

5.6 Natural Environment

5.6.1 Coleford Parish area has a wealth of significant natural heritage assets. These include:

- Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Map 14)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Map 14)
- Numerous Tree Preservation Orders
- Meends
- Statutory Forest on the edge of the parish.

5.6.2 The Landscape Character Assessment for the Forest of Dean 2002²⁹ explains what the landscape of each place is like and what makes one place different from another. It assumes that every place is special and distinctive and sets out to show just how and where these special qualities and distinctive features occur. The character assessment identified fifteen landscape character types across the district and 42 landscape character areas.

5.6.3 Coleford falls within Landscape Character Type Limestone Hills and Landscape Character Area 2c Coleford and Christchurch Hills. The Landscape Character Assessment covering Coleford Parish reads:

The most significant settlement in the Limestone Hills is Coleford ... The landscape character area comprises gentle hills surrounding ... Coleford. ... [C]onvex hills are cloaked by fields of improved pasture defined by a well maintained network of hedges. However, in close proximity to the settlements the influence of the urban fringe becomes apparent; areas of neglected pasture and manicured golf courses contrast strongly

with the patchwork of pasture fields ... The underlying Carboniferous Coal Measures have had a strong influence on the industrial development of the area and the growth of these settlements in the 19th and 20th centuries. In more recent times large housing estates, and industrial areas and factories sited on the edge of towns and as ribbon developments along roadsides exert a strong urbanising influence on the landscape. Built elements, often of incongruous materials and design, are frequently visible on the skyline, or obscure views from roads into the landscape beyond.

5.6.4 The Landscape Strategy for the Forest of Dean Council (2004)³⁰ suggests that

in the Limestone Hills the following key environmental features should be conserved and enhanced:

- Rolling landscape of interlocking convex hills and dry valleys formed from Carboniferous Limestone and Coal Measures providing contrasting experiences. Hilltops are elevated and afford extensive views over the surrounding landscape. Valleys are intimate and sheltered
- Generally poor soils and hilly landform well suited to pasture which is the dominant land use on the hills
- Fields defined by well-maintained hedgerows creating a patchwork landscape that emphasises hilly landform
- Hedgerow trees, copses on steeper slopes

and large areas of mixed and coniferous woodland giving the sense of a well wooded landscape

■ Small villages are well integrated with their surroundings and display vernacular building styles and the use of locally quarried stone. Village churches are often a prominent landscape feature and are visible from some distance away. Large towns exerting a strong urbanising influence over the landscape and containing many buildings betraying their industrial origins. Scowles and other remnants of mining activity representing important reminders of the area's industrial heritage. Large areas of woodland on the Carboniferous Coal Measures obscuring the underlying subtleties of landform and geology



Figure 19
Rural
Surroundings
and Green
Infrastructure
Findings

²⁹ www.fdean.gov.uk/residents/planning-building/planning-policy/local-plan-new/landscape-character/

³⁰ www.fdean.gov.uk/media/4204/landscape-strategy.pdf

■ Mature trees are an important characteristic of the whole Parish (including within the town) and contribute to the rural nature of the area and to the views in and out of town

In addition, the strategy identifies a number of outline landscape strategies which could be brought forward to guide development through the Coleford NDP. These include:

New housing and employment on the fringes of Coleford

■ Conserve the landscape setting of Coleford
 ■ Promote high quality residential development that respects local townscape and landscape character and reflects local vernacular building styles, layouts and materials

■ Conserve existing landscape features (trees, hedges) as intrinsic part of new development

■ Encourage a positive approach to new development and seek opportunities to create exciting new character in areas of degraded or declining landscape

■ Seek innovative architectural/landscape ideas to create new character and minimise impact on local landscape character such as the use of 'green roofs'

Pressure for new recreation and tourist development in the vicinity of Coleford and within Highmeadow Woods

■ Conserve the rural landscape setting of Coleford

■ Seek to minimise the encroachment of development into visually exposed landscapes
 ■ Conserve and enhance areas of existing woodland/forest cover

■ Conserve and enhance mature trees, which are essential to the area's character and natural environment

Community Consultation

The extensive community consultation and engagement activity has provided a range of suggestions for improving the natural environment which have led to the policies following:

5.6.5 In the consultations of 2015 & 2016, people responded that the green landscape which separates out the surrounding settlements, and those settlements from Coleford Town, was important (e.g. Berry Hill separate from Coleford); rural spaces in surrounding settlements were valued such as Broadwell FC, Forest Hills, Forestry Commission land, e.g. Jugs Hole and woods at Worcester Lodge; Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) Appendix L and enforce conservation of species habitat; protecting the Green Ring and recognising groundwater issues, water quality as well as flood risk.

Improvements: recognise and enhance quiet reflective areas, 'breathing spaces' and also wildlife corridors; promote areas for small scale food growing/orchard/community farm; tighter control on the boar; public buildings should embrace green and renewable technologies.

