

# Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-submission Draft)



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## Document History

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## **1. Introduction**

1. The Westbury-Sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan represents the priorities that the communities within the parish have for the development of their neighbourhood. These have been collected and interpreted through an extensive and inclusive process of community engagement and consultation mainly during the period 2023 to 2025 (Appendix 1).
2. The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan was undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group which was set up by the parish council. The progress made has only happened with the help of many community volunteers who participated in working groups, task groups and workshops and assisted with consultation events.
3. In developing the Neighbourhood Plan the working group has taken time and care to identify the intrinsic qualities of the settlement and to craft a set of policies that will both preserve these qualities and allow the area to change and develop over time as a successful mixed community.

### **What is a Neighbourhood Plan?**

4. The Neighbourhood Plan provides a mechanism for residents to influence the sustainable development of the parish area so that it reflects local priorities whilst also identifying the special qualities of the parish that are most valued.
5. The Plan covers the period 2025 to 2040 and needs to be applied within the context set by the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), and the Somerset Council Local Plan ([Mendip Local Plan 2006 - 2029](#)).
6. A neighbourhood plan is not a legal requirement, but it is a right that communities can choose to use to set planning policies that form part of the development plan used in determining planning applications. Once a neighbourhood plan is agreed, it becomes part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be obtained in accordance with the development plan.

## **2. Village Background.**

### **2.1 Key features of Westbury-sub-Mendip**

1. The Parish of Westbury-sub-Mendip is located on the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills National Landscape and extends south to the River Axe at the edge of the Somerset Levels. The village sits centrally within the parish, halfway between the tourist centre of Cheddar and the City of Wells, historic home of the Bishops of Bath and Wells. It is bisected from East to West by the A371.

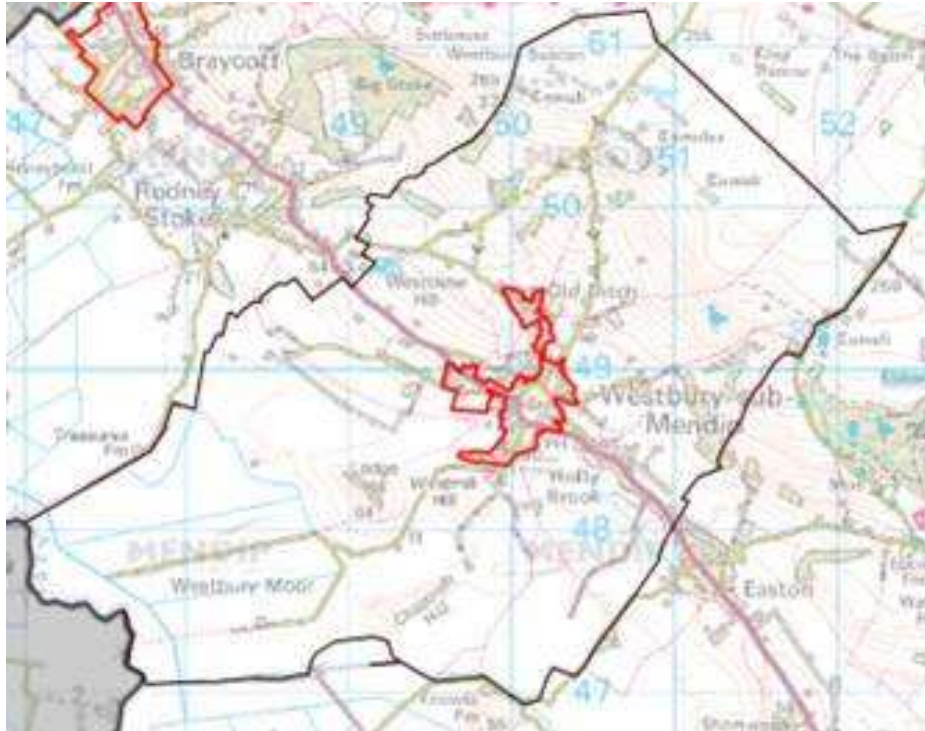


Fig 1 Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish boundary in black  
Development area in red

2. In the Mendip District Council [Local Plan](#) (2006-2029)<sup>1</sup> Westbury-sub-Mendip has been classified as a “Primary” rural village with a community owned village shop & post office, primary school, village hall, pub and a daily bus service. It is a popular village with a strong community spirit, evidenced by one of only five remaining Friendly Societies, a Women’s Institute, WhatsApp Wildlife Group, Westbury Society, Film Club, Thespian Group, Tree Group & Nursery, Archaeology Group and Emergency Committee. The Robert Glanville Playing Field has swings, a skateboard area, all-weather ball-play area and a platform canopy relocated from the former Lodge Hill Station. The village won Somerset Village of the Year in 2006. In 2009, the red telephone box in the Square became the first in the country to be converted to a library and book exchange when the mobile library stopped visiting.

### Demographics:

3. According to the 2021 census there were 805 people living in 347 households within the parish. The average household size was 2.32 persons per household which is smaller than the average for England (2.41) and larger than the district. ([Housing Needs Survey 2024](#) (HNS))<sup>2</sup>
4. The age profile of the village, compared to the Mendip average, shows there are fewer residents in the 16-24 age range and more in the 45-74 age range (in 2021 census).

Age profile	In 2021	Mendip Average
0 - 15 years	11.4%	17.2%
16 - 24 years	9.2%	8.7%
25 - 49 years	18.4%	27.9%
50 - 74 years	46.9%	35.1%
75+ years	14.2%	11%

Fig 2 Demographic Profile 2021 Census

## Historical development

5. Some of the oldest evidence of human presence in Britain was discovered in 1969 at Broadmead Quarry located at the northern edge of the parish. According to a study by the Natural History Museum the human remains on the site are between 400,000 and 500,000 years old. In addition, numerous Bronze Age barrows and standing stones can be found to the north of the village across the escarpment between Westbury Beacon and Deerleap.
6. In the south of the parish on land towards the edge of the levels, a Roman villa rustica is in the process of being excavated by the Westbury Society.
7. The landscape and environment of Westbury are largely the result of several thousand years of farming. The settlement pattern evident in the village today was created by the Saxons, following their arrival circa 700 CE. From 900 CE, the entire village was owned by the bishops of Wells which contributed significantly to its growth & development. In the 12th century Bishop John de Tours created a 600 acre deer park which extended south to the edge of the levels beyond Lodge Hill & Chalcroft Hill. Remnants of the original deer park walls together with evidence of early medieval clapper bridges can still be found on Westbury Moor. There is also evidence of a manorial court operating as early as 1275 CE on the site of the current 19th century Court House Farm building in the centre of the village.
8. Hollybrook to the east of the village and Ramspits on the side of the hill towards Deerleap were outlying settlements during the medieval period. Ramspits was deserted following the Black Death in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but Hollybrook remains as a distinct hamlet of the community with an emphasis on farming. Also, within the parish boundaries there is evidence of a Tudor hunting lodge on the eastern slope of Lodge Hill together with 18<sup>th</sup> century lime kilns along the scarp slope to the north of the village.
9. The arrival of the railways in 1870s led to the creation of the Cheddar Valley Railway, a branch line which created opportunities for local growers to transport produce to Bristol and onward to London. The "Strawberry Line" was closed in 1963 as part of a major pruning of the rail network and the land was subsequently sold. Lodge Hill Station on the southern edge of the village was later redeveloped as Lodge Hill Industrial Estate and offers local employment opportunities
10. More recently during the Cold War Westbury Beacon was used as a radar testing site to test the radar signatures of low flying aircraft.
11. In 2020 work began to re-engineer the remains of the old Strawberry Line track bed into an off-road multi-user route between Cheddar and Wells.

## 2.2 Topography and Geology

1. The predominantly carboniferous limestone landform of the Mendip Hills rises abruptly out of the flat landscape of the Somerset Levels and Moors to the south. More resistant Devonian sandstone forms some of the highest points on the hills including Beacon Hill and North Hill near Priddy. There are extensive views from the edge of the plateau in all directions. Dramatic views of the Mendip Hills, particularly the south-facing scarp, are gained from the surrounding lowland areas. The special

qualities of the area are reflected in the designation of the Mendips Hills as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), now termed as a National Landscape and part of the area is included in the new King's Super Nature Reserve.

2. The Mendips are renowned for their classic karst landscape features, resulting from the response of the soluble limestone to water and weathering, creating complex underground cave and river systems and surface features including gorges, dry valleys, surface depressions, swallets, sink holes and fast-flowing springs. Within Westbury-sub-Mendip there are stone outcrops which in part determine the lane pattern of the village.

## **2.3 Ecology**

1. The significance of the geology is reflected in the number of geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Nature Reserves at Cook's Field and Lynchcombe. Woodland lying within narrow valleys or covering steep slopes emphasises the variety of slopes and landforms on the Mendips, the most spectacular being the gorges of Cheddar to the west, and Ebbor to the east of the Parish. Panoramic views from Deerleap and Westbury Beacon encompass the Bristol Channel and Welsh Coast to the west, Exmoor and Devon to the south and Wiltshire to the east.
2. The thinner soils of the escarpment and some areas of the plateau suffer significantly from drought in summer and are not easily capable of agricultural intensification, which has allowed semi-natural habitats to remain. The woodlands and calcareous grasslands are generally of high nature conservation interest and havens of biodiversity. The varied textures of these semi-natural grasslands are a particular feature of the southern slopes.
3. The parish includes part of the North Somerset Mendip Bats Special Area of Concern (SAC) for greater and lesser horseshoe bats, which benefit from the combination of natural caves, woodland, hedgerows and grazing livestock, particularly found in the Mendip Limestone Grasslands SAC and the Mendip Woodlands SAC.

## **2.4 Historic buildings,**

1. Historically Westbury-sub-Mendip was the home of yeoman farmers and agricultural workers, with an occasional successful family of wool merchants, such as the Spencers, or landowners like the Knyftons. Much of the central village settlement lies within a conservation area. Many farmhouses & cottages in this part of the village date back to the 17th - 19th centuries with some of these properties including remains of earlier buildings within them.
2. Much of the character of the older parts of the village is due to locally quarried grey limestone and reddish-brown conglomerate mudstone being used for the construction of many of the houses, other buildings and boundary walls.



Fig 4 Westbury-sub-Mendip Conservation area in green

3. Historic buildings of particular note are:
  - a. St Lawrence Church, built in 12th C, grade II\* listed and cemetery
  - b. Court House Farm, and 14 others all grade II listed
  - c. Old Ditch Conservation area, containing 17th-19th century farmhouses & cottages
  - d. Westbury Cross
4. During the last 50 years the village housing stock has grown slowly, averaging 3 - 4 dwellings per year, largely as a result of relatively small scale housing developments extending out from the historic village centre.
5. It can be seen that Westbury-sub-Mendip is an ancient settlement, and its history is valued and recorded by the local community. The Somerset Historic Environment Record [www.somersetheritage.org.uk](http://www.somersetheritage.org.uk) contains further details of these and many other local sites of historic importance.

### 3. Village Priorities & Policies

1. The village priorities have been identified as a result of two years of consultation within the community including 4 village wide surveys, 4 village hall and 5 focus group meetings. The resulting priorities of relevance to neighbourhood planning are articulated as aims and objectives across 7 key topic areas for the plan period (2025-2040):

Housing  
Settlement Character  
Highways and Pedestrian Safety  
Landscape & Environment  
Community Facilities  
Sustainability  
Employment

2. For each key topic area, the neighbourhood plan considers the evidence available to justify the planning policy proposed. The evidence provided is from a mixture of existing national and local plan policies, supporting documents that carry weight in planning matters (eg, National Landscape Management Plans), three pieces of research conducted by external specialists with engagement of the village community (The Village Character Assessment, Housing Needs Survey and Highway Safety Scoping Report) and the collation of views gathered from a number of village consultations. Taken together the resulting policies and their justification support the aims and objectives of the community.
3. During the consultation process the community also expressed priorities that were not matters that could be influenced directly by planning policy and so would not be part of the statutory neighbourhood plan. These priorities have been identified and are presented in the community aspirations (Section 10) of this report for further action by the community and where relevant by the parish council.

### 4. Housing

1. Objectives: There is a broad consensus in Westbury-sub-Mendip that additional housing which delivers the mix of types and size needed by those already living in the village should be supported. The scale and pace of development, however, should respect and be consistent with the size and character of the existing settlement. The cumulative impact of growth needs to be reflected in parallel improvements in infrastructure and public services.
2. New housing developments should be required to provide an appropriate proportion of social and discounted open market housing that is prioritised to meet and protect local needs.

