



National
Trust

Sherborne Big Nature Big Access

Concept Paper to be shared with CDC (Cotswold District Council)

1.0 Vision

A Cotswold landscape for everyone – where nature and people can thrive



Our vision is a Sherborne for everyone - buzzing with wildlife and wilder places. A landscape rich in history and beauty. A welcoming place to visit where people can easily roam, be inspired and connect. A place that is playing its part in the climate response. Where communities are contributing to and benefitting from change. Where everyone feels welcome and can help care for this special place. A place connected to the surrounding Cotswolds landscape, working with our partners and neighbours to deliver landscape-scale change.

Our priorities and investments will be guided by the following values and aims:

1. More people experience and enjoy Sherborne: The visitor experience is transformed by a new network of facilities and accessible routes for multiple audiences, enabling local communities and visitors to easily explore and connect with the landscape, nature and heritage. This high-quality visitor offer attracts more people, including many who are discovering Sherborne for the first time.

2.Cotswold wildlife and habitats thrive: Flower rich meadows, new native woodlands and nature-friendly land management across the whole landscape restores soils, waterways and supports widespread and charismatic wildlife.

3.Sherborne plays its part in the climate response: Delivering nature-based solutions to lock up more carbon in native woodland, produce healthy soils and waterways and restore more resilient habitats for wildlife to flourish and adapt. Climate-friendly solutions will inform every decision.

4.History and landscape are celebrated: Sherborne offers a compelling story of an evolving Cotswold landscape rich in history, entering a new era that meets the needs of the 21st century.

5.Collaboration and partnership support design and delivery: Working with a wide variety of communities across the Cotswolds, tenants and partners who share our vision and values to make Sherborne more nature rich, accessible, and sustainable so more people can benefit.

1.1 Summary

The Sherborne landscape sits between Oxford and Cheltenham, and within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Linked by the River Windrush to the towns of Bourton-on-the-Water and Burford, this large estate comprises 1672ha of farmland, meadows, wetlands and woodland; traditional Cotswold buildings and landscapes; and Lodge Park, England's only surviving 17th-century grandstand.

We have reimagined what can be delivered on the 1672 hectares of Sherborne Estate, and already begun the work to deliver this transformational change for people and nature.

- A large farm tenancy will be returning to the National Trust at an agreed end of a tenancy (325ha at Sherborne Farm, November 2023), and an adjoining strategic part of a different tenancy will return to the National Trust at the same time (33 ha at Old Park, Jan 2023). Feasibility work will soon be underway for restoration of watermeadows and flower-rich grasslands, and planting of new woodlands, on this land which currently includes areas of arable and some more intensive grazing.
- 15,000 trees will be planted this winter in the grade 1 listed landscape of Lodge Park.
- Flow modelling is underway on the Sherborne Brook to find a sustainable way to manage the watercourse.
- Working with local communities, tenants and partner organisations, we imagine a visitor experience that enables everyone to enjoy and benefit from this landscape – with accessibility at the core of our design. 8km of access paths have been resurfaced in the last 4 years, but we want to create a network of new and revitalised trails linked by up to 3 different outdoor hubs that serve a variety of visitor needs. These facilities and experiences will offer a warm welcome to visitors and enable them to engage with the Cotswold landscape of Sherborne in their own way.

- Ongoing local relationships with communities, tenants, and partners will make Sherborne a place with people at its heart – better for those already using the landscape, but crucially also attracting new audiences out into the Cotswolds countryside. Importantly, we will also seek partners to help co-develop and deliver additional elements of the visitor experience and develop the wider local visitor economy – diversifying choice and promoting innovation so that the benefits can be shared more widely amongst local communities.
- Currently redundant farm buildings offer a fantastic opportunity to drive new forms of income for the estate, and by revitalising these buildings we can offer further ways for visitors to engage with the landscape whilst conserving and protecting these heritage assets.
- With support and investment now, there is the opportunity to create much more priority habitat across the rest of the estate, plant significantly more trees, and truly deliver for nature, climate and wildlife. The opportunity for people is also enormous, as we can work with partners and communities to welcome and engage many more people in a truly accessible and inclusive Cotswold landscape.

