



new Leaf  
STUDIO

# WATERSIDE VALLEY Masterplan & Management Plan

Prepared for



**WESTFIELD**  
Parish Council

October 2022



Prepared by

New Leaf Studio Ltd

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CHARTERED  
LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTS

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## Appendices

### *Included as part of this document*

- Drawing WPC740/Drg01 – Survey & Analysis
- RoSAP Safety Inspection
- Drawing WPC740/Drg02 – Masterplan, improvements and general management regimes
  
- Drawing WPC740/Drg03 – Management Plan Areas
- Annual Maintenance Programme
- Look Out Look up – guide to safe use of mechanical plant below power lines

### *Supplied as separate documents*

- Quantified Risk Assessment Tree Survey



## Introduction

Waterside Valley is an 11.6 hectare (28.7 acre) piece of land running along the eastern margin of Westfield and connecting to the centre of Radstock.

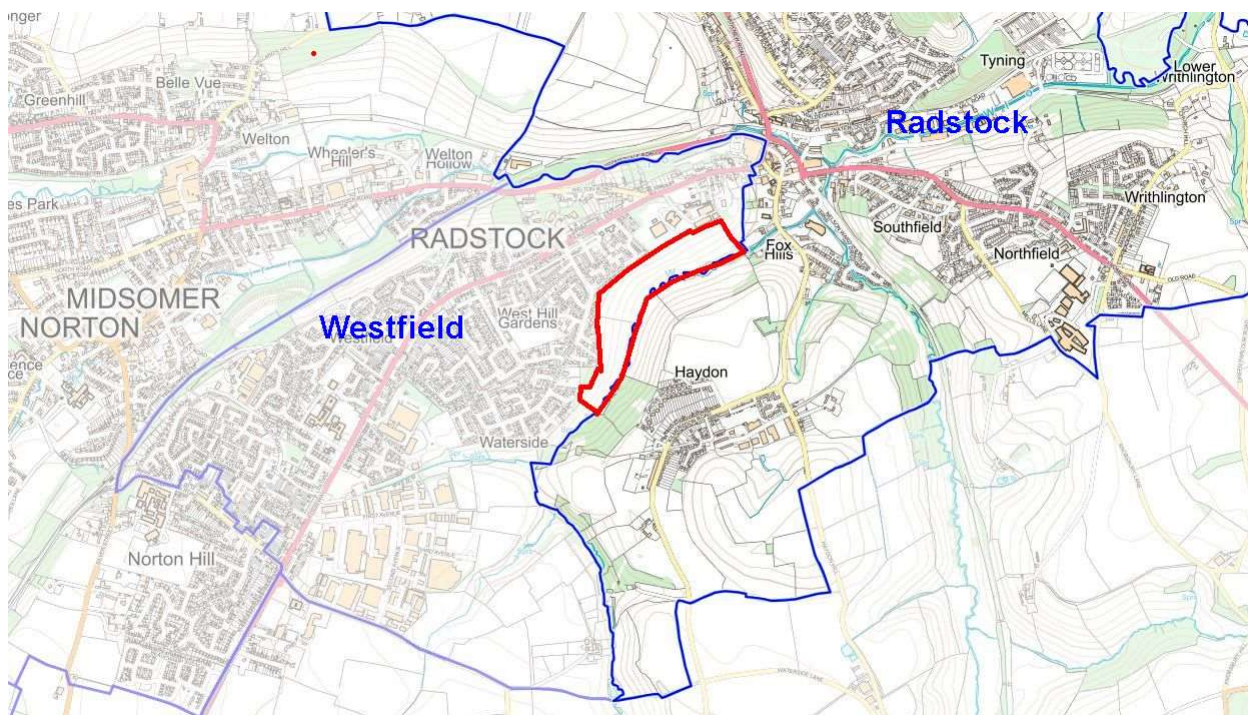
The site comprises two fields of disused grazing land on the western side of the Waterside Valley and includes most of the watercourse itself and some land on the opposite bank. However to the north east end of the site, the boundary line is offset from the watercourse. Here part of the watercourse is known as the Miner's Pool. This with its associated footbridge and cascade feature upstream lie outside of the site.

The grazing land has been un-managed for some years and is now mostly coarse tussocky grassland, with areas of bramble and tall ruderal vegetation (including nettles and thistles) developing within the sward. Species diversity within the grassland is relatively low.

The site includes two short sections of hedgerow and the watercourse itself is well wooded with some mature stands of alder and other tree species.

The site has long been used as an unofficial public green space, with local residents taking on some maintenance work (grass cutting) in most heavily used areas.

The site was acquired by Westfield Parish Council in 2021 to preserve and enhance it as a community green space. In October 2021 the Parish Council commissioned New Leaf Studio, a local practice of Landscape Architects to develop a masterplan and management plan for the site.



**Figure 1 – Site location plan**



**Figure 2 – Aerial view of the site**

## 1. Site Survey & Analysis

New Leaf Studio have undertaken a walkover survey of the site and brief desk top study. The results of this are presented graphically on drawing WPC740/Drg01 “Site Survey and Analysis” and described below. This drawing is reproduced at reduced scale in the Appendices to this document. However a full scale digital copy or print should be referred to for full legibility.

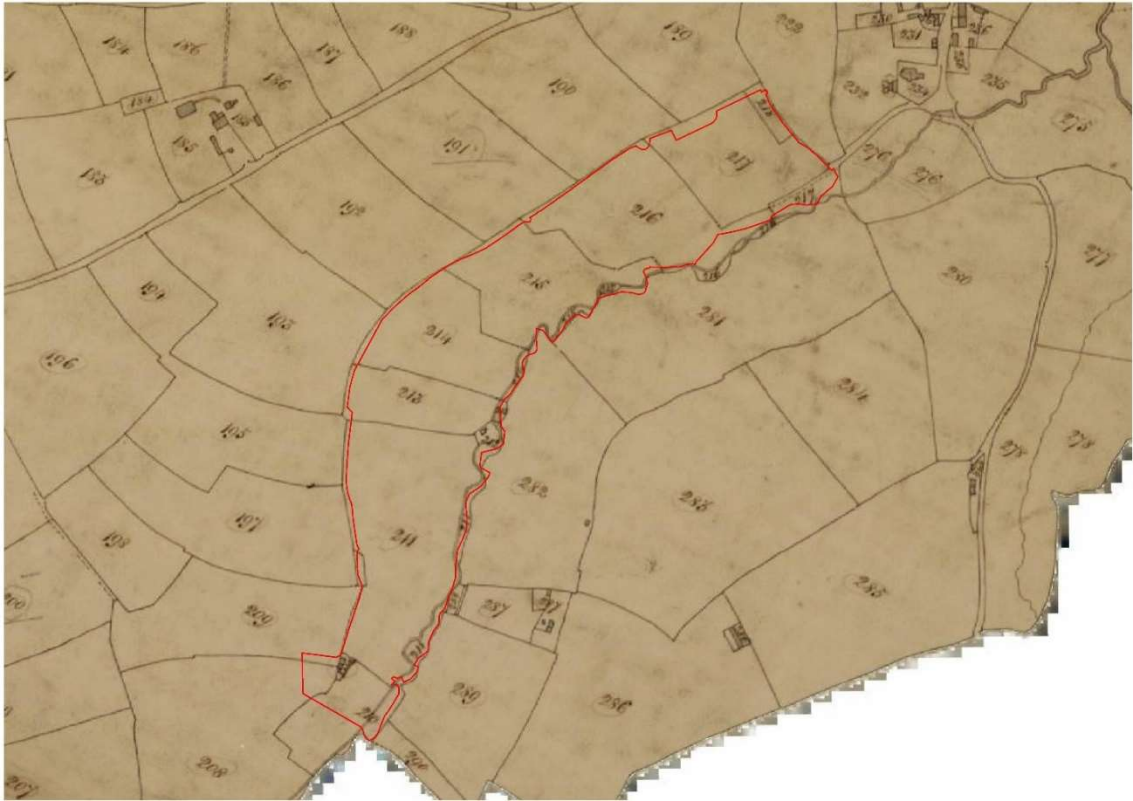
### 1.1 History

#### 1.1.1 Farming

The site has long been used as farmland, thought to be associated with Manor Farm the other side of Church Street in Radstock (now Manor Farm Residential Care Home). It seems likely that the land has always been pasture.

The 1838-39 tithe map (reproduced in Fig 3 with an approximate outline of the site in red) shows field numbers. The accompanying apportionments record shows all of the fields within the site (and others around) as belonging to George Edward (7<sup>th</sup>) Earl of Waldegrave, and leased as pasture, giving names of the occupiers as Charles Simes, George Alban Simes, George Bush Simes, Joseph Steeds and Benjamin Rossiter. Maybe some of these families are still in the area.





**Figure 3** – 1838-39 Tithe Map (approx. site boundary in red)

### 1.1.2 Coal mining

The wider area of the Somerset Coalfield had been mined for coal to some extent since Roman times. The early mining was largely open cast or into relatively shallow coal seams. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century the presence of deeper coal seams became known and coal extraction in the area began to increase. The last mines eventually closed in the 1960s. However mining does not seem to have had any direct impact on the site

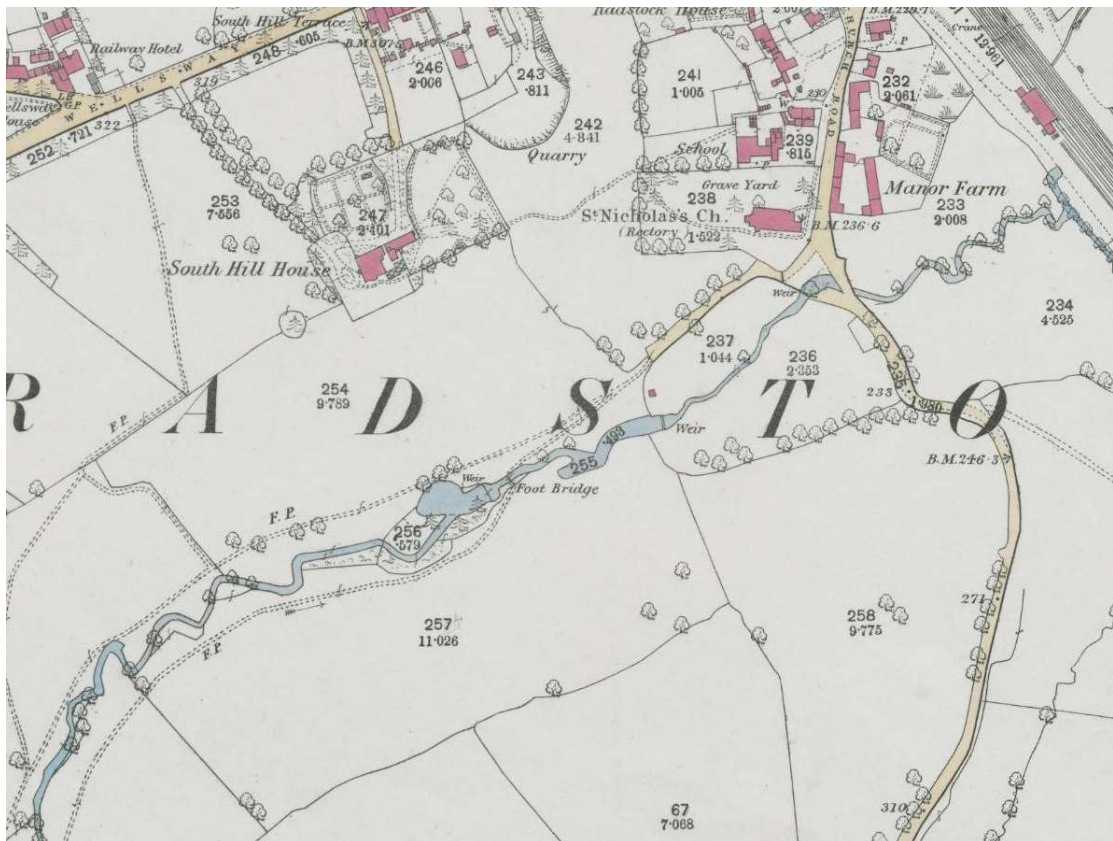
### 1.1.3 Miner's Pool

The area known as the Miner's pool (and otherwise as Radstock Fishponds and Snail's Book) to the north of the eastern end of the site lies outside the site boundary but recreationally is used as part of the site. Its full history is yet to be discovered. The man made dams, sluices and cascades suggest that there may have been a mill here at some time in the past, however neither 1838-39 tithe map nor historic ordnance survey mapping indicate a mill. The pool above the lower dam is known as the Miners Pool because the miners used to wash here after a shift underground. It was also used for recreational swimming for some years in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with diving boards and a changing hut provided. There have been more recent moves to try to restore bathing to the pool, which while compatible with the development of Waterside Valley as a public green space, is beyond the scope of this plan.

