii) Garage, hairdresser, Bluebell Cafe</li> <li>xiii) Pharmacy</li> <li>xiv) Diggerland area + Fishing Lakes</li> <li>xv) Elmside down to the river</li> <li>xvi) Willand School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>
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<b>2. Securing sustainability now and for the long-term future.</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Topic(s) in this Plan</b>
<b>2.1 Climate change</b>	
a) In future Willand will require more variety of local employment opportunities for working age residents, involving more emphasis on working at or near home. These should be clustered around the Garage site to the south and near the Halfway House to the north. The development should include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. small starter units - office premises - light industrial units</li> <li>ii. home worker support facilities</li> <li>iii. greater choice of catering/refreshment outlets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy and Employment</li> </ul>
b) Allotments and community green space and protected woodland should be an integral part of any proposed future housing and industrial development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>
c) New development to result in a net increase in biodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>
d) All new houses and businesses should have private electric charging points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Development</li> </ul>
e) Solar panels and heat pumps should be integral to all new employment and residential properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Development</li> </ul>
f) Commercial and community organisations should be encouraged to provide public electric charging points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Development</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>
g) Consideration should be given to providing a “hub” to the north of the village equipped with electric bikes enabling people to commute to Parkway Station and to the canal and beyond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>
h) Tree planting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>
<b>2.2 Care of the natural environment</b>	
a) The production of a clear mapped statement as to who is responsible for keeping which existing paths, verges and green areas clear, including those with no registered ownership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>
b) A planting strategy for more trees and other wildlife habitat on public and private land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>

<b>2. Securing sustainability now and for the long-term future.</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Topic(s) in this Plan</b>
<p><b>2.3 Opportunities for the future</b></p> <p>i) Young people have been well served by a strong village school, access to nearby secondary schooling and good play and youth club facilities. Ready access to education and training needs to be continued and strengthened.</p> <p>ii) Accessible Pre-school and Primary education are an important part of making Willand what it is. Current pedestrian and cycle access and parking issues need to be addressed, and more provision of secure safe bike access to schools and community facilities with secure onsite bike storage.</p> <p>iii) Transport must be secure for young people's and adults' access to out of village education, work and leisure opportunities</p> <p>iv) Continued local presence of Pharmacy and of GP facilities is important for all ages.</p> <p>v) The current strong community spirit requires constant support for community buildings, organisations and facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.4 Key reminders of Willand's history</b></p> <p>a) Preserve and enhance historic remnants if any of the old Tiverton Junction area including the Station, Maunders and the Duchess Dairy and the remaining railway cottages.</p> <p>b) Preservation and enhancement of the Old Village Conservation Area, Willand's listed buildings and other notable sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage</li> </ul>

<b>3. Engaging with its rural context</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Topic(s) in this Plan</b>
a) Increasing access by foot and bike especially to the rural hinterland is a major priority for residents. In contrast to other villages Willand lacks walkways and cycleways, noting the need for wider access for the disabled and children's mobility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>
b) More public seating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> </ul>
c) Jaycroft should be protected as a place to walk and cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>
d) Pedestrian access across the road from the churchyard path to Jaycroft should be given protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>
<p>e) Willand residents should have</p> <p>i) Safe pedestrian/cycle access to the cemetery.</p> <p>ii) New crossing from where the footpath joins Silver Street by Ash Close to be routed through Townlands to provide pedestrian access to the Post Office, Church and Hall etc.</p> <p>iii) Pedestrian/cyclist access from Halfway House up to Waterloo Cross, connecting to existing paths for Bridwell and Muxbeare.</p> <p>iv) Safe cycle and pedestrian accesses to the Culm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel, Access and Connectivity</li> </ul>

<b>3. Engaging with its rural context</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Topic(s) in this Plan</b>
v) An early start linking Jaycroft to the proposed off-road footpaths/cycleways intended eventually to reach the Garden Village with Willand, and consideration how this might provide safe pedestrian/cycle access to Cullompton.	
vi) Safe footpaths/cycleways alongside the B3181 or off road provision to replace the current unsafe link to and from Cullompton to Willand and then the cycleway to Tiverton Parkway Station.	
vii) A cycle/pathway to Uffculme, possibly opening up old railway line to Hemyock (even where blocked).	
viii) Open viewing spaces and public access through towards the Culm Valley.	
ix) The solar farm field south of Dean Hill Road and alongside Five bridges should be promoted as a place to walk with dogs.	
x) The traditional walk 'Round the World' should be recovered, made safe for pedestrians and cyclists and maintained, with protection from any development on the farmland alongside it.	
xi) Pedestrian and cycling opportunities to be improved / enhanced by remediation of pavements/pathways that are overgrown and where the verge has encroached, particularly where this inhibits pedestrian access to school and other facilities.	
xii) safer pedestrian crossing points and safer cycleways on or across roads, particularly Silver Street.	

### 3. PLAN TOPICS

This Plan’s planning policies, and community actions and projects are set out under the topic headings identified in the right-hand column of the table in the previous section. These topics are:

- **Sustainable Development;**
- **Community;**
- **Green Infrastructure;**
- **Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity;**
- **Economy and Employment;**
- **Heritage;**
- **Housing.**

These topics are not listed in any priority order as the Plan’s policies all carry equal weight in the planning system once the Plan is made (adopted). The policies, and the community actions and projects which are set out under each topic seek to provide a positive response to the Plan vision and objectives.

Neither the Heritage nor Housing topics have any planning policies, but we consider it appropriate to have a commentary in this Plan about those issues, given that they were raised as key issues during consultation and feature in the objectives set out in the Plan.

#### 3.1 A Note About Planning Policies

The planning policies in this Plan are not able, within the context of planning policies and regulations, to provide a solution for every issue in the Parish. Broadly speaking, the following factors need to be remembered when looking at or using the policies in the Plan:

- Policies must be evidenced and justified, supported by written evidence gathered and community consultation;
- Policies need to relate to land-use and either protect something, propose something or be able to be used by the local planning authority to respond to a development proposal (i.e. help determine its appropriateness, or not);
- Policies should be ‘positively framed’ to support or enable development subject to various criteria / conditions;
- Policies cannot deal with certain ‘excluded matters’ such as waste or minerals planning matters which are dealt with by the County Council;
- Policies in a neighbourhood plan should not simply duplicate policies set out elsewhere in policy at the national or local authority level. The neighbourhood plan forms part of the ‘development plan’, the other parts of which are the district-wide Local Plan and other development plan documents produced by the District Council. The policies across these documents should align, with policies in the neighbourhood plan being in “general conformity” with the strategic policies of the local authority’s Local Plan;
- It is the planning policies in the Plan which carry legal weight (or are the statutory element of the Plan);
- Each policy has a unique title and reference number.

It is important to note that, while we have packaged policies under topic headings, when development proposals are being assessed, the whole plan (i.e. all policies) should be considered, as policies in one theme may apply to proposals which naturally fit under another. In other words, the Plan should be read as a whole.

## 4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Introduction

Section 1.9 in the Plan references the need to consider sustainable development within the context of the planning framework set out by national policy. Consultation also gave rise to concerns about our changing climate and the need for this Plan to respond positively to opportunities to help reduce emissions. In response to this, and the resultant objectives of the Plan set out in section 2.2, this first topic and section of the Plan sets out our response to these concerns and key issues raised, setting out planning policies which introduce criteria to help contribute to adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and encourage a positive response to the challenges which a changing climate poses.

The policies in this section are:

- Policy SD1: High -Quality Design in New Development
- Policy SD2: Sustainable Development in New Development

### 4.2 Sustainable Development and High-Quality Design

#### Policies Justification

We have identified good, high-quality and sustainable design as an important factor that new housing, commercial and retail development, in particular, should consider and meet. The Government has acknowledged the importance of good design of development in the National Design Guide and emerging National Design Code<sup>8</sup>, while the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill<sup>9</sup> has elevated the importance of delivering good design through the planning system further. Mid-Devon District Council's Design Guide includes useful guidance for a variety of development types<sup>10</sup>.

We consider that there is a good level of design guidance for high-quality design to take place in Willand. However, there are some areas in relation to sustainable development and climate change which we consider are worth emphasising through planning policy in this Plan and so policies SD1 and SD2 focus on these areas.

Good design is not simply about the “look and feel” of a development in terms of the materials it is made of or the colour it is. It extends to many other factors. To understand what good design means development should:

- integrate new development with its surroundings while also providing identity;
- consider the impact on and relationship with the climate change;
- be a sustainable development, both in terms of energy efficiency of development, low carbon energy generation and ease of access to help minimise unnecessary travel by private car;
- create a safe and secure environment;
- provide good accessibility and permeability within and through a development;

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3155>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/mid-devon-design-guide/>

- recognise the day-to-day impact of on-street parking on maintaining good access for pedestrians, parents and carers with prams, the disabled and those with mobility problems and other vehicles;
- consider its environmental impact;
- ensure that it is fit for purpose for the people who will use, live or work within the development;
- reflect the amenity of existing neighbouring uses;
- ensure a positive legacy;
- not simply be “pastiche”;
- introduce balance between colour, shape, form, space and textures;
- be of an appropriate scale, massing, density and materials relative to the site and the development’s setting.



While planning policies cannot force development to comply with sustainability standards above those required by Building Regulations, policies can strongly encourage developers to exceed those standards where those higher standards do not compromise a development’s viability. We therefore signpost tests for new housing such as Building for a Healthy Life<sup>11</sup> and guidance such as Active Design principles<sup>12</sup> to ensure that new development is sustainable and encourages healthy and active lifestyles, and BREEAM in relation to commercial development<sup>13</sup> to help ensure that new commercial development is sustainable. It is critical for new development to help drive us towards meeting net zero carbon emissions targets as soon as we can, including commercial development, which can often have a large carbon footprint given the energy uses of businesses.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.designforhomes.org/project/building-for-life/>

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.breeam.com/>

Policy SD1 also signposts our desire to see proposals for major development<sup>14</sup> go through a design review process<sup>15</sup> to help guide applicants and local authority planning officers towards a high-quality designed development. This approach has been successfully introduced in policies in other made neighbourhood plans.

Policy SD2 requires development proposals to do as much as they can to have a positive impact on climate change issues on the basis that the level of response to the criteria set and measures introduced will need to be proportionate to the scale and type of development being proposed. In some cases, for example, smaller or householder applications, some criteria will not be relevant to the proposal. The policy also includes reference to the Devon County Council “Sustainable Drainage Systems – Guidance for Devon” document<sup>16</sup>, which should be used, where relevant to the proposals, to ensure that flood risk is appropriately managed.

It should be noted that changes to buildings undertaken through permitted development rights will not have to adhere to planning policies.