***The policies applying to layout and design of any additional housing (including alterations and extensions) is considered within section 5 - Settlement Character.***



#### **4.1 Housing Policies (Mix, Scale and Affordable)**

##### **Policy H1: Housing Character, Type and Mix**

**Development proposals for dwellings will be supported within the Westbury-sub-Mendip settlement boundary and on its edge where they:**

- i. provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes which meet the needs of local residents and in doing so, accurately reflect identified local demand and needs as identified in the most up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Housing Needs Assessment and/or local Housing Needs Survey;**
- ii. reflect positively the unique and historic character of the village and its landscape setting and in doing so demonstrate, through a Planning Statement or Design and Access Statement, how the proposal meets the requirements of policy SC1: Settlement Character and Design of Development;**

##### **Policy H2: Scale**

**Development proposals for dwellings within the Westbury-sub-Mendip settlement boundary and on its edge will be supported where the location and scale of development and overall rate of delivery respects the following:**

- i. delivers a scale of “organic” growth, is considered “small” scale in the Westbury-sub-Mendip context, is commensurate with previous rates of change and does not compromise the current role and function of the village or the sustainable or cohesive nature of the village and its community;**
- ii. demonstrates no adverse impact on the village’s sensitive landscape setting on the edge of the Mendip Hills National Landscape;**
- iii. considers the sustainability of increasing the rural population commensurate with the availability of infrastructure, services facilities and accessibility to provision of public transport and local employment opportunities.**

### **Policy H3: Affordable Housing**

- 1. To help ensure that the provision of affordable housing meets the needs of local residents or those people with a connection to the parish and who wish to return all qualifying housing developments will be expected to:**
- 2.**
  - i. deliver at least the minimum proportions of affordable housing as detailed in the adopted Local Plan, subject to viability; and**
  - ii. provide a mix of affordable housing tenures, types and sizes which meet the needs of local residents and in doing so, accurately reflect identified local demand and needs as identified in the most up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Housing Needs Assessment and/or local Housing Needs Survey.**
- 3. Preference will be given, where feasible, to schemes where social or discounted open market housing can be retained as such, ensuring that it continues to meet local needs in the long-term;**
- 4. For any new affordable housing units delivered in the parish preference will be given, sequentially, to those who have the following local connection with the Plan area:**
- 5.**
  - i. Currently live in (and have done so for 5 years or more) the Plan area;**
  - ii. Previously lived for 5 years or more (within the previous 10 years) in the Plan area;**
  - iii. Work 16 hours or more a week in the Plan area or;**
  - iv. Live outside of the Plan area but have immediate family (who currently live in, and have done so for 5 years or more) in the Plan area (i.e. grandparent(s), parent(s), child(ren) or sibling(s));**
  - v. Provide or receives care for immediate family in the Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish (immediate family as defined above).**
- 6. Should any affordable homes be left unallocated after exhausting the above list, the unallocated affordable homes will be allocated in accordance with the Home Finder Somerset housing policy and rules (or any subsequent replacement).**

## **4.2 Justification for Housing Policies**

### **Meeting the needs of the community**

- 1. The reason for the policies set out in this section is to seek to secure a more balanced, mixed community, with growth over the plan period in proportion to the capacity of the settlement. A mixed community is seen in government guidance as more inclusive and sustainable (NPPF para 96). It is also an aspiration reflected consistently in feedback from Westbury-sub-Mendip residents.**
- 2. There is ample evidence that the demographic structure of Westbury-sub-Mendip is unbalanced and likely to become more so. According to a [Housing Needs Survey 2024](#) (HNS) conducted for the parish by CNB Associates, 38.6% of households are single people or couples aged 66 or over compared with 22% nationally. There are correspondingly fewer families with dependent children and fewer than half the national proportion of lone parents.**

3. This is reflected in, and in large part driven by, the nature of the housing stock. The same source indicates that just over 80% of properties in Westbury-sub-Mendip are owner occupied compared with 62% nationally. There is a particular shortage of private rented housing.
4. Almost half of Westbury-sub-Mendip homes are four bedroomed detached houses (47%) compared with just over a fifth for England as a whole, while one and two bed properties form 19% - less than half the English average. ([Housing Needs Survey 2024](#)).
5. The nature of the housing stock means that there are few opportunities for young people to rent or purchase suitable property, and also few opportunities for older people who need to downsize if they wish to remain in the community. This is reflected both in responses to the housing needs survey conducted in 2024<sup>3</sup> (paras 5.13 – 5.16) and also a [survey of residents](#) undertaken by the community in February 2022<sup>4</sup>. Of those responding to the latter, 14% indicated that family members who had wished to remain in the village had been forced to move away, mainly because of a lack of starter homes. Some 30% felt that they may have to move within 5 years because of the lack of suitable property - in this case mainly smaller and single storey accommodation.
6. Evidence of local concern about the need for a more balanced community comes from a variety of further sources. In response to an open-ended question on a survey not concerned with housing ([Facilities November 2023](#)<sup>5</sup>) one villager summed up a commonly expressed concern saying, “There is a need to prevent the village being frozen in time not just a retirement idyll”. In a survey in [May 2017](#)<sup>6</sup>, concerned with housing development, some 20 out of 70 residents responded to an open question inviting ‘any other comments’ emphasising the need for smaller and more affordable housing. This is consistent with the survey conducted by CNB which concluded:
7. *“Most respondents considered that a high priority for future housebuilding should be for small family homes (2 or 3 bedroom), small homes for single person households/couples, and smaller homes to enable older people to downsize.”*
8. The HNS<sup>2</sup> calculated the bedroom mix needed **for social and affordable rented housing**, on the basis of housing register (local connection) data as it is based upon a larger sample than the household survey data. It suggested the following proportions were required
  - 1-bedroom 38%;
  - 2-bedroom 32%;
  - 3-bedroom 20%;
  - 4 or more-bedroom 10%.
9. The same source indicates that in respect of market housing *“There is also a clear gap in entry level home ownership dwellings in the form of 1 or 2 bedroom flats and houses”*
10. In all cases, the most up-to-date evidence from one or more of the Housing Needs Survey, Housing Needs Assessment and Strategic Housing Market Assessment should inform the tenure, type and size of dwellings.

11. Residents therefore accept that there is a need for the village to grow to make more appropriate housing available. In the CNB survey some 85% of respondents (111/135) answered “Yes” to the question “*Would you support limited future house building to meet the needs of local households and their children?*”. The needs of locals and their children, however, is an important qualification.
12. This mirrors the views of residents, reflected in both their comments on the CNB Housing Needs Survey <sup>2</sup> and in village consultations (Appendix 1). In a series of [focus groups](#), convened to consider an initial draft of the Neighbourhood Plan most villagers endorsed the proposal: “*To support the provision within any development an appropriate proportion of social housing that cannot be transferred to the open market*”.
13. Whilst it is recognised that affordable housing cannot be retained in perpetuity through Registered Landlords (Housing Associations) due to the “Right to Buy”, affordable housing supply should be kept as such where possible to support retention of a stock of social housing for those who cannot afford to rent or buy on the open market.
14. Building on the desire to see local affordable housing provided to address local needs, in order to help ensure that local residents or those with a connection to the parish can remain in or move back to the village, all qualifying housing developments will be expected to deliver at least the minimum levels of affordable housing as detailed in Mendip Local Plan Part I: 2006-2029, (30% and up to 40% in rural locations subject to viability, and higher proportions if on a “rural exceptions” site). A policy has also been introduced into this Plan to prioritise provision of affordable housing units to those with a local connection, defined in policy H3, before “casting the net” wider to neighbouring parishes and wider Somerset. This is a logical and practical approach to the best fit for the allocation of affordable housing, given that evidence is based, principally, on local needs arising in the parish. This approach also helps to ensure that a sustainability and social health principle is applied to addressing need, with people who live outside of the parish and having no existing relationship or support network with the parish not being expected to move into the parish and “start anew” without any social, familial or economic support locally, unless local needs have been met.
15. In respect of housing for sale, the same aspiration can in part be achieved by focussing on the types of houses suitable to meet local need as outlined above.

### **Scale and pace of development**

1. In the village Neighbourhood Plan [Priorities Survey](#) April 2024<sup>7</sup> over half (74 of 135 respondents) saw a growth of between 20 and 50 houses over a 15-year period as acceptable. This general stance was confirmed in an exit poll following a meeting to consider a forthcoming application to build housing on an allocated site at Roughmoor Lane (Map1 in Appendix 2)<sup>8</sup>. Some 70% of those offering an opinion thought that 40 homes would be acceptable though people were unanimous that 60 would represent overdevelopment. A subsequent [village meeting](#) concurred with these views.
2. While not opposed to new housing, therefore, residents are very concerned about the pace and scale of change, particularly where it is not supported by improvements in highway safety and other infrastructure requirements. There are concerns that too rapid development would have a negative impact on the “community cohesiveness” enjoyed at the current time, and the character of the village and its landscape setting.

This character and identity is very clearly set out in the [Village Character Assessment](#) – Appendix 3 (VCA)<sup>9</sup>, which gives a strong reference point for proposals which would be considered acceptable in the village. Following and taking fully into account the VCA will help to ensure that excellent design is delivered which protects and enhances local character and uniqueness and in doing so ensuring that the village and its setting continue to protect and enhance (and not significantly harm or adversely impact) its heritage and important historic legacy.

3. There is consistently expressed opposition to ‘large new estates’ both in terms of the step change in the number of residents and demand on local infrastructure that such development would bring and the visual impact of large numbers of houses of duplicate design. With few exceptions growth in Westbury-sub-Mendip has been incremental rather than sudden. This incremental rate of change should continue, being “organic” and commensurate with the character, role and function of the village, to help retain the qualities of the village and its “close-knit” community.
4. Placing a figure on ‘large’ that might result in too large a step change however is difficult. Residents, as indicated above, want to see priority given to affordable housing, both socially rented and for sale or shared ownership. It is recognised that [policy](#)<sup>10</sup> can only require such provision in developments of more than 10 homes so ‘small’ (and therefore an appropriate scale for new developments) might best be interpreted as 10-12 units as opposed to anything much larger.
5. The neighbourhood plan recognises the need for housing policies to meet the requirement as detailed in the NPPF (2024). There is strong support from the NPPF to ensure that the mix of sizes in housing reflects local needs - the community views emphasise that a larger proportion of smaller houses are required in any housing development.
6. The neighbourhood plan also reflects the strong community views that the scale of housing over the plan period should be contained to respect key local factors. These factors are echoed in previous local plan strategies (Local Plan Paras 4.28,4.32, 4.86 and Core Policy 4 (1)) and with significant support from the NPPF <sup>11</sup> (Para 7, 8b, 11 and 129).
7. The existing Mendip (now Somerset) local plan policies (as listed above) recognise the need to protect rural villages from excessive growth where local infrastructure capacity can normally only respond to incremental growth and where residents have difficulty accessing public transport resulting in unsustainable increases in private car use. The existing local plan established the principal of limiting growth in rural villages to levels in proportion with the existing housing stock.
8. The 2024 NPPF (paras as detailed above) also provides guidance on how sustainable development should be achieved – at a high level, meeting today's needs should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Eg locating too many houses in a location where public transport is ineffective will mean that future generations cannot seek employment without increasing private travel and carbon load). At a more local level para 8b suggests development will require accessible services in order to support healthy vibrant communities.
9. NPPF Para 11 (Presumption in favour of development) supports development unless protected areas or assets of particular importance (Eg National Landscape Areas and SSSI) provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; and where adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

10. The NPPF (2024 para 77) guides local planning authorities making land allocations to consider: “Significant extensions to existing villages and towns, [will be supported] provided they are well located and designed and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way.
11. In doing so, they should:
- a) consider the opportunities presented by existing or planned investment in infrastructure, the area’s economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains;
  - b) ensure that their size and location will support a sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities”
12. Westbury-sub-Mendip is a small village of 350 houses with limited infrastructure and services:
13. Existing public transport connections rely on an annual politically dependant subsidy and the [poor frequency](#)<sup>12</sup> of the service does not support effective commutes to and from work or allow people to attend hospital. Proposals that increase rural populations that are not served well by public transport detracts from the objective to build sustainable communities.
14. The Westbury-sub -Mendip Settlement forms a gateway to the [Mendip Hills National Landscape](#) area<sup>13</sup> and the [Levels and Moors Landscape](#) area<sup>14</sup>. This means that the landscape character of the wider setting of the village requires careful consideration when assessing the visual impact of larger developments. Major residential development out of scale with the existing settlement will result in harmful impact on the landscape and village character.
15. The village waste water treatment facility is not capable of protecting the Somerset levels RAMSAR sites from phosphate pollution and is of a size below the nutrient neutrality threshold of serving 2000 homes which would otherwise lead to investment to improve this performance (See drainage strategy for planning application 2025/0135/OUT ).
16. The A371 is one of few east-west trunk routes in the area and already handles increased traffic volumes from growth in Wells and Cheddar. The road is below standard for A-road widths, has numerous existing highway bottle necks and on the whole, there is a lack of pavements through the villages along its length. The scale of development in villages between Wells and Cheddar together with wider commercial sites should take account of increased risks to safety along the route.
17. Highway safety and in particular pedestrian safety crossing the A371 is of priority concern for the community. Development of land at Roughmoor Lane allocated for residential development in the 2006-2029 Mendip Local Plan remains subject to further investigation on traffic impacts and a safe access onto the A371 as set out by policy WM1 in the Local Plan. Development of this site will be required to provide safe pedestrian links to enable access on foot to the village core which will require a safe crossing of the A371. As the site is allocated in the Local Plan, policy in this Neighbourhood Plan cannot introduce additional requirements or assurances specific to the site. However, all future proposals which come forward for housing development will need to consider policies H2 in addition to HP1 and HP2. If an

application at Roughmoor Lane is not concluded and determined prior to this Neighbourhood Plan being “made” (adopted) any future planning application for development of this allocated site, will need to take these policies into account where relevant.