Incidentally, while it is understood that the land encompassing the Miner's Pool is unregistered, and this has hampered progression of any proposals to restore the pool, the tithe map and apportionments also show this land as belonging to Earl Waldegrave at that time.



**Figure 4** – Miners pool, postcard image possibly c.1907. Note South Hill House on the ridge, where Bath College now stands



**Figure 5** – First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1844-88) showing the Miner's Pool area and South Hill House



### 1.1.4 World War II

During the Second World War the site was host to a number of defensive features. The three pill boxes remain - these are located along the upper, northern boundary of the site. One is now in private ownership (within a domestic garden) one is within the grounds of Bath College, but overlooking the site and the third at the eastern end of the site is within WPC ownership.

A lost war time defence feature was an anti-tank trench which ran from the vicinity of 38 Birch Road, past the western (now privately owned) pill box and then down the slope to the watercourse in the vicinity of the mown grass recreation area.

The location of these features is indicated on drawing WPC740/Drg01 Site Survey & Analysis

## 1.2 Topography

The site comprises the south-east facing slopes of the Waterside Valley, with its highest point at 103m above sea level\* towards the mid-point of the north-west boundary and its lowest point at 75m around the extreme eastern corner of the site.

Generally the land falls by around 15-25m from the top of the slope to the watercourse with gradients ranging from 1:3.7 to 1:4. There are some localised steeper areas and some more level areas towards the bottom of the slope.

\*Levels based on ordnance Survey contours, above mean sea level at Newlyn datum.



**Figure 6** – general view of NE field, looking north, showing typical topography of SE facing slope from development boundary on the ridge down to the Waterside

### 1.3 Watercourse - Waterside

The name of the watercourse passing through the site seems to be confused with it variously referred to as Waterside, Waterside Brook or Snail's Brook. It is simply named as Waterside on OS mapping along its full length.

It is fed by the stream running through Snail's Bottom to the South West of Charlton, perhaps giving rise to the name Snail's Brook. It then passes Waterside Lane, Waterside Farm and Waterside House with a culverted section below Haydon Batch before re-emerging as an open stream about 190m from the southern end of the site

For the purposes of this report and to avoid confusion with the area of Westfield known as Waterside, it will be referred to as the Waterside brook.

From just north of the mid-point of the watercourse within the site, almost directly below the western (privately owned) pill box, the watercourse is designated by the Environment Agency (EA) as Main River. This means that the EA can undertake works to manage flood risk along this section and that the EA must be consulted over certain works in the vicinity (within 8m) of the watercourse with some works requiring their consent.

The watercourse upstream from here is designated as an ordinary water course and here certain works are controlled by the lead local flood authority in this case Bath & NE Somerset Council.

Further guidance on restrictions and regulations can be found on the following websites:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/lead-local-flood-authority/planning-and-development>

The natural meanders of the watercourse are a valuable feature both in ecological and human enjoyment terms, providing a variety of bank profiles and a mix of wider slower moving sections of water and narrower faster moving sections. This provides a potential for educational use in relation to teaching physical geography or river ecology.



**Figure 7** – Waterside - general view looking upstream





**Figure 8** – Waterside - general view, gentle meanders



**Figure 9** – Waterside – another general view looking upstream



Most of the sites southern / south eastern boundary runs either along the south bank or a small distance beyond, meaning that along most of its length (with a one exception where meanders cross the ownership boundary) that both banks belong to WPC. It is only the north eastern quarter of the water course, not far downstream from where its Main River designation begins that the site boundary crosses to the north side of the watercourse, excluding it from the site.

After exiting the site the Waterside brook continues north-eastwards joining the Wellow Brook in the centre of Radstock.

## 1.4 Springs

In a number of locations springs or issues emerge from the lower half of the slope. In some cases there may be a distinct point of emergence, in others cases a more diffuse seepage from a wider area of the slope. It is assumed that they are natural springs, but they could also be outfalls from land drains or surface water drains further up the slope.

While these springs cause problems with muddiness of the lower path, they also present an opportunity for providing an attractive feature with potential for providing a further variant of wetland habitat on site.



**Figure 10** – One of the point where water from a spring crosses the lower path making it muddy for long periods of the year.

## 1.5 Views

From the upper slopes of the site there are stunning views across and down the valley. Looking NE towards Radstock the valley frames views to a number of batches (coal spoil heaps) on the horizon, now mostly covered with tree plantations. Tynning, Braysdown and Writhlington batches are potentially visible from the site (subject to confirmation as the batches are not named on maps) these could provide a detail for interpretation material.



**Figure 11** – View down the valley towards Radstock with tree covered batches on the horizon in centre of view.

## 1.6 Entrances

The entrance points into the site have been identified on drawing WPC740/Drg01 Site Survey & Analysis as entrances A to J. Some of these are protected by Public Right of Way Status or due to the land the other side of the watercourse being designated as access land. For others the legal status of the access point is less clear.

Vehicle access to the site is possible from two points; via an unmade track from Waterford Park to entrance “A” one and via another unmade track from Church Road in Radstock to Entrance “D”. Vehicle access to the latter track is controlled by a gate close to Church Road, understood to be managed by the Parish Church.



While the track from Waterford Park is a PROW, the one from Church Road is not and the legality of taking any vehicle over either of these routes is not clear. Historically they would have given access to the farm land. Neither are suitable for visitor vehicle access, but either provides options for access to undertake maintenance and improvement works.

For the purposes of the Survey & Analysis drawing two levels of entrance hierarchy have been identified as follows:

- **Principal “official” Entrances:** mostly protected by public right of way and generally the most heavily used access points
- **Informal / “unofficial” entrances:** Some protected by adjacent access land designations but with no more formal right of access, generally with a secondary level of use

Most of the entrance points have kissing gates and gate furniture that with the cessation of grazing and no plans to reintroduce it, are now redundant. Many have also been by-passed so now at best add un-necessary clutter but in some cases also present a barrier to full accessibility or hazards with sharp metal edges and remnants of barbed wire.



**Figure 12** – Redundant and by-passed kissing gate near Entrance E





**Figure 13** – Redundant and by-passed kissing gate and field gate at Entrance A presents an unwelcoming feel.

## 1.7 Public Rights of Way and Informal Paths

A number of public rights of way pass through the site, Most significantly PRWO CL24/100 passes from the kissing gated entrance at the southern end of the site along the lower areas of the site for its full length, exiting in the north eastern corner to join the track past the churchyard (which is not itself a public right of way) to Radstock.

A similar path PROW CL24/102 follows the watercourse along its eastern bank (mostly beyond the site boundary)

Other public rights of way then also connect into the site from Birch Road and Waterford Park.

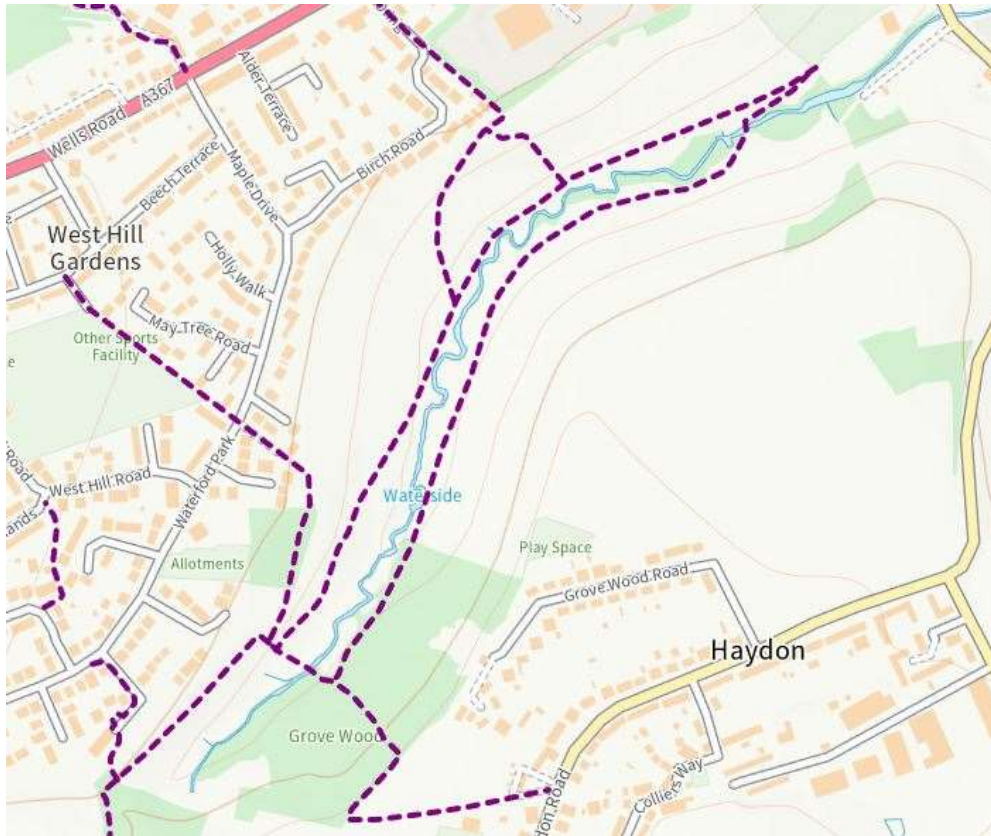
These routes are shown on drawing WPC740/Drg01 Site Survey & Analysis and summarised on the map in Figure 14 on the following page.

It should be noted that officially mapped public right of way routes do not always exactly coincide with worn desire line paths as these can change over the years.

If improving paths there is sense in the improved surface following the desire line route and this is not seen as an issue in relation to the PROW, provided the mapped PRWO route is not blocked.

In addition to the official PRWO routes there are numerous informal desire line paths crossing the site. These too are identified on drawing WPC740/Drg01 Site Survey & Analysis.





**Figure 14** – Public Right of Way routes through and in the vicinity of the site

Many paths, especially but not exclusively in the lower areas of the site become very muddy for the wetter months of the year. These muddy areas are a significant barrier to year round use by all but the most determined welly wearing visitors.