**Policy SD1: High-quality Design in New Developments**

**For housing, retail and commercial development proposals to be considered high quality in the Willand context, they should have particular regard to the following considerations, where feasible, viable and applicable:**

- i) be well-related to scale, form, density and character of the settlement / built-up area and of its setting, enhancing visual amenity;**
- ii) have boundary treatment well-related to those of nearby buildings to complement the character of its setting;**
- iii) provide safe and easy access for pedestrians, those with impaired mobility and disabilities and cyclists onto existing pedestrian footpaths and cycle lanes and, where feasible provide segregated, direct, safe routes to support good connectivity to local facilities and amenities. Pedestrian and cycle routes should assist permeability and “desire line” point to point access into and out of the development;**
- iv) ensure good and safe accessibility for refuse, emergency and delivery vehicles, where feasible, taking into account likely levels of on-street parking by occupants, users and visitors;**
- v) for proposals for dwellings, provide private amenity space (gardens) appropriate to dwelling type and size and to inform consideration of the appropriateness of a proposal’s suitability in relation to the character of the built environment and the site’s setting. Applicants should provide an analysis of proposal’s plot size(s) and building footprint in relation to garden areas of the dwellings in the surrounding area;**
- vi) follow a design review process prior to the submission of a planning application (for major development) where the development is in a sensitive built or landscape character area or would introduce significant change to its setting; and,**
- vii) respond positively to the National Design Guide and Code, and the Mid-Devon Design Guide.**

<sup>14</sup> Major development is: for housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the [Parish and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#). See the NPPF - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.designreviewpanel.co.uk/> for further information.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/planning-and-development/suds-guidance/>



**Policy SD2: Sustainable Design in New Developments**

Development will be required to respond positively to the challenge posed by climate change. It should aim to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction and be optimised for energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions. Proposals are encouraged to meet as many of the following criteria as possible, where feasible, viable and where relevant to the scale and type of proposal:

- i) meet the highest standards for commercial / employment uses, or other up-to-date standards at the time of application;
- ii) utilise the most up-to-date Building for a Healthy Life sustainable development tests for dwellings, achieving as many green scores as possible;
- iii) respond positively to principles such as those for “walkable communities” in Sport England and Public Health England’s “Active Design” guidance;
- iv) have a layout which optimises passive solar gain;
- v) have sustainable drainage systems installed on-site, where relevant, to mitigate the impact of increased surface water run-off or provide off-site solutions where on-site provision is not possible. Proposals should demonstrate, through a Planning Statement, that they have taken into account the Devon County Council “Sustainable Drainage Systems – Guidance for Devon” (or the most up-to-date equivalent where this is superseded during the Plan period);
- vi) ensure that all off-road parking spaces are permeable to help prevent surface water run-off and include filtration or interceptors to prevent vehicle oil polluting the ground and watercourses;
- vii) incorporate on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar panels or heat pumps;
- viii) provide an appropriate number of electric vehicle charging points for electric cars and electric bikes in accordance with the most up-to-date standards;
- ix) provide secure outside covered storage space for refuse bins and recycling boxes (ensuring that their location gives easy access to the kerbside for collection) and secure inside or outside covered storage for bicycles.

### **4.3 Community Actions and Projects**

For this topic, the projects and actions, not covered through our planning policies, are:

- Commercial and community organisations should be encouraged to provide public electric charging points.

## 5. COMMUNITY

### 5.1 Introduction

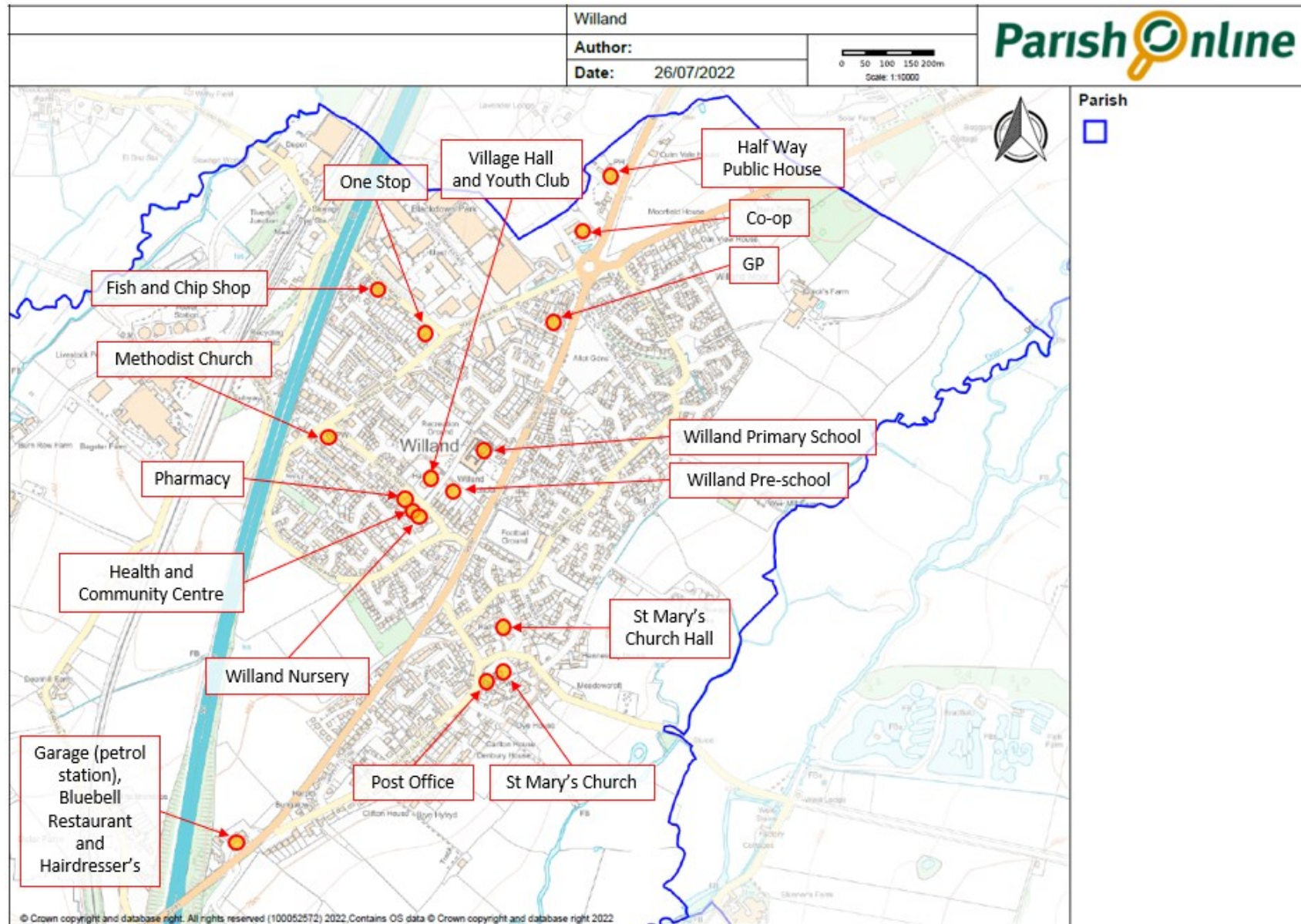
The “community feel” in Willand is central to what makes our Parish the place it is. The environmental, social and economic assets that the Parish benefits from all contribute to this and the apparent balance between living, playing, enjoying and working in the Parish. From this perspective this section could cover almost all objectives of this Plan. However, this topic, in relation to land-use planning, focuses on helping to protect and enhance community identity, by supporting its assets and facilities. The policies in this section are:

- Policy COM1: Engaging with the Community on Major Development Proposals
- Policy COM2: Protecting Community Facilities, Amenities and Assets
- Policy COM3: Enhancing Community Facilities, Amenities and Assets
- Policy COM4: Protecting Sports Facilities, Amenities and Assets
- Policy COM5: Enhancing Sports Facilities, Amenities and Assets
- Policy COM6: Protecting Community “Services”

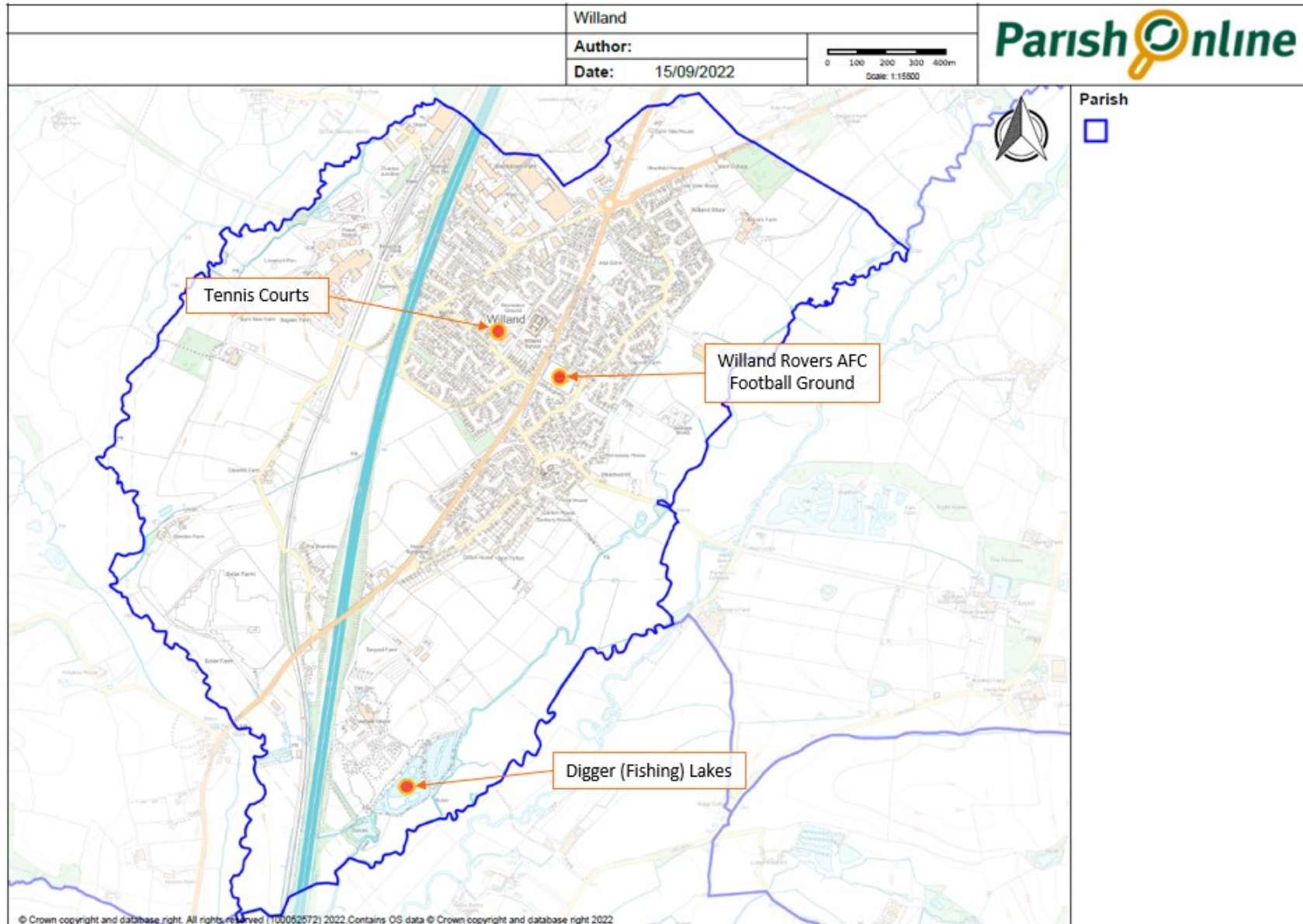
We are fortunate to have a wide range of well-used community and sports facilities and assets, which are shown on Maps 3 and 4 below. This also includes buildings which house or host what we consider to be of critical importance to the health and sustainability of the Parish and its community as community “services”. Many of these also play a much wider role in supporting residents in neighbouring parishes.



Map 3: Community and Sports Facilities, Assets and “Services”



Map 4: Sports Facilities and Assets



## 5.2 Engaging with the Community on Major Development Proposals

### Policy Justification

As noted earlier in this Plan, the Parish (and village) of Willand is fortunate to have a good balance between housing, employment and community facilities, making it a relatively sustainable place to live and work. Ironically, its position of balance comes largely from its location on the strategic road network and proximity particularly to Junction 27, but also Junction 28 to the south and the Tiverton Parkway railway station.