### **Conclusion to justification for housing policies**

18. The neighbourhood plan policies therefore support organic growth that prioritises providing houses for the local community while seeking to protect the settlement character of Westbury-sub-Mendip and the valued landscape in which it is located from a scale of development that would bring unnecessary harm to the quality of the place, and which would be unsupported by infrastructure and services.

## **5. Settlement Character**

1. Objectives: Consultations with the community have made clear that the settlement character and its place within the landscape is highly valued by most people. Westbury-sub-Mendip character has arisen over time from a wide range of features which today's village brings together: its history, its layout, its relationship with surrounding landscape, its rural lanes, the scale and patterns of its buildings and the materials employed. The character of the place is precious and is valued very highly by its residents. It is also fragile.
2. The parish council commissioned an independent Village Character Assessment (VCA) to provide guidance on what locally responsive good design in Westbury-sub-Mendip means in practice, both in terms of materials, style and layout of buildings. It is the local detail needed for higher level policy to be truly effective. The Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan aims to present these in an unambiguous way that will protect the character of the village and its place in the landscape bringing benefit both the Village and its residents, and responsible potential developers.



## 5.1 Settlement Character Policies

<b>Policy SC1: Settlement Character</b>	
<p><b>1. Development proposals should respect, protect and enhance the character of the village and demonstrate no adverse impact on the village's landscape setting on the edge of the Mendip Hills National Landscape. This character is described in detail in the Village Character Assessment (VCA). Proposals should be accompanied by a Planning Statement which demonstrates how they respond positively to the VCA. Key elements that should be addressed are:</b></p>	
i.	<b>Siting and Layout: how its siting and layout reflects and respects the historic radial pattern of the village, and the presence of green spaces or wedges (Map 2 of Appendix 2) that penetrate into the village centre.</b>
ii.	<b>Building form and scale: the inclusion of a mix of building forms offering both front and side frontages to the street, modest scale, and avoiding uniform homogenous repetitive layouts and house types.</b>
iii.	<b>Materials and detailing: the use of characteristic local materials notably local stone, varying roof materials steep roofs and characteristic door and window details</b>
iv.	<b>Roads and access: the creation of roadways derived from village lanes rather than urban streets, offering safe multi-use surfaces.</b>
v.	<b>Boundary treatments: comprising stone walls and hedges.</b>
vi.	<b>Development proposals should demonstrate how the guidance in the Village Character Assessment for the relevant character areas within the village has been followed.</b>

<b>Policy SC2: Green Wedges and Rural Character of Settlement</b>	
<p><b>1. Development proposals will only be supported where they do not harm, have an adverse impact on, or compromise the rural character of the settlement and its setting. Proposals should protect and enhance the contribution of the green wedges (Map 2 of Appendix 2) to the character of the settlement as identified in the Village Character Assessment (VCA)</b></p>	

<b>Policy SC3: Local Heritage</b>	
<p><b>1. Development proposals (including alteration and refurbishment) affecting Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and local heritage assets (identified on Map 3 of Appendix 2) and their setting will take account of their significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness.</b></p>	
<p><b>2. Proposals on, to or affecting these local and other nationally recognised heritage assets and/or their settings will only be supported where they demonstrate, through a Planning Statement or relevant assessment:</b></p>	
i.	<b>that they cause no significant harm to these assets; and,</b>
ii.	<b>where relevant, that they have taken account of the Village Character Assessment (VCA), any Conservation Area Appraisal and the Historic Environment Record, and have had regard to any other additional relevant local evidence documenting local historic and heritage assets.</b>
<p><b>3. Proposals should not harm views into and from the village which capture its heritage features, its historic character and its wider rural landscape setting.</b></p>	



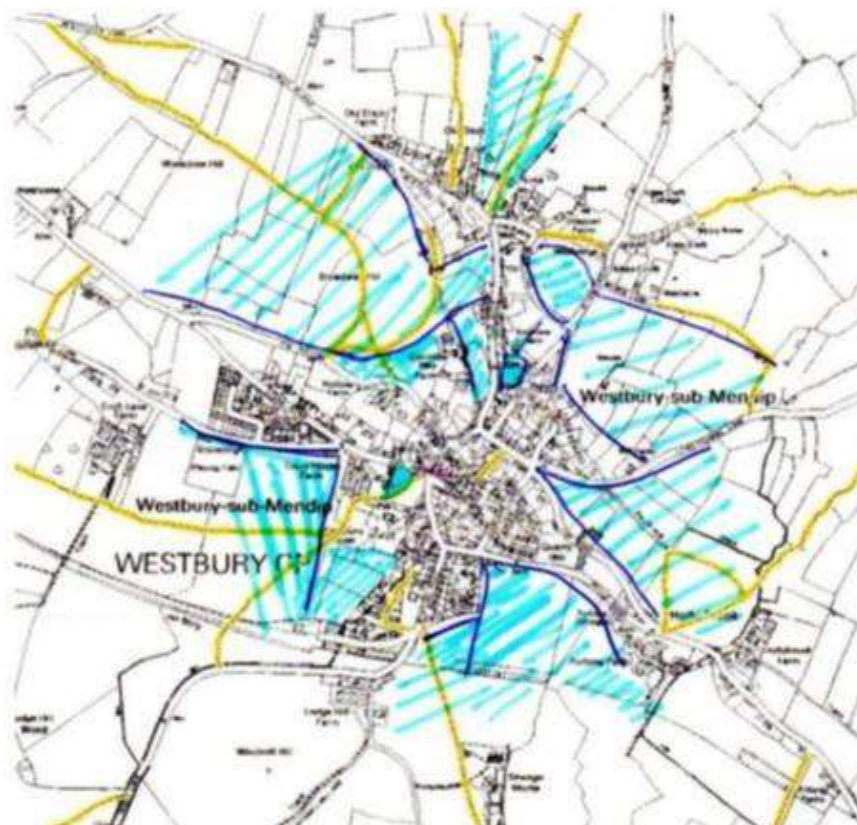
## 5.2 Justification for Settlement Character Policies

1. Strategic planning policy encourages local policies which seek to preserve and enhance settlement character, and are clear, well researched and have local public support. The NPPF places particular importance on good design that is sensitive to its historical context. Specifically, in para 131<sup>15</sup>, it states that *'The creation of high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.'* It goes on to state that plans should, at the appropriate level, set out clear design vision and expectations grounded in the area's defining characteristics, and that these should be developed with local communities. It explicitly supports the role Neighbourhood Plans can play in the process.
2. The Mendip Local Plan Part 1 reinforces and develops these points. It specifies issues, including street scenes, views, boundary walls and trees, which it considers help to generate a place's distinct identity and character, and notes the importance of heritage conservation. It emphasises the importance that the landscape of the Mendips, designated as a National Landscape (NL formerly an AONB), plays in defining the character of the wider area within which Westbury-sub-Mendip is located. It stresses the importance of preserving the landscape, and of protecting both panoramic and local views. The Mendip Plan highlights issues that it considers make important contributions to high quality design. These include building heights, layouts, materials and soft landscaping. It also requires new developments to make a contribution to new, and accessible natural open spaces.
3. This strategic policy framework is particularly relevant to Westbury-sub-Mendip. Westbury is a historic village whose origins go back over one thousand years. It has grown slowly and incrementally in that time, allowing it in the process to retain intact much of its early structure of roads, paths, buildings (several now listed including the 13th century St Lawrence church) and open spaces. Its core is now a Conservation Area.
4. This profoundly rural context extends into the village in the form of green wedges (Map 2 of Appendix 2) which serve to accentuate its rural character and bind together its extended parts including Hollybrook. They also serve to reveal striking views of the village and its heritage components, set against the wider village itself, its green spaces and more distant views of the Mendips and the Levels and Moors.
5. The village also has an intimate and long-established relationship with the Mendip Hills of which it forms part. Its location on the contoured lower slopes of the Mendips makes it highly visible, with prominent views both internally, and from the surrounding countryside that are of great importance to the National Landscape. For these several reasons, therefore, its settlement character is a very profound and influential feature of the village, one which should continue to define the path for its future evolution and growth.
6. In line with strategic advice in the national and local framework, Westbury-sub-Mendip has commissioned an independent Village Character Assessment (VCA) (Endnote 10). This has gone through extensive consultation and discussion with experts and residents and is fully representative of local views. It provides guidance on what locally responsive good design in Westbury sub-Mendip means in practice, in terms of materials, style and layout of buildings. It provides the local evidence and detail to

achieve effective planning policy and forms the bedrock of the draft Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan. The Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan aims to secure excellent design in new development that protects and enhances the character and uniqueness of the village. In this way the village and its setting will continue to charm both local residents and visitors and maintain the important historical legacy visible in its form and location.

7. The Village Character Assessment analyses the setting of the village, and historical development, in depth. It draws attention to its intimate relationship with the adjoining National Landscape, which directly abuts the edge of the village. It identifies several important consequential characteristics - the presence of green wedges of open land which intrude into the village, the generous tree cover which results, the frequent views in and out of the village to and from the National Landscape around it, and the dark sky policy of the parish council.

Map 2: Green Wedges of Westbury (Appendix 2)



Source: Figure 5 taken from the VCA - Green Wedges of Westbury (from the VCA Report)

8. Policy SC1 also requires lighting controls to maintain and support the dark skies that are one of its strengths. Street lighting is not used in the village to the north of the A371 and only exists in two areas to the south of the main road. Existing parish policy requires that any lighting of buildings takes care not to cause light pollution.
9. The Village Character Assessment goes on to identify a set of key factors that define its character and that maintain it, and provide a practical framework for policy:

## **Roads and path network and urban structure**

10. It notes the historic radial pattern of roads and value of paths which creates permeability throughout and beyond the Village. It recommends that new development be consistent with the overall radial pattern of buildings within the settlement and preserves and maintains areas of green space penetrating between built up areas towards the village centre. It notes the frequent absence of footways in residential streets as an important characteristic that should be adopted in any new development and recommends that new residential road layouts should be similar in scale and should use shared surface solutions designed to slow vehicle traffic.

## **Building types and layout**

11. It notes how non-uniform and irregular building layouts, with frontages to the street including both the front and sides of buildings, recur throughout the village and form part of the character. This creates gentle variations and attractive and interesting non-uniformity. To preserve this the plan proposes that new development should be limited in height to two storeys. It recommends that dwelling layouts should respect the form of the character area, include a mix of size and types of property in close proximity with homes close to the narrow lanes. To enhance the rural character of the village it is suggested that any significant new development should avoid a homogeneous style of housing and a rectilinear grid layout more commonly found in urban settlements.

## **Building design and materials**

12. The plan recommends design measures are adopted that would serve to integrate new developments with the village's established character:
13. Elevations should use a local stone that reflects the local reddish-brown conglomerate base limestone rock or reconstituted stone that presents an acceptable appearance of such stone, laid at random and uncoursed, with some render in less visible areas and used to good overall effect. Limited use of red brick should be allowed to reflect the use of red brick in the village in Stoneleigh and other houses on the A371 and elsewhere in the village. Building quoins, stone jambs and arched doorways can usefully repeat local character. Larger developments will need to vary building elevations and scale in order to be in keeping with the small-scale variation found in the village.
14. Roofs should be steep and substantial development of more than 10 homes should consider mixing the use of roofing material to maintain the mix of material in the village. Extensions to existing buildings should continue with the existing roofing material
15. Door and window treatments are important features of elevations and should respect the vernacular wherever possible, unless an innovative and modern design requires an alternative treatment.
16. Boundary treatments comprising stone walls or hedges are a distinctive feature of the village, and their incorporation within new developments would help them be integrated into the street scene.