**Figure 15** – Extreme level of mud by footbridge near entrance H



*Figure 16 – Muddy section of upper path where it passes through the dividing hedgerow*

## **1.8 Transport**

While it is expected that the majority of users of the site (as at present) will arrive on foot from surrounding residential areas in Radstock and Westfield, with improvements to the site and greater awareness resulting from events and publicity such as via the Somer Valley Rediscovered project it hoped that visitors will be encouraged from further afield.

The site is fairly readily accessible by public transport with bus stops in the centre of Radstock and along Waterford Park.

While arriving by car is not to be encouraged, there is potential of parking in the public car park in the centre of Radstock (a short walk from Entrance D) together with parking on residential roads within Westfield.



## 1.9 Vegetation Types and Ecology

### 1.9.1 Ecological studies

A biodiversity net gain (BNG) baseline assessment was carried out by Ethos Environmental Planning in December 2021 covering this site and four others in Midsomer Norton and Radstock. This assessment was undertaken as part of the Somer Valley Rediscovered project, a strategic greenspace project led by Bath & NE Somerset Council, Wessex Water, Public Health England and Natural England. The report on this assessment should be referred to for greater detail of the sites current biodiversity value and potential for biodiversity gain.

There is however scope for more extensive ecological study and recording to determine exactly what species are present on site.

Below is a summary of the vegetation types found, based on the BNG baseline survey and New Leaf Studio's site assessment.

### 1.9.2 Grassland

Most of the site is covered by grassland classified under the 2018 UK Habitat Classifications as type g4 which is Modified grassland. This type of grassland is also sometimes referred to as improved grassland. The word improved relates to its agricultural value rather than its biodiversity value which has in reality been reduced.

This is grassland that has been modified by human activity, predominantly by way of increasing soil fertility as a result of direct fertilization or accumulated waste from livestock. It is dominated by a low number of fast growing, coarse grass species, typically on neutral soils, with relatively few wild flower species, less than nine species (grass and wildflower) per m<sup>2</sup>.

Some areas and grass paths have been kept mown for public amenity. This has been undertaken unofficially by a local volunteer.



**Figure 17** – Modified grassland to either side of mown path (September 2021). Note the coarse grasses and establishing patches of nettle (darker areas)

### 1.9.3 Scrub and Coarse ruderal vegetation

Since grazing on the land ceased, areas of scrub and coarse ruderal vegetation have been gradually spreading in from the margins of the site and with some areas of bramble and nettle developing within the grassland itself.

Along the margins of the watercourse where soil fertility is naturally higher, this coarse ruderal vegetation becomes more dominant with dense impenetrable stands of nettles, thistles, brambles and tall umbelifers.



**Figure 18** – Blackthorn scrub spreading from the central dividing hedgerow (January 2022)



**Figure 19** – Bramble dominated area expanding from north boundary of site (January 2022)



#### 1.9.4 Hedgerows

A short section of hedgerow (approx. 125m long) divides the site into two fields. There is also a hedgerow (approx. 75m long) at the southern end of the site. This mostly sits within a narrow triangle of unregistered land.

Both these hedgerow have been left unmanaged for some years. Blackthorn is fairly dominant in both with some hawthorn present.

#### 1.9.5 Vegetation along watercourse

The BNG baseline survey simply identifies the watercourse and the vegetation along its banks as a liner feature akin to a hedgerow. This seems somewhat of an over-simplification as the watercourse provides significant biodiversity value.

With its meanders, mix of open and shaded sections and bankside vegetation the watercourse could have potential to be host to a number of significant species including kingfishers, water voles and otters.

The banks are fairly consistently host to trees dominated by common alder, but with willow, hawthorn and ash also present. This woody vegetation makes the watercourse a potentially significant habitat for bats.

Further ecological study of the watercourse is recommended to fully understand its features and potential.



**Figure 20** – Beautiful stand of mature common alder on the SE bank of Waterside

## 1.10 Trees & Tree Risk Assessment

**1.10.1** A tree risk assessment was commissioned from O Frost Forestry & Arboriculture Ltd, undertaken in February 2022. The resulting report is included in the appendices to this document.

The assessment was undertaken as a Quantified Risk Assessment whereby only trees of concern are recorded and their relative risk to the safety of the public is assessed based on level of exposure. I.e. put simply, a dangerous tree in an inaccessible area will be rated as lower risk than a similar tree overhanging a heavily used path.

The assessment is based on a visual survey, so there is potential for hidden defects to be missed.

Recommended works are recorded along with an indication of priority, together with recommended timescales for re-inspection.

A number of trees were identified in the assessment as requiring works, which it is understood Westfield Parish Council have since had carried out.

Other trees are identified for ongoing monitoring, with re-inspections advised in 12 and 24 months (February 2023 and 2024).

Any changes to the site that result in increased level of occupation (use) should be reviewed in relation to changes to exposure levels to potentially dangerous trees.

### 1.10.2 Trees - Ash Die Back

There are ash trees on site of varying age. Many of these are showing signs of the now nationally prevalent and devastating Ash Die Back disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (syn. *Chalara fraxinea*)) – a fungal disease that is fatal to most ash trees. It should thus be expected that most of the ash trees on site (maybe around 90%) are likely to be lost over ensuing years. The need to remove diseased ash trees will be identified by repeated tree risk assessments.

## 1.11 Health & Safety Assessment

A number of features on the site had raised health and safety concerns and concerns about the potential liability of Westfield Parish Council. The features included rope swings attached to trees over the watercourse and various trampolines and football goals placed on upper areas of the site that were informally used as extensions to private gardens.

Westfield Parish Council commissioned a RoSPA safety inspection of the site which was undertaken in January 2022.

The report from this inspection is included in the appendices to this plan. It identifies a few areas with recommended improvements, but none were assessed as presenting more than medium level of risk.

Items identified for attention included: Gates, slippery paths, trampolines, damaged boundary fences, old ironwork with sharp edges, barbed wire and rope swings over the watercourse.



Many of these issues will be addressed as part of proposed improvements to entrances and pathways round the site.

The owners of the trampolines have since been approached by WPC and these have now been removed.

The rope swings were identified as a medium risk, with advice that the risk could be reduced to low through obtaining satisfactory arboricultural assessment of the trees, using proper ropes and suitable strops to attach the ropes to the tree, removing rocks that could be fallen upon and undertaking regular inspections and maintenance

It is significant to note that it did not find any issues with the presence of the watercourse itself (including the miners Pool) stating that “access to and egress from the river is reasonably easy, keeping the risks tolerable.....the nature of the water is obvious to users, who will be able to foresee the risks on entering”

## **1.12 Boundaries**

The nature of the sites boundaries is described on the accompanying survey and analysis drawing, by way of lower case lettering identifying points, cross- referencing to a key on the drawing.

It was not possible to access the boundaries in all areas due to dense vegetation. The survey is a general overview, visual survey, rather than a detailed meter by meter examination of existing boundary features.

In some areas the physical boundary feature may not be exactly on the registered boundary line. This is quite common on this kind of site, where livestock fences are often erected on the most convenient line, which has sometimes deviated from the official alignment.

The ownership of physical boundary features has not been established and in many cases may not be known. Any proposed works to or affecting the boundaries should be discussed and agreed with the adjoining landowner and/or tenant.

In the case of the boundary following the watercourse, in many areas there are stock fences (post and wire) that do not follow the legal boundary and where the WPC land extends to the other side of the watercourse, in many cases there is no fence.

There are also redundant post and wire stock fences within the site, especially between the main site area and the watercourse. Many of these are now engulfed by coarse vegetation and many are in poor condition.

### 1.13 Planning Designations

The site is understood to be outside of the development boundary but covered by the following planning strategy designations:

- Green Infrastructure Network – Policy NE1
- Landscape Setting of Settlement – Policy NE2A
- Site of Nature Conservation Interest – Policy NE3
- Ecological Networks – Policy NE5
- Sports and Recreational Areas – Policy LCR5

Any proposed changes to the site will need to be mindful of these policies, most of which are in tune with the Parish Councils aspirations for the site.

There are no Tree Preservation Orders affecting the site and it is not within a Conservation Area.

### 1.14 Existing Uses

The site has long been used informally by the general public as a recreational green space

Currently the majority of year round users are probably dog owners using the site for dog walking. However during the dryer months there is significant family use as well as use of the site as a through route.

There is evidence of extensive play along the watercourse particularly at three locations where the banks are shallower and the water more readily accessible, with informal rope swings attached to trees.

Along the northern margins where private rear gardens back onto the site there is extensive use of the site effectively as an extension to these gardens, many of which have direct gate access onto the land. This use extends to encroachment onto the land with some gardening taking place as well as storage of play equipment and some tipping of garden waste (see 5.4.5 below).

The wildlife on site is likely to be a significant draw to many of the above users as well as for those for whom observing wildlife is the main activity. However the muddy nature of paths in wetter seasons is likely to significantly reduce use by all but the most determined walkers at these times of year.



## 2. Consultation and Briefing

An initial briefing document was prepared by Westfield Parish Council in September 2021 for the purposes of procuring professional input to help develop a management plan for the site. New Leaf Studio were appointed based on their tender submission in response to this document.

Restrictions during the Covid-19 Pandemic hampered public consultation to some extent. The Parish Council had gathered a list of contact details from people who showed interest in the site during WPC's consultations over the purchase of the site. This group of people was informally treated as a focus group for the project.

An online Questionnaire was circulated by WPC to members of the focus group in February 2022, this sought detail of how they used the site and what they felt was most valuable and should be preserved and what needs to be changed.

An online meeting was then held with the focus group and parish councillors on 02-03-2022 during which Andrew King of New Leaf Studio gave a slide presentation with images of the site and some options for treatment of features such as paths and entrances. This helped generate sharing of option and discussion of ideas for the site.

Andrew King then gave a presentation to the WPC annual meeting on 30-03-2022. This followed a similar format to the focus group online meeting but included sharing an initial draft of the survey and analysis plan. Further useful discussion ensued during and after the meeting which has fed into formulating proposals for the site.

Following completion of a first draft of the masterplan and general management regimes drawing (WPC740/Drg02) WPC held further consultation focusing on two drop in events. These were held at Mardon's Social Club on 07-10-22 and at Westfield Methodist Hall on 08-10-22 for an hour at each venue. These were publicised via the parish magazine the Westfield Warbler and social media. The plans were made available on the WPC website.

The Youth Connect group that meets weekly at the Church Rooms in Radstock also undertook a consultation on behalf of WPC in order to reach a younger audience.

Meetings have also been held with Radstock Town Council to ensure that the Waterside Valley project works in a harmonious and complimentary way with Radstock TC's adjacent Haydon Batch project.

The feedback from all these activities has been fed into preparing the proposals for the site presented here.

A record of the consultation events and feedback received is held by WPC.

### 3. Masterplan Proposals

While the brief from WPC focused on providing a management plan for the site, it was evident that the desires for the site would involve some changes and improvements that could not be achieved by management alone, instead involving some initial capital works.

We have thus developed a Masterplan for the site setting out the objectives for change and improvement, accompanied by a management plan dealing with the ongoing management and maintenance.

The Masterplan proposals for the site have been developed in response to the brief from the Parish Council and the consultation sessions. The proposals are presented graphically on drawing WPC740/ Drg02 “Masterplan – Improvements and general management regimes” and described below. This drawing is reproduced at reduced scale in the appendices to this document. However a full scale digital copy or print should be referred to for full legibility.

#### 3.1 Generally – Overall Objective

The general overriding principal has been to aim to preserve and enhance the overall informal and natural character of the site, in turn preserving and enhancing its value for wildlife, while making subtle changes to make it more welcoming, more readily accessible, better understood and appreciated as well as being able to accommodate a greater variety of uses and types of visitor.

