

CONSERVATION AND PLANNING DESIGNATIONS

The whole of the Manor Woods Valley site, from Bishopsworth library entrance in the southwest to Ilchester Crescent in the northeast was first designated as Malago Valley Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) in the Avon County Structure Plan of 1987/1993. SNCIs are sites which contain features of substantive nature conservation value at a local level. The sites were designated through a Local Sites Partnership (LSP), using an agreed set of criteria. The LSP for the West of England, was formed by ecologists from each of the unitary authorities, Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT), Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC), Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, and the local Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) group. These sites receive a level of protection through local planning policy, in-line with Planning Policy Statement (PPS9). The latter was a document produced by the Government to advise Local Planning Authorities on planning policies for the protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. SNCI designation is therefore not protection per-se, but means that biodiversity and geological conservation are a material consideration during the planning process.



Malago Valley Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)

The site was designated as a Wildlife Corridor in the Greater Bristol Nature Conservation Strategy (Nature Conservancy Council (Great Britain); Strategy Steering Committee, 1991), but nothing is known as to what this 'designation' meant in site conservation or planning terms.

Julia Bolzek prepared 'A Management Brief for The Malago and Manor Woods' on behalf of AWT in September 1995. This was a detailed and lengthy report that included excellent habitat descriptions and a coloured habitats map, prepared as part of her studies in Germany. The report and map only just post-date, and didn't reference, the formalised habitat codes and colours adopted in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC) 'Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit', which was first published in 1993; however, most of the habitat codes and descriptions used in the report of 1995 are analogous to those used in the publication of 1993.

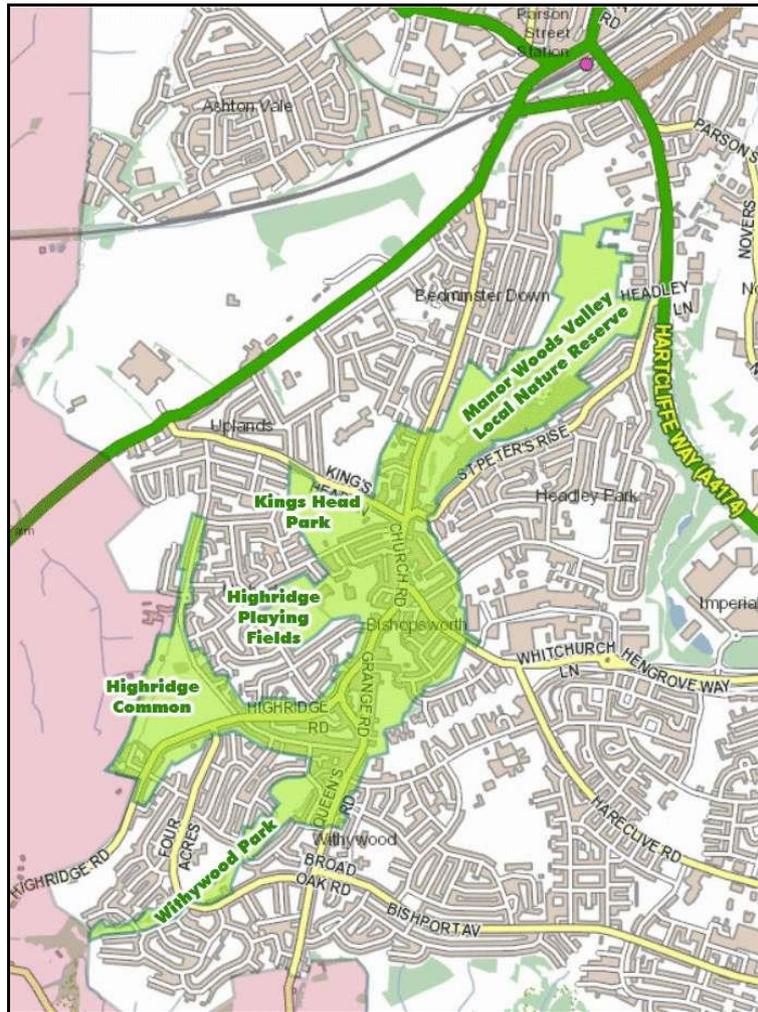
The Management Brief also included an ambitious list of recommendations for environmental improvements in Manor Woods Valley, including:

- The planting of hedges at both main entrances
- The planting of an avenue of (possibly fruit) trees at the Vale Lane entrance
- The cutting of a new footpath in the former quarry area
- Consolidation and improvement of existing footpaths in the woodland
- Planting and periodical thinning & coppicing of ... hazel ... in woodland
- Extending the area allocated to long 'wildflower meadow' grassland
- Monitoring of water pollution of the Malago on a weekly basis
- Clearing of nettles every two years in autumn and removal of material
- Reeds planted on a third of the 'bird sanctuary' and cut in rotation
- Present shrub area thinned in rotation every five years

Local luminary Anton Bantock, rather rashly, believed that most of the described tasks were within the capacity and capability of the Malago Valley Conservation Group (MVCG) volunteers.

In the summer of 1995, a site meeting involving the author of the aforementioned report, MVCG, a local councilor, the BCC Area Landscape Manager and a representative of the National Rivers Authority, took place to discuss which areas of grass should be mown and which ones left to develop as wildflower meadows; possible hedge and tree planting; and what could be done to clean up the Malago and whether it might be possible to open up the culverted stretch. This meeting resulted in the mowing regime that encouraged the large wildflower meadow to develop as well as initiation of an 'aquatic garbage raid' to be carried out by volunteers organized by MVCG.

In December 1993 the Malago Society, a local history group, had presented a 'Proposal for a Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