## Local Green Spaces

17. Local Green Space designations protect areas of open space that make a special contribution to the character of the village and the enjoyment of residents and visitors.
18. The NPPF (2024) lays out criteria to be met when assigning green space status. Two spaces in the village (previous assigned the status of 'open areas of local significance' in the Mendip local plan) could probably meet the NPPF criteria but are already protected from inappropriate development by other legal means. These two are the Robert Glanville playing fields (protected under DP 16 - Green Infrastructure) and the Court House Farm front lawn (legal covenant)
19. A third area which could meet the criteria for green space designation is the former railway embankment and cutting between Station Road and Erlon Lane now occupied by the Strawberry Line multi-user path. This land is leased to Greenways and Cyclerooutes, a charity that exists to promote off-road routes for walking and cycling.
20. Other open spaces in the village are valued for a range of other reasons and remain a key part of settlement character. They do not however meet the criteria to be assigned Green Space status as required by NPPF para 107 – extracted below  
*The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*  
*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 is not an extensive tract of land.*
21. Given that the three areas in the village most likely to qualify as Local Green Space (see Map 4 of Appendix 2) are protected by other means, no such designations are proposed in this Neighbourhood Plan.

## 6. Highways & Pedestrian Safety

1. **Objectives:** Consultations with the village community have regularly shown that improving road safety is of paramount importance to residents. Safe pedestrian access across and along the A371 is a priority that any increases in population will only make more urgent. The need to invest in infrastructure that will enable a greater use of active travel options, both within the village and to adjacent communities similarly commands a high level of support.
2. The village is poorly served by public transport. While the community aspires to improve the frequency and reliability of services, future developments need to respond to the reality of sub-standard connectivity in this rural location and therefore the need for an above average level of car ownership and work vehicles requiring more than the standard parking allocation. The place making principles adopted by Somerset Council<sup>17</sup> are not appropriate for this rural village.

## 6.1 Highway & Pedestrian Safety Policies

### **Policy HP1 – Highway & Pedestrian Safety**

- 1. All developments should show how they will provide safe pedestrian links to the existing Public Rights of Way and footpath network (and to the village core, it's services, amenities and facilities) in a way which minimises risk for pedestrians (including disabled people and those with impaired mobility) from traffic using the road network (and in particular, where relevant, the A371) .**
- 2. Major developments of 10 houses or more should deliver (or improve if already provided) a safe crossing of the A371 for pedestrians in order to provide safe links to the village core and other facilities. Developers should assess and progress safe crossing proposals as outlined in the "Pedestrian Safety Proposal April 2025" issued by the Parish Council (Footnote 22)**

### **Policy HP2: Improving Transport and Accessibility**

- 1. The Transport and Accessibility Plan as set out in Appendix 4 identifies the key transport and accessibility constraints, opportunities and the network's key features' contribution to the Parish's character, across modes. Where relevant, development proposals will be supported where they demonstrate that they:**
  - i. deliver identified opportunities and/or resolve identified constraints;**
  - ii. do not erode key features' contribution to the built and landscape character of the Parish;**
  - iii. do not exacerbate identified constraints, satisfactorily mitigating any adverse impacts which arise from the proposal.**
- 2. Proposals should contribute positively to reducing, adapting to and mitigating the locally generated impacts which would result in climate change.**
- 3. Public Rights of Way, Bridleways and cycle route networks will be protected from loss or changes as a result of development proposals which could reduce their quality and overall accessibility.**
- 4. Proposals which protect and deliver (or support the delivery of) improvements to the Strawberry Line within the Parish will be supported.**

<b>Policy HP3: Parking</b>	
1.	Development proposals within or on the edge of the Westbury-Sub-Mendip Settlement Boundary should provide off-street parking appropriate to the scale, location and type of development where relevant and should exceed local authority parking standards reflecting the needs arising from the rurality of the parish and poor access to public transport. Parking areas should be of a permeable construction, forming part of the SuDS solution for the site.
2.	Proposals should demonstrate that design has allowed for the need to ensure good and safe accessibility for refuse, emergency and delivery vehicles, where feasible, considering the likely levels of on-street parking required by occupants, users and visitors.
3.	Proposals which result in the loss of existing on-street parking capacity will only be supported where they mitigate the loss through additional replacement capacity provided either on-site or on an alternative location within close proximity of the parking capacity which has been lost.
4.	Proposals that enable the provision of further off-street parking provision in locations that service access to village facilities will be supported subject to meeting other requirements in this Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted Local Plan.

## 6.2 Justification for Highway and Pedestrian Safety Policies

1. Somerset Council's "[Creating Places for People](#)"<sup>16</sup> was launched for public consultation in 2023. It stated that:

*While Somerset is a largely rural county, at present rural roads are the most hazardous for users, per mile travelled, so the principles would aim to provide safer streets and lanes for rural communities and the opportunity for sustainable travel. The principles are intended to make it easier for those able to walk, wheel, cycle or take public transport to do so, leaving space for those less able to make active travel trips or journeys by public transport, to continue to drive.*

2. Somerset Council adopted Placemaking Principles for Somerset in August 2024. See Finalised placemaking principles ([Somerset Council Appendix 1](#))<sup>17</sup>. It is, however, very important to understand that these principles apply primarily to the main urban settlements and market towns in Somerset, reflective of the fact that the majority of site allocations in the adopted local plans are in these locations.  
**Rural villages have different needs and considerations as a result of their rurality.**

### Connectivity - Road

3. Westbury-sub-Mendip benefits from a position on the strategic road network which means the village is on one of few east-west trunk routes, the A371. The road has a restricted width of carriageway as it runs through the village but carries a large amount of tourist traffic including caravans, HGV traffic, quarry lorries and large

agricultural vehicles. The village survey highlighted a safe crossing of the A371 and reducing traffic speeds in the village as the main priorities.

4. Westbury-sub-Mendip is a 10 minute drive via the A371 from the picturesque city of Wells and the tourist hotspot town of Cheddar with its famous gorge and caves. Westbury-sub- Mendip nestles at the bottom of the slopes of the Mendip Hills and provides vehicle and walking access to this National Landscape (previously AONB). The motorway network can be accessed in approximately 30 minutes by car on to the M5 at Burnham on Sea or Weston Super Mare.

### **Connectivity - Public Transport**

5. There are no railway services near Westbury-sub-Mendip. The closest railway station with services to London, the South Coast, Devon and Cornwall and Bath and Bristol is in Castle Cary, approximately a 35 minute journey by car. Bristol, a 55 minute car journey away is the closest station for rail links to the north and to Wales. There are no direct bus routes linking Westbury-sub-Mendip to a railway station. The only bus route which runs through Westbury-sub-Mendip is the 126 service which runs every couple of hours between Wells and Weston Super Mare. V
6. In the 2024 village Neighbourhood Plan [Priorities Survey](#) <sup>7</sup> , whilst 91% of villagers felt this bus route was key to the village, 90% did not regularly use the service citing the infrequency of the services, no early morning or late evening service and poor connection with other onward routes. The 126 service does not provide a timetable suitable for people wishing to travel to and from work even for normal working hours let alone shift hours. It is also virtually impossible to travel by public transport from Westbury-sub-Mendip to attend an appointment at any of the main hospitals in Taunton, Bath or Bristol and return on the same day. Similarly, travel to and from the Minor Treatment Centres in Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet by public transport is arduous.

### **Connectivity - Cycling and walking**

7. The A371 has no pedestrian footpaths beyond the centre of the village and the paths that do exist are inadequate being intermittent and narrow. There is no safe pedestrian crossing of the A371 in Westbury-sub-Mendip, consequently walking to core services within the village or to neighbouring villages along the A371 is dangerous. Heavy traffic on the A371 makes it an unpopular cycle route and a no-go for families on bicycles. The extensive network of footpaths within the parish is illustrated in Fig 6.





Fig 6 Illustration of footpaths within the village in purple and the completed multi user path in blue

8. This network of footpaths give access to the landscape and provide connection to the Strawberry Line multi-user path which holds out the possibility of a safe pedestrian and cycle route to Wells, Cheddar and beyond but as yet the route is not complete to either Wells or Cheddar. Access to the Strawberry Line for half the village involves crossing the A371 which is dangerous.

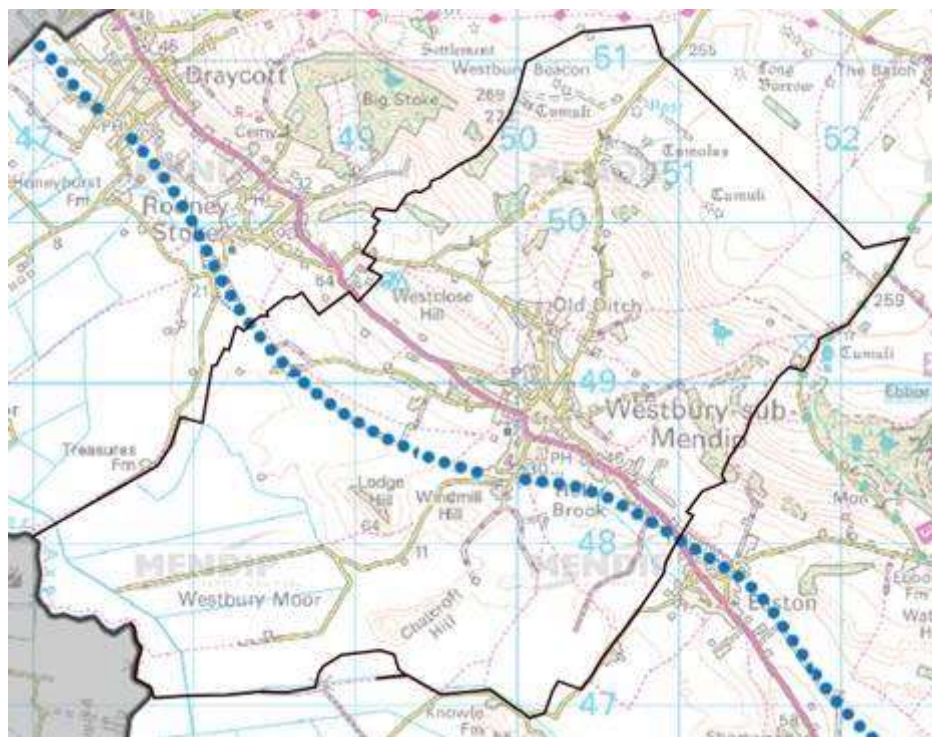


Fig 6A Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish boundary in black  
 Strawberry Line multi-user route  
 Protection of Former Transport Corridors for Future Transport Use - DP18



## Car Parking

9. Westbury-sub-Mendip is not within the 20 minute round trip walking, cycling or public transport time referred to in the Placemaking principles. Therefore, the use of private cars to enable villagers to access the main services provided in Wells, Cheddar and beyond is unavoidable and consequently a higher level of safe and usable parking provision is needed in this rural location than in urban areas.
10. In the 2024 village Neighbourhood Plan [Priorities Survey<sup>7</sup>](#) the 71% of residents who replied stated that the need for public parking within the village should be addressed.
11. There are no car parks as such in Westbury-sub-Mendip with the exception of a rough parking area near the western entrance to the playing field on the edge of the village. The Westbury Inn has very limited parking for patrons only and the only other parking available is beside the A371 in the Mortar Pits lay-by an area which will be lost if the proposed Roughmoor Lane development goes ahead. Many houses in the village have no off-road parking, which combined with the requirement to park work vehicles at home and accommodate multi generation households means on-street parking spaces are at a premium.
12. Particularly busy parking areas within the village are at Stoneleigh, School Hill, The Square, the entrance to the Church, by the village hall, the A371 by the pub and on Station Road at the entrance to the Strawberry Line. These are shown in Fig 6B below.



Fig 6B showing areas of roadside public parking in blue

13. There is currently no designated parking provision for the shop, school, village hall or church. Any resident with restricted mobility is forced to park on the road in order to use these village facilities which creates a hazard for other pedestrians and road users.