Maintaining and improving biodiversity has also been a key factor in determining the approach to vegetation management.

#### 3.2 Entrances

The individual entrances to the site are identified by capitalised letter codes A-J annotated on both the survey and masterplan drawings.

Beyond the “principal entrance” and “informal entrance” categorisation identified on the survey and analysis plan (see also section 1.6 above), for the purposes of intended treatment they have been divided into three categories as set out below.

A consistent approach should be applied to the design of each entrance feature, using the same materials and design language.

The potential linking of Waterside Valley to Radstock TC’s Haydon Batch project also needs to be considered with a unified identity given to both sites.

##### 3.2.1 Primary Entrances

This applies to entrances identified as **A**, **D** and **I** on the masterplan drawing

- These entrances should appear open and welcoming (see also 3.3.1 below). They should give a sense of entering somewhere special, set apart from the general countryside.
- A simple style employing timber elements is probably most in keeping with the character of the site. This could include simple but substantial gate posts, possibly with an overthrow arch, or could incorporate some kind of artwork feature that forms the posts and / or archway. The theme of any artwork should reflect the character, features and history of the site and local area.



- Different entrances may have more or less high profile treatment according to their location (see below).
- Each entrance should include the name / identity of the site and Parish Council branding
- Include interpretation / information boards. The scale and content of these may be adjusted to suit the relative use level of each entrance.
- Signage to include details of any prohibitions and Parish Council contact details in the event of any problems.
- As far as practical the entrances should be a clear unhindered opening allowing access to all (including mobility scooters and pushchairs)
- Where there is vehicle access up to the entrance (Entrances A & D) removable or folding bollards should be included to prevent unauthorised vehicle access, while allowing access by maintenance vehicles or for events.
- Entrance I may be re-located closer to Linden Close and become a combined entrance to Waterside Valley and Haydon Batch if WPC’s moves to purchase the intervening field are successful.



Figure 21 – Precedent images for possible treatment of primary entrances

### 3.2.2 Secondary Entrances

Entrances B, E, H and potentially J are in this category

These entrances although equally protected by public right of way are generally lower key in nature and possibly less significant entrances.

They should be treated similarly to the primary entrances as set out above, although possibly with not all the elements included, or with smaller interpretation boards if these are included.

Entrance J is left floating between being a secondary and tertiary entrance as the ownership of the land it crosses is yet to be determined. If relevant landowners and overlooking householders are agreeable this entrance could be formalised with a more direct route across the small greenspace area to Redwood Road.

### 3.2.3 Tertiary Entrances

This applies to entrances identified as **C, F, G** and possibly **J** on the plan (see commentary on entrance J above). These entrances are accessed via well used but unofficially recognised paths. However the right to roam / access land designation of the fields on the opposite side of the valley makes F & G relatively protected.

It is proposed that these entrances are marked with a simple but substantial marker post or totem, giving the site name and Parish Council corporate identity.



**Figure 22**  
*Example simple marker post for tertiary entrances*

## 3.3 Access & Paths

### 3.3.1 Access Control

Access to the site by off road motorcycles has been raised as a concern by WPC and during public consultation. However it is felt that any physical feature to actually prevent such access not only looks ugly and unwelcoming but also discriminates against a number of legitimate users, including those using mobility scooters and pushchairs.

There is also a question over how much of a problem this really is. Is such use happening very regularly and causing real damage, nuisance and danger, or it is occasional and the level of nuisance and danger is more a matter of perception than reality?

With greater use of the site and formalisation of some of the paths it is also likely to become less attractive to such use. Thus open, unhindered entrances are currently proposed coupled with maintaining signage prohibiting motorcycle use combined with reporting and policing.

### 3.3.2 Improved Access for All – New Paths

As a general principal efforts should be made to improve access to all, to all areas of the site.

In practice the site topography and characteristic of path routes beyond the site boundary reduce the practicability and level of reasonableness in making all routes fully accessible. However improvements to path widths and surfaces will significantly enhance the situation.

Paths run the length of the site along both top and bottom of the slope, but there is a lack of accessible route between the two. For example it is not currently possible to gain access from the housing in Waterford Park to entrance D and on to the centre of Radstock without navigating some quite steep slopes.

Thus some suggested new path routes are indicated on the drawing that will provide less steep routes between the upper and lower levels by cutting diagonally across the slope. These will significantly benefit less physically able users and provide much stronger through route links between Westfield, Radstock and Haydon.

It is important to note that while it should be possible to provide gradients of around 1:13 / 1:14 on these paths (compared to the general 1:4 slope of the valley side, these gradients are not considered fully accessible. However they should be navigable by powered wheelchairs and the more rugged types of mobility scooter for example.



**Figure 23** – Example of improved accessibility but retaining natural character of the site

### 3.3.3 Existing Paths - Improvements

The survey and analysis drawing has identified most of the paths on site. It shows the public rights of way as well as highlighting the most significant and apparently well used routes (based on the level of wear) It also indicates which of these get significantly muddy during the wetter months of the year.

This has then fed into the masterplan drawing which shows proposed priority for improving the primary paths. It is intended that others paths are allowed to continue as they are, formed and maintained by repeated public use or growing over if not used.



Improvement of the primary routes is differentiated into first and second priority.

**First Priority:** this relates to Areas of primary through routes that currently get significantly muddy for long periods over autumn/ winter/ spring

**Second Priority** Areas of primary through routes that currently do not get so significantly muddy but would still benefit from improvement to provide full connectivity and accessibility for a wider range of users along primary through routes.

In a number of areas paths also have quite a steep cross fall that makes them awkward to walk on even for able bodied users. Improvement works should also aim to reduce cross falls to a more comfortable level.

#### Proposed improvement works

- As a minimum remove surface mud and dress with crushed aggregate to provide 2m wide path.
- For improved durability and accessibility, cut and fill along length of path, cutting into the slope on the up-hill side and depositing arisings down slope to remove any cross fall >1:50
- Surface with 150mm depth Type 1 aggregate plus 50mm of matching 10mm to dust aggregate to fill any surface voids and address any concentrations of loose larger aggregate left on the surface, providing a relatively smooth and regular finish.
- Alternatively the 50mm top course could be a buff coloured self-binding path gravel, for more aesthetically pleasing (but higher cost) finish.
- It is suggested that the paths are simply edged by the sides of the excavation being cut to a clean line, rather than installing timber edging. This will save on cost and provide a more natural finish.

The exact specification, width of paths and prioritisation of treatment can be discussed further to suit available budgets. However a path width of between 1m and 2m is advised, with 2m allowing two people to pass comfortably

#### 3.3.4 Drainage Cut-offs

Sloping aggregate surface paths can be prone to gullying whereby flow of surface water builds up along the length reaching sufficient volume and velocity to causes channels to develop in the path surface. Over time these can become quite deep.

Where there is risk of this with new paths or improved surface to existing, drainage cut-offs should be installed to direct water to the side and off the path every few metres to avoid sufficient build-up of water to cause gullying.



**Figure 24** – Example of timber drainage cut off

### 3.4 Footbridges

Two of the footbridges are on public right of way routes (at entrance E and H) and the B&NES PROW team presumably have some responsibility (although limited budget) to maintain these. This includes the historic brick arch bridge at entrance E near the Miner’s Pool. This is currently in deteriorating condition with loss of brickwork from parapets and a very muddy path surface (in winter). This bridge is beyond the site boundary, on the unregistered land within which the miner’s pool sits.

The bridge at Entrance H is within the site boundary. The bridge itself is currently in reasonable condition but has gates at either end. These are now redundant (with no grazing) and form a barrier together with awkward steps at either end. Removal of the gates should be considered and the ground at either end could be built up to provide easier access to the bridge.

The other two bridges at entrances F & G are not on PRWO routes but do provide access to the “access land” the other side of the valley. It is not clear who might have installed these bridges and who had been responsible for them before WPC bought the land. Both are within the WPC ownership boundary and neither are in very good condition. Replacement or remedial work to these should be considered within the next few years.

Similarly to the one at entrance H, both these have an awkward step at either end which could be removed by building up the ground. The Bridge at Entrance G previously had side rails, which have since been lost, leaving only four of the supporting posts. Consideration should be given to repairing and replacing these rails.

The bridge at entrance F is potentially more heavily used, connecting with the mown amenity space. It lacks any side rails and has been repaired at some point. This bridge would be best replaced with a new one, again with the ground built up at either end to provide easier access.

Land drainage consent and or a permit from the Environment Agency may be required for works to these bridges.



**Figure 25** – Footbridge at entrance G. Note steps at ends and lack of handrail



**Figure 26** – Footbridge at entrance F. Note repair to beam, lack of handrails, bank erosion and steps at each end

### 3.5 Treatment of springs and issues

The springs that emerge from the slope are key features that the PC has expressed desire to make more of a feature of. There is also a need to resolve the way these springs contribute to the muddiness of the lower path.

The proposed works can be summarised as follows:

- Clear vegetation at head of spring point to establish if water arises from a single distinct point.
- If so construct head wall or use large boulders to make a feature of the spring
- Excavate existing channel to provide a more distinct shallow stepped channel with large boulders forming weir points to slow water flow and form small ponds.
- Include widened wetland / pond areas with still water to increase range of wetland habitat. A varying approach may be desirable to each of the springs
- Plant with or encourage native marginal aquatic plants
- Install a simple sleeper plank bridge to take path over the channel.

These works should be developed in more detail with some input from an ecologist. The works are likely to require land drainage consent form B&NES.



**Figure 27** – Example of suitable plank footbridge across channel



**Figure 28** – Example treatment for channel with boulders forming weirs and small pools behind



## **3.6 Watercourse - Waterside**

### **3.6.1 Further study and professional advice**

As mentioned in 1.9.5 above, the current Biodiversity Net Gain studies seem to treat the watercourse in an overly simplified way, as just a hedgerow type feature.

Waterside with its natural meanders, mix of shallow and deeper sections and varying bank profiles has far greater potential to be exploited as a resource for wildlife and for public amenity. In the absence of a more detailed ecological study to determine what species are likely to be present and what could be encouraged by subtle modifications, it is not possible to be fully prescriptive about proposed treatment. However some general points are set out below:

- Likely presence and suitability of the watercourse for species such as bats, water voles, otters and kingfishers requires further study. Localised modifications may be worth considering to encourage these species
- The watercourse is likely to be an important bat corridor, so the balance of maintaining tree cover versus opening up some sections will need careful consideration
- Opening up some sections of the watercourse to allow sunlight to reach the water could be advantageous
- Significant lengths of the watercourse are lost from view in dense vegetation, especially in the summer. Through selective cutting of ruderal vegetation and scrub, extending grassland closer to the watercourse, its visibility could be greatly improved. A notional extent of such works is indicated on the Masterplan, but needs to be subject to further advice following more detailed study
- Addition of features to slow water flow, such as log dams or boulders could be beneficial in creating wider variety of habitat as well as helping to store more water in extreme climate events, so helping reduce potential flooding down stream
- It is likely to be beneficial to improve human access to some sections of the watercourse to allow interaction with it, but to keep other areas less accessible to humans for the benefit of wildlife.

It is recommended that specialist input is obtained from an organisation such as the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) to study and advise on treatment of the watercourse in more detail.

## **3.7 Seats & Picnic Benches**

There are currently no formalised opportunities to sit and relax on site other than by sitting on the grass or fallen logs.

