



Planning and the Forest of Avon



A Guide for Developers Adopted October 2005

The Forest of Avon is one of 12 Community Forests in England. It covers just over 57,000 hectares across the four unitary areas of which 26,840 hectares are in South Gloucestershire, forming an extensive and valuable asset for local people. It incorporates within its boundaries a variety of different land uses and both urban and rural areas.

This leaflet describes how developers can contribute to this exciting initiative. It sets out relevant planning policies and provides advice as to how these policies will be applied.

Once adopted the advice constitutes planning guidance, supplementing the policies of the Development Plan.



It will be reviewed and updated as part of the Local Development Framework process.

Achieving the objectives of the Forest of Avon will assist in off-setting global climate change. The Forest is also providing opportunities for local people to enjoy, explore and benefit from their local environment.

Key achievements so far include development of the Community Forest Path and other major walking trails, the provision and management of wildlife habitats, the creation of new woodlands open to the community and enriched by fun events. All of these contribute to the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors in and around the Forest area.

The Forest contributes to sustainable development and is playing an active role in securing a viable economy by encouraging the creation of jobs linked to the area's natural environment.

The Forest of Avon Partnership connects people to trees, timber and woodlands by enhancing natural environments close to local communities – benefiting over 1 million people in and around the Bristol area and providing a model for community forestry across the South West Region.

Forest of Avon and Planning Policies

The Regional Planning Guidance for the South West, (Policy SS20) and the Joint Replacement Structure Plan (Policy 21) contain policies which support the establishment and objectives of the Forest of Avon.

The South Gloucestershire Local Plan Revised Deposit Draft (2002) includes Policy L5 Forest of Avon.

In addition to Policy L5 (the Forest of Avon) a number of other policies in the Local Plan are relevant to delivery of Forest Objectives. These relate to:

- Landscape Protection and Enhancement (Policy L1)
- Open areas within the existing urban areas and defined settlements (Policy L6)
- Biodiversity and nature conservation (Policies L7, L8, L9, L10)
- Historic parks and gardens and battlefields (Policy L11)
- Archaeology (Policy L12)
- Cycle routes and pedestrian routes (Policy T5)
- Farm diversification (Policy E7)
- Protection of open space and playing fields (Policy LC9)

- Quiet enjoyment of the countryside (Policy LC10)
- Recreational routes (Policy LC12)
- Public art (Policy LC13)

The Forest of Avon does not override the Green Belt policies and any development must be in accordance with other policies in the South Gloucestershire Local Plan.

South Gloucestershire Council will seek to secure benefits for the Forest of Avon, in relation to development proposals wherever appropriate opportunities arise. Benefits will be secured to minimise the impact of development. **However, the offer of such benefits cannot be used to justify inappropriate development.**

Examples of sites within the Forest where developer contributions have been secured include:

- Seabank Power Station where a planning obligation was entered into which secured major off-site planting to mitigate against visual impact of the development.
- Hanham Hall Hospital where land was made available at no cost to the Council for 25 years for open public access.

Policy L5: Development that is permitted within the Community Forest Area as defined on the proposals map should:

A: Respect the developing woodland setting; and
C: Not prejudice Community Forest Projects.

B: Not conflict with the Community Forest objectives; and

In its consideration of applications within the Forest of Avon the Council will take account of the Forest Plan's strategies and the Council will seek to negotiate a contribution towards the implementation of Community Forest objectives. (Policy L5 South Gloucestershire Local Plan)

The Forest of Avon Plan

The Forest of Avon Plan was first approved in 1995. The Plan was revised in 2000 (published 2002) and is a material consideration in determining proposals for development.

The Plan identifies three main strategy areas for South Gloucestershire and sets out objectives for local areas and woodland cover targets. These will be complemented by the Council's Landscape Character Assessment "Rural Landscapes of Bath & North East Somerset" adopted as SPG

The Forest Plan is available from the forest team as a CD or from the website www.forestofavon.org.uk



How to contribute to the Forest of Avon

TREES AND WOODLANDS

The pattern of woodlands in Bath & North East Somerset varies from the wooded slopes of the Avon Valley to the more open character to the south and west of Keynsham.