## Pedestrian safety

14. In the 2024 village NP [Priorities Survey](#)<sup>7</sup> pedestrian safety came out as the main priority for the village. A safe crossing of the A371 was raised at every village meeting and consultation. A safe crossing requirement of the A371 is currently described in WM1 of part 2 [Mendip Local Plan](#)<sup>18</sup>.
15. In response to the priority for highway and pedestrian safety the Parish Council commissioned a [Highways Scoping Report](#)<sup>19</sup>[Please add embedded link] to identify the issues that need to be considered by any development on allocated land south of Roughmoor Lane. The key issue are seen as key to address in any future development and are therefore referenced in this Neighbourhood Plan
16. The [Placemaking principles](#)<sup>17</sup> require that careful consideration should be given to how children are to access schools without reliance upon private cars, instead encouraging walking, cycling and public bus use. A safe crossing of the A371 is essential for half the village's children to access the school by foot or cycle.
17. The A371 which cuts Westbury-sub-Mendip in half does not have a footpath throughout its length with no footpath on either side of the road near the village hall or at the western exit from the village by Stoneleigh. In addition, there is no pedestrian crossing of the A371 in the village. Speed measurements frequently record traffic passing through the village significantly in excess of the speed limit. The shop/PO, school, village hall and pub are to the north of the A371 and church, playing fields, access to the Strawberry Line and Mortar Pits parking are all south of the A371. A safe crossing of the A371 is the number one priority voiced by villagers in all surveys, questionnaires and at village meetings.
18. Few of the lanes leading off the A371 have any footpaths and most have no street lighting because of the village dark skies policy though it does have provision for lighting to be added for safety purposes such as a crossing of the A371. Pedestrian safety from the increased volume of traffic and vehicles moving too fast for the road conditions is a major concern.
19. Roughmoor Lane at the western edge of the village has approximately 65 houses located along its length and the village playing fields are located at the end of the lane. However, there is no footpath or street lighting, and the lane is also frequently used by large tractor and trailer combinations.

### **Community control and influence**

1. The planning system can only influence 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. Issues such as enforcement of traffic speeds and parking regulations are the responsibility of bodies such as the Avon and Somerset Police and Somerset Council (as Highways Authority). The Parish Council has no control over any car parks in the village. Somerset Council has control over the Mortar Pits lay-by. The frequency of bus services is not regulated through the planning system and planning policies.
2. Speed limits can be varied by Somerset Highways. Traffic speed measurements carried out in support of the Roughmoor Lane residential application (2025) on the A371 on the bend by the shop/PO suggested speeds were close to 20mph. Therefore, it should be possible to lobby Somerset Highways to issue an order reducing the speed limit through this part of the village to 20mph which could make crossing the A371 marginally safer.

3. The Strawberry Line multi-user path was previously a railway line with a station in Westbury-sub-Mendip but much of the land is now in private ownership and completing the path is dependent on the goodwill of a number of different landowners. Without this cooperation there is little prospect of the line being reinstated and helping to reduce the need for car usage.

## A Way Forward

1. This Neighbourhood Plan draws together several key issues on highways and transport identified through consultation with the community. The objectives are to respond to community priorities identified including:
  - Pedestrian safety along and across the A371,
  - Better Parking facilities (private and public spaces)
  - Improved public transport to deliver sustainable access to employment, health services and other facilities
  - Improved health through active travel with access to safe and connected footpaths
  - More sustainable travel modes helping to reduce pollution and tackle climate change
2. Importantly, this plan does not simply leave other “non-planning” transport issues and problems to one side but presents them as issues connected to planning matters that need resolving. We have identified all highways, transport and accessibility constraints in the Transport and Accessibility Plan (Appendix 4). The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need to separate planning and non-planning matters. The Neighbourhood Plan planning policies seek to support planning related matters and the non-planning matters are identified as community aspirations in section 11.
3. **Pedestrian safety along and across the A371** is key to allowing all residents to move freely and safely throughout the village to make full use of the village’s local amenities, and to improve health. It is integral to the adoption of more sustainable forms of travel e.g. walking or cycling to village facilities, bus stops, or multi user path connections)
4. Existing Local Plan policy WM1 states clearly the need to provide safe pedestrian links to the core of the village before any residential development is permitted on the land allocated south of Roughmoor Lane. The Local Planning Authority is required to deliver this provision in consideration of the live 2025 planning application. To safeguard future provision of safe pedestrian links along and across the A371 planning policies in this Neighbourhood Plan propose to require any future [major developments](#) as defined by NPPF<sup>20</sup> to deliver and improve safe pedestrian movement throughout the village (including crossing of the A371).
5. The village and surrounding communities will continue to increase in size as demonstrated by Somerset Council’s recent call for further development sites. This will bring increased traffic and pedestrian activity to our rural roads which need to adapt to ensure the safety of all users. The Parish Council have submitted a [proposal](#) to Somerset Council that shows how accepted standards for a safe crossing can be met.<sup>21</sup>

6. **Better Parking facilities (private & public spaces)** has been highlighted in surveys and village meetings as a significant issue for villagers. The lack of provision detailed above is a significant negative impact on the use of community facilities such as the shop/PO, village hall, school and church. Multi-generational homes are common given the high cost of housing and this rural village is poorly serviced by public transport which taken together increase the necessary use of cars for commuting, school runs, shopping and leisure activities.
7. Neighbourhood Plan policies recognise the facts of life of a rural village that is not well connected to larger towns and employment whereby a higher ratio of parking spaces is needed for each new residence compared to more urban locations. Areas and opportunities for additional public parking to access village facilities also need to be identified to ensure a vibrant sustainable village community. The redundant agricultural site adjacent to Court House Farm may provide space for centralising village facilities and parking and its use for by the village is encouraged.
8. There is some tension between this need for more parking required and the objective to reduce impact on pollution and mitigation of climate change. The solution proposed is to increase private and public parking space and safer footpaths for pedestrians with improved links to footpath and multi user paths (planning matters) whilst also promoting active travel and better public transport links (a non -planning matter but included in community aspirations). It is critical to avoid ignoring the need for more parking in a rural location badly serviced by public transport. A combination approach is the proposed solution.
9. **Improved public transport, improved health through active travel and more sustainable travel modes** can only indirectly be supported by Neighbourhood Plan planning policies. These improvements are identified in the **transport and accessibility plan (appendix 4)** and the **list of community aspirations (section 11)** and will require action by relevant stakeholders during the plan period. There is opportunity for development taking place within the plan area to make contributions towards these improvements and the Neighbourhood Plan policies highlight this responsibility of developers.
10. Please note: The above justifications note the presence of Mendip Local Plan Part 1 policies: Development Policy 9: Transport Impact of New Development (page 97) Development Policy 10: Parking Standards (page 98)
11. These policies in principle support provision of a safe highway serving any new development and parking provision but they were written a long time ago. For example, pedestrian safety is now at the top of the safety hierarchy for highway design which is not reflected in the policies written in 2012. The needs of the Westbury-sub-Mendip community clearly demand additional attention. Improved pedestrian safety by providing a crossing of the A371, reduced speed limits in the village and solving parking provision are key priorities as indicated in village surveys. Improved public transport would better connect the village to the neighbouring towns and villages and improve sustainability.

## 7. Landscape & Environment

1. Objectives: Westbury-sub-Mendip residents place great value on the special features of the landscape in which the parish is set, and which have led to the inclusion of a large proportion of it in the protected Mendip Hills National Landscape.

There is support for development that helps maintain and enhance these qualities and reflects the importance of ‘views in’ and ‘views out’ of that area. Development should also have regard to the importance of the local area for nature conservation and traditional agricultural practices.

2. The community has an aspiration to enhance public access to and engagement with the natural environment to promote physical and mental health and developments that align with that aspiration will command support.

## 7.1 Landscape and Environment Policies

<b><u>Policy LE1: Quality of Landscape</u></b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development proposals that may affect the National Landscape area, its setting or its assets should submit a visual impact assessment proportionate to the location, scale and nature of the proposals which applies the principles outlined in guidance such as GLVIA3 and LI TGN-06-19 showing how their development will impact on relevant views.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Developers should demonstrate how their proposals reflect the overarching objectives of the Mendip Hills National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and are in sympathy with the key features of the both the Mendip Hills and the Levels &amp; Moors Landscape Character areas within which Westbury-sub-Mendip is situated.</li> </ol>

<b><u>Policy LE2: Key Views</u></b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The views identified on Fig 10 (and Map 6 of Appendix 2) representing ‘views in’ and ‘views over’ the village and the National Landscape are identified as Key Views and should be protected: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A From Westbury Beacon, looking South down the Mendip Escarpment, over the St. Lawrence Church towards Glastonbury Tor</li> <li>B From the South-western escarpment of Cook’s Field Nature Reserve, including many points along the medieval “Coffin Route” footpath from Little Field Lane leading to Priddy and Deer Leap, looking South-west</li> <li>C From Deer Leap carpark, looking West along the Mendip Hills plateau to the Bristol Channel and South across the Somerset Levels and Moors towards Glastonbury Tor</li> <li>D From the footpath on Broadhay, Westclose Hill, looking South-west over the St. Lawrence Church and across the Somerset Levels and Moors towards Glastonbury Tor</li> <li>E From the footpath by Knowle Hill, looking North-east across St Lawrence Church towards the Mendip Hills South-western escarpment</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Development proposals must ensure that the Key Views can continue to be enjoyed.</li> <li>3. Proposals will be supported where there is no adverse impact on the Key Views or where the proposals include measures to protect, restore or enhance them or the defining features within them, to the benefit of the overall visual amenity.</li> </ol>

<b>Policy LE3: Development on Agricultural Land</b>
<p>1. Proposals requiring full applications for the development of new agricultural buildings on working farmland and buildings or premises which support the diversification of the business, and which require planning permission, should be of a scale and form:</p> <p>a. which do not compromise or have adverse impacts on the quality of the environment and the special landscape character of the Parish;</p> <p>b. do not cause an adverse impact on local amenity;</p> <p>c. which do not result in the loss of land used for agriculture whilst also helping to retain and reinforce local agricultural practices traditional to the Parish and National Landscape, such as:</p> <p>a. the protection of hedge banks and hedgerows, small areas of coppice and wildlife corridors;</p> <p>b. maintenance and restoration of drystone walls;</p> <p>c. protection and maintenance of unimproved limestone grassland.</p> <p>d. where any increase in traffic movement including HGVs can be safely accommodated on the rural road network and, where necessary, provide solutions to mitigate the impact of increases in traffic caused by the development.</p>
<p>2. When considering prior approval applications for agricultural buildings under permitted development regulations, the applicants and local planning authority are required to consider carefully how the agricultural need is justified for an active farming business. Special consideration can be made under Part 6. Class A – Conditions A2.2.d(i) within the context of the high value and very visible locations on the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills and from these slopes towards the levels and moors - together with impact of cumulative developments.</p>

<b>Policy LE4: Biodiversity</b>
<p>1. Local areas identified as SSSIs because of their importance to wildlife are identified on Map 7 of Appendix 2. The network of nature reserves and local wildlife sites, which, though not having the statutory protections afforded to SSSIs are seen locally as equally important, are shown on Map 8 of Appendix 2. These areas, and the connections between them are critical in supporting wildlife habitats and biodiversity.</p> <p>i. Where relevant, development proposals should demonstrate how these areas and the connections between them are enhanced.</p>



<b>Policy LE6: Dark Skies</b>	
1.	Proposals for development will be supported where it is demonstrated that light spill from within buildings will be reduced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. avoiding or recessing large areas of vertical fenestration;</li> <li>ii. avoiding glazing which is facing upwards (whether horizontal or angled) including conservatory roofs;</li> <li>iii. within a site, locating and orientating development as sensitively as possible; and</li> <li>iv. limiting the correlated colour temperature of lamps to 3000 Kelvins or less.</li> </ul>
2.	Lighting measures proposed should align with guidance provided by the International Dark Skies Association and the Westbury Sub Mendip Dark Skies Policy.

## 7.2 Justification for Landscape and Environmental Policies

1. Neighbourhood Plan Policies need to be concerned with the wider landscape and environment to the full extent of the Parish of Westbury-sub-Mendip: an area of 1,187 hectares with a perimeter boundary of 16.52km. See Fig 8.