A number of seats and picnic benches are proposed on the Masterplan to increase the potential for visitors to linger and fully enjoy the site. The exact number and locations for these can be considered further as part of preparing detailed specifications for the furniture and its installation.

A few points to consider:

- A level and firm space should be provided at the end of each seat to allow a wheelchair or mobility scooter user to sit directly alongside their companions.

- Picnic benches should be of a design with an extended table to one end to allow disabled users to sit at the table.
- Provision of a level concrete pad below seats and picnic benches will allow them to be bolted down and remove the problem of maintain grass around them or the area below becoming muddy.



*Figure 29 - Example of fully accessible picnic bench with extended end for wheelchair use*

### **3.8 Litter & Dog Waste Bins**

#### **3.8.1 Dog Waste**

The masterplan also proposes new dog waste bins at most of the primary entrances, not least because picking up dog waste is not currently widely practiced, with a possible combination of laziness and lack of proximity of a bin often being factors.

The track leading to entrance B, does already have a B&NES bin provided at the junction of Birch Road and The Dring, so an additional bin may not be required at this entrance

Encouraging more picking up of dog waste is beneficial not just in making a more pleasant and healthy environment for all users, but also in limiting the raising of soil fertility, which in turn encourages the spread of coarse ruderal weed vegetation and loss of biodiversity.

The number of bins to be provided and their locations is open to review in order to balance convenience (hopefully leading to maximising use), with accessibility for emptying.

Education will also be required to encourage picking up of dog waste, thorough signage on site and information on interpretation boards as to why it is important.

#### **3.8.2 Littering**

Litter bins are not currently provided and littering does not seem currently to be a significant problem. Combined dog waste / litter bins are proposed at the primary entrances to encourage dog owners to pick up and dispose of dog waste.

Further bins could readily be added for litter close to picnic benches and elsewhere, however accessibility of location and cost of emptying need to be considered.

A country park in Somerset has recently trialled removing all litter bins and found that this encourages people to take litter home, reduces littering, avoids the problem of overflowing bins at weekends and saves significantly on emptying and maintenance costs.

It is thus suggested that a no additional litter bin approach is taken here to begin with, on a trial basis but subject to review, adding bins later if littering is found to be a problem.

### **3.9 Rope Swings & other play features**

#### **3.9.1 Rope Swings**

Several rope swings have been installed by members of the public, suspended from trees over the watercourse. Concern had been raised about health and safety issues and the liability of WPC for these. Initially some rope swings had been removed by WPC, but these were subsequently replaced by the public.

The RoSPA health and safety inspection suggests that retention of rope swings would be acceptable and rendered low risk based on several provisos as follows:

- Tree to be inspected for safety / stability, initially and on a regular basis thereafter
- Rope swing with proper rope and strapping to attach it to the tree to be installed
- Any rocks or other objects below, that could be fallen on and cause injury to be removed
- Swing to be inspected on a regular basis and maintained as per any other type of play equipment

On the basis of the apparent determination of users to have a rope swing and in the interests of encouraging natural play with a measured level of risk, as a positive contributor to child development, it is suggested that WPC replace the rope swings with proper equipment in line with the RoSPA recommendations above.

#### **3.9.2 Other play features**

It is not suggested that any additional formalised play provision is installed on the site. However the characteristics of the site lend to very positive natural environment play. This aspect should be considered in relation to other proposed changes and ongoing management of the site. Factors to consider include:

- Leaving large logs from any tree felling in suitable locations as natural play features and informal seating
- Allowing access to the watercourse for play in suitable locations
- Consider policy in relation to potential “den” building by children



### 3.10 Internal fences

Within the site, or close to some site boundaries but not necessarily on them, there are a number of old stock proof (typically post and barbed wire / timber post and wire mesh) fences. With no grazing on the site and potentially no grazing on the other side of the valley, most of these fences are redundant. Many form an unnecessary barrier and it would be beneficial to remove most if not all of these.

Removal could either be undertaken wholesale as part of initial improvement works, or carried out over a period of time as and when scrub and coarse vegetation that envelopes them is managed.

Where such fences are on the south side of the watercourse, potentially providing enclosure to the Access Land on this side of the valley, it would be wise to consult with the adjoining land owner before removing these fences, as although they do not currently make this land stock proof, they may have been installed by that landowner.

### 3.11 Site boundaries

No essential work to site boundary features has been identified. A more detailed examination of these is suggested to be sure all are in good condition, with any remedial work found necessary being undertaken. Whether this needs to go to the extent of uncovering fences lost in dense vegetation is debatable.

In many instances the ownership of neighbouring land has not been established and the responsibility for boundary features is not known. There would be sense in establishing who owns and / or tenants all adjoining land and obtaining relevant contact details. Any work proposed to boundaries should be discussed with the relevant adjoining owner.

#### 3.11.1 Boundary with Bath College (I-m-n-o-p-q on survey plan)

Much of this boundary is the historic boundary of South Hill House which previously stood on the college site. In some areas the old vertical bar railings are in poor condition and in need of repair.

With proposals to control scrub and open up views of the pill box (see 3.13 below) this boundary becomes more prominent.

It is desirable to keep the historic railings, especially in the vicinity of the pill box, however the college may be inclined to replace these with a cheaper, but less sympathetic fence. It would be worthwhile making contact with the college to discuss this boundary in conjunction with discussion about the pill box to try and ensure the best outcome.



*Figure 30 – damaged railings to college site by the central pill box*

### **3.11.2 Redundant livestock features by Entrance D**

Around entrance D there are various gates and features likely to be remnants from past farming use for controlling and corralling livestock. It is difficult to determine on site exactly where the ownership boundary lies here and thus to what extent these elements are on WPC land as opposed to the unregistered land which includes the Miner’s Pool.

Ideally as part of improving the appearance and welcome of entrance D, and subject to detailed design proposals, these features need to be cleared.

It would thus be helpful to make further efforts to determine ownership of this land and seek permission from the landowner for removal.



*Figure 31 – Redundant gates and metalwork at entrance D to be removed*



### 3.12 Pill Boxes

Western pill box: This is within private ownership and while highly visible from the site is not accessible to the public.

The central Pill Box is within the grounds of Bath College. This pill box is not publically accessible and is partially hidden by the dense epicormics growth from the base of the lime trees that surround them. Management of this growth and some slight crown lifting of the trees would be beneficial in helping to reveal the feature to the site enabling the wartime storey of the site to be told more effectively. It is however noted that this work would be of little benefit to the owners of these trees, so liaison and a potential offer to organise and pay for these works may be required.



**Figure 32** – Central pill box in ground of Bath College, largely hidden by vegetation

The eastern pill box is within the WPC ownership boundary, but is currently lost in dense bramble and is inaccessible. The following action is recommended:

- Surrounding vegetation to be cleared to provide clear views of the pill box.
- Subject to agreement, this could include some clearance within church yard.
- Condition to be checked and any necessary remedial work / cleaning out undertaken.
- Consideration to be given as to whether 24-hour access to within the pill box will be made possible or if a gate / grille needs to be fitted. Access could be provided for special open days or educational events.
- Vegetation to be kept cleared to maintain access and views of the pill box from the valley, in the context of the other two.





**Figure 33** – approximate location of east pill box which is in WPC ownership

### 3.13 Initial Works to Vegetation

#### 3.13.1 Tree work

Tree works required for health and safety reasons are set out in the tree risk assessment. See section 1.10 above. It is understood that the works identified for imminent attention have all since been attended to (during 2022).

Further periodic assessment of trees will be required as advised in the risk assessment.

#### 3.13.2 Scrub & Coarse vegetation reduction

Lack of grazing or other management of the site over recent years has meant that scrub (mostly brambles and blackthorn) and coarse ruderal vegetation (nettles, thistles coarse umbellifers) has spread further into the grassland than desirable.

The masterplan identifies the approximate extent of such vegetation to be cut back initially and thereafter managed as per the grassland areas to encourage re-establishment of grassland here.

There are also isolated patches of such vegetation developing within the grassland. These have not been identified on the plan, but need to be treated similarly.

The exact extent of this clearance works needs to be determined on site. Along the watercourse this should be decided in the light of further specialist advice from a holistic viewpoint taking into account wildlife and ecology balanced with public amenity.

This initial clearance works should proceed as follows:

- Work to proceed in a manner to avoid impacts on birds, reptiles, amphibians and hedgehogs. Avoid such work during the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) or otherwise proceed under ecological supervision.
- Works to be undertaken using hand held tools such as brush cutters or hedge trimmers.
- Larger areas of bramble may be cleared by an excavator using a brush rake or root rake to pull out roots, minimising overrun by machinery. The rake on the excavator arm being used to pull up the brambles and gather the material compressing it into a neat pile.
- All arisings should be removed from site or stacked tidily as compost heaps in carefully chosen locations adjacent to scrub and tree lines.
- Check over cleared area, level any localised lumps and remove any foreign objects, litter, rocks or rubble – anything that might cause an obstruction to subsequent cutting as part of the grassland.

### 3.13.3 Initial grassland management

None of the grassland has been grazed or cut for some years (apart from areas of close mown amenity grass that have been volunteer mown by a member of the public).

During the first year it will be advantageous to undertake several cuts, with an initial cut being done as soon as possible.

Following a first cut, possible over seeding with wild flower mix, including yellow rattle is worthy of consideration, although experience of success is mixed.

Yellow rattle is a plant with yellow flowers and seeds that rattle in their casings, which is parasitic to coarse grass species. Its presence in the sward can greatly reduce the vigour of the coarse grasses, helping to allow other wild flowers to establish.

Yellow Rattle needs to be sown in the autumn as it requires a period of winter cold to germinate. As with other wild flower seed, it also requires a degree of bare disturbed soil to establish. To achieve this and prepare ground for overseeding it would need to be harrowed after cutting in order to open up a proportion of bare disturbed ground.

Given the likely timing of commencement of work on site, with some potential for vegetation works to get underway during winter 2022/23 it is suggested that the grassland is simply cut during 2023, with three cuts between March and September.

At the end of this season, the option of overseeding in Autumn 2023 could be reviewed, with possibly just a trial area being treated.

After any over seeding the sward will need another season with three cuts and potential spot treatment of any coarse undesirable species (such as docks and nettles)

Thereafter the grass should be cut annually in July / August.

It is very important that during or immediately after each cut, the cuttings are collected and either removed from site, or neatly stacked in suitable locations as a compost heap. The latter may provide habitat for grass snakes which are potentially already on site.

It is possible that a farmer may be willing to cut the grass in return for the hay crop or a modest payment plus the hay. However the current components of the grassland vegetation, including some undesirable species and the presence of dog waste may preclude this. In which case if not composted on site the arisings would have to be removed as waste.

### 3.13.4 Initial works to Hedgerows

The **central dividing hedgerow** would benefit from some remedial works as follows:

- Cut back and reduce extent of spreading blackthorn scrub as part of general scrub reduction
- Cut back hedgerow itself, maintaining selected tree saplings (if present) to allow to grow into standard trees.
- Interplant with additional native hedgerow species including: *Cornus sanguinea*, *Corylus avellana*, *Euonymus europaeus*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Ligustrum vulgare*, *Viburnum opulus*.

The **southern hedgerow** is mostly on a narrow triangle of unregistered land in unknown ownership. However, especially if the further southern field is purchased by the PC it would be pertinent to manage this hedgerow. See section 5.1.4 below.

### 3.14 Tree Planting

The masterplan suggests provisional locations for some new tree planting within the grassland. This is proposed as much from an aesthetic amenity point of view as ecology. The aim being to create a landscape parkland type of character, akin to 18th Century parkland surrounding historic houses. The aim is to maintain the overall dominance of the grassland (which has the greatest biodiversity potential) while adding some individual specimen trees and small groups of trees for their visual effect and shade value.

