

Working in partnership with Town and Parish Councils

Briefing Note No. 20-11

Service: Economic Development and Planning

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Summary

Further to [Briefing Note No.19-015](#) the Council is undertaking additional engagement with the town and parish councils to inform the review of the Wiltshire Local Plan.

This will focus on updating our evidence base in relation to:

- (i) Rural facilities survey; and
- (ii) Open space and green infrastructure.

We are writing to parishes requesting responses by 31 March 2020. This can be extended if parishes need further time. In such cases clerks should contact the council (details above) to agree an extension period.

Rural Facilities Survey

In April 2019, we contacted rural parish councils to assist us in updating the [rural facilities survey](#), which was last published in 2013. The response rate was low, and this is being followed up to provide the opportunity for the parishes who didn't respond last time round to complete the survey.

This information will enable us to have a better understanding of local facilities and employment provision in rural settlements and parishes in Wiltshire. It will be used to inform policy development for the more rural parts of the county. In summary, the new survey will ask for details of facilities, services, local employers and the extent of mobile and broadband coverage for each rural settlement.

Green infrastructure and open space

The council is also updating its open space and green infrastructure evidence base to inform the review of the Local Plan, the development of a new green infrastructure strategy and open space strategy for Wiltshire.

To support this, we are writing to the town and parish councils to seek their input and to provide information about their local area. This builds on the open space consultation undertaken in 2015, which was well responded to.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy will identify Wiltshire's existing strategic green infrastructure and set out a long-term vision, objectives and framework to support a delivery plan for the enhancement of this important network. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will inform the work of the council, partner organisations and the community to improve the mental wellbeing and physical health of residents through improved connectivity with the countryside; support natural methods of urban cooling; help improve air quality; and increase biodiversity through developing eco-recovery networks.

The term 'green infrastructure' describes the network of green and blue (water) natural spaces and includes formal as well as informal spaces, such as allotments, amenity greenspace, parks and recreation grounds, outdoor sports pitches, play space, rivers, canals and ponds.

The benefits of green infrastructure as multifunctional areas of land are explained by Natural England as follows:

"Individual spaces may have many functions such as:

- providing recreational space for healthy exercise and a relatively tranquil environment;*
- providing a place for wildlife to live;*
- contributing an attractive green element to the image of an area;*
- raising the quality of people's everyday living and working environments;*
- providing flood storage space in times of flood;*
- providing a transport corridor for walkers and cyclists;*
- helping areas cope with the impacts of climate change; or*
- providing areas for local food production."*

To assist the town and parish councils in responding, we have prepared a questionnaire that is supported by a guidance note and maps that illustrate our current understanding of the open spaces in each parish. We will be asking town and parish councils to consider whether this is up to date and to provide any information they have on the quality of spaces. In addition, blank maps are being provided so any ideas that could help enhance the local green infrastructure network can be put forward for consideration.

By engaging with town and parish councils, we hope to get a better understanding of the quantity and quality of the local open spaces that exist and any local evidence of future need.

The information will support the setting of local open space standards to ensure that any new developments help deliver identified local needs. The resulting Open Space Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy will help to create a healthier environment for both people and our flora and fauna and help to combat climate change.