The pattern of all future planting should conserve and enhance local landscape character. In contributing to the establishment of the Forest:

- Planting may be on or off site
- May include new tree or woodland planting, protection/management of existing woodlands and trees including ancient woodlands and trees or hedgerows
- Indigenous species should be used where appropriate and reflect local character and promote biodiversity
- Planting may be used to reduce the impact of a development but cannot be used to justify inappropriate development

FOREST OF AVON GATEWAYS AND RECREATIONAL ROUTES

Forest of Avon Gateways, which provide points of access and information about the Forest, are linked by an extensive network of recreational routes. They provide opportunities for sustainable recreation, improve quality of life and enhance links between town and country. Potential benefits which may be required include:

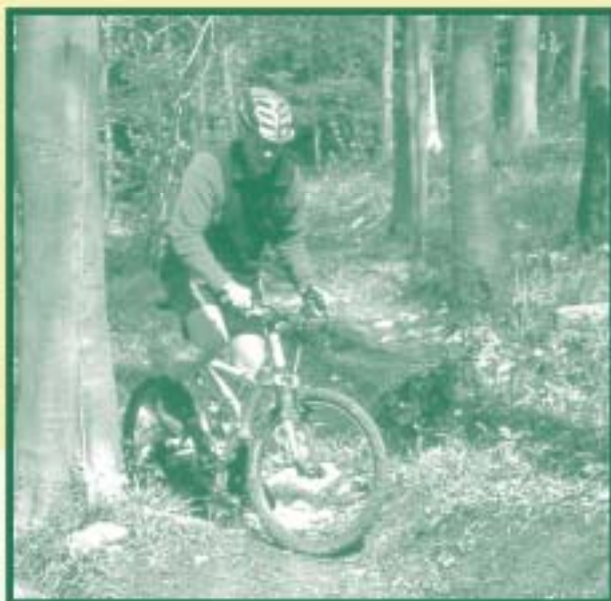
- Enhancement of the network of strategic routes and links to it by improvements to surfaces, clearance of obstructions or provision of furniture to increase access for all e.g. by replacing old stiles with kissing gates
- Provision of interpretation, e.g. boards and signs and funding of walks leaflets
- New links may be required to provide routes between the development and the existing network to provide improved access for walkers, cyclists and horseriders

HABITATS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Bath & North East Somerset has a rich diversity of natural and historic resources and it is important that these are retained and enhanced. Where development is to proceed, appropriate mitigation measures will be required to minimise the impact of development and to ensure the future of these resources.