It is suggested that trees are planted relatively small, potentially as whips 1.5-1.8m high or as light standards with a girth of 8-10cm. Planting this size will be cheaper and will be less reliant on irrigation for establishment.

Tree planting should ideally be undertaken during November / December which will further help reduce reliance on artificial watering during the first year and not require any artificial watering thereafter.

Control of vegetation growth around new trees will be vital to ensuring good establishment rates. Thus an area at least 1mx1m should be thoroughly cleared of vegetation, including roots before planting and a fully bio-degradable mulch mat (typically coir) applied around each tree.

To protect these new trees from deer (and from accidentally being mown over) tree guards should be installed. These can either be in the form of a substantial wooden guard, or two stakes with a wire mesh cylinder secured around them. Once the trees are well established with a crown above head height these guards will become largely redundant (with no grazing livestock), so this may suggest the cheaper wire mesh option.

See section 5.1.6 below for maintenance of new trees.





**Figure 34** – Typical timber and wire mesh tree guards

All new tree planting on site should comprise locally appropriate native species, with the following being suitable:

<b>Botanical name</b>	<b>Common name</b>
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> *#	Hornbeam
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> *	Beech
<i>Quercus robur</i> *	Common or English oak
<i>Quercus petraea</i> *#	Sessile or durmast oak
<i>Salix alba</i> #	White willow
<i>Tilia cordata</i> *	Small leaved lime
*Species best placed to form large stately mature specimens	
# Species best suited to cope with damper areas of the site	

### 3.15 Potential Off-site Works

Various works that would be beneficial to the enjoyment and success of Waterside Valley that are not actually on the land owned by WPC have been suggested above or are identified on the Masterplan drawing. These are summarized here for ease of reference

#### 3.15.1 Access lanes & paths

The tracks / lanes giving access to Entrance A from Waterford Park and Entrance B from Birch Road / The Dring (both of which are public Rights of Way) would benefit from some vegetation management and improvement to surfaces. Working in partnership with B&NES PROW team may be required here.

The track from Church Street to entrance D would also benefit from some attention but this is not a PROW and crosses the unregistered land.

Entrance C is accessed through the churchyard, the grass and mud path within the churchyard leading to it gets very slippery. It would be beneficial to improve and formalise this path working in partnership with the church.

### **3.15.2 Links to access land**

There are several path links to the access land on the opposite side of the valley. In many cases these paths also become very muddy in the wetter months, especially nearest the watercourse. There would be merit in improving path surfaces to some of these. This should involve liaison or working in partnership with the relevant landowner.

### **3.15.3 Miner's Pool**

Being outside of the WPC site boundary, the Miner's Pool does not form part of the brief for this document. However the area would benefit from improvements to access and vegetation management, either just as an attractive amenity and interesting historic water feature or more especially if it is ever restored for public bathing.

Several of the structures (bridge and upper dam) would benefit from restoration work.

In either case it would be beneficial if the Miner's Pool were treated in terms of functionality as part of the Waterside Valley site with WPC and whoever takes on the Miner's Pool as a project working in close partnership.

### **3.15.4 Bath College – pill box and boundary**

See sections 3.11.1 and 3.12 above

### **3.15.4 Signage**

Directional signage to the site would be beneficial from all the points mentioned in 3.15.1 above, potentially relating to a combined identity for Waterside Valley & Haydon Batch

## **3.16 Addition of further field to south west**

At the time of compiling this document WPC are expecting their bid to purchase the further field to the SW of the current site to be successful. If this is the case this extension to the site is a very positive move that will enable several further benefits

- Direct physical linkage to Radstock Town Council's Haydon Batch project
- Improvements to access from Linden Close, from Westfield Industrial Estate (First Avenue) and from Haydon (the latter when combined with access improvements on the Haydon Batch site)
- Addition of another area, which whilst still a SE facing grassland slope down to Waterside has subtly different characteristics.
- Strengthening of potential combined Waterside Valley / Haydon Batch identity

## **4. Progressing Realisation of the Masterplan**

### **4.1 Further work**

By its nature this masterplan and management plan is intended to only set the general principals. It does not provide a fully detailed design or specification suitable for actually procuring any works.

There is potential for work to be phased and procured by differing means. Some of the more substantial works are probably best undertaken by suitable specialist contractors, whereas other works could be suitable to be undertaken by supervised voluntary groups on a more gradual ongoing basis.

Subject to decisions about phasing, funding and potential procurement methods, the works can be divided into packages with detailed designs and specifications being produced to a suitable level of detail to allow them to be priced by contractors and thereafter implemented.

#### **4.1.1 Extending this plan to cover additional field**

If WPC's purchase of the additional field to the south goes through successfully, then it would make sense to extend this plan to cover that area as well.

While most of the principals of this plan can be rolled out to cover the additional site area, it is likely to have some key features and differences that may require specific consideration or a different approach.

#### **4.1.2 Detailed Design**

More detailed design work and preparation of specifications will be required in order to agree the final form and procure some of the improvement works. This includes

- Works to entrances
- Pathway improvements
- Replacement of footbridges
- Works to springs and issues
- Choice of seats and picnic benches and finalised location plan
- Planting plan & specification for new trees

#### **4.1.3 Ecological input**

The limited Biodiversity Baseline Survey of the site provides a very broad overview of the habitats and potential biodiversity on site. However this gives very little detail of the riparian habitat and leaves lots of scope for further study to identify exactly what species are present on the site overall.

While further ecological survey may not be absolutely necessary, it would add significantly to the knowledge of the site and provide details to feed into site interpretation, site events such as bug hunts and nature walks. It may also reveal potential for species of particular interest which may suggest adjustments to specific management details.



Should a planning application be required to cover any of the works or more generally for a change of use to the site, this would likely trigger a need for a further ecological study (see 4.2.1 below) to support an application.

Otherwise a degree of survey and recording can potentially be achieved through volunteer input or through organised public events.

#### 4.1.4 Specialist water course management input

As discussed in section 3.6 above, current detailed understanding of the features, value and potential of the watercourse as a combined amenity and wildlife feature is not fully developed.

It is recommended that further more specialist input is sought, such as from the Bristol Avon Rovers Trust (BART) to feed into and refine proposals for improvement and ongoing management

#### 4.1.5 Procurement of works

As funding becomes available the Parish Council can make decisions about the next phase of works, commissioning production of suitable tender packages in order to tender the works and appoint a contractor under the PC's regulations.

Unless the PC have expertise in house for running such contracts, inspecting works and instructing on any changes due to unforeseen circumstances arising on site, it is advised that the PC appoint a suitable specialist professional such as a Landscape Architect, to administer contracts on the TC's behalf.

Different elements of the proposed works are likely to lend themselves to different types of contractors. Consideration should be given as to whether the PC appoints an overall main contractor, who then uses specialist sub-contractors, or whether the works are let as a series of separate contracts directly to the relevant specialists.

Examples of types of contractor to be considered include the following:

<b>Type of contractor</b>	<b>Work area</b>
Arboricultural / Forestry contractor	Tree work, scrub clearance, hedge works, tree planting
Farm contractor	Scrub clearance / management, grass cutting, fencing / fencing clearance. Harrowing and over seeding grassland
Specialist Ecological Contractor	Vegetation clearance and management. Habitat creation. Harrowing and over seeding grassland
Civil engineering / groundworks	Pathway and entrance works, installation of signage, furniture, bridges. Works to watercourses
Landscape contractor	Pathway and entrance works, installation of signage, furniture, bridges, tree planting. Harrowing and over seeding grassland
Specialist riparian contractor	Works to watercourses.

As shown above, there is significant overlap in the type of work that different types of contractor may be suitable to undertake. It would be appropriate to assess options for types of contractor once phases or packages of work are defined bearing in mind economy, efficiency, degree of specialism required and health and safety.

## 4.2 Permissions

### 4.2.1 Planning

It is not entirely clear at this stage whether planning permission may be required to cover any of the works.

Under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as a local authority, the Town Council has certain permitted development rights as per extract below:

PART 12  
Development by local authorities

*Class A*

**Permitted development**

*A. The erection or construction and the maintenance, improvement or other alteration by a local authority or by an urban development corporation of—*

- (a) any small ancillary building, works or equipment on land belonging to or maintained by them required for the purposes of any function exercised by them on that land otherwise than as statutory undertakers;*
- (b) lamp standards, information kiosks, passenger shelters, public shelters and seats, telephone boxes, fire alarms, public drinking fountains, horse troughs, refuse bins or baskets, barriers for the control of people waiting to enter public service vehicles, electric vehicle charging points and any associated infrastructure, and similar structures or works required in connection with the operation of any public service administered by them.*

**Interpretation of Class A**

**A.1** For the purposes of Class A, “urban development corporation” has the same meaning as in Part 16 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (urban development)(1).

**A.2** The reference in Class A to any small ancillary building, works or equipment is a reference to any ancillary building, works or equipment not exceeding 4 metres in height or 200 cubic metres in capacity.

It seems that this covers most of what is proposed on site with the wording “and similar structures or works required in connection with the operation of any public service administered by them” is interesting to note on the assumption that provision of a public greenspace is a service provided by WPC.

However if the works are seen to constitute a change of use in planning terms, a planning application for change of use may be required.

The simplest and most cost effective means of testing this would be to submit an application to B&NES as the Local Planning Authority for a Certificate of Lawful Development / Use supplying the masterplan as part of the application.

#### 4.2.2 Environment Agency & Lead Local Flood Authority See also section 1.3 above

Any works within 8m of the extent of Waterside that is designated as a main river may require an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency. Some works are exempt but still have to be notified. The rules are quite complex and beyond the scope of this report. Refer to the link below for further details:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>

While based on what is currently proposed it is anticipated that such an application should be reasonably straightforward, the approval process is bureaucratic and can be quite protracted, especially for anything that does not quite seem to fit their standard guidelines and parameters, so sufficient time needs to be allowed for this process.

Any works to ordinary watercourses (the upper stretch of Waterside and the springs) may require land drainage consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority. In this instance this is B&NES. Refer to the link below for further detail:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/lead-local-flood-authority/planning-and-development>

#### 4.2.3 Adjoining land owners

Other than work to boundaries that are in uncertain ownership, off-site works or for works to limit encroachment there is not necessarily any need to consult adjoining land owners. However it is always good policy to thoroughly consult any interested parties and to try to “keep them on board” with the project

Party wall legislation may come into play with any boundary works. This is a specialist area that may require professional advice.

Otherwise there are probably no official formalised processes to follow, but some legal advice may be pertinent in any uncertain situations.

### 4.3 Health & Safety

As part of planning any works on site, health and safety of the public and operatives will need careful consideration.

- It may be appropriate to close off areas of the site or entrances during works
- It may be possible to keep the site fully open with adequate measures place to warn the public and keep them separate from the works.
- Any contractor undertaking works should provide evidence of appropriate insurance.
- Any contractor undertaking works should provide a risk assessment and management plan, which should be reviewed by the PC.
- Any works deemed as construction works under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015) will be subject to these regulations. The extent to which these regulations apply is dictated by the length of the contract and number of operatives likely to be on site at any one time.
- The overhead power cables crossing the site will necessitate specific risk assessment for any work with tools or machinery that could come into contact with the cables (E.g excavator arms). Refer to safe working guidelines “Look out Look up” produced by Western Power Distribution, reproduced in the appendices.