2.0 Introduction

I. Sherborne Big Access, Big Nature was established as project in January 2022 with a Sponsor (Nick Droy, ADO), Client (Jonny Loose, GM) and interim Project Manager. There is now a full-time Project Manager (Andrew Danson)

II. The project has a vision of a Cotswold landscape for everyone where nature and people can thrive

III. 4 major workstreams have been identified for delivery in the next 3 years that will enable Sherborne to contribute to the National Trust strategic objectives of Everyone Welcome and Climate Action, including:

- Bridgeman Landscape restoration – tree planting and new access
- Sherborne Farm – priority habitat creation and new access
- Old Park – priority habitat restoration and new access
- Broadwaters – sustainable watercourse management and new access

Enabling workstreams have also been identified, including the commission of a Conservation Management Plan (this is in train), commissioning of audience insight work for outdoor visitor experience, an asset management plan as part of funding plan, and habitat and carbon baselining across the whole estate.



Sherborne Big Nature, Big Access project

Phase 1 : 2022–2025

The opportunity:

The Sherborne landscape sits between Oxford and Cheltenham, forming part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Linked by the River Windrush to the towns of Bourton-on-the-Water and Burford, this large estate comprises 1600ha of farmland, meadows, wetlands and woodland; traditional Cotswold buildings and landscapes; and Lodge Park, England's only surviving 17th-century grandstand.

The vision:

1. More people experience and enjoy Sherborne
2. Cotswold wildlife and habitats thrive
3. Sherborne plays its part in the climate response
4. History and landscape are celebrated
5. Collaboration and partnership support design and delivery

The benefits:

- Improvements for nature -> LON
- Better access -> Everyone Welcome
- Improved relationship with the community -> Growing Support
- Contribution to our climate and energy targets

Pan-project workstreams

Community engagement and communications To include the social history project, opportunities for volunteering

Carbon baselining To understand the carbon we hold now, and to measure carbon captured

CMP for the Sherborne estate Has just started, to be contracted out. Timescale 1 year, due Dec 2022. Will feed in to restoration and access plans.

Core landscape projects

Sherborne Farm nature and access

The restoration and creation of 170 hectares of grassland and woodland priority habitat, with wet scrapes, on currently arable farmland.

Old Park nature and access

The restoration of parkland habitat, and improved access network throughout

Lodge Park Bridgman historic landscape restoration

The restoration and completion of the historic Bridgman planned landscape, with large-scale tree planting.

Sherborne Broadwaters habitat and heritage restoration

Installing a sustainable management solution to maintain the open aspect of Sherborne Brook, restore the built features and support riverine wildlife.

Feasibility studies

Visitor insight and access master planning Research who is visiting and assess the feasibility of having 3 welcome hubs across the estate

Buildings and built assets feasibility and options To include Sherborne Farmhouse holiday let

Home farm Solar generation feasibility study In train, waiting for response from solar company

Not in scope

Bourton to Burford

Initial thinking started. Will affect adjacent habitat and access.

Tree and hedge plan

Not yet started, will be completed in-hand.

Woodland management plan

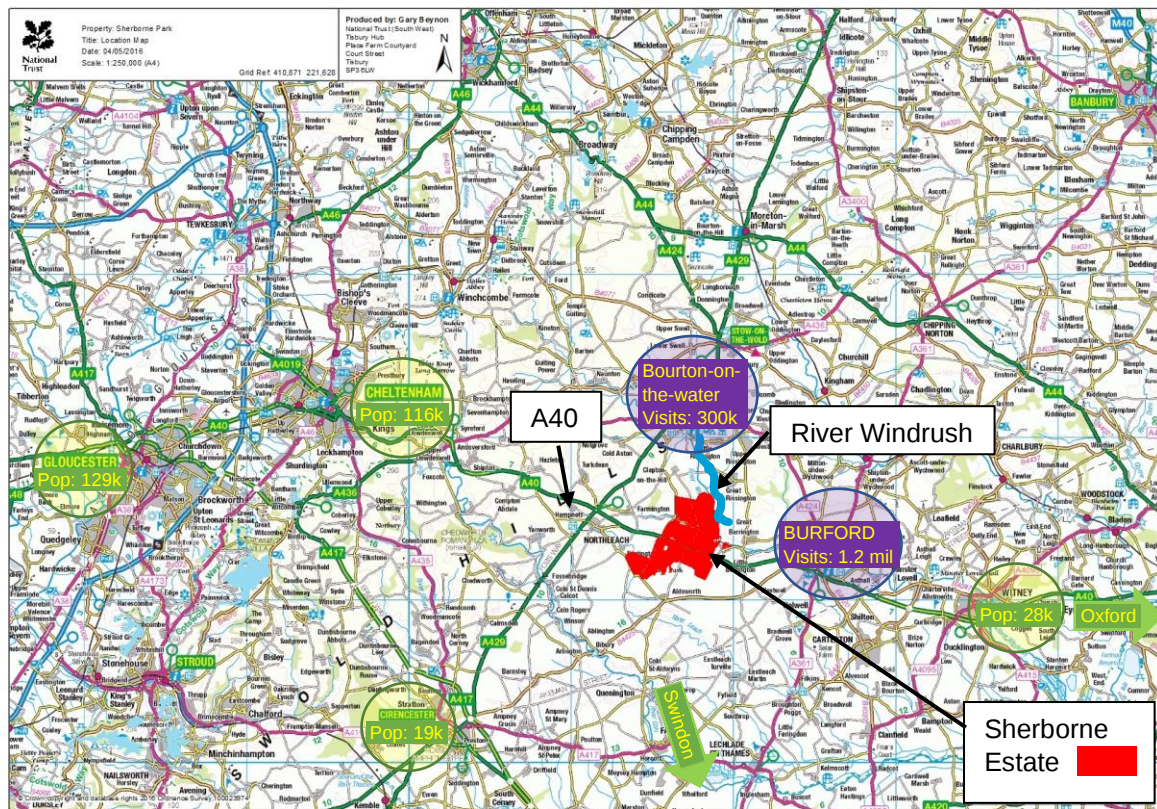
Nearly completed, being written by contractor.