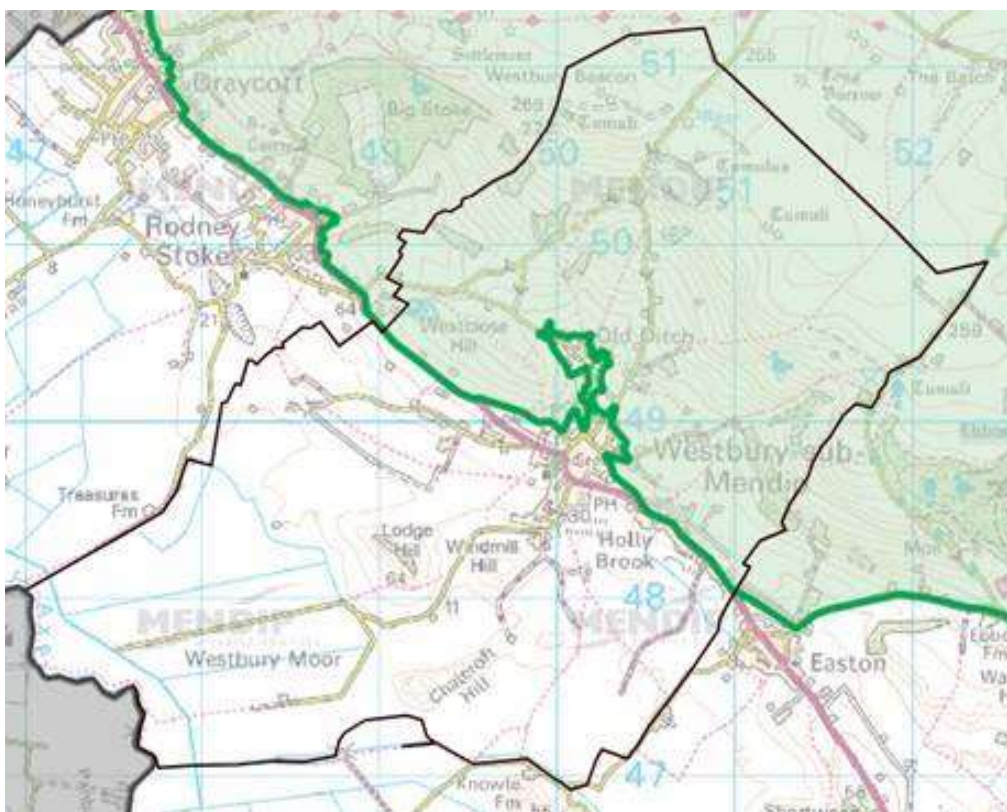


Fig 8 Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish boundary in black

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Mendip Hills AONB – National Landscape in green - DP2

2. The Parish area north of the A371 is part of the National Character Area NCA 141 – [Mendip Hills](#)<sup>22</sup> and is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and [National Landscape](#)<sup>23</sup>, also now included as one of four designated [King's National Nature Reserves](#)<sup>24</sup>.
3. The parish area south of the A371 is part of NCA 142 – [Somerset Levels and Moors](#)<sup>25</sup>, with some outlying knolls of NCA 143 - Mid-Somerset Hills.

The history of land use is summarised by this image and key below

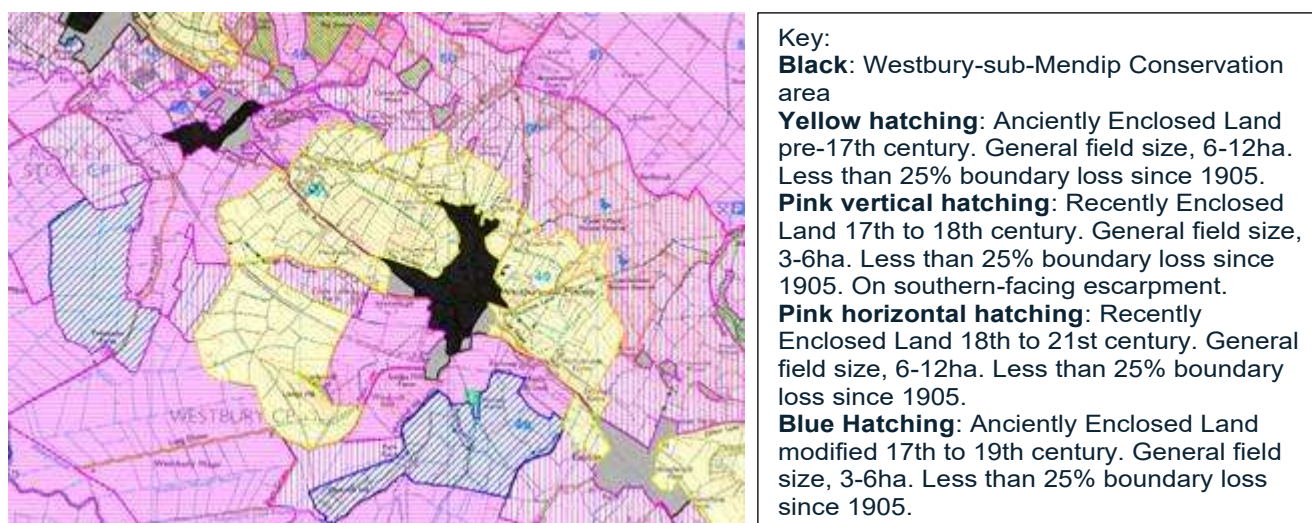


Fig 3 SW Heritage Trust - Historic Landscape Character (HLC)

4. The Village Background (section 2.1) of this Neighbourhood Plan describes the wide range of Community groups in the Village with particular interest and expertise in the natural landscape, history and ecology of the Mendip Hills, Somerset Levels and Moors. Village meetings, consultations and focus groups have consistently demonstrated a strong desire to protect, maintain and enhance the peace, tranquillity, quality of life and well-being that this unique rural setting provides. Many residents in the Westbury-sub-Mendip volunteer their time to enabling the stewardship of these highly valued features of the village,

### Mendip Hills National Landscape (AONB) and National Character Areas

5. Since 22nd November 2023, all AONBs have been known as “National Landscapes”. However, relevant legislation continues to refer to “Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty” (AONB) and their statutory purpose remain unchanged. The terms National Landscape and AONB are therefore used interchangeably in this document.
6. The 198 square kilometres that is the nationally protected landscape of the Mendip Hills National Landscape has [12 special qualities](#) that create the Mendip Hills sense of place and identity. Of these 12 there are 7 of specific relevance to Westbury Sub Mendip Parish area.



7. Those relevant are:

- South-facing slopes of flower-rich limestone grasslands
- A tough landscape famous for adventure and enjoying nature
- Views towards and Views out
- Distinctive limestone ridge
- Diverse and visible geology
- Ancient, wooded combes
- Drystone Walls

8. The Mendip Hills National Landscape [Management Plan](#) (2025-2030)<sup>23</sup> highlights key targets and references the Mendip Hills [Landscape Recovery Plan](#)<sup>26</sup> which identifies local priorities for the South Western Slopes. Further special qualities referenced are:

- Dark skies, tranquillity and sense of remoteness,
- Evidence of past human settlement, and
- Landscape enjoyed by huge numbers of people.

9. The NPPF (section 15) details the Government's policy on the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes.

10. The NPPF and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance confirm that:

- The scale and extent of development in National Landscapes should be limited.
- The tilted balance may often be disapplied in respect of planning affecting the Mendip Hills National Landscape. That is because the NPPF makes clear the tilted balance is not triggered in cases where the application of its policies that "protect areas or assets of particular importance" (including National Landscapes) provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

11. Local plan policies have been designed and are expected to continue to ensure that the most significant parts of our landscape are shielded from all but the most essential forms of development and that elsewhere the intrinsic value of the countryside is maintained whilst allowing forms of development that contribute to the social and economic health of the county.

12. An important aspect is the consideration of the impact of schemes both individually and cumulatively. Collectively, even small developments can result in a more significant impact that will change the character of the landscape.

### **Landscape:**

13. The relevant paragraphs from NPPF Section 16 are:

- Para 187 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- Para 189 - Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National

Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

- Para 189 - The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

14. A character assessment for Mendip District was previously undertaken in 1996. This was then updated in 2019/2020 ([Macgregor Smith](#))<sup>27</sup> which identified the Mendip South Western Facing Slopes (LCA – A4) and the [Central Mendip](#) subsets being:

- A 4.1 The Draycott - Westbury Slopes
- A 4.2 The Strawberry Belt
- A 4.3 Ebbor Gorge and The Upper Axe
- A 4.4 The Wells Bowl

15. An extract follows:

#### A4.1 THE DRAYCOTT-WESTBURY SLOPES

This area forms the MDC section of escarpment edge to the Mendip ridge (the scarp slope continues beyond the boundary to the west towards and beyond Cheddar). This area sits above the Strawberry Belt villages (LCA A4.2). This area is one of the most open and visible sections of the southern flank of the Mendip ridge and forms the backdrop to the extensive landscape to the south both within and outside the Mendip authority area.

16. The significant features of note for the South Western Slopes of the Mendip scarp, are:

- A chain of prominent limestone hills extending inland from the Severn Estuary and rising up sharply from the surrounding lowlands.
- Far-reaching views south across the Somerset Levels to Glastonbury Tor, Wedmore and Hinkley Point, even as far as Dorset on a clear day and west across the Severn Estuary to Wales.
- Many viewpoints provide the experience of tranquillity and dark skies.
- An extensive network of public rights of way and land are classified as being publicly accessible.

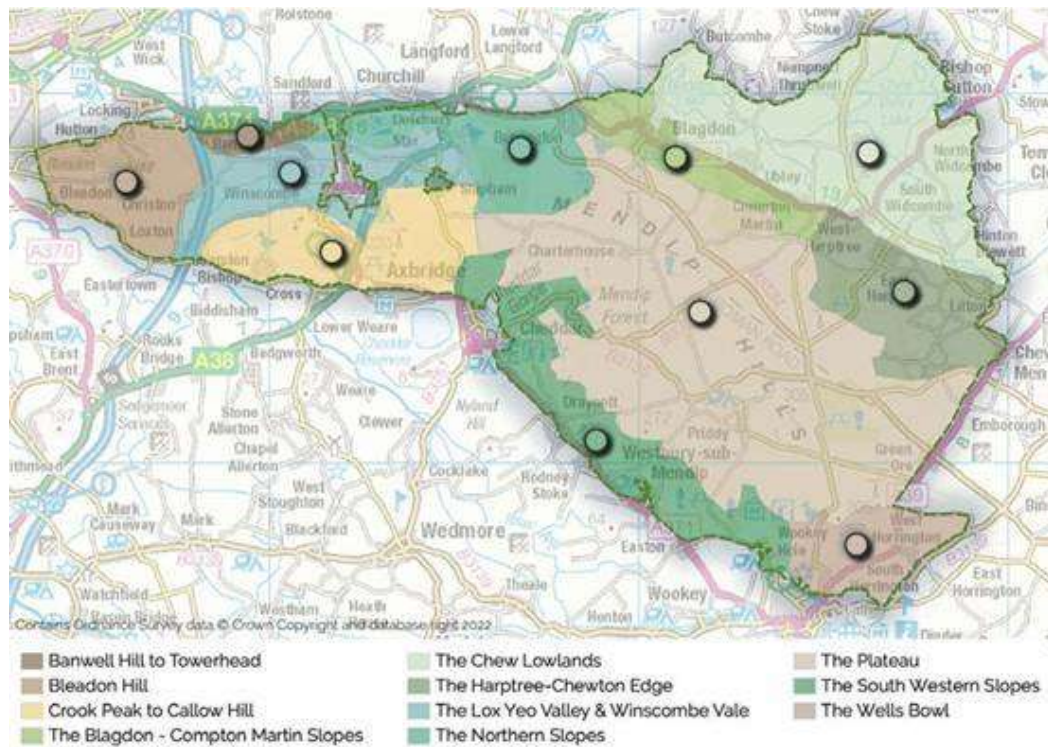


Fig 9 Extracted from Mendip Hills AONB Nature Recovery Plan. Aug 2023 (Page 61)

17. The Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to provide some granularity and add weight to the intent of [NPPF](#) Section 15<sup>28</sup>. The Plan seeks to protect the unique gateway setting that this parish represents to the Mendip Hills AONB National Landscape Area.
18. There is a robust evidence base for the landscape and environment policies of this Neighbourhood Plan in the Mendip Hills [AONB Management Plan](#) 2019-2024<sup>29</sup>, a report on the [State of the AONB](#) (National Landscape)<sup>30</sup>, the consultation draft of the Mendip Hills National Landscape [Management Plan 2025-2030](#)<sup>31</sup>, together with the Mendip Hills [Nature Recovery Plan](#).
19. The recovery plan identifies the unique nature of the South West Slopes and confirms the local priorities. A number of the key objectives in the Recovery Plan (Pages 45-46, section 8.1 Overarching Objectives) are complementary to objectives in this Neighbourhood Plan, namely:
  - No.2 Create and restore linear habitats and connective corridors to aid species abundance and movement, including a network of ponds, native hedgerows with trees, and drystone walls.
  - No.4 Support farmers and land managers to 'rewild' unproductive agricultural land and provide support with their transition to the new Environmental Land Management Schemes through a strong network, promoting the AONB's Special Qualities & Natural Capital.
  - No.5 Encourage land management practices that are sensitive to river catchments and incorporate Natural Flood Management in order to protect soils, reduce surface water run-off, and increase water quality.
  - No.6 Plant the right trees in the right places to increase woodland and climate resilience by promoting natural restocking and replacing Ash trees lost to Ash-dieback, including safeguarding our existing and future veteran trees, and ensuring archaeological and historic sites are not damaged.