## 5. Management Plan

*Refer to drawing WPC740/Drg03 – Management Plan Areas*

### 5.1 Vegetation Management

In some cases some initial vegetation management work will be required to help address the undesirable excessive spread of scrub and coarse ruderal vegetation in order to restore this to grassland. See section 3.13 above for details of initial vegetation management

#### 5.1.1 Meadow Grassland

The overall aim for the majority of the meadow grassland is to improve its biodiversity value from Modified (or improved) grassland to a more bio-diverse “other neutral grassland” classification. It is important to note that due to the relative fertility of the soil on site, the grassland will not be likely to become a full blown wild flower meadow. However through appropriate management and gradually reducing fertility and the predominance of coarse grass species, it is realistic to expect to see an overall increase in floral diversity, which in turn will increase the diversity of pollinators and other fauna.

The key to achieving this is either annual cutting or seasonal grazing. During development of proposals for the site, the Parish Council considered the option of grazing but this was deemed suitable for the site for two sound reasons:

- Grazing would necessitate making the site, including entrances stock proof. Such treatment at the entrances would make them less accessible to all levels of mobility and less open and welcoming.
- Grazing is not compatible with the high level of use for exercising dogs, as all dogs would then have to be kept on a lead.

Thus annual cutting of the grass has been deemed to be the most suitable approach. This must be accompanied by removal of arisings. This ongoing removal of cuttings will gradually over some years reduce the nitrogen levels in the soil or seasonal grazing by livestock.

During the early years some additional cutting, either wholesale or localised may be desirable to further control brambles and coarse ruderals that may not have been fully brought under control during the initial establishment works.

The ideal situation to aim for, would be to find a farmer who is willing to cut the grass in return for the hay crop. The main limiting factors are likely to be the current species constituents of the sward (inclusion of coarse ruderals, including some ragwort, which will gradually be reduced over the years by the proposed cutting regime) and the presence of dog faeces. The latter can hopefully be limited by a campaign to encourage picking up and binning dog waste and education as to the reasons for this. (“Pick up waste to improve biodiversity and keep your council tax down”).

If an ideal hay crop situation cannot be reached, a farmer may still be willing to cut the grassland for a lower quality of hay (bedding rather than food), or for some payment, which is potentially likely to still be less than amenity grass cuttings costs.

As mentioned in 3.13 above, the potential to over-seed some or all areas with a wildflower seed mix, including yellow rattle can be kept under review, with perhaps a trial area done

first and further areas seeded in subsequent years (dependent upon success) possibly funded via Biodiversity Net gain offsetting (See 5.6 below)

***Maintenance operations:***

- Cut all grassland annually in July / August, removing all arisings
- Arisings to be removed from site (either as hay crop or green waste, for composting off site) or stacked neatly on site as habitat compost heaps in selected locations.
- Review the need for any additional cuts between March and July for any areas where further control of brambles or coarse ruderals is desirable.
- Review options for further over-seeding of selected areas or wholesale, using wild flower seed (depending on funds and success of any initial trial areas)

### **5.1.2 Close mown amenity grassland**

The areas of close mown amenity grassland are currently maintained by a volunteer member of the public or group of people who have been undertaking this work unofficially, apparently for some years (see 5.8 below regarding volunteering)

The amount of area that is mown is probably reasonable and proportionate to the use of the site, so it is potentially desirable to continue this.

***Maintenance operations:***

- Cut approximately 6 times per year, adjusting frequency to respond to annual variation in rainfall, overall growth rate and consensus of opinion as to height of grass in relation to usage needs.
- Ideally cuttings should be boxed off during cutting or collected afterwards, in line with the overall objective of reducing soil fertility for the potential biodiversity gain. However the difficulty of practicality achieving this, especially under the current volunteer basis is recognised. Given the location and limited extent of close mown grass, while removal of arisings remains an ideal, failure to do so is probably not overly detrimental.

### **5.1.3 Tall, coarse ruderal vegetation**

Some areas of tall ruderal vegetation are indicated on the masterplan for retention as an appropriate portion of this vegetation does provide additional habitat and biodiversity

***Maintenance operations:***

- This vegetation should be cut on a rotational basis to help reduce the potential for it to gradually develop into scrub.
- Approximately one third of these areas should be cut each year, so that each area is cut every three years.
- All arisings from cutting should be removed from site, ideally to a green waste composting facility.

### **5.1.4 Scrub**

Following initial works to reduce the amount of scrub and restore this to grassland, the remaining scrub will need to be managed in order to limit its spread, maintain a diverse age structure and range of habitat across the site.

Drawing WPC740/Drg01 shows the site divided into scrub management zones 1-5:

***Maintenance operations:***

- Cut back around 50-60% of the scrub in one area each year on a 5-year rotation.
- Scrub cutting should aim to form scalloped or undulating edges between scrub and grassland, maximising this valuable edge habitat and providing a natural looking appearance
- Cutting to be undertaken using hand tools, hand held brush cutters or an excavator with a root rake or hedge cutter bar used to undercut the scrub
- Arisings to be raked up and removed from site in order to gradually reduce soil nutrient levels
- Scrub cutting to be timed to avoid the bird nesting season (March- August) – i.e. undertaken September – February.
- Work to be undertaken sensitively, potentially with ecological supervision to minimise risk of damage or injury to species such as hedgehogs, birds and reptiles which may be sheltering within the scrub.

### **5.1.5 Hedgerows**

There is limited hedgerow on site, what there is, is generally in reasonable condition, however it could be improved from a biodiversity point of view, through appropriate management and maintenance.

***Maintenance operations***

- Lay hedges on a rotational basis aiming at laying every 10-15 years
- Only lay up to a maximum of 1/3 of the length of any hedgerow in any one year to maintain a mixed age structure and refuge areas for wildlife
- Once laid, review presence of any gaps and species diversity of the hedge and interplant with additional hedgerow shrub species as appropriate

### **5.1.6 Trees**

Following the tree risk assessment carried out in 2022 (see 10.1 above), routine repeat inspections will be required. That report advises ongoing monitoring, with re-inspections advised after 12 and 24 months (February 2023 and 2024).

Any changes to the site that result in increased level of occupation (use) should be reviewed in relation to changes to exposure levels to potentially dangerous trees.

Any safety works advised in ongoing assessments should be undertaken according to the level of urgency advised in the inspection report.

As and when it becomes necessary to fell trees, or in the event of trees being lost in storms, the potential of planting replacements should be considered.

***Maintenance operations – mature trees***

- Routine tree risk assessment inspections as discussed above
- Reactive maintenance works to keep trees safe

***Maintenance operations new trees***



- If planted small and between Novembers – December newly planted trees should not routinely require any irrigation, however in their first year after planting, if prolonged periods are forecast without rain, then monthly watering during these periods is advised. When watering apply large quantities infrequently rather than small quantities more frequently. 2-3 buckets of water should be applied to each tree, allowing it to soak in around the tree rather than running off the surface.
- Maintain a 1mx1m vegetation free area around each tree for at least the first 2-years after planting.
- Check stakes and ties every 6-months, once in early spring and again in late summer. Adjust ties that are getting tight and risk cutting into tree bark. Repair any broken stakes or ties.
- Remove stakes and ties once no longer required to support the tree, usually after 2-3 years.
- Once trees have established and are branching out well above head height, in the absence of grazing by livestock, the surrounding tree guards are largely redundant and may be removed.

### 5.1.7 Wetland features – enhanced areas around springs

It is harder to be prescriptive about routine maintenance of these areas which should generally be left alone with maintenance operations being more reactive than prescriptive.

Wetland and marginal vegetation may be left to develop with little management intervention unless vigorous spreading species such as reed-mace threaten to completely colonise areas intended to be open water.

#### ***Maintenance operations:***

- Inspect quarterly to ensure that watercourses are running freely or appropriately.
- Inspect annually to assess level of vigorous spreading vegetation such as reed-mace and plan for remedial works.
- Remove excessive growth of any such vegetation to maintain significant areas of open water where intended.
- Remove any accumulating litter.
- Repair any damage to banks which may result in water flow where not desirable, resulting in muddy paths.
- Inspect and maintain informal footbridges.

## 5.2 Watercourse Management

See also section 4.2.2 above

The rules relating to responsibility for watercourses can be complex, and advice should be sought about individual circumstances (see web links in 4.2.2 above)

Below is a basic summary of the author's understanding

For the extent of watercourse that is classified as Ordinary Watercourse (i.e. not Main river), then as landowner the PC has full responsibility for maintenance.

For the extent that is classified as Main River the Environment Agency may have some responsibilities and a right of access to the watercourse.

In general legal duties and good practice dos and don'ts include:

- Do not do anything that may reduce water flow to other landowners
- Do not do anything that may cause flooding to other landowners
- Remove any blockages or fallen trees that may reduce water flow downstream or cause flooding to other landowners
- Any other fallen branches or trees should be left where they are as they can help retain water and prevent flooding.
- Avoid anything that may contaminate or pollute the water. This could include grass cuttings and other green waste placed too close to the water.
- Do not apply herbicides within one meter from the top of any bank.
- Avoid anything that is likely to result in large amounts of soil entering the water course, either as a result of direct action or leaving areas of undisturbed and unprotected soil that could be washed into the watercourse by rain.
- Avoid disturbing the beds or banks other than under appropriate advice and with relevant permissions in place

Where the full extent of the watercourse (both banks) is beyond the PC's ownership boundary (E.g. area of weirs and Miner's Pool), then obviously the PC have no liability or responsibility

Further specialist input into the treatment and management of the watercourse is likely to add further detail to this section (see 4.1.3 above).

## 5.3 Amenity Management

### 5.3.1 Paths

#### Formal and improved paths

- Day to day maintenance of these paths should be minimal, but some periodic remedial work and renewal may be required.
- If autumn leaves settle and remain on these paths, they should be swept or blown off as if left they will decompose and eventually create an organic mud over the path surface.
- Where drainage and erosion gullies or cut-offs have been installed to deflect water sideways and reduce the likelihood of erosion of the path surface these will need to be kept regularly maintained to ensure that they do not fill with silt so that water simply passes over the filled cut-offs. Check quarterly and after extreme rain events and clean out as required
- If any areas of path are subject to wear from surface water flow in wet weather, fines may wash out from the path, requiring topping up of the surfacing material. Measures should be taken to divert and water runnels that develop, away from the paths. Check annually and plan remedial works.
- Over time, fines from below the paths may gradually migrate to the surface making localised areas muddy. Scraping off surface mud and topping up with fresh granular surfacing material should remedy this. Check annually and plan remedial works.

### Informal paths

Paths that have not been provided with a formalised imported surface are either mown grass paths or compacted existing site substrate (soil) it is intended that such paths be allowed to develop naturally through use and self-maintain.

If due to other changes on or around the site, usage patterns should change with paths becoming more significant as access routes, then consideration could be given to providing a granular surface to these. Review annually.

### 5.3.2 Footbridges

These should be checked for condition and safety quarterly and after any flooding events which could cause damage or erosion to the abutments, with any necessary repairs or replacement undertaken.

Being timber, these will gradually decay and occasional repair and ultimate replacement should be planned for. Any timber for repair or replacement should be suitably pressure or vacuum treated ensuring an appropriate level of treatment to provide a minimum 30 year service life.

**Recommended Timber treatment:** Copper-organic preservative applied using a vacuum pressure process to BS EN 8417 and EN355 use class 4, for 30 year service life (belowground timbers and timbers in contact with the ground). Site cuts to be kept to a minimum and treated with proprietary ENSELE end grain treatment.