Retaining the “look and feel” and this balance of our community is a clear issue of importance for residents during our consultations but also from a planning perspective with the Local Plan and its evidence base recognising Willand’s role in this regard<sup>17</sup>. Our policy COM1 is a simple, but important, requirement for developers of major development<sup>18</sup> proposals to engage with the local community at an early stage to ensure that the aims of this Plan and aspirations of the community are met. This is particularly important in the later years of the Plan period and should a new Local Plan come into place during the same period. While we cannot, at this stage, predict with any accuracy what might happen with regard to future housing and employment allocations, having policy COM1 in place will help to ensure that any future planned or speculative planning proposals have some form of early community engagement. While the current Local Plan encourages developers to take opportunities to do this, it is by no means certain that all will, hence the need for this policy to give some weight to the importance of both this Plan, its policies and the community of Willand.

### **Policy COM1: Engaging with the Community on Major Development Proposals**

**Proposers of major development (on sites of 10 or more dwellings) are strongly encouraged to engage with the local community and Parish Council, prior to submission of a planning application to the Local Planning Authority, to help ensure that proposals take into account both this Plan’s Aims and Objectives and the views of the local community.**

## 5.3 Protecting and Enhancing Community Facilities and Assets

### Policy Justification

In order to maintain and enhance the sustainable balance in our community, our community facilities must be protected for future use. They provide important opportunities for people to meet and

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<sup>17</sup> For example, in the Local Plan itself, and various evidence base documents which suggest this position such as the Settlement Character Assessment, Employment Land Review, Area Profile and Sustainability Appraisal. See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/adopted-local-plan-and-policies-maps/adopted-local-plan-review-evidence-base/>

<sup>18</sup> Major development is: for housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the [Parish and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#). See the NPPF - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>

socialise, learn, practice religion, and engage in mental and physical exercise, and are essential for people's mental and physical wellbeing.

In the context of policy COM2 below, these comprise those facilities which are not run commercially by a private business and which largely provide facilities for community activities, events, clubs, organisations and faith groups, across age groups. The facilities we are seeking to protect are Willand Village Hall<sup>19</sup>, Willand Health and Community Centre<sup>20</sup>, St Mary's Church and St Mary's Church Hall<sup>21</sup>, Willand Methodist Church<sup>22</sup> and Willand Primary School, Pre-school and Nursery.

These facilities are used by a wide range of groups and organisations including, but not limited to:

- Theatre groups;
- Gardening club;
- Coffee mornings and other social meeting events and groups;
- Youth clubs;
- Various sports clubs;
- Various parent and toddler groups;
- Various faith groups, church meetings and worship;
- Various exercise groups;
- Various martial arts clubs;
- Bingo;
- Fairs;
- Education, learning and training courses;
- Concerts;
- Parish Council meetings.

All facilities listed in policy COM2 are well-used by the community and changes to alternative, non-community use facilities, will be resisted. This policy therefore seeks to protect them for community use.

National policy supports a policy position of protecting community facilities<sup>23</sup> and our policy COM2 adds value and local specificity to Local Plan policies S1: Sustainable development priorities and DM23: Community facilities<sup>24</sup>. In addition to protecting facilities it seeks to enable improvements to be made to them and protect from their loss as far as planning policies are able. The policy also seeks to ensure that proposals are "fit-for-purpose" and early engagement with the local community is encouraged.

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<sup>19</sup> See <https://willandvillagehall.org.uk/>

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/190698607681346/>

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.stmaryswilland.org/>

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.tivwell-methodists.org.uk/culm-valley>

<sup>23</sup> See paragraphs 92 and 83 d) of the NPPF, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf). Paragraph 92 states that "To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should...a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments..." and "... (c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs...". Paragraph 83 d) states that planning policies and decisions should enable "the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship." to support a prosperous local rural economy.

<sup>24</sup> See Mid-Devon Local Plan, <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/adopted-local-plan-and-policies-maps/>

**Policy COM2: Protecting and Enhancing Community Facilities, Amenities and Assets**

**1. Existing community facilities, amenities and assets (as identified on Map 3 and listed below) are locally valued and will be protected for community use. Their loss will not normally be supported:**

- i) Willand Village Hall and Youth Club;**
- ii) Willand Health and Community Centre;**
- iii) St Mary’s Church Hall;**
- iv) St Mary’s Church;**
- v) Willand Methodist Church;**
- vi) Willand Primary School;**
- vii) Willand Pre-school;**
- viii) Willand Nursery.**

**2. Proposals for new community facilities and those which result in the loss (redevelopment or change of use) of the named facilities, amenities and assets above will only be supported where:**

- i) they meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy DM23: Community Facilities; and,**
- ii) they do not have an adverse impact on the special character of the area’s natural and built environments.**

**3. Proposers of development are encouraged to engage with the local community and Parish Council at the earliest opportunity to help ensure that any proposals take into account both this Plan’s Objectives, the needs of users and the views of the local community.**

## **5.4 Protecting and Enhancing Sports Facilities and Assets**

### **Policy Justification**

Our sports facilities in the village also have a key role to play in supporting the sustainability and health and wellbeing of the community. We are fortunate to have a well-supported Football Club and Tennis Club, both with a buoyant membership. The Willand Rovers Football Club<sup>25</sup> (WRFC) 1<sup>st</sup> team plays in the Southern League. The club’s ground is at Silver Street and should be protected from loss as a sports facility. Willand Tennis Club<sup>26</sup> is an active village club based at the courts in Jubilee Field and supports social and competitive tennis for both adults and juniors.

The Mid-Devon Playing Pitch Strategy<sup>27</sup> highlights both the football and tennis clubs, supporting resurfacing of the tennis courts and upgraded lighting, and additional facilities for the football club should demand become apparent from youth and ladies teams (with at least one youth 11v11 pitch required).

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/willandroversfc/> and <http://www.willandrovers.co.uk/>

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/Willandtennisclub/> and <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/WillandTennisClub>

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/playing-pitch-strategy/>

Policy COM3 seeks to protect these facilities from loss. However, the policy does not seek to ossify these facilities. Should improvements and enhancements be required which support their main use, these should be supported. Equally, if either facility could be improved by relocation, this is supported subject to better quality and quantity (or capacity) of facilities being provided. It is important to note that a secure community use agreement is a common way to ensure that the community gets access to new provision for sport in particular. These are typically secured through section 106 agreements and organisations such as national sports governing bodies and Sport England have model agreement examples which the local authority can use where such an agreement is required. It is important, after agreement is in place, for the local authority to enforce it. The policy also rightly draws attention to the need for proposals where mitigation is proposed, to take fully into account Sport England’s most up-to-date policy. For example, Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy<sup>28</sup> is a critical policy document used to help defend against loss of playing fields. This is particularly relevant for applications where Sport England will not be a statutory consultee, such as smaller scale proposals.

Policy COM4 provides support to enhance facilities, subject to criteria being met to ensure that a balance of factors are taken into account. It is considered appropriate to seek to retain spend for enhanced facilities within the Parish. The criterion in the policy is borne from an understanding of how mitigation can sometimes be “gained” from a housing proposal but then provided or spent outside of the Parish if it goes into a central “pot” held by the local authority. It is also important to reflect the position that there can sometimes be a misconception that sports clubs always require additional pitches or facilities to increase their capacity (and cater for an increased local population from new development). Clubs (and indeed the Parish Council) can prefer a financial contribution to improve the quality (and therefore enhance capacity of) facilities and pitches.

**Policy COM3: Protecting Sports Facilities, Amenities and Assets**

**1. Our main sport facilities and pitches are identified on Map 4 and are:**

- i) Tennis Courts at Jubilee Field;**
- ii) Digger (Fishing) Lakes;**
- iii) the Willand Rovers Athletic Football Club ground.**

**2. Existing sports facilities and pitches will be protected from loss. Where loss of a facility or pitch is unavoidable, it will be supported only where:**

- i) redevelopment of the existing site includes an alternative type of community use, space or access;**
- ii) alternative replacement provision is made within the Plan area and to a better quality and quantity than the facility and / or pitches being lost;**
- iii) provision ensures community access through a community use agreement, s106 agreement or other enforceable legal agreement;**
- iv) that the proposal demonstrates how it has taken into account the most up-to-date Local Planning Authority Playing Pitch Strategy and / or Sports Facility Strategy; and,**

<sup>28</sup> See [https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport?section=playing\\_fields\\_policy](https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport?section=playing_fields_policy)



v) proposals for replacement to mitigate loss satisfactorily meet the most up-to-date policy requirements of Sport England and relevant sports governing bodies.

3. Where replacement cannot be achieved in the Plan area, a section 106 planning obligation (financial contribution), in lieu of replacement, will be made to ensure that provision is enhanced at other existing facilities, amenities and assets.

**Policy COM4: Enhancing Sports Facilities, Amenities and Assets**

1. Where relevant, development, refurbishment or redevelopment proposals for sports will be supported where they :

- i) deliver or contribute towards improving quality and / or capacity to accommodate demand at existing facilities and / or pitches through on-site improvements, enhancements or extension; and / or,
- ii) deliver or contribute towards identified opportunities and / or resolve identified constraints; and / or,
- iii) secure or improve the financial viability of long-term use of facilities and pitches;

and;

- iv) do not exacerbate identified constraints or challenges on or associated with the site and proposal; and,
- v) satisfactorily mitigate adverse impacts which arise from the proposal.

2. If proposals for additional or improved facilities and / or pitches to accommodate demand arising from development proposals are not feasible or viable on-site, off-site provision or financial contributions towards provision should be made within the Plan area.

## **5.5 Protecting and Enhancing Community “Services”**

### **Policy Justification**

There are several services in the village which are considered “essential” for the community to continue to be sustainable in the long-term. These are services which are relied upon by the community which are operated either on a purely commercial footing or as businesses. The planning system cannot control whether or not a business or commercial operation remains in its premises given that this will come down to economic viability and that the planning system can only be concerned with matters of land-use. However, planning policy can have some limited control over what uses take place in buildings. It is important for this Plan to identify the services which are important to the community. These often also operate as meeting places which can provide people with social support and provide services which would otherwise be difficult to access locally if they were absent. The community services of particular importance in Willand are the post office, the GP surgery, pharmacy, garage, hairdresser’s and the Halfway Public House. Policy COM5 seeks to protect the uses of the buildings which they occupy to enable similar provision to use them should they

become unviable or cease trading in the future. We recognise that planning policies will have a limited impact on retention of these in the village, particularly with permitted development rights allowing certain changes of use without the need for planning permission. The policy also seeks to protect other businesses which offer top-up or convenience retail food shopping (such as the Co-op and One Stop) and the Fish and Chip shop. These also play a role as “services” and contribute to the sustainability of the village, even though they are purely retail and take-away uses.