Green Ring

See Map 12 Character Assessments in 5.4, Appendix N Landscape Assessment Bells Field

5.6.6 The town of Coleford is surrounded by a 'Green Ring' of open landscape which is accessible to all and is an important part of Coleford's local character. In community consultation sessions for the NDP, there were many comments in support of retaining and enhancing the natural environment. (See also Local Green Spaces Policy CC3 and Town Centre Policy CTC1. Also see 5.4.9 and CSP9 in the Core Strategy.) The following

Policy CNE1

Protecting and Enhancing Local Landscape Character in Coleford and its Surrounding Settlements

New development should protect and enhance local landscape character in Coleford and its surrounding settlements.

Subject to other development plan policies new development will be supported, which demonstrates how it:

- Promotes high quality residential design that respects local townscape and landscape character and reflects local vernacular building styles, layouts and materials
- Conserves the landscape setting of Coleford, including the Green Ring
- Conserves existing landscape features such as trees, and hedges as intrinsic parts of new development
- Conserves the valued views into and out of sites as on Map 13
- Seeks opportunities to create exciting new character in areas of degraded or declining landscape, and
- Seeks opportunities for innovative architectural/landscape schemes to create new character and minimise impact on local landscape character such as with the use of ecofeatures

New recreation and tourist development will be supported where it would:

- Conserve the rural landscape setting of Coleford and surrounding settlements as well as neighbouring villages, e.g. Berry Hill (see West Dean Parish's NDP)
- Seek to minimise the encroachment of development into visually exposed landscapes/key views
- Conserve and enhances areas of existing woodland/forest cover

Policy CNE2 Green Ring

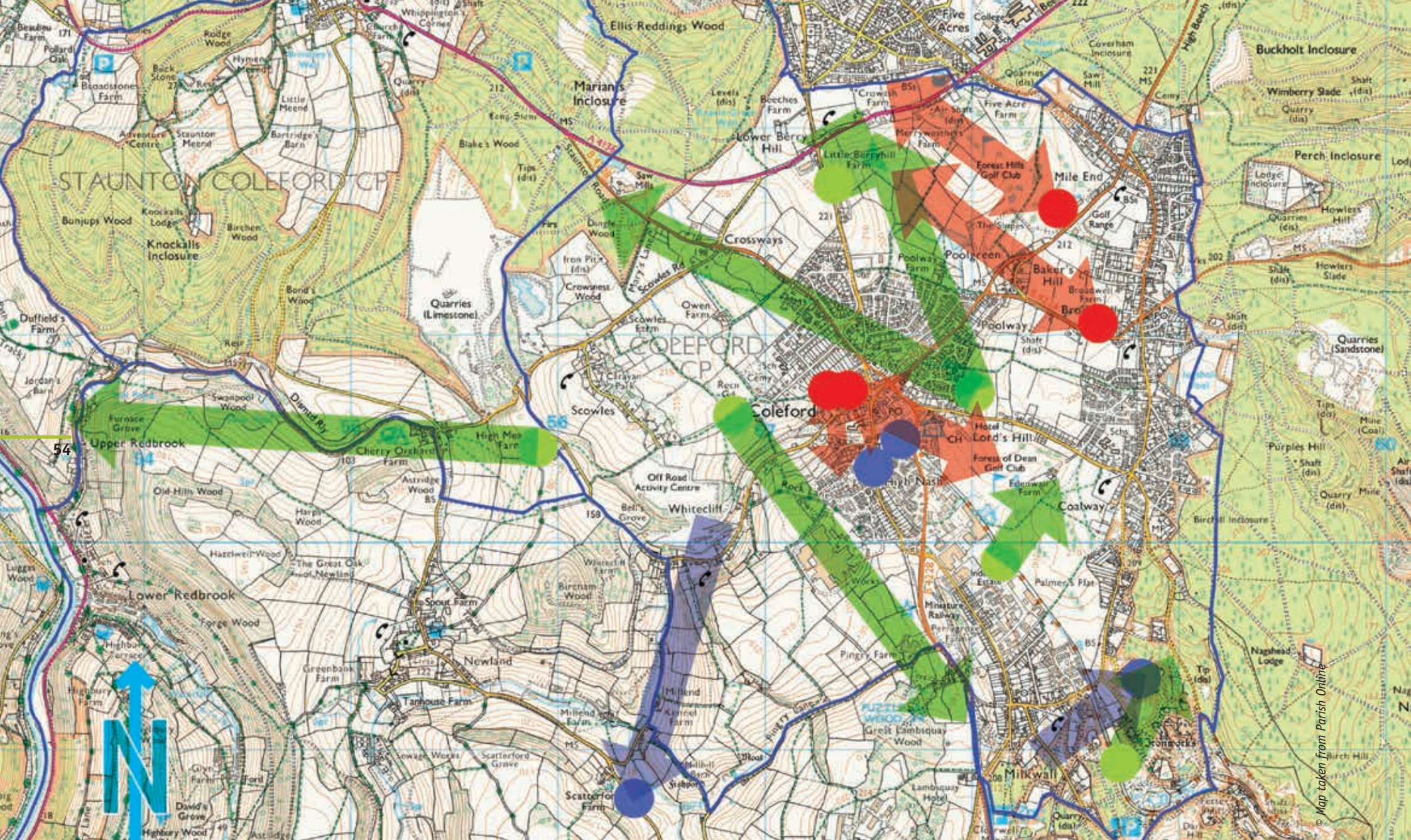
The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Green Ring to protect the historic and natural setting of Coleford.