- No.7 Conserve and restore Dark Night Skies by influencing development and infrastructure plans to limit the amount of new external lighting, and by working with existing emitters to reduce their light pollution.
- No.8 Establish a 'Super' National Nature Reserve on Mendip by working in partnership to create a joined-up approach at a landscape scale along the south facing slopes, where nature conservation, scientific research, and public engagement will be a priority.

### **Ecology:**

20. The local plan policy DP5: Biodiversity and Ecological Networks sets out how the planning authority will protect, enhance and restore Somerset's Ecological Network within Mendip. This is well supported by the NLA management plan with village survey responses showing strong support.
21. Biodiversity and Geodiversity - for resilient and coherent ecological networks in place providing bigger, better, and joined up habitats, with no loss of characteristic species. The area's diverse geology is understood and managed for its importance, both to the biodiversity, and ecosystem services that benefit business, people and wildlife.
22. Two objectives for biodiversity are to ensure that there is no net loss of characteristic habitats and species and to promote a landscape scale approach to the conservation and enhancement of ecological networks within and adjoining the AONB.

### **Dark Skies:**

23. The Mendip Hills National Landscape seeks to protect dark skies as a special characteristic of the Mendip Hills and has issued guidance in relation to all development in, or in the setting of, the protected landscape. Westbury-sub-Mendip is partly within and extensively viewed from the National Landscape and the village has endorsed Dark Skies principles on several occasions.
24. The Parish Council and Somerset County Council ran a comprehensive survey of all residents in the early 2000s to establish support for the Dark Skies principle. They offered a range of options including the removal of streetlights, fitting timers and maintaining the status quo.
25. The village gave overwhelming support for the Dark Skies principles. Just one area, Stoneleigh, voted to retain their local streetlights, and a second area, Lodge Hill opted for a timer giving limited hours of lighting. All other streetlights were removed, resulting in no lights north of the A371 and just the 2 exceptions south of the A371. The Parish Council has since adopted a [Dark Skies Policy](#)<sup>32</sup> and has sought to limit/control external lighting and encourage the automated blinding of Velux windows etc. within the constraints of the existing planning regulations.
26. Surveys subsequently conducted in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan confirmed continuing village support for Dark Skies principles.
27. The Mendip Hills National Landscape is home to [the North Somerset and Mendips Bat SAC](#). This designation is largely for greater horseshoe (and lesser horseshoe) bats. Greater Horseshoe bats are extremely light sensitive, the cave systems of the Mendips and the surrounding landscape, provide hibernation and maternity roosting sites of national importance, together with foraging habitats. Greater lux levels could have major impacts on the value of these habitats.

28. Locally Somerset Environmental Records Centre( SERC), have records of over 20 years of community glow worm counts, as well as the numbers and sightings of owls and bats in the village, all of which could be threatened by increased light pollution.
29. It is relevant to note that because of the long-standing dark skies character of the Mendip Hills, the nearby village of Charterhouse-on-Mendip is the location for an astronomic Observatory.

### **Village Survey Responses on Landscape and Ecology - May 2024**

30. The Neighbourhood Plan Village [Priorities Survey](#) April 2024 <sup>7</sup> confirmed the importance of the natural landscape of the Mendip Hills AONB to residents and visitors' enjoyment and well-being, with many popular panoramic vistas and glimpsed views in and out of the moors to the south and the historic escarpment to the north; the close interweaving of green spaces/wedges with the historic conservation area and lanes. Community interest groups demonstrate a strong interest and importance attached to wildlife and flora.
31. The importance of the landscape and environment features to the community are clearly communicated with 80% saying the following were "very important":
- Woodlands and mature trees
  - Variety of wildlife
  - Green open spaces
  - Farming activity and livestock
32. The public access to the countryside was considered in the survey with 85-95% considering access to country lanes, footpaths, multi-user paths, open access and bridleways as "good or fair".
33. The survey responses also make it evident that the views of the Mendip Hills, the Levels and Moors and the largely agricultural landscape, within and around the parish of Westbury-sub-Mendip are of major importance to the character and quality of life for residents.

### **The Active Farming Landscape**

34. It is important to work with the local farming community to safeguard future food production whilst enhancing key ecosystem elements. These include biodiversity, water quality, water regulation(flooding), soil quality and erosion, pollination services, and genetic diversity, geological and historic features.
35. Small parcels of land change ownership and fall away from being part of active farms with other land uses developing. The working farm impact on the community and on the landscape are important to the village. Westbury-sub Mendip has a landscape created and maintained by working farms which could be lost through development in the next fifteen to twenty years, with fields being divided up and taken out of production, and stables and 'barns' being built. As land use changes with ownership, this transition needs to be carefully managed to safeguard future food production and to support the local working farm community whilst enhancing key elements of the ecosystem.



## Key Views

1. The proximity and variety of the landscape views are a highly valued special characteristic for Westbury-sub-Mendip. The glimpsed views of the countryside and close proximity to areas of green space are a feature of the village that has been identified in the Village Character Assessment referred to previously in section 5 on Settlement Character. The wider parish area, situated as it is within the National Landscape, benefits from dramatic panoramic views which are highly valued and sensitive. These are considered here:
  - 5 key landscape views have been identified to illustrate the special features of the wider Westbury-sub-Mendip parish from viewpoints with easy public access.
  - The factors contributing to these key views represent multiple layers - the landscape views themselves, the geology that the landscape reflects, the history of land use (and of human impacts) within that landscape and the ecology arising from centuries of land use and more recent conservation.
  - Viewpoints A – C follow the Mendip Hills ridge from the north-east of the parish to the north-west, whilst View D overlooks the village, church and conservation area; View E provides views back across the village to the Mendip Hills scarp and gives access to the drove roads of Westbury Moor, much visited by birdwatchers.



Fig 10 Key views in Westbury-sub-Mendip

A [Key Views](#) reference document<sup>33</sup> describes the views in more detail together with more representative images

**View A – from Westbury Beacon (ST 500 507, 272m OD), looking south down the Mendip Escarpment, over St. Lawrence Church towards Glastonbury Tor.**

This illustrates one of the ‘views out’ from the protected National Landscape which contributes to its essential character. It is a view of a predominantly agricultural landscape marked by small fields, often bounded by hedges with occasional small patches of woodland. The spring line villages along the southern boundary of the hills are largely hidden by the lie of the land and at night the view is not dominated by lighting from housing or streets.



Fig 11 View A from Westbury Beacon

**View B – From the south-western escarpment of Cook’s Field Nature Reserve (ST 512 496), including many points between 150 – 250m OD along the medieval “Coffin Route” footpath from Little Field Lane, Kites Croft to Deerleap and Priddy, looking South-west.**

This view is a ‘view out and over’ the protected landscape and also includes part of the village of Westbury sub-Mendip. It shows how the built areas of the village surrounded by fields and partially concealed by trees and hedges. There is no large block of building and the built up area of the parish does not extend significantly south of the A371.



Fig 12 View B from SW Escarpment Cook's Field Nature Reserve

**View C – From Deer Leap carpark (ST 519 413, 248m OD), looking west along the Mendip Hills plateau to the Bristol Channel and South across the Somerset Levels and Moors towards Glastonbury Tor.**

This view, again a 'view out' from the National Landscape, illustrates the same features as views A and B. The southern part of the parish is revealed as part of a continuous expanse of agricultural land with buildings largely confined to the spring line to the north. In addition, the landscape nearer to the car park shows visible signs of the historic and archaeological heritage of the site.

The panoramic views and access to extensive footpaths along the Mendip escarpment, north across to Priddy and south-east to Ebbor Gorge National Nature Reserve make Dearleap car park very popular with visitors and walkers, both local residents and tourists. It provides easy access to Key View B and the open access areas of Cook's Field and Lynchcombe Nature Reserves. The SWT counter at the carpark has been recording an average of 3,000 visitor trips each month.



Fig 13 View C from Deer Leap car park



**View D – From the public footpath on Broadhay (ST 499 492, 101m OD),** providing lower-level access to views looking south-west over St. Lawrence Church and across the Somerset Levels and Moors towards Glastonbury Tor.

This view illustrates the radial pattern of settlement in Westbury sub-Mendip that contributes significantly to its essential character. Buildings in the conservation area follow valleys with areas of farmland in between. To the south more modern development follows the road layout, again separated by agricultural land. Buildings are varied, no more than two storeys, and predominantly individual in character. Roof and walls are reddish brown or limestone grey.

The local popularity of this viewpoint is evidenced by the memorial bench with relatively easy access from the village square, via The Hollow or Broadway Lane.



Fig 14 View D from Broadhay Ridge – looking south east



Fig 15 View D from Broadhay Ridge – looking south

**View E –From the public footpath by Lodge Hill (ST 493 481, 25m OD), looking north-east across St Lawrence Church towards the Mendip Hills south-facing escarpment.**

This view again illustrates that village buildings predominately show pastel colours of roofs and walls, reflecting the reddish-brown of the underlying mudstone conglomerate and grey limestone, camouflaged by a dense green canopy of mature trees, with glimpsed views of the church tower, green wedges and the uncultivated limestone grassland of the nature reserves on the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills. Taken from the southern boundary of the built-up area it illustrates how the form of the settlement is folded into the hillside below the open slopes of the southern Mendip scarp.



Fig 16 Views E from Public Footpath Lodge Hill



Fig 17 View E from Windmill Hill

A Key Views reference document <sup>33</sup> describes the views in more detail together with further representative images.

## 8. Community Facilities

1. **Objectives:** Consultation with the community has highlighted concerns about the suitability and long-term viability of a range of facilities including the village hall, shop and post office. It has also identified that the needs of both young and older members of the parish are not well met. Residents therefore will be supportive of developments to the extent that they protect and enhance existing facilities and provide opportunities for the development of new community assets.

### 8.1 Community Facilities Policies

<b>Policy CF1: Community Hub</b>
<b>1. Proposals for the development of a village hall/community hub in a central location within the village, which includes parking, will be supported subject to the proposal demonstrating, through a Planning Statement, how it has responded positively to the Village Character Assessment (VCA) and the most up-to-date national and local authority design guidance.</b>

<b>Policy CF2: Community, Sports and Leisure Facilities</b>
<b>1. Existing community facilities identified on Map 9 (Appendix 2) including the Village Hall, community shop and Post Office, playing field and Strawberry Line multi-user path will be protected for such use and their loss will not normally be supported.</b>
<b>2. Development proposals for new, replacement, extended and/or improved community facilities including allotments will be supported where:</b>
<b>i. the proposal would not have significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents;</b>
<b>ii. the proposal would not have significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, wildlife habitat and the character of the village as defined in the village character assessment or the surrounding landscape;</b>
<b>iii. the proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on the local road network with regard to additional traffic volumes, congestion, demand for parking and pollution levels; and</b>
<b>iv. the proposed use will be easily accessible to residents.</b>
<b>3. Proposers of any new development are encouraged to engage with the local community and Parish Council at the earliest opportunity to help ensure that any proposals consider both this plan's aims and objectives, the needs of users and the views of the local community.</b>

### 8.2 Justification for Community Facilities

1. [Mendip Local Plan Part 1](#), Development Policy 17 - Safeguarding Community Facilities<sup>1</sup> requires that, as far as is possible, services and facilities should be retained within villages in order to limit rural isolation and avoid an increase in the need for people to travel. The NPPF in paragraphs 29, 88d and 98 provides explicit support for the policies that can lead to improving community facilities in rural locations.



2. Westbury sub-Mendip is a thriving rural community with a village hall, a community shop and post office, pub, playing field, village school and church. A section of the Strawberry Line multi-user path opened in 2022, has proved to be a popular and well used addition to local community facilities and is already in use as a safe walking route to St Lawrence's school from the neighbouring village of Easton. This path will eventually provide a safe active travel route between Cheddar and Wells.
3. The village hall, which is home to many successful clubs and societies, is located at the eastern end of the village, has no car parking and is not safely accessible on foot. A proposed housing development on land to the south of Roughmoor Lane includes a requirement to provide 0.1 hectares of land for community use. A village [facilities survey](#) undertaken in November 2023 indicates a preference for a new village hall to be sited at the NE corner of the development close to the A371 and adjacent to the derelict Court House Farm barns. In addition, where funding and the agreement of the landowner permits, there is strong local support for the creation of a community hub with parking on the site of the derelict barns which will provide an opportunity to combine several village facilities in a central location with safe access to the Strawberry Line Multi user path and Robert Glanville playing field.



Fig 18 Westbury sub Mendip Village Facilities

4. The Neighbourhood Plan [Priorities Survey](#)<sup>7</sup> carried out in April 2024 demonstrates that 70-80% of residents consider the current community facilities to be very important to village life and the events and activities provided by them as excellent/good. When community facilities and leisure opportunities were broken down by age group however, whilst services for younger children were considered to be fair, the provision for young people (11-17) and young adults (18-30) was considered to be fair/poor. Provision for parents with young families and elderly people were considered as good/fair.
5. The same survey indicated strong support for provision of land for allotments or community horticultural schemes with 56% indicating support.