**Policy COM5: Protecting Community “Services”**

**1. Our locally valued “services” which support the vitality of the community are identified on Map 3, and are:**

- i) Willand Post Office;**
- ii) General Practitioners (GP) Surgery;**
- iii) Willand Pharmacy;**
- iv) Willand Garage (petrol station), Bluebell Restaurant / Café and Hairdressers;**
- v) Fish and Chip shop (Station Road);**
- vi) Co-op;**
- vii) One Stop; and,**
- viii) Halfway House Public House.**

**2. Development proposals (which require planning permission) which result in the loss to alternative uses of community “services” which support the vitality of the community will only be supported where:**

- i) it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the use is no longer viable having been publicly and openly marketed for sale, lease and / or rent (under current and other ownership models) for a minimum of 12 months for a similar use, unless there is robust local evidence for a shorter timeframe; or,**
- ii) a replacement use or provision is proposed (and will be delivered) on an alternative site within the Plan area; or,**
- iii) the proposed alternative use would provide equal or greater benefits for the local economy and community than the current use.**

## **5.6 Community Actions and Projects**

For this topic, the projects and actions, not covered through our planning policies, are:

- Access to education and training needs to be continued and strengthened.
- More public seating should be provided.

## 6. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

### 6.1 Introduction







The Parish’s “green infrastructure” is of critical importance to the community, people who work in Willand and to flora and fauna. It comprises many elements, some natural, some semi-natural and some human-made<sup>29</sup>. Typical types of green infrastructure are shown in the box on this page.

Collectively, all of these elements of green infrastructure are important to quality of life, health and wellbeing, biodiversity, and the wider environment.

These elements also play a vital role in a much wider network of green spaces. The declared “Climate Emergency”<sup>30</sup>, legal targets for the nation to be “net zero carbon” by 2050 and the District and County-wide aspirations to reach net zero by 2030 will mean that the natural environment must be protected and will have an even more important role, moving forward, to help to reach these targets. Solutions such as “carbon sequestration” which can

include the planting of more trees to absorb and “capture” carbon will become more important in future.

The policies in this section of the Plan are designed to perform several roles, namely, to protect the green spaces that we value for local amenity and recreational enjoyment, to protect natural and semi-natural areas which do not already enjoy policy or legal protection through existing legislation, or national and Local Plan policies, to take opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity, and provide policy protection for locally important reasons and which are not otherwise recognised elsewhere. They also have justification based in Mid-Devon District Council’s Green Infrastructure Assessment and Strategy<sup>31</sup>. The Assessment states that “Overall GI is below average, as is the GI per head of

Typical elements of “green infrastructure”	
	Agricultural field systems, rural landscape, urban fringe and gaps between settlements
	Grassland, heathland, woodland, hedgerows, trees and their interconnecting corridors critical to biodiversity and habitat
	Protected areas such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves
	Recreational, sport and leisure greenspaces, parks and gardens, public amenity greenspace, village greens, formal greenspaces, playing pitches, heritage / cultural greenspace, churchyards and allotments
	“Greenways”, footpaths, cycle paths, coast path, bridleways and lanes
	Includes “blue infrastructure” such as: rivers, streams, wetland, sustainable drainage systems

<sup>29</sup> It is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) glossary as “a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.”

<sup>30</sup> See <https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/> for further information on both the climate emergency and ecological emergency declared in Devon.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/local-plan-history/previous-local-plan-evidence/green-infrastructure-assessment/>

population. Nature sites are in short supply, with very few County Wildlife Sites and no SSSIs. There is a high land area of protected trees (Tree Preservation Orders) in comparison to other catchment areas.” (Paragraph 5.163) It goes on to say that “...public right of way density is one of the lowest in Mid Devon at 0.45km per square kilometre, and qualifies as a ‘deficiency area’. Devon County Council categorises deficiency areas as those parishes with 0.5km public rights of way per square kilometre, or less.” (Paragraph 5.164) The Fields in Trust Green Space Index suggests that Willand village, and much of the remaining Parish area, has a lower than minimum national standard score<sup>32</sup>. The Assessment and the Green Space Index suggest a need to protect the green infrastructure we have and support its improvement. This also leads to the Strategy’s recommendation that Willand is the 5<sup>th</sup> priority for local authority investment in delivering green infrastructure of 28 priority areas (policy GI/2, p.8). However, the Assessment does suggest that Willand is fortunate to have a higher area of small-scale open space and play areas compared to other areas. This reinforces the need to protect these areas.

The policies in this section are:

- Policy GI1: Local Green Space
- Policy GI2: Locally Valued Areas of Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Habitat
- Policy GI3: Protecting Trees from Loss as a Result of Development
- Policy GI4: New Trees and Planting

Our Green Infrastructure network, comprised of a variety of land uses / elements is set out, below on Maps 5 and 6.

## 6.2 Local Green Space

### Policy Justification

Through national planning policy<sup>33</sup>, we have an opportunity to designate our important local green spaces in order to protect them and ensure that their current use remains. For a space to be designated as Local Green Space, it needs to be:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and,
- c) local in character and not an extensive tract of land.<sup>34</sup>

Through local consultation and gathering evidence on the nature, use of and quality of important local spaces, we have identified 19 spaces which we designate as Local Green Spaces (LGS).

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<sup>32</sup> See <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/5301c55a8189410b9428a90f05596af4/page/GSI-Score/> Fields in Trust states that the “Green Space Index is Fields in Trust’s annual barometer of park and green space provision in Great Britain. It helps to identify where legal protection of green space can help to achieve these targets and bring lasting benefits to people, place and the planet.”

<sup>33</sup> See NPPF, paragraphs 101-103, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> See NPPF, paragraph 102, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/810197/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf).

They are designated where they play mainly a social, play, leisure and recreational role. In many instances they play a multi-functional role and also connect to the areas of habitat and biodiversity, therefore forming an integral part of our wider green infrastructure network important for the community and wildlife alike.

The identified spaces defined in Map 7 (and in more detailed mapping in Appendix 2) all meet the requirements set out in national policy<sup>35</sup>. Our assessment to demonstrate that the spaces do meet the required criteria is also set out in this appendix.

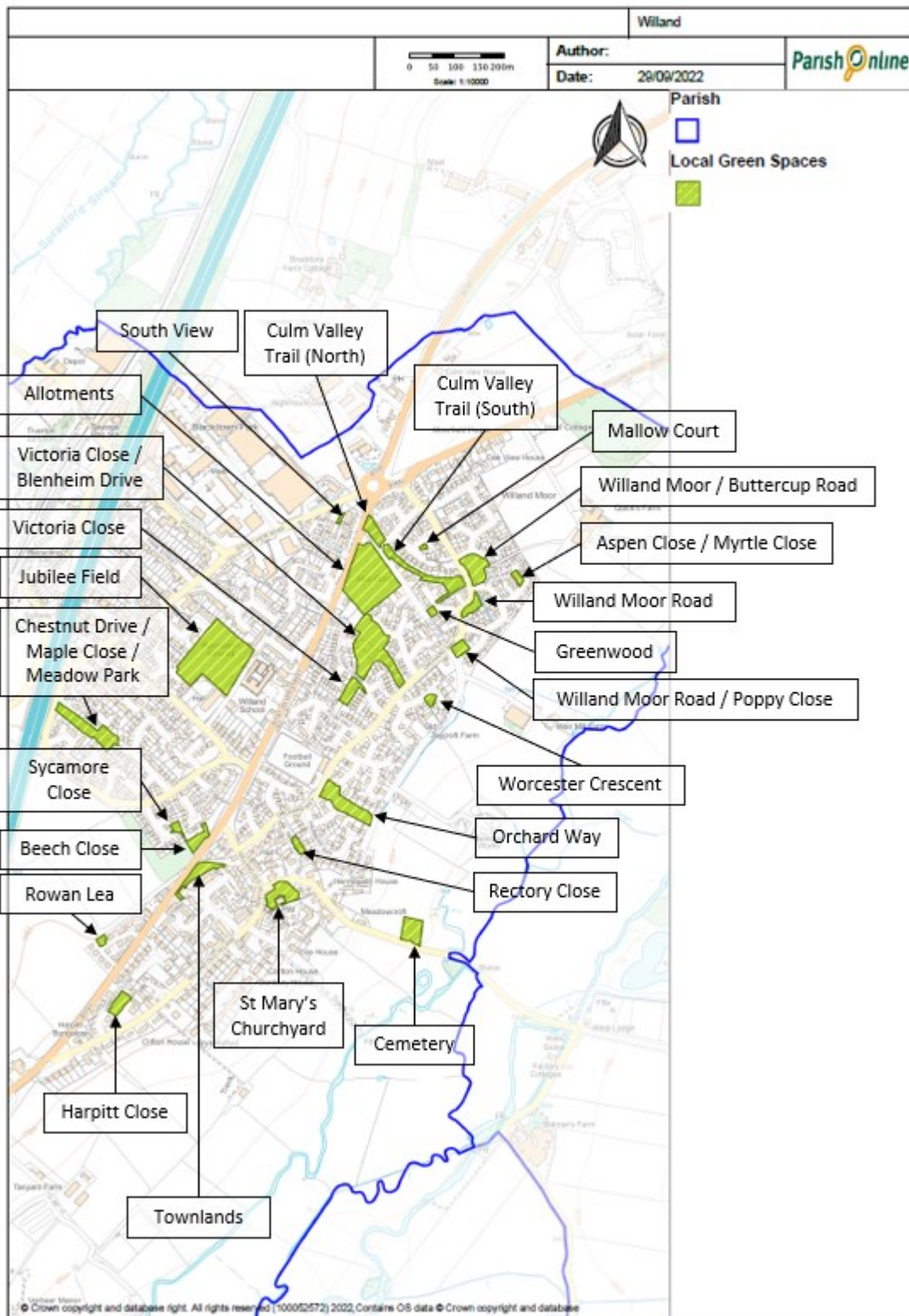
The designation does not mean that no change can happen on the sites and policy GI1 below sets out the criteria against which any planning proposals on these sites would be acceptable. Typically, for example, a proposal (which needs planning permission) for facilities which help to support or enhance the main use for which the site is protected, could be permissible.



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<sup>35</sup> See our Local Green Space Study which can be seen in Appendix 2.

Map 5: Local Green Spaces



**Policy GI1: Local Green Space**

**1. Our locally valued green spaces are identified on Map 7 (and Appendix 2) and are designated as Local Green Space in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. These areas will be protected for their local environmental, heritage and / or recreational value. Willand's Local Green Spaces are:**

- i) Aspen Close / Myrtle Close;**
- ii) Beech Close;**
- iii) Chestnut Drive / Maple Close;**
- iv) Culm Valley Trail (North);**
- v) Culm Valley Trail (South);**
- vi) Greenwood;**
- vii) Harpitt Close;**
- viii) Jubilee Playing Field / Gables Lea;**
- ix) Mallow Court;**
- x) Orchard Way;**
- xi) Rectory Close;**
- xii) Rowan Lea;**
- xiii) St Mary's Churchyard;**
- xiv) South View Close;**
- xv) Sycamore Close;**
- xvi) Townlands;**
- xvii) Victoria Close / Blenheim Drive;**
- xviii) Victoria Close;**
- xix) Willand Allotments;**
- xx) Willand Moor Road / Buttercup Road;**
- xxi) Willand Moor Road;**
- xxii) Willand Moor Road / Poppy Close;**
- xxiii) Willand Parish Cemetery;**
- xxiv) Worcester Crescent.**

**2. Development that would harm the openness and / or special character of a Local Green Space or its significance and value to the local community will not be permitted unless the proposal can demonstrate very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.**

**3. Any development of such areas will be managed in accordance with national policy for Green Belt.**



## 6.3 Locally Valued Areas of Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Habitat

### Policy Justification

There are several areas of woodland and other areas of land with noted habitats which require protection from harm and adverse change. These form a critical part of the green infrastructure network in the Parish. These areas of locally valued biodiversity, geodiversity and habitat will be protected.