Conygree Farm tree planting

In train, nearly finished

Let estate

3.0 Geographical context



Sherborne is part of the National Trust's Cotswold Countryside portfolio and is located within the Cotswold National Landscape AONB - the largest AONB within England and Wales, attracting 38-million-day visitors annually.

The estate is well-sited on the busy A40, surrounded by sizeable populations. Within 30 minutes' drive is a population of 208,000, including the towns of Cheltenham, Cirencester and Witney. Within 45 minutes' drive is a population of 790,000, including the towns of Gloucester, Swindon and Oxford. Sherborne makes up part of the transition to the Cotswolds as you travel east to west.

The immediate surroundings already attract good numbers of tourists. The River Windrush runs along the eastern border of the estate and provides a natural link between the tourist towns of Bourton-on-the-Water and Burford, which have 1.5 million tourist visits per annum between them, only 10 minutes' drive from Sherborne. The tourist town of Bibury is likewise only 10 minutes' drive south of the estate.

The estate connects to the Sabrina Way bridleway, part of the national Bridleroute network, a 203-mile route that links to the Cotswold Way.

By capitalising on this location and improving the visitor offer, Sherborne can be a place to stay for a holiday, a place to specifically visit for a day trip and a place to stop off at between places.

4.0 Context of the specific LLE (Large Lowland Estates) and opportunities for change



4.1 Facts and figures

Sherborne Estate covers 1672 ha (4100 acres) of the Cotswolds, near Northleach and includes the River Windrush and its tributary of Sherborne Broadwater.

The estate is currently composed of 7 farm tenancies and several in-hand woodlands. The landscape comprises mixed arable (60%) and semi-improved pasture (40%), with several coniferous as well as deciduous plantations and shelter belts. There are extensive areas of parkland, both at Sherborne (258ha) and Lodge Park (153ha), along with restored water meadows along part of the River Windrush and a loved and beautiful waterway between weirs along the Sherborne Brook. There are no SSSI's at Sherborne, although there are quite extensive areas of Wood Pasture (19ha) and Parkland Priority Habitat and some protected species. Almost all the farmed estate is managed under Agri-environment schemes.

There are 13 bat species present at Sherborne, 7 of them UK BAP species. Serotine and Barbastelle are both vulnerable whilst Leislars and Nathusias Pippestrelle are both near threatened. Other BAP mammal species include otter, water vole, polecat, brown hare and hedgehog. Tawny, Barn and Little owl are frequent breeders and short-eared have been recorded. Numerous raptors breed on the estate including Buzzard, Red Kite, Hobby, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. There are 17 red list birds on the estate. Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting, Linnet, Lapwing and Skylark red list species whose presence and numbers make Sherborne an important site for farmland birds. The estate is of county significance for arable wildflowers, including the vulnerable Night-flowering catchfly and near threatened Dwarf spurge among others. Given the number of ancient and veteran trees on the estate, there is no doubt many interesting fungi, but this group is under-recorded at present.

The estate has 3 car parks and 25km of paths and tracks.

The only toilet facilities are at Lodge Park, a Pay for Entry operation that is currently open 6 weekends/year.

There are 80 let residential properties in Sherborne village.

There is a grade 1 listed grandstand, grade 1 listed parkland, and 5 scheduled ancient monuments including a long barrow and iron age hill fort.