N.B treated construction timber more readily available off the shelf from mainstream builders merchants typically does not have this level of protection and is likely to require replacement significantly sooner.

### 5.3.3 Signs, furniture and litter bins

#### Generally

- Level of maintenance required for furniture, litter bins and signage will be dependent upon the materials that the chosen items are made from. Recycled plastic provides a stable, durable and long lasting option with very little need for maintenance.
- Any seats in shadier locations may be prone to algal growth which will tend to hold moisture and make them unappealing to sit on. In such instances as well as where regular bird mess becomes a factor, the seats should be periodically scrubbed with water and mild detergent (dish washing liquid). Check twice per year.

#### Signage

- Any signage provided should be selected to be durable and require a minimum level of maintenance. Occasional cleaning to remove algal growth may be required – check once per year
- Periodically the content of the signage should be reviewed to ensure that all information is correct, in line with subsequent changes and improvements made to the site, in line with current legislation and with relevant contact details. It is expected that signage may need updating periodically, at least perhaps every 10 years. Interpretation signs with



removable panels will help make updating more economic. Review every 5 years or in the event of any change in contact details

#### **Litter bins**

- Empty on a regular basis. The frequency will depend on the speed at which bins fill, which will become evident over a period of time. This may vary with the season.
- Additional emptying before and after any event likely to involve large numbers of people should be allowed for
- Ensure that up to date contact details are provide on any bins to encourage any issues with bins (overflowing or damage) can be reported promptly

### **5.3.4 Rope Swings**

If proper rope swings are installed by the PC, these should then be routinely inspected and maintained in line with normal requirements for any other play equipment. If the PC is responsible for play areas elsewhere, the rope swings could be added to the inspection routine for these.

## **5.4 Management of undesirable behaviour**

### **5.4.1 Litter & dog waste**

See section 3.8 above.

It would be beneficial to periodically review the level of bin provision and degree of littering and dog waste left on site, potentially making adjustments. No doubt if problems do arise public reporting of this issue will be likely.

It would also be beneficial to maintain signage and information about the benefits of not leaving dog waste on site. (Public health / biodiversity / reduced grass cutting costs)

### **5.4.2 Fly tipping**

Fly tipping does not seem to have been a major issue to date. Some tipping of garden waste is evident where garden boundaries adjoin the site. This should be monitored and dealt with (see 5.4.6 below).

### **5.4.3 Vandalism & graffiti**

As part of routine checks of the site, any vandalism or graffiti should be noted and measures taken to make good as quickly as possible. A well-kept and well-used site helps discourage vandalism whereas neglect seems to attract it.

### **5.4.4 Motorcycle use**

With the decision to keep entrances open and welcoming, avoiding unwelcoming obstructions that any anti-motorcycle devise would create, motorcycle use is best managed through maintenance of signage, PR campaigns, reporting and policing. (See also 3.3.1 above)

With increased use of the site it is hoped that use by motorcycles will be further discouraged. Occasional motorcycle use is probably less harmful than the visual and physical barriers that any prevention device would result in.

#### **5.4.5 Encroachment**

Prior to Westfield Parish Council's ownership there were multiple instances of encroachment onto the site by adjoining households, adopting parts of the site along the top NW boundary of the site effectively as extensions to their private gardens, allotments, playgrounds of general dumping areas.

This presented a rather hotchpotch appearance to this area, is unfair to other users and presented risks with miscellaneous football goals and trampolines appearing.

While there is no desire to be heavy handed over this, it should be policy to discourage and gradually remove this activity.

It is understood that WPC have written to all householders asking them to remove extraneous clutter and equipment and that while this informal use of the site can continue for present owners, that in the event of properties changing hands, no right to continue this is passed to the new owners and at that point such encroachment from that property should cease.

This situation will require ongoing review and potential future action to ensure changes happen.

With increased attention to the site with improvements, ongoing maintenance and increased use it is hoped that the tendency of householders to encroach onto what was previously seen as abandoned land will hopefully diminish.

#### **5.4.6 Fires and barbeques**

It is understood that some users currently use disposable barbeques on site. To what extent this is a positive or negative activity is open to debate and perhaps something best decided upon by WPC.

With the potential of increasingly dry summers and the extensive grassland on site, the risk of causing wildfire is a matter for consideration.

Use of disposable barbeques, scorching the grass and then being left in-situ is another issue, but if used responsibly and removed afterwards they are perhaps not a problem.

If a no fires and barbeques policy is adopted by the PC, then appropriate information signage and policing needs to be maintained.

## 5.5 Protected Species – Avoiding Adverse Impact

**5.5.1 Badgers:** Only use low ground pressure vehicles in the 10m vicinity of any Badger tunnels (if present)

### 5.5.2 Bats

Ivy growth on trees, root holes and any branch or trunk damage resulting in potential hollows can create roosting opportunities for bats. No works to mature trees should be undertaken without prior inspection by ecologist for potential bat roosts, with appropriate licences being applied for where essential works will unavoidably impact bats and their roosts.

Where possible without risk of damage to property or injury, any dead trees to be retained as standing dead-wood. (Value for bats and invertebrates).

**5.5.3 Reptiles:** Undertake meadow grass cutting during the active reptile season (April to October) to give reptiles the opportunity to escape the mower and do not cut too closely.

**5.5.4 Nesting Birds:** Only carry out woody vegetation / scrub clearance during the season September and end of February to avoid disturbing breeding birds

## 5.6 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Offsetting

As mentioned in section 1.9.1 above a biodiversity net gain survey of the site was undertaken in December 2021 and WPC have since approached the Bristol Avon Catchment Market with a view to offering the site as a BNG offsetting receptor site.

Achieving an overall gain in biodiversity on the site is very much in keeping with the wider aspirations, as one of the main reasons people like visiting and are likely to be attracted going forwards, is the opportunity to connect with nature.

BNG offsetting has the potential to bring a stream of income to the site, covering 30 years of input, funded by development projects that are unable to achieve a net gain in biodiversity on site.

There are various means of tapping into this potential funding stream of which the Bristol Avon Catchment Market is just one agency.

Following discussion with the Parish Clerk and B&NES's Somer Valley Rediscovered project officer, in the light of the recently awarded West of England Combined Authority (WECA) green spaces grant, as there is potential to undertake most if not all the initial vegetation management works under this grant over the next 3-years it seems prudent to hold off signing up for BNG offsetting at this stage. The option however will still be open to sign up at a later date to cover ongoing management of the site.

The works and objectives set out in this management plan are broadly in accord with those to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.



## 5.7 Volunteering and events

With unsupervised unofficial volunteer maintenance already happening on site and interest in volunteering shown by a large number of people surveyed within the focus group and through the consultation events it would be a wasted opportunity if this potential were not harnessed.

Volunteering is a really good way of helping local people feel involved, building a sense of pride, community and stake holding in the site. This in turn can lead to increased informal surveillance and policing of any antisocial activities or any damage on site.

However without appropriate checks and control measures in place, volunteering input can all too easily go off at a tangent from the overall objectives for a site.

Thus it is important that current volunteer input is brought within some kind of framework with the volunteers responding to the PC within the overall principals of this management plan, rather than volunteers doing whatever they think is appropriate.

Care will be necessary to bring existing volunteers on-board to accept a new regime, without alienating them.

Some volunteer input lends itself to proceeding without significant supervision, while other operations would need to be facilitated by an onsite coordinator to guide appropriate action.

There are existing agencies such as The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) who may be willing to run a regular volunteer day on site.

It is also worth considering running one off events to tackle specific issues, such as a once a year “big litter collections” or activity groups to assist with wildlife recording. If these can have an added fun element such as some kind of competition or provision of refreshments, it is likely to increase the turn-out

As part of the recent WECA grant, there is funding for a volunteer coordinator to be appointed by B&NES, to promote and run volunteering at all five of the Somer Valley sites covered by the grant over its three year span.

Thus for the life of this grant, it seems sense to work within that arrangement, but with WPC working with the existing volunteers and those who have already shown an interest in order to get them on board.

After the 3-year life of the WECA grant the ideal would be to retain the bulk of the volunteer force, especially those more local to this particular site to form an ongoing body, such as a “friends of” group in order to continue volunteer input. A plan will need to be in place to then facilitate and appropriately direct ongoing volunteer input.

Some activities will require a higher level of supervision and organisation than others. Some of the most appropriate volunteer activities are set out below with comments on the necessary level of supervision.

<b>Potential Volunteer Activities</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Grass cutting (close mown)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervised overview and reporting needed, but cutting can be undertaken unsupervised as and when suits the volunteer within agreed parameters</li> <li>WPC to consider paying for fuel and maintenance of machine</li> </ul>
General Litter Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WPC to provide basic training and equipment (bags, gloves, litter picker)</li> <li>WPC to provide means of disposing of collected litter</li> <li>Could be undertaken without supervision as and when suits volunteers</li> </ul>
Big litter removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If larger items of “litter” require removal, volunteer day could be set up with a co-ordinator.</li> <li>WPC to provide a skip</li> </ul>
Scrub clearance / management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would need experienced on site facilitator / coordinator at all times</li> <li>Tools and equipment to be provided</li> </ul>
Path maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would need experienced on site facilitator / coordinator at all times</li> <li>Materials, tools and equipment to be provided</li> </ul>
Tree watering and weeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervised overview and reporting needed, but work can be undertaken unsupervised as and when suits the volunteer within agreed parameters</li> <li>WPC to consider paying for fuel and maintenance of machine</li> </ul>
Hedge laying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would need experienced on site facilitator / coordinator at all times</li> <li>Tools and equipment to be provided</li> </ul>
Site checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less physically active volunteers could be recruited to undertake informal site checks and inspections with reporting back to WPC</li> </ul>
Wildlife Recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would require a facilitator</li> <li>Good way of both compiling knowledge of species present on site and involving a different group of volunteers.</li> </ul>

It will be necessary to undertake risk assessment for each activity or event and to check with WPC's insurers that such activities are appropriately covered by the TC's insurance policy.

This may require some kind of membership or sign form for volunteers to confirm that they are aware of any risks and of the basis of their involvement.

## 5.8 Management of Health & Safety

See also sections 1.11 and 4.3 above

As a public amenity greenspace health and safety considerations should always be to the forefront of any planning, inspections or work on site.

It would be prudent to commission repeat RoSAP inspections, particularly after any new improvement works are completed and periodically otherwise, effectively as a second set of eyes to review any issues that may have been missed internally.

If “official” rope swings are installed. These, the tree they are attached to and the surrounding area will need to be regularly checked in accord with BS EN 1176 Part 7 which recommends that operational inspections are carried out on a monthly or quarterly basis, depending on risk assessment.

In between formal inspections, encouraging effective reporting of issues arising by members of the public, through information and contact details on interpretation boards can be very useful. This could even be expanded by appointing volunteer wardens / ambassadors who make periodic tours on inspection with reporting back. It should however be noted that such inspection by unqualified volunteers should be seen only as an additional layer of checking and not substitute for proper inspections by suitably trained people.

## APPENDICES

### ***Included as part of this document***

- Drawing WPC740/Drg01 – Survey & Analysis
- RoSAP Safety Inspection
- Drawing WPC740/Drg02 – Masterplan, improvements and general management regimes
- Drawing WPC740/Drg03 – Management Plan Areas
- Annual Maintenance Programme
- Look Out Look up – guide to safe use of mechanical plant below power lines

### ***Supplied as separate documents***

- Quantified Risk Assessment Tree Survey