Using local knowledge, aerial mapping, Devon Environment Viewer<sup>36</sup> and Natural England's habitats data<sup>37</sup>, areas of habitat and green corridors which link these areas of biodiversity have been defined on Map 6 (and in greater detail in Appendix 3). These areas should be protected from loss as a basic principle. However, the planning system requires policies to enable the opportunity for development proposals to mitigate impact and so policy GI2 also sets out the criteria which must be considered and passed for development to be considered acceptable in these designated areas. The policy also requires proposals to take fully into account other notable and significant environmental records relating to habitat and species.

In applying the policy, a funded management and maintenance plan should be agreed between the applicant and Local Planning Authority to ensure that net gains in biodiversity are properly managed and realised. Any proposal should also not cause significant harm to the setting with regard to biodiversity, geodiversity and habitat, or such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated.

These areas will naturally link to other areas of importance outside the Parish boundary, but this Plan can do nothing to protect these areas. This Plan cannot introduce policy for these neighbouring parish areas but planning officers and developers are encouraged to consider the natural continuity and inter-connectivity of the areas designated in policy GI2 beyond this Plan's area. Mid-Devon District

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<sup>36</sup> See <http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/>

<sup>37</sup> This is documented in our evidence base, but detailed interactive mapping of these areas can be searched and seen here <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

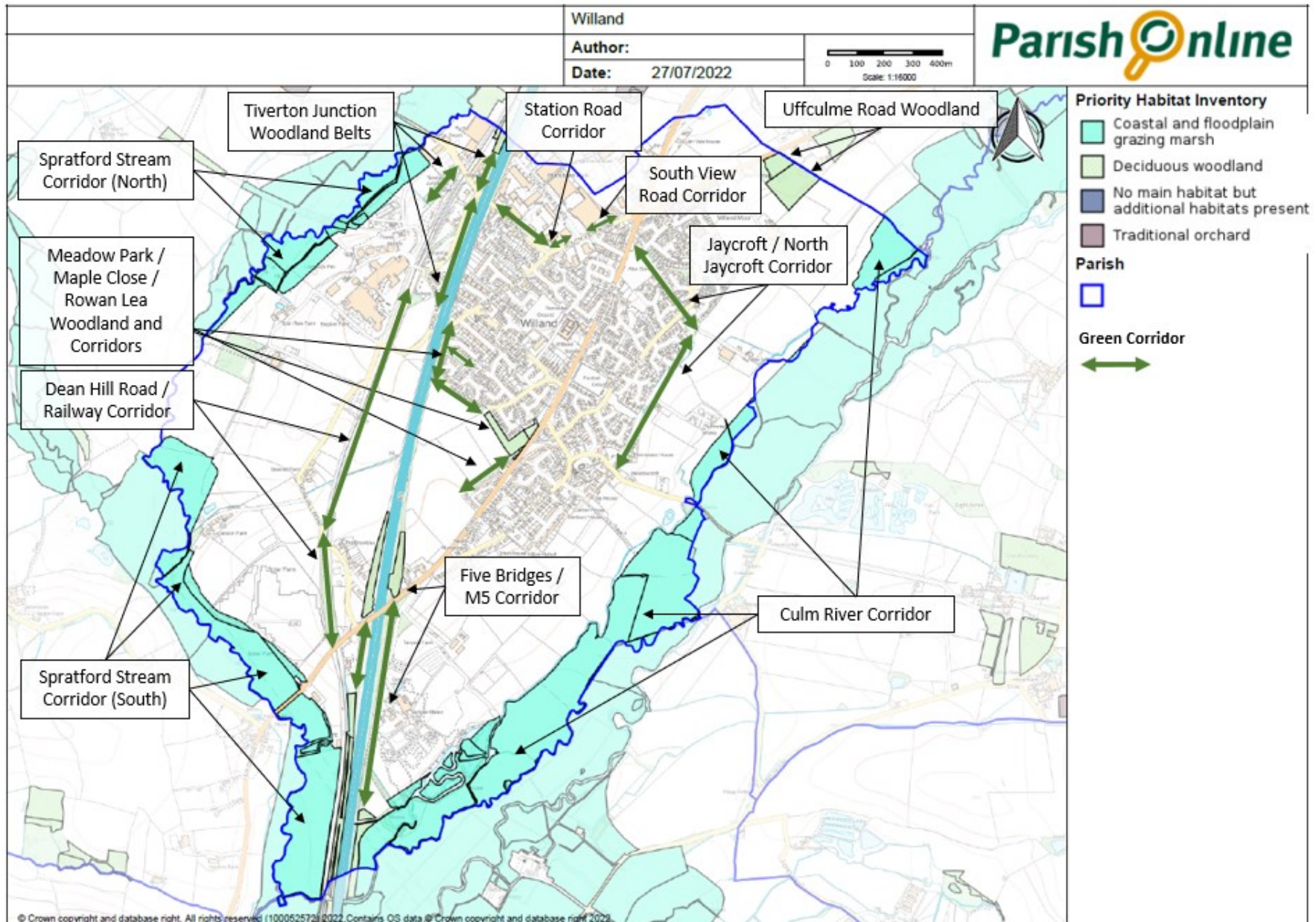


Council is encouraged to ensure that a strategic and cross-parish boundary protection is put in place through the Local Plan review.

The policy requires that proposals on or affecting these sites should demonstrate how they have responded to the requirements of the policy through an ecological assessment. This provides applicants with the opportunity to demonstrate how they have responded and will ensure that the areas can be protected from significant harm or that satisfactory mitigation can be introduced.

The Devon Carbon Plan, targets for zero carbon emissions, emerging Climate Change Bill, Environment Act and Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, and recent changes to the NPPF in relation to the importance of trees, emphasise the need to retain areas of habitat and woodland as essential components of a wider green infrastructure network.

Map 6: Locally Valued Areas of Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Habitat and Supporting Green Corridors



**Policy GI2: Locally Valued Areas of Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Habitat**

**1. Our locally valued areas of biodiversity, geodiversity and habitat are identified on Map 6 and are:**

- i) Culm River Corridor;**
- ii) Five Bridges / M5 Corridor;**
- iii) Meadow Park / Maple Close / Rowan Lea Woodland;**
- iv) Spratford Stream Corridor (North);**
- v) Spratford Stream Corridor (South);**
- vi) Tiverton Junction Woodland Belts;**
- vii) Uffculme Road Woodland.**

**2. These areas will be protected (and enhanced where possible) as areas important in supporting wildlife habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity and their role within the wider network of green infrastructure. Significant harm will not be supported. Green corridors linking these areas will also be protected.**

**3. Proposals which result in the unavoidable significant harm to these areas (in whole or in part) will only be supported where:**

- i) The proposal is specific to that use and role of the site; and,**
- ii) The area (quality, land area and habitat, biodiversity and geodiversity value) can be satisfactorily replaced within the Parish with net gains in biodiversity.**

**4. Proposals on or affecting these sites should demonstrate how they have responded to the requirements of this policy through an ecological assessment.**

## 6.4 Protecting Trees from Loss and New Trees in Development

### **Policies Justification**

Trees, whether part of woodland, hedgerows, copse, isolated clumps or as a single prominent feature in both the rural areas and the village, form a key component of the landscape and as habitats for wildlife. All common species have value and so protection of habitats and ecosystems should not simply be limited to rare or endangered species of flora and fauna.

Within the settlement limits in particular trees play a vital role in helping to reduce airborne pollution and are increasingly recognised, wherever they are located, as vital in the absorption of carbon dioxide emissions (i.e. carbon capture and contribution to carbon sequestration<sup>38</sup>), and playing a role in flood prevention, and therefore very significant in their contribution to meeting the challenge of climate change. Retention of trees also plays an important role in helping to slow and extend the period of time for the drainage of water during periods of rainfall. Trees are a key feature of our immediate

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<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/glossary/> for definitions relating to climate change. Also see <https://www.woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/standard-and-guidance/3-carbon-sequestration/3-3-project-carbon-sequestration> for details on how development proposals can calculate carbon sequestration.

environment which help contribute to positive mental health. For all of these reasons, their loss will not be supported.

While some trees benefit from Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) designated by Mid-Devon District Council<sup>39</sup>, and those within our designated Conservation Area also carry some protection, there are others within habitat areas identified by policy GI2 and outside of these which play an important role as part of the essential green infrastructure network.

Policy GI3 seeks to protect this valuable part of our green infrastructure, although it is recognised that planning policy can play only a limited role given that policies can be used only in relation to proposals for development.

Our support for trees and the important role they play in the natural and village environments extends, through policy GI4, to increasing tree planting to also help with improving air quality, canopy cover and shade during hot weather, biodiversity, and help mitigate carbon dioxide emissions and the drive towards net zero emissions. The planting of trees can also help contribute significantly to demonstrating net gains in biodiversity in relation to a development site. The Environment Act 2021<sup>40</sup> introduced, through Regulations in 2022/23, statutory requirements for providing net gains in biodiversity in relation to development proposals (in addition to the existing Local Plan policy requirement in policies S1: Sustainable development priorities and DM26: Green infrastructure in major development) and so this Plan does not seek such requirements. Policy GI4 support for tree planting and sets out the checks and balances required to ensure that planting is fit for purpose. However, the policy is limited to use when planning proposals come forward as a planning policy cannot simply require tree planting to happen, given that planting a tree does not require planning permission.

In addition to the policy requirements, development proposals incorporating new trees and planting will be required to submit management and maintenance details to help ensure that new trees are managed and maintained, not only to ensure that they “bed in” in the first season of planting but also that they remain managed in the longer-term as necessary. Our policies support the efforts of organisations such as the Devon Wildlife Trust in saving treescapes<sup>41</sup>.

### **Policy GI3: Protecting Trees from Loss as a Result of Development**

- 1. Where development proposals are on a site on which trees exist, these existing trees will be retained wherever possible for the contribution they make to reducing air pollution, softening the built landscape, providing shade in the summer months (urban cooling), good mental health, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.**
- 2. Where the loss of a tree or trees is unavoidable, proposals will replace trees to an equivalent maturity where feasible and in all cases to the same scale, effect or massing of trees to ensure an equivalent contribution to local biodiversity, air quality and health, and carbon sequestration, on site or within close proximity if on-site is not feasible. Where replacement of trees is required on-site or off-site to mitigate loss, policy GI4 will also be**

<sup>39</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning/trees-and-hedgerows/tree-preservation-orders/> for further information on Tree Preservation Orders.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/48/contents/made>

<sup>41</sup> See Wild about Devon - Saving Devon's Treescapes project <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/what-we-do/our-projects/saving-devons-treescapes>

relevant.

**Policy GI4: New Trees and Planting**

Development proposals which include the provision of trees and other planting to enhance the environment should ensure that:

- i) the trees are of a species, size and massing appropriate to the immediate setting;
- ii) planting and trees in foliage allow adequate access to buildings within their setting through adoption and implementation of an appropriate management and maintenance programme;
- iii) trees and planting areas are designed and contained in such a way as to prevent future problems from roots to the planting structure (where relevant), paving surface and underground structures and infrastructure; and,
- iv) species are planted which are resilient to likely changes in the climate and weather patterns.