4.2 Projects in progress

- **Sherborne Farm**– Priority Habitat creation and improved access. This tenancy comes to a natural end in Nov 2023, and we have completed habitat visioning work for the whole farm: 325 ha. We have applied for feasibility and design grants of £120,000 with expected delivery costs of £500,000 from National Highways for delivery of 167ha of priority habitat, with a series of butterfly banks and ponds, by 2025. We will further apply to Community Forest for feasibility, design and delivery grants for woodland creation. These together will deliver in total 190 hectares of new Priority Habitat.
- **Bridgeman Landscape** – historic designed landscape restoration, through significant tree-planting. We have confirmed £200k of external funding from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative for planting of 15k trees this winter (2022).
- **Broadwaters and Old Park**– delivering new public access, restoration of heritage features, and management of the watercourse. We are currently conducting feasibility studies to understand how the Brook can be managed sustainably to deliver for nature and carbon, whilst considering its cultural and historical significance. There is a planned schedule of works to repair many of the built features and to create new circular access along and across the river.
- **Solar energy**– delivering renewable energy. Currently in the early feasibility stage.

4.3 Existing property initiatives

Developing relationships with potential local partners for the Sherborne Big Nature, Big Access project through site visits and meetings, with Barnwood Trust, Cotswold District Council, Cotswold National Landscape, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, and members of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership.

Discussions with farmers about new Agri-environment schemes to deliver more for nature.

‘Enabling’ workstreams and phasing mapped out – including need to develop a finance plan and gather visitor insight.

A Conservation Management Plan for Sherborne Estate is currently being tendered for. The commission is due for completion by end of 2022/23 financial year.

4.4 Existing external projects or initiatives

The **Bourton to Burford project**, led by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, aims to provide connectivity along the river habitat and access for people, and will adjoin the Sherborne Estate.

The **Cotswold District Council** are further developing their Local Plan, with ambition to include Sherborne Estate as a Country Park.

The **badger vaccination** programme, taking place on the Sherborne Estate, is in year 2 of 4.

4.5 Operational Considerations

The property will need to be adequately resourced to deliver the scale of transformation driven by the project, e.g., major hedge planting, tree planting and maintenance, signage and repairs, knowledgeable faces and advocates in the landscape, visitor engagement, community engagement, cleaning facilities etc.

A full time Project Manager and new Ranger have recently been recruited for the property; however further project Ranger staffing will be required to deliver the habitat ambition. There is also an identified need for a Community Engagement/Participation.

Parking charges and improved payment compliance, along with well thought through and sensitively located commercial opportunities such as food and beverage outlets and holiday lets, will support the future operational/BAU costs of the completed project.

5.0 Phases of work

5.1 Potential 0-3 years

<u>Activity</u>
Creation of 167 ha of Priority Habitat at Sherborne Farm including 53 ha wood pasture, 43 ha parkland planting, 56 ha grassland creation and 15 ha woodland.
Creation of 52 ha of Priority Habitat at Old Park.
Planting of 25k trees, 15ha of closed canopy woodland.
Planting of 5.5 km of new hedgerows
Carry out baseline soil and carbon analysis
Carry out baseline wildlife/species monitoring
Deliver new management model for Sherborne Brook
Creation of 5 km of new paths
Planning approval and funding agreed for new changing places facility

Further development of stakeholder engagement and established community partnerships
Drone footage commissioned for use in communications/engagement and for habitat monitoring
Audience insight complete and plans for first visitor experience facilities developed.
Food and beverage research completed
Plans for adaptive reuse or restoration of building assets developed.
Develop a spatial plan across the whole estate showing proposed habitats and access routes,
Conservation Management Plan for the estate complete
Turbine House and 2 bridges made safe and accessible

5.2 Potential 3-10 years

<u>Activity</u>
Expand outdoor visitor facilities. Network of waymarked trails across the estate serviced by multiple carparks with changing places facilities.
100 ha of land changed from agricultural use to Priority Habitat.
16 ha of woodland cover across the estate (10%).
Sherborne Farm holiday let up and running.
Sheafhouse restored as a visitor-facing building.

6.0 Benefits / Strategic fit

Climate action, Land and Nature

A Cotswold landscape that is wilder and more natural overall, natural process driven and where species flourish. Priority Habitat restored and created at scale, hundreds of thousands of trees planted, and all land at High Nature Status as a minimum.

Rivers managed sustainably to store carbon, with water that leaves our land cleaner than it arrives.

A more resilient landscape that can withstand and support future changes to climate.

A clear timeline for large scale connectivity nature interventions across tenancies in the landscape.

Opportunity to communicate our work for climate to new audiences, and for local engagement and participation in the planning and delivery of these interventions, e.g., community tree planting.