Within the identified Green Ring Zones 1-3 land will be protected from development that would detract from the open setting of Coleford.

Within Green Ring Zones 1-3 proposals that would consolidate or enhance outdoor recreational facilities and to assist in the delivery of biodiversity objectives will be supported.

Panoramic view from Lower Lane, toward Broadwell on the rim and over the town





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Scale 1:12772
15 October 2017

consultation comments are related to all or parts of the Green Ring as below:

Whole Green Ring

- Keep all green spaces (existing)
- Create links (cycleways and paths to link settlements) to the north and south
- Forest waste to be made into village greens
- Keep forest 'waste' areas
- Look at green spaces to protect – linked maybe to walkways
- Allocate village greens, more spaces adopted as protected land
- Clearing of spaces; planting of wild flowers; reclaim verges; grass cutting costs could be reduced
- Make better flowering opportunities – verges, benches, open spaces; hedgerows of wild flower planting (like roadways into Gloucester & Monmouth)
- Local businesses to sponsor verges, tidy up their land of casual litter

Green Ring (1 and 2) (3 South)

- Keep Green Ring and keep village community
- Keep separate identities of villages
- Keep green spaces beyond boundary – example Prosper Lane
- Keep low vegetation near to tracks to keep boar hidden in the depths
- Push the positive aspect of boar, helps regenerate and plant seeds
- Fear of the boar can put off walkers/visitors. More education to alleviate this
- Information stops and plaques (like Dark Hill), incorporating health walks

The Green Ring with zones shown as 1, 2, 3 on Map 10 requires protection from inappropriate development. These zones provide a significant contribution to local landscape character in terms of protecting

the historic and natural setting of the town within its 'bowl'

5.6.7 Within the Green Ring the following areas are particularly important:

- Whitecliff valley as a green Gateway into Coleford
- Pingry Lane as a green lane
- Meends around the Southern and Eastern Arc
- Scowles, for example at Scowles
- Two golf courses, at Bells and Forest Hills
- Bells Field, separating the town from the Eastern Arc

5.6.8 The Coleford NDP has a role in protecting existing green infrastructure and expanding it to promote the creation of new green infrastructure if new development proposals come forward. Such green infrastructure could include protection and creation of woodland and wildlife corridors, meends, wetlands, open water, golf courses and other environmental assets in the area to preserve and expand the existing ecosystem network.

Green Infrastructure

5.6.9 Multi-functional green infrastructure is important to underpin the overall sustainability of a development by performing a range of functions including flood risk management, the provision of accessible green space, climate change adaptation and supporting biodiversity. An example of a green infrastructure provision is sustainable drainage systems. These can deliver benefits for people and for wildlife and make a valuable contribution to the local green infrastructure network. Actions such as re-naturalising watercourses can also bring multifunctional benefits, including benefiting flood attenuation. Woodland planting

can also help mitigate flooding. Research indicates that green roofs/living roofs can reduce run-off and thereby the risk of surface water flooding; reducing the requirement for heating and air-conditioning; and providing habitat for wildlife. Examples of open water in Coleford parished area are the Stowfield quarry pond, open water on the golf courses, Jugs Hole, Aarons Pond and Valley Brook (Whitecliff).

5.6.10 Proposals may present opportunities to incorporate features such as roosting opportunities for bats, the installation of bird nest boxes or the use of native species in the landscape planting and we advise including within a green infrastructure policy the requirement for ecological enhancements.

Policy CNE3 Green Infrastructure

Development proposals should safeguard protected species and habitats.

Subject to other development plan policies development proposals will be supported where they safeguard protected species and habitats. Development proposals should:

- Demonstrate how the design has taken into account its potential impact on local habitats and species.
- Ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to protect wildlife and enhance biodiversity and important habitats. Appropriate measures may include for instance use of swift bricks, bat and owl boxes, and ensuring that new and converted buildings provide nesting and roosting spaces for bats and birds. A mixture of native species typical of this locality should be incorporated in landscaping schemes including: Coast Redwood; Douglas Fir; Beech; Yew; Hazel; Ash; Oak; European Larch; Silver Fir; Birch; Scots Pine; Sweet Chestnut.
- Incorporate features such as green/living roofs. Re-naturalising water courses, planting of native woodland and use of sustainable drainage (SUDS) will be encouraged, especially for public buildings.

Any new development will also have to be compatible with other NDP policies (NB design policies, open areas, local green spaces, key views as in Map 13, green areas protected by the NDP and on sites allocated for other purposes). Opportunities for developer contributions will be sought (see list with 5.7.12).

Proposed actions for the Town Council, partnerships and other interested parties (See projects section 7.6). Note improvements to:

- Promote natural heritage of Coleford Parish
- Green cycling/walking trails
- Establish and maintain Local Green Spaces