## 6.5 Community Actions and Projects

For this topic, the projects and actions, not covered through our planning policies, are:

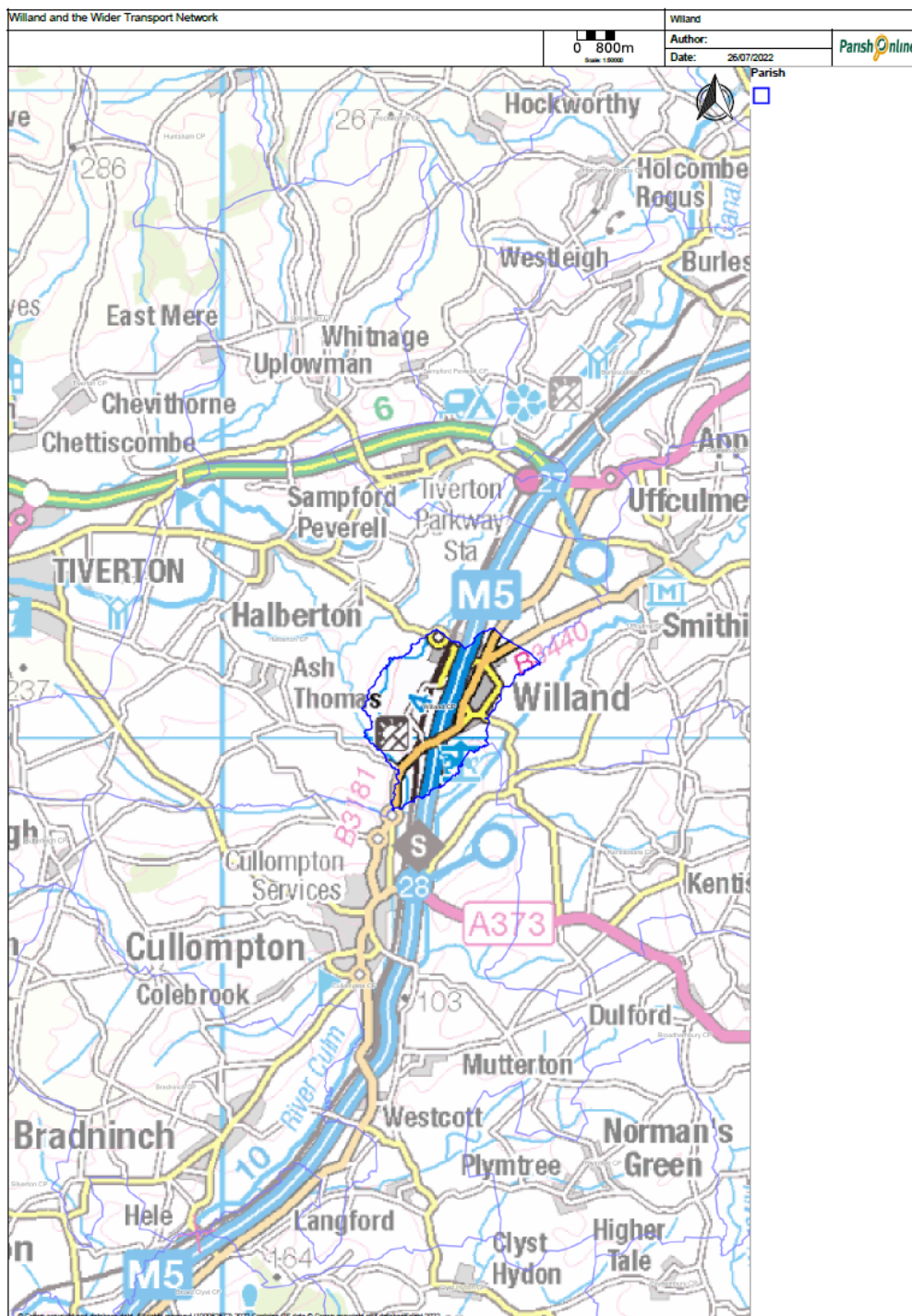
- Develop a planting strategy for more trees and other wildlife habitat on public and private land.
- Work with public and private landowners to ensure that good and easy access to these areas is maintained.
- Work with neighbouring parishes and Mid-Devon District Council to help retain spatial differentiation between Willand and existing neighbouring settlements and the continuation of what is, in reality, a strategic network of green infrastructure which extends well beyond the Parish boundary.

## 7. TRANSPORT, ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

### 7.1 Introduction

Willand benefits from having a good position on the strategic road network, being most closely linked to the M5 Junction 27 but also close to Junction 28. It is also relatively close to Tiverton Parkway railway station with trains running up and down the Great Western mainline between Penzance, Exeter, Bristol and London. Its location means that it is viewed as a good place to be based for many businesses and this is true of the wider area outside the Parish boundary.

Map 7: Willand and its Wider Transport Network



Locally, the village has its own range of transport, accessibility and connectivity challenges and opportunities. This section sets out a range of policies to respond to these challenges and opportunities. In doing so we recognise, however, that the planning system only has a limited role in being able to effect change and deliver improvements to the transport network. Other organisations and agencies have responsibility for the transport network and issues related to it, for example, Devon County Council Highways for the county road network and public highways, Highways England for the strategic road network (motorways and trunk road network), on-street parking enforcement by Devon County Council, and the Police for traffic speeding. In addition, many measures which could introduce changes and improvements are subject to permitted development rights and would not be influenced by planning policies. However, our suite of policies in this section present a planning policy response where development proposals should be influenced and have the opportunity to support improvements in our transport network.

The policies in this section are:

- Policy TAC1: Improving Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity
- Policy TAC2: Protecting the Footpath, Bridleway and Cyclepath Network
- Policy TAC3: Electric Charging Points for Plug-in Vehicles
- Policy TAC4: E-cargo and Electric Vehicle Hub

## 7.2 Improving Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity

### Policy Justification

As we have noted above, the planning system can influence only some aspects of transport. For example, minor alterations to the road network, repairs and traffic calming are usually permitted without the need for planning permission and issues such as enforcement of traffic speeds and parking regulations are the responsibility of bodies such as the Devon & Cornwall Police and Devon County Council (as both Parking Enforcement and Highways Authority). The frequency of rail and bus services are not regulated through the planning system and planning policies can only influence provision of smaller scale infrastructure and changes to buildings and land-use.

However, this Plan draws together several key issues, challenges and opportunities identified through consultation with the community and sets out policies where they can be used to help protect or enhance transport, accessibility and connectivity. Taking such measures not only helps to improve travel options, but helps to support improvements to our health while presenting a positive response to the challenges posed by climate change. As indicated earlier in this Plan, Willand is a relatively sustainable village. With the walking time around 15-20 minutes from the northern to southern tip of the village, and walking times from most parts of the village to the centre around 10-15 minutes, this is something which can be built-upon. The concept of a 15 or 20 minute walking radius to and from facilities and services is becoming a more central part of town planning thinking and Willand can capitalise on this<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> For example, see <https://tcpa.org.uk/collection/the-20-minute-neighbourhood/>, <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/>, <https://tcpa.org.uk/resources/the-climate-crisis-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-planning-for-climate-change/>, and <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

Importantly, this Plan does not simply leave non-planning transport issues and problems to one side but presents them as issues connected to planning and our wider environment. We have identified non-planning transport actions and projects at the end of this section.

The main transport challenges and opportunities in Willand can be grouped around the following issues:

- Improving safe pedestrian and cycle routes;
- Improving pedestrian safety (with a focus on children);
- Increasing the frequency of local trips to be made by foot and bicycle (also called “modeshift”) to benefit health and help reduce the local carbon footprint, congestion at busy times and road safety;
- Supporting opportunities to introduce electric vehicle infrastructure.

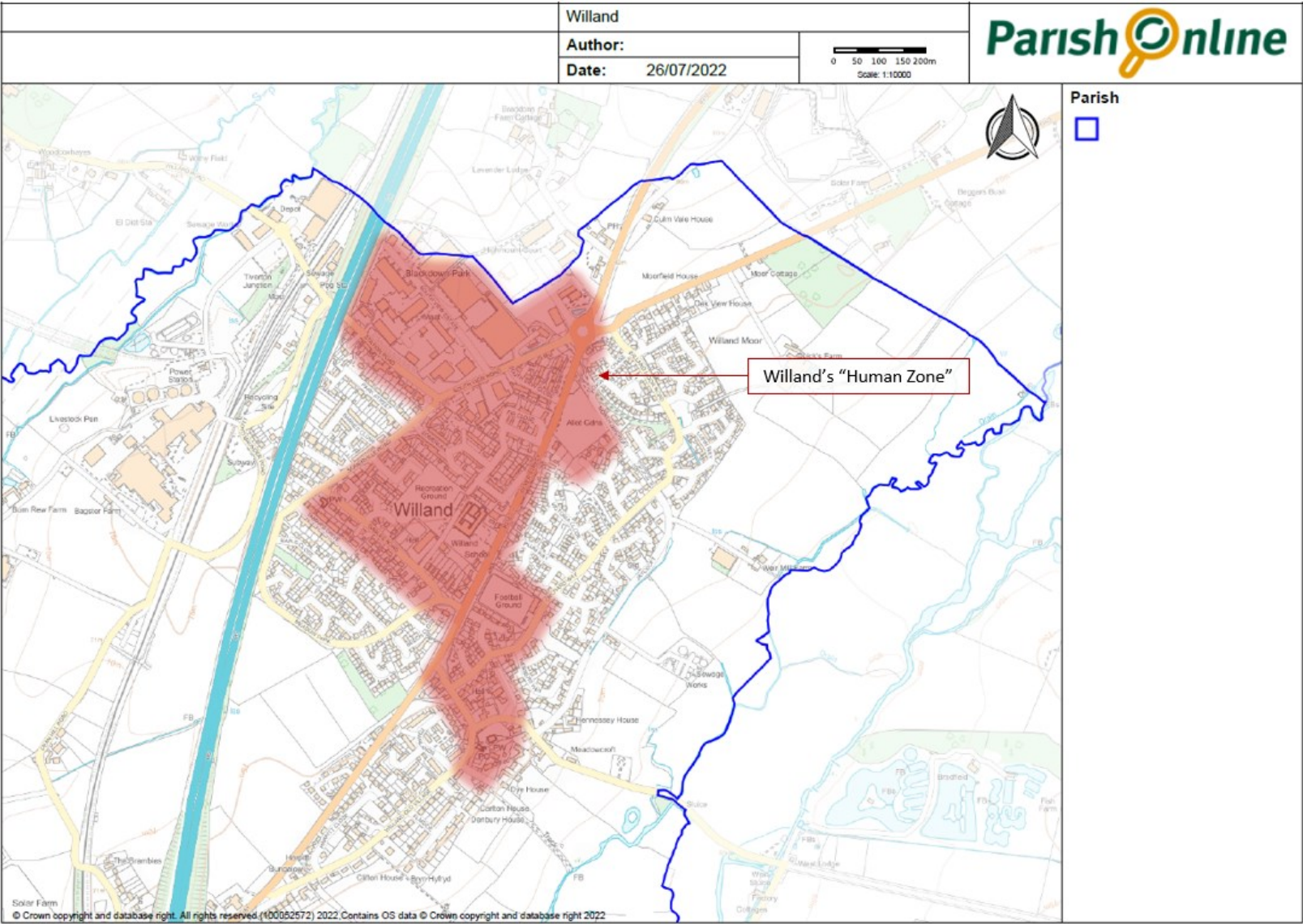


Willand village’s character of being a sustainable place to live and work is formed not just by the right balance between housing, facilities, services, retail and employment opportunities but also by the compact nature of where these are located. As referenced, the walking distances in and across Willand make it ideal for people having their day-to-day needs within easy reach. Uses are spread across the village, with no central area where all shops, facilities and services are located. Willand does have a “human zone” where most activity and journeys take place day-to-day, based on common destinations. This indicative “human zone” is shown on Map 8. Improving travel across this Human Zone, to help enable Willand to continue to be a sustainable place to live, work and enjoy, with easy access to employment, facilities and services is a priority for the village.