Solar installation to deliver significant contribution to our net zero target and replacing the current dependence of the let estate on oil.

Everyone Welcome

A Cotswold landscape for everyone, where all are welcome to explore, connect with nature and heritage, and are invited to contribute to caring for this special place. Increased involvement of communities, and new partnerships with organisations such as the Barnwood Trust, ensuring that a range of voices are heard and engagement with them is central to our delivery.

The creation of new outdoor visitor facilities to provide a warm welcome to Sherborne Estate, with the facilities to enable all visitors to feel comfortable. An improved and expanded accessible trail network to encourage everyone to explore at their own pace, discovering a stronger nature connection.

This higher quality visitor experience will grow visitor numbers, ensure a good distribution of those visitors.

Importantly, we will also be seeking to involve and stimulate other local businesses, partners and enterprises to join us in providing this high-quality offer for visitors and users. In this way we will ensure benefits are shared and embedded within local communities and innovation and choice is promoted.

Local community of residents and tenants engaged with and supportive of change.

Good communication, change management and marketing opportunities.

7.0 Considerations

Local community: There is a need to bring local community on-board with significant change to the landscape that they live in and improve the existing relationship

Heritage assets: The challenge of how to manage the estate's numerous heritage assets (e.g., open water of the small brook) in context of climate and biodiversity crisis, and significant costs.

Scale of change in a Cotswold landscape: The ambition for transformational change to make a wilder and busier landscape.

8.0 Maps

Sherborne for access

Everyone welcome

Underway:

- Considering possibilities of three connected visitor hubs at Watermeadows, Ewe Pens and Lodge Park, to include accessible loos (none currently on whole estate)
- Project to improve the network of estate paths, ensuring greater resilience and accessibility
- 15km of accessible routes
- 45km of paths and tracks across the estate

Considering:

- Car parking ticket valid across the estate
- Increased car park capacity to remove pressure on village and support ease of visit, potential for electric charging and covered spaces for trampers
- Five nature and historic landscape trails established, inc. new access to parkland by river
- Other potential components in future e.g. cycling

2 Ewe Pens car park

Underway:

- Access to all-weather network of paths and tracks
- Old interpretation boards removed
- Pay and display machine in operation
- Three circular walks for different abilities

1 Watermeadows car park

Underway:

- New welcome and orientation board

Considering:

- Possible car park extension and improved visibility and passing
- Pay and display machine
- Refreshed waymarking
- Permissive routes extended and new longer circular walks created, linking into future access (maybe with cycling) along a Bourton to Burford route

..... Existing permissive routes and public rights of way

..... Proposed new public access

3 Lodge Park car park

Underway:

- Car park and landscape to be opened 365, looking at facilities needed to support
- 'Little Gem' grandstand building exclusive opening

Considering:

- Pay and display machine
- New longer circular walk created, with tenant support
- Toilets and small food and beverage offer

Sherborne for nature

The Sherborne Park Estate has a clear future as a sustainable modern farmed lowland estate. An exemplar for land management, biodiversity and access.

Underway:

- 170 ha. plus of arable fields identified to be restored to species-rich grassland
- Restoration of Grade 1 Listed Bridgeman landscape
- Renewable energy investigations
- Significant tree planting - tens of thousands new trees

In development:

- 54 ha. plus of land restored to wood pasture
- Wildlife corridors created for the 13 species of bat
- Bourton to Burford nature and access connectivity corridor
- Holistic grazing focussed on maximum wildlife benefit
- Deadwood habitats preserved
- Partnerships with other organisations improving water and habitat quality on the River Windrush
- Areas restored to pasture, revitalising and rebuilding exhausted soils
- The former deer course restored to wildflower grassland

Sandy Hill Farm

Underway: Scattered tree planting within existing parkland, hedgerows and arable reversion across 43 ha.

Old Park:

Planned: Succession trees, new grazing, sustainable water management

Pasture connected and managed for access

Sherborne Farm

Underway: National Highways feasibility funding received

Planned:

- 170 ha plus new Priority Habitat created
- Wood pasture, trees, shrubs, wildflower rich grasslands

Stones Farm

Considering alongside farmer possible additional hedges/ nature areas

Lodge Park

Underway: 300 avenue trees planted

Planned:

- 2km hedgerow
- 10,000 trees and shrubs planted to original design in 2022/23

Conygree Farm

Underway:

- 9 ha. new native woodland
- 300m hedgerow
- Over 10,000 trees and shrubs planted, linking woodlands along the southern boundary

Home Farm

To be considered alongside farmer:

- Calcareous grassland reinstated, large scale connected hedgerows planted