6. A series of [focus groups and Village Meeting in Oct 2024](#) <sup>34</sup> agreed the following:

- A more conveniently situated village hall/hub would increase the opportunities to provide improved facilities for younger people as well as older residents and those with mobility problems. The Neighbourhood Plan should set out an objective for village organisations to collaborate to deliver this facility.
- The Village Hall committee agreed that the hall should be moved to a more central location when possible.
- A contribution to upgrade/expand a new community facility should be sought from any new development.
- In addition to a new village hall, consideration should be given to upgrading the facilities at the playing field.
- The previously developed site (barns) adjacent to Court House Farm should be retained for community, not residential use.

## 9. Sustainability

1. Objectives: There is strong support in Westbury for encouraging sustainable practice in all aspects of development including building design, travel planning and the impact on the environment. Developments should seek, wherever possible, to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide effective mitigation in anticipation of more surface water flood events, exploit opportunities to minimise the use of fossil fuels and promote active travel options that allow people to reduce car use.

### 9.1 Sustainability Policies

<b>Policy S1: Electric Vehicle Charging Points</b>
<b>1. Development proposals for the provision of electric vehicle charging points, where planning permission is required, will be supported where they demonstrate, through a Planning Statement, that they:</b>
<b>i. have no adverse impact on the character of the built and natural environment where relevant</b>
<b>ii. have had full regard to the Village Character Assessment (VCA) and the most up-to-date national and local authority design guidance.</b>
<b>2. Proposals for commercial charging “stations” or “hubs”, or new bespoke facilities, will be supported, subject to other policies in this Plan.</b>

<b>Policy S2: Renewable &amp; Low Carbon Energy Development</b>
<b>Development proposals for renewable and low carbon energy generation will only be supported where the proposal can demonstrate the following:</b>
<b>ii. Avoids adverse impact to landscape character and quality, when viewed from publicly accessible vantage points</b>
<b>iii. Avoids cumulative adverse impacts from other renewable or low carbon energy developments on landscape character and quality, when viewed from publicly accessible vantage points</b>
<b>iv. Avoids adverse impacts to nationally and internationally protected areas</b>

<b>Policy S3: Managing Flood Risk</b>
<p><b>1. Development proposals should demonstrate that they do not increase flood risk on-site, and elsewhere as an implication of the development. This can include use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and/or other management schemes on or off-site, and should take into account locations of known surface water flooding identified on up-to-date flood risk maps (Map 10 in Appendix 2) and should also take account of locations where flooding occurs from significant ground water flows</b></p>
<p><b>2. New development requiring surface water mitigation where possible should seek to assist with improving the performance of the existing surface water drainage adjacent to the development</b></p>
<p><b>3. Proposals should demonstrate that there will be a long-term management plan in place to ensure effective performance of the SuDS</b></p>

## 9.2 Justification for Sustainability Policies

1. National Policy is clear that policies should promote healthy and safe communities to include enhancement of the sustainability of communities and residential environments (NPPF Para 98). Significant weight should be given to designs which promote high levels of sustainability (NPPF Para 139)
2. In 2023 Somerset Council identified a greener more sustainable Somerset as one of four priorities, local councils have also declared climate emergencies and action plans. It is very likely therefore that the new Somerset Local Plan will include some key policies to prioritise the sustainability of communities.
3. Through the Neighbourhood Plan process of surveys and consultation there is clear evidence that the Westbury-Sub-Mendip community is supportive of developments that will increase solar energy provision, reduce car use, mitigate increasing local surface water flood risk and reduce waste, subject to such developments not having a significant adverse impact on the character of) the village or the surrounding landscape. In the Village [Priorities Survey](#) 2024 70% of respondents expressed support for renewable energy installations in the village and 47% of respondents were supportive of a community energy project. Flood risk and water run off were also of concern to 70% of those responding.
4. Surface water flood risk needs more significant and well-designed mitigation due to Westbury-sub-Mendip's location along the spring line where ground water continues to emerge for considerable periods of time following rainfall events. In addition, the village is in the catchment to surface water flowing at speed off the Mendip scarp. The village as a whole and a number of individual properties in particular suffer as a result of these surface water flood risks.



## 10. Employment

1. **Objectives:** The village recognises the importance of supporting the local economy through encouragement of business growth whilst ensuring physical development is compatible with a rural and residential village location. Infrastructure improvements for working from home and for new employment space requires balancing the desire to minimise impact on settlement character. General or heavy industry uses (B2 or B8 use class or any future replacement) are viewed as not compatible with the rural location.

### 10.1 Employment Policies

Policy E1: Local Employment	
1.	<b>Development proposals which support local small and micro businesses and provide space for home working will be supported, where they demonstrate, through a Planning Statement, that there will be no adverse impact on the following (or such impacts can satisfactorily be mitigated):</b>
	<b>i. the character of the village;</b>
	<b>ii. the character of the open countryside, landscape and setting;</b>
	<b>iii. residential amenity and/or the amenity of other existing neighbouring uses;</b>
	<b>iv. flood risk;</b>
	<b>v. traffic conditions and parking;</b>
	<b>vi. noise; and,</b>
	<b>vii. light pollution.</b>

### 10.2 Justification for Employment Policies

1. The core policies in the Mendip Local Plan Part 1 set out a positive framework to encourage business investment and job creation in the district with employment space being created mainly close to the main towns. Core policy 4 relates to the need to sustain rural communities including the need to provide for employment in rural locations.
2. Clause 4 within this core policy supports proposals for the “*establishment, expansion and diversification of business development of the rural economy in a manner and of a scale which is appropriate to the location and constraints upon it*” As a primary village Westbury-sub-Mendip hosts Lodge Hill Industrial Estate which whilst providing employment opportunities already results in significant environmental and visual impact on the settlement.
3. The community supports provision for further employment but with caveats for scale and the need to limit the impact on settlement character and highway safety, with a preference that further employment should be of local people. The context of the existing highway safety issues arising from growing traffic volumes on the A371 needs to be accounted for when considering future employment uses, as does the absence of a public transport service that allows normal business hours commuting.

4. The Neighbourhood policies are therefore centred on support for home and micro enterprise working with conditions to be met on impact. Heavier use classes such as B2 and B8 which have a greater impact on scale, noise and traffic are not supported. Expansion of existing businesses at Lodge Hill Industrial Estate (Map 11 of Appendix 2) needs to be controlled through active application of existing policy that recognises the visual impact on the unique setting of Westbury-Sub-Mendip given its proximity to a National Landscape, the poor quality of the A371 and the limited service from public transport.

## 11. Community Aspirations

1. In the course of consultations, it has become clear that the community shares a number of aspirations which cannot be delivered by the planning system either in whole or in part. Nevertheless, it is felt important to record them here as they form part of the context for the plan and help interpret its policies. They also form an agenda for action by the parish council, by other community groups and by private individuals and organisations.

Topic & Community Aims	Community Objectives
<b>Transport, Highways and Pedestrian Safety</b>	
Aim 6: To bring improvement in safer access to all areas of Westbury-sub-Mendip and neighbouring villages for pedestrians, non-motorised transport and vehicles.	<p>c) To support the improvement of safe travel between Westbury-sub-Mendip and neighbouring villages.</p> <p>d) To support measures that slow down vehicles travelling through Westbury-sub-Mendip and the improvement of sight lines for vehicles and pedestrians on the A371</p>
Aim 8: Improve public transport to reflect the needs of a small rural village and members of the community with restricted mobility.	Improve public transport to reflect the needs of a small rural village and members of the community with restricted mobility.
<b>Landscape &amp; Environment</b>	
Aim 9. To support development where it helps maintain or enhance the special qualities of gateway setting that the parish occupies for both the Mendip Hills and the Levels & Moors National Landscape.	<p>d) To encourage the maintenance and restoration of drystone walls and traditional native hedges.</p> <p>f) To support the viability of traditional and restorative agricultural practices to help manage unimproved limestone grassland and the traditional landscape of the Mendip Hills and Somerset Levels and Moors.</p>
Aim 10. To promote opportunities to enhance public access to and engagement with the natural environment in order to promote physical and mental health and the appreciation of nature.	<p>a) To maintain and, where possible, expand the network of footpaths, shared use paths and bridleways throughout the parish.</p> <p>b) To encourage the designation of areas of special wildlife interest as local nature reserves.</p>

	c) To provide opportunities for local people to become actively involved in managing the landscape and local wildlife sites.
<b>Community Facilities</b>	
Aim 11 To improve the range of community facilities to reflect the needs of groups within Westbury sub Mendip.	<p>b) To promote, seek funding and progress subsequent development of a new community hub to meet the needs of village services, recreation and leisure activities for all age groups.</p> <p>d) To seek out opportunities to source land for allotments for village community use</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	
Aim 12: Encourage sustainable practice across all NP policies – traffic, design, environment and to encourage progress in the following:	<p>b) Advocate for ways to reduce car use including support for completion of the strawberry line multi-user path.</p> <p>e) Identify and promote opportunities to reduce waste and recycle.</p>
<b>Employment</b>	
Aim 13: Support the growth of small businesses and rural local economy whilst ensuring physical development is compatible with a rural and residential village location.	<p>a,) Promote improvements in the range of infrastructure needed by small and micro businesses and those who work from home.</p> <p>c,) Work with existing and new employment uses to balance business need with other neighbourhood plan objectives requiring minimal impact on the settlement character, and environment and specifically limiting light pollution.</p>

## 12. Appendices to Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan

Appendix 1 - Timeline of Westbury-sub-Mendip Neighbourhood Plan Consultations and summary of survey topics

Appendix 2 – Westbury Sub Mendip Maps (Maps 1-11)

Appendix 3 - Westbury-sub-Mendip Village Character Assessment (VCA)

Appendix 4 – Transport and Accessibility Constraints Plan

**See *Westbury-sub-Mendip NP Appendix.pdf***

## 13. Endnote Summary

<sup>1</sup> Mendip Local Plan Part 1 (<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/>)

<sup>2</sup> Westbury-sub-Mendip Housing Needs Survey 2024

<sup>3</sup> Westbury-sub-Mendip Housing Needs Survey 2024; Para 5.13; para 5.16

<sup>4</sup> WSM Village Survey Feb 2022 - Roughmour Lane Development

<sup>5</sup> WSM Village Facilities Survey Sept 2023

<sup>6</sup> Village Survey May 2017 - <https://westburysubmendip-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Data-all-170502-for-website.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> WSM Village Survey Apr 2024 - Neighbourhood Plan Priorities

<sup>8</sup> WsM Maps (Maps 1-11) – Appendix 2

<sup>9</sup> Westbury-sub-Mendip Village Character Assessment (VCA) – Appendix 3 (Also <https://westburysubmendip-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Westbury-sub-Mendip-VCA-v3-Oct23.pdf>)

<sup>10</sup> Somerset Council Affordable Housing Guidance

<sup>11</sup> NPPF - (Para 7, 8b, 11 and 129) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

<sup>12</sup> First Bus timetable link?

<sup>13</sup> Mendip Hills National Landscape <https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> Levels and Moors NCA - <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/12320274>

<sup>15</sup> NPPF (2024) Para 131 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/creating-places-for-people/>

<sup>17</sup> Somerset Council Placemaking Principles – Appendix 1

<sup>18</sup> Mendip DC Local Plan Part 2

<sup>19</sup> Westbury Sub Mendip Highways Safety Scoping Report

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>

<sup>21</sup> WsM Parish Council Safe Crossing Proposal – April 2025

<sup>22</sup> <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/mendip-hills/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/national-landscapes/mendip-hills>

<sup>24</sup> Kings Nature Reserve (<https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/news/mendipnnr/>)

<sup>25</sup> <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/Somerset-Levels-and-Moors/>

<sup>26</sup> Mendip Hills Nature Recovery Plan Section 9.11 The South Western Slopes (Page 96) (<https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/caring/nature-recovery-plan/>)

<sup>27</sup> <https://macgregorsmith.co.uk/mendip/introduction.html> and <https://macgregorsmith.co.uk/mendip/landscape-types.html#central-mendip>

<sup>28</sup> NPPF Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

<sup>29</sup> Mendip Hills National Landscape Management Plan (<https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/caring/management-plan/>)

<sup>30</sup> State-of-the-Mendip AONB-2022

<sup>31</sup> Mendip-Hills-AONBDraftMngmntPlan2025

<sup>32</sup> Westbury-sub-Mendip Dark Skies Policy

<sup>33</sup> Westbury Sub Mendip Key Views

<sup>34</sup> Summary of focus group meeting discussions