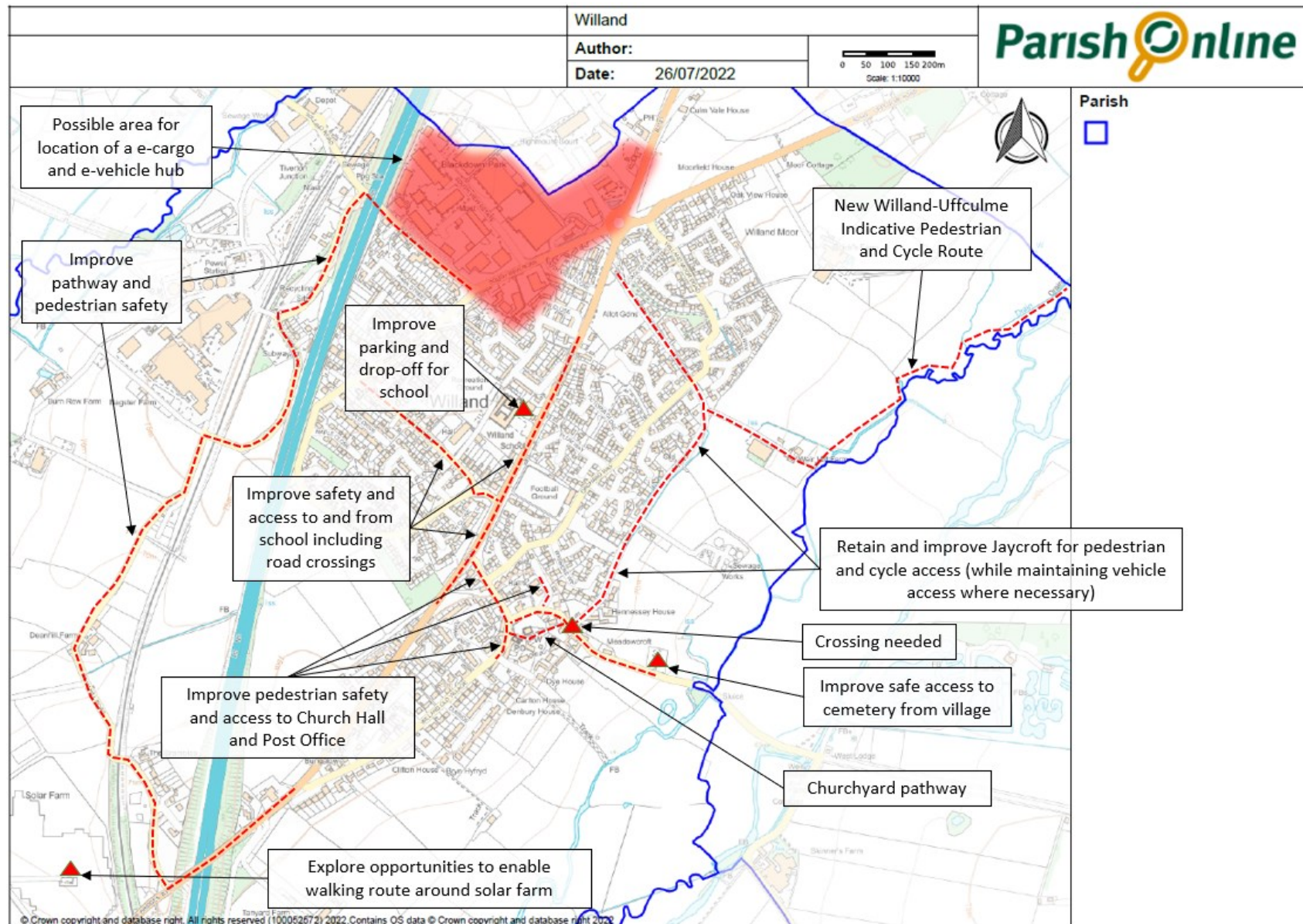
Map 8 below, shows the key transport and accessibility constraints, opportunities and features which will help to enhance Willand’s connectivity and ease of accessibility. Policy TAC1 then provides a positive policy framework to enable such projects and actions to be brought forward in planning terms, where opportunity arises to do so through the planning system.



Map 8: The Willand "Human Zone"



Map 9: Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity Plan



**Policy TAC1: Improving Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity**

**1. Our Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity Plan is set out on Map 9 and identifies the key transport and accessibility constraints, opportunities and the network’s key features’ contribution to Willand’s character, across modes. Where relevant, development proposals will be supported which:**

- i) deliver identified opportunities and / or resolve identified constraints; and / or,**
- ii) do not erode key features’ contribution to the built and landscape character of Willand; and / or,**
- iii) do not exacerbate identified constraints or satisfactorily mitigate adverse impacts which arise from the proposal.**

**2. Development proposals should contribute positively to reducing, adapting to and mitigating the locally generated impacts which would result in increasing factors related to climate change and contribute positively to moving the Parish up the sustainable transport hierarchy.**

**3. Development proposals should, where relevant, improve accessibility for all through consideration of disability access including (but not limited to) direct route desire lines between crossing points at dropped and tactile kerbs, pavement widths which allow for mobility vehicles to pass alongside other users and cycle lanes, and facilitate good access to public buildings, business premises, shops and services.**

**5. Development proposals should not exacerbate existing problems related to traffic flow, off-street parking capacity and the capacity of the road network to accommodate movement at peak travel times and should enhance road safety where feasible.**

## **7.3 Protecting the Footpath, Bridleway and Cyclepath Network**

### **Policy Justification**

Much of the Parish’s footpath network is within the village. However, there are also opportunities to access the countryside from the edges of the village<sup>43</sup> and such footpaths and bridleways will be protected through policy TAC2 below. While there is some protection through Law, our policy draws attention to the importance of the Public Rights of Way in the Parish and the desire to protect them from a land-use planning perspective. There are very few dedicated cycle paths in the Parish but opportunities to provide more safer routes for leisure activities, safe travel to school and to work. Of particular note is the opportunity to introduce an off-road walking and cycling route between Willand and Uffculme and improve the “Round the World” circular walking route around the Parish. Such improvements are set out above under Policy TAC1 and the Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity Plan. The popularity of electric bikes and e-scooters looks likely to increase during the Plan period and also necessitates safe infrastructure to be put in place for both modes for users and pedestrians.

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<sup>43</sup> The footpath (and cycle) network can be viewed on the following websites - <https://fourpointmapping.sustrans.org.uk/devoncyclemap/devon.html> and <https://www.devon.gov.uk/prow/interactive-map/>

Policy TAC2 also sets out criteria for new development to respond to where proposals have or could have an impact on existing provision and provides policy guidance for new foot and cycle paths to meet to ensure that they provide safe and good access and have no adverse impact on the Plan area.

**Policy TAC2: Protecting the Footpath, Bridleway and Cyclepath Network**

- 1. Development proposals which result in the loss of public footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths or reduce permeability within the settlement limits boundary will not be supported.**
- 2. Proposals on or affecting existing or for new Rights of Way and other public non-vehicular routes (for example, which could enhance accessibility to local amenities, community facilities and services) should, where relevant:**
  - i) help to increase opportunities for recreational access to and within the countryside;**
  - ii) better link existing areas of green infrastructure and Local Green Space used for recreational purposes;**
  - iii) help to retain and enhance safe and easy pedestrian and cycle access to local amenities including the school, community and sports facilities and assets and services;**
  - iv) ensure permeability through the built area and desire line access for pedestrians, those with impaired mobility and disabilities, and cyclists;**
  - v) provide safe routes with appropriate lighting, where necessary;**
  - vi) provide sufficiently wide pedestrian pavements for use by passing wheelchairs, mobility vehicles and pushchairs;**
  - vii) have no adverse impact on landscape or built character or such impacts are satisfactorily mitigated;**
  - viii) meet the most up-to-date standards of design (including preferable use of permeable and / or utilising sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) where feasible).**

## **7.4 Electric Charging Points for Plug-in Vehicles**

**Policy Justification**

Building Regulations now require electric vehicle charging points for new dwellings. However, in light of the need to respond positively to the climate change emergency and the aspirational target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 ahead of the legal national target of 2050, Policy TAC3 supports the provision of electric charging points for other types of development, where they require planning permission, subject to such infrastructure not having an adverse impact on accessibility or the character of the built environment.

**Policy TAC3: Electric Charging Points for Plug-in Vehicles**

**1. Development proposals for the provision of electric vehicle charging points, where planning permission is required, will be supported where they have no significant adverse impact on:**

- i) safe and good accessibility of pedestrians, those with impaired mobility and the disabled and cyclists along footpaths and cycle paths; and,**
- ii) the character of the built and natural environment where relevant.**

**2. Proposals for commercial charging “stations” or “hubs” on existing fuel station locations, or new bespoke facilities, will be supported, subject to other policies in the development plan.**

## **7.5 E-cargo and Electric Vehicle Hub**

### **Policy Justification**

A growing area of interest is the potential for a positive response to the decarbonisation agenda through more localised e-cargo hubs. Such hubs have been identified as potential solutions to a “greener” network of distribution for goods<sup>44</sup> currently delivered locally by couriers and vans which results in a significant carbon footprint. Policy TAC4 is therefore forward looking and supports provision of such an e-cargo distribution site in the Parish, potentially on the South View Business Park or the former garage on the B3181 close to existing employment areas both within the Parish and outside at Junction 27 of the M5. The policy is not an allocation of land for this facility.

**Policy TAC4: E-cargo and Electric Vehicle Hub**

**Development proposals for, or which support the delivery of, an e-cargo exchange and electric vehicle sustainable transport hub at the northern end of Willand village will be supported.**

## **7.6 Community Actions and Projects**

For this topic the projects and actions not covered through our planning policies, are:

- Work with responsible authorities such as Devon County Council Highways and Education departments, Mid-Devon District Council and the Devon & Cornwall Police, to introduce the measures and projects identified in the Transport, Access and Connectivity Plan, including (but not limited to) increased and safer accessibility, improved parking at the school and safe pedestrian and cycling routes.
- Work with local landowners (public and private sector) to increase access to the countryside around Willand village, explore access to the area around the solar farm for walking and restore the traditional walk ‘Round the World’ (including Dean Hill Road, past Gerston Farm and Burn Rew round to Station Road)
- Produce a clear mapped statement as to who is responsible for keeping which existing paths, verges and green areas clear, including those with no registered ownership.

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<sup>44</sup> For example, see recent research here - <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/>

## 8. ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

### 8.1 Introduction

As outlined in the introduction to the Plan in section 1.2, Willand is in a fortunate position to host numerous businesses, partially due to its good location close to the M5. The main areas of employment are at the northern end of the village at South View Business Park, and at Mid-Devon Business Park (with part of a Local Plan allocation site already delivered there and part still to be developed), and on the Parish's western edge at Tiverton Junction and Lloyd Maunder Road where the 2 Sister's Food Group is located. Other key areas include Diggerland, Tanyards Farm, the garage and hairdresser's just outside the settlement limit to the south of the village. The school is also a key employer in the village and there are numerous businesses run from home, as well as the key services mentioned earlier in the Plan. Map 10 shows the main existing locations for employment in the Parish. Just outside (to the north) of the Parish boundary the Hitchcocks Business Park and Langlands Business Park provide further employment which relate to the Parish, as do other businesses and facilities at Junction 27 of the M5 and at Waterloo Cross.

The Local Plan provides sufficient policy coverage for strategic employment matters, including the allocated employment site at the Mid-Devon Business Park (policy WI2), and also through policies S6: Employment, S13: Rural areas, S14: Countryside, DM18: Rural employment development and DM19: Protection of employment land. The policies in this Plan reflect locally important employment matters.

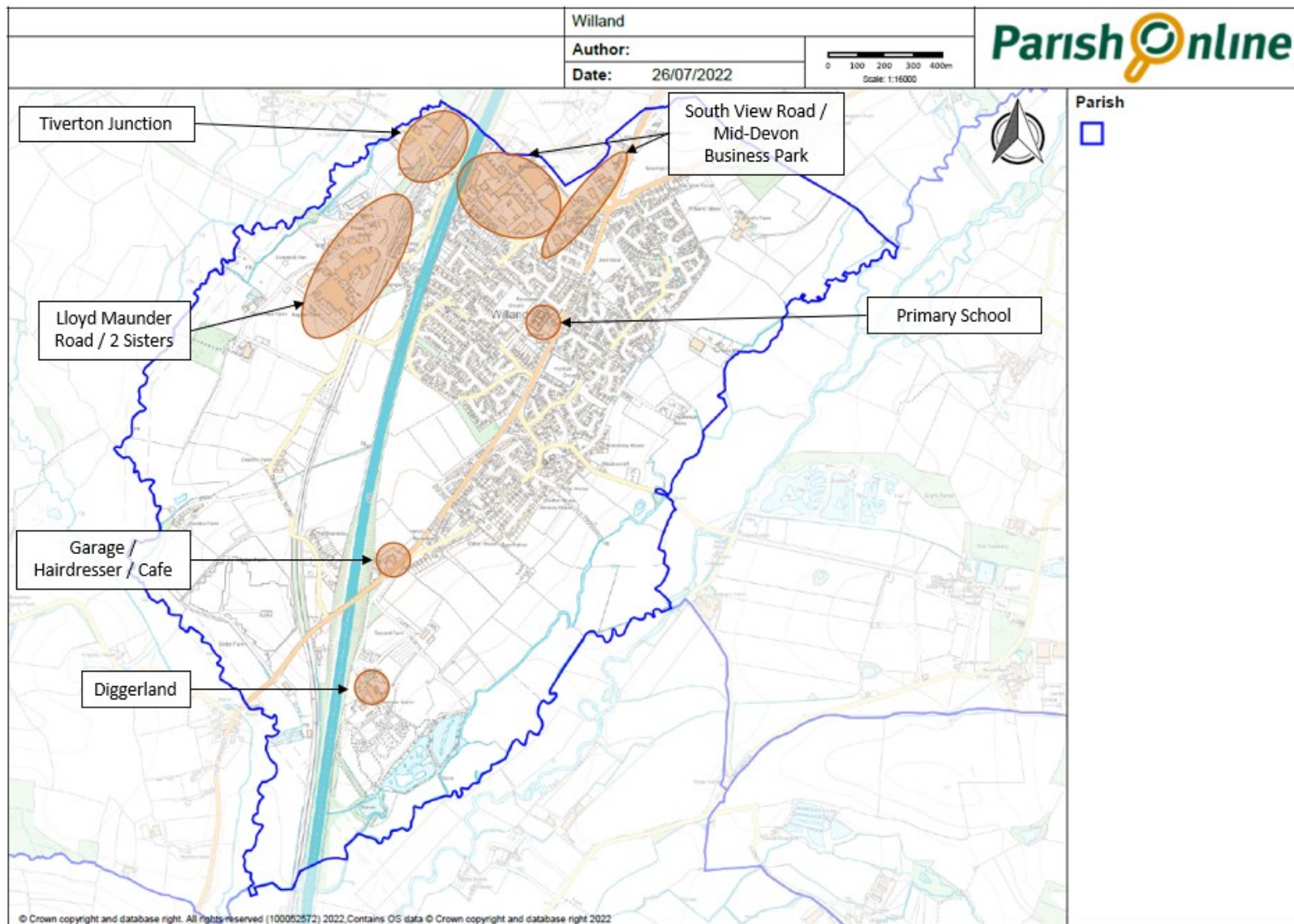
The policy in this section is:

- Policy EE1: Small Employment Units and Hubs to Support the Local Economy

Anecdotally, the employment premises occupancy seems to have remained reasonably buoyant through the Covid-19 pandemic, although the pandemic has shown the growth in businesses operating from home and more people working from home instead of travelling to work outside of Willand every day. This amplifies the need stressed, throughout this Plan, for Willand to continue to provide support to enable the village to remain as a sustainable place to live and work, a place which can successfully host micro and small businesses, and also a location which continues to be attractive for medium and large scale employers and which contribute to the local economy.

Looking forward, it is clear that the economy, nationally and locally, is undergoing and will continue to undergo change and is a change that Willand should be prepared for by supporting local businesses.

Map 10: Main Employment Areas in Willand



## 8.2 Small Employment Units and Work Hubs to Support the Local Economy

### Policy Justification

At the local level, this Plan provides policy support for and encouragement to the provision of small scale units for micro and small businesses to complement the larger scale businesses which operate in the Parish and help support businesses starting-up or wanting to access flexible or temporary office or workshop space. Flexibility seems to be key to the future of business working patterns, as well as the traditional format of provision of traditional office, warehouse, manufacture and other industrial units. To this end, policy EE1 provides support for flexible work hubs, workshops and other business premises to support micro, small and medium sized local businesses. Locations could include the existing employment areas identified on Map 10, but equally, if a village centre location presented itself, this could also be appropriate for such units ( which could be provided as part of a community-led initiative or community facility). This policy is not allocating sites for this type of development and does not preclude the consideration of other locations outside of Willand village subject to other development plan policies being met.

### **Policy EE1: Small Employment Units and Hubs to Support the Local Economy**

- 1. Development proposals for the creation of flexible work hubs, workshops and other business premises to support micro, small and medium sized local businesses will be supported within the settlement limit boundary, subject to other policies in the development plan, and where they do not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the local amenity enjoyed by existing neighbouring uses and residents.**
- 2. Proposals which also provide community access or facilities will be particularly welcomed.**



## 9. HERITAGE

### 9.1 Heritage Statement

There are numerous heritage assets<sup>45</sup> in the Parish which contribute to the character of the built environment. These vary in their protective designations and include listed buildings<sup>46</sup>, assets protected in the village's Conservation Area<sup>47</sup> and assets identified on the Mid-Devon District Council "local list" of heritage assets<sup>48</sup>. Maps showing the location and number of these heritage assets are shown in Appendix 4. There is much policy protection and legal protection for heritage assets. Additionally, the Local Plan extends protection to assets included on the Historic Environment Record<sup>49</sup> which are otherwise unregistered.

As Heritage was identified as important in Willand in this Plan's objectives, we have retained this short section to reflect its importance.

However, we do not consider that additional policies for heritage assets are necessary in this Plan as existing policy and legal protections already provide sufficient coverage to protect these assets. Additional local heritage assets can be added to the local authority's "local list" outside of this Plan and a policy is not necessary in this Plan to include them in that list.

## 10. HOUSING

### 10.1 Housing Statement

The Mid-Devon Local Plan allocates housing in Willand at Land East of M5 (policy WI1) to the south of the village for 42 dwellings with 30% affordable housing. The policy and allocated site area are reproduced in Appendix 1 for ease of reference. A planning application has since been approved for 125 dwellings with 35% affordable housing which includes the allocated site and an extended area<sup>50</sup>.

The planning system requires our Neighbourhood Plan to be in "general conformity" (or aligned) with the strategic policies of the adopted Mid-Devon Local Plan. This Neighbourhood Plan is not allowed to reduce the scale of housing proposed or allocated in the Parish.

Outside of the strategic allocation made in the Local Plan, there is no requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to allocate additional housing, but it can allocate housing sites to help address local needs if it wishes, where sites are demonstrated to be deliverable and the community is supportive. To date, nothing in the consultations held suggest that there is support for further additional housing allocations to be made in light of both the Local Plan's strategic allocation, the permission received for a greater number of dwellings than that specified in the Local Plan allocation

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<sup>45</sup> The NPPF defines a "heritage asset" as "A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)." See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>

<sup>46</sup> Listed buildings have legal protection. Further details can be seen here - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/>

<sup>47</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning/conservation/conservation-areas/>

<sup>48</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning/conservation/local-heritage-assets-register/>

<sup>49</sup> See <https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/the-devon-historic-environment-record/> for further details

<sup>50</sup> Application reference 18/00175/MOUT

and other windfall<sup>51</sup> sites which have come forward such as the site for 35 affordable dwellings now built at Rowan Lea and Ash Close adjacent to the allocation site<sup>52</sup>.

Local Plan policy S13: Villages sets the policy framework for additional housing (and other) development in Willand, with proposals for housing limited to small scale sites within the defined settlement limit. The Rowan Lea and Ash Close sites, being for 100% affordable social rented housing, will have come forward under the Local Plan rural exceptions policy (Policy DM6: Rural exceptions sites) which allows this type of housing to be developed outside of settlement limits in rural areas where there is local need.



We consider that between the above-mentioned developments, a sufficient number of both market and affordable dwellings have been or will soon be developed to address local needs while balancing an appropriate level of development for Willand. While affordability is a national problem the imperative is still to achieve a balance in the scale of development in villages like Willand and local needs will continue to be monitored over time through mechanisms such as the Devon Home Choice register<sup>53</sup> and the ability to undertake housing needs surveys and assessments when evidence requires updating. This is alongside Mid-Devon District Council monitoring which records the position on housing land supply and delivery of dwellings<sup>54</sup>.

However, the review of the current Mid-Devon Local Plan is very likely to consider higher housing numbers in the district over a longer Plan period and so minimum requirements in the Parish could be subject to change in the future. In that scenario it will be appropriate to review this Neighbourhood Plan if changes to housing numbers in Willand suggest a need to do so. Importantly, however, this Plan can be used to influence the Local Plan review.

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<sup>51</sup> A windfall site is a site not specifically allocated for development, but which unexpectedly becomes available for development during the lifetime of a Plan.

<sup>52</sup> Application reference 17/01179/MFUL

<sup>53</sup> Devon Home Choice – see

<https://www.devonhomechoice.com/sites/default/files/DevonEditor2/devonhomechoicpolicyv6effectivefrom1jan2017.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> See <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/monitoring/housing-land-availability/> for further details.

Given the policy coverage in the Local Plan, and feedback from local consultation, we do not consider it necessary to have housing specific policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. However, we do have policy coverage of how sustainable design should play a key role in development, including housing, set out in section 4 of this Plan.

## **11. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Plan will be subject to periodic monitoring and review by the Parish Council , possibly through a Council Committee, who will be closest to the process and able to raise issues where parts of the Plan may need to be revised to ensure that it continues to be appropriate.

It will be subject to a review as and when various triggers suggest the need to do so. For example, this could be because of changes to the Local Plan, national policy or Parish Boundary changes, where they suggest a need to update or amend policies or other Plan content.



## **1.2 APPENDICES – SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENTS**

**Appendix 1 – Mid-Devon District Council Local Plan Key Policies**

**Appendix 2 – Willand Local Green Spaces Assessment**

**Appendix 3 – Green Infrastructure Evidence Maps**

**Appendix 4 – Willand Heritage Assets Summary**