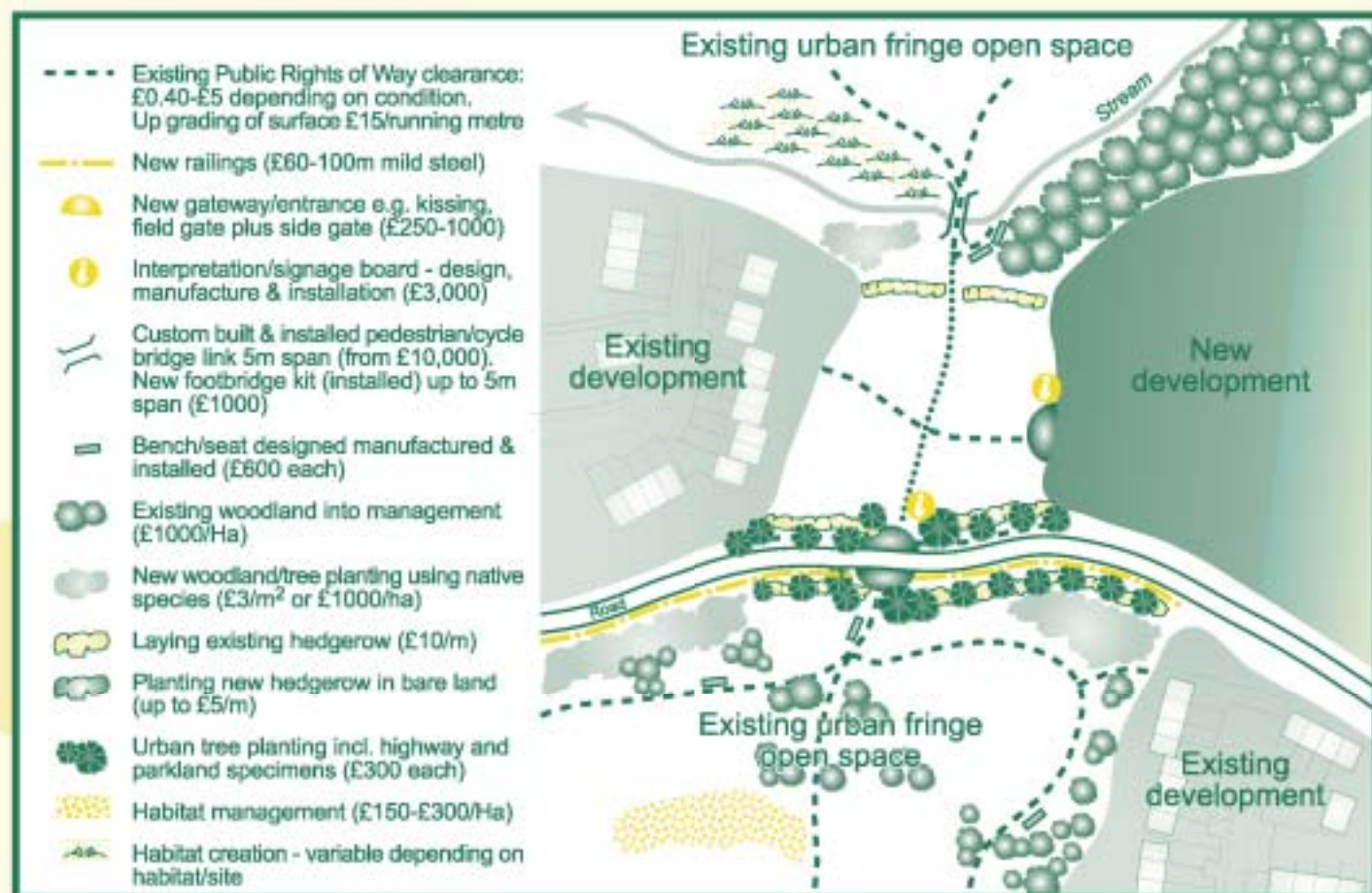
This may include:

- Protection, enhancement and long term appropriate management of existing wildlife habitats and species.
- Creation and long term protection/management of wildlife habitats and corridors
- Preservation, management and interpretation of archaeology
- Protection and enhancement of local landscape features such as ponds, hedgerows and walls
- The establishment and maintenance of a Local Nature Reserve.



Illustrative Proposals

If the principle of development is acceptable the need for planning obligations and their form will be identified during the planning application process. Examples of obligations and approximate costs are set out below. (Illustrative costs based on 2005 prices)



Many businesses today are trying to operate in an environmentally responsible way offsetting their global warming effects by planting trees. This is your chance to show you care by making a contribution to the Community Forest. Some funding may be available to implement proposals through Agri-Environment schemes, e.g. Woodland Grant Scheme and other national and local initiatives.

Further useful information and addresses

Planning and Environment Section	Forest of Avon Team	Forestry Commission	Countryside Agency	DEFRA
South Glos Council High Street Kingswood South Gloucestershire BS15 9TR	Ashton Court Visitor Centre Ashton Court Long Ashton Bristol BS41 9JN	Bank House Bank Street Coleford Glos GL16 8BA	South West Region 5th Floor One Redcliff Street Bristol BS1 6NP	Block III Government Buildings Burghill Road Westbury-on-Trym Bristol BS10 6NJ
☎ 01454 863592 www.southglos.gov.uk	☎ 0117 953 2141 www.forestofavon.org.uk	☎ 01594 810983 www.forestry.gov.uk	☎ 0117 910 2900 www.countryside.gov.uk	☎ 0117 959 1000 www.defra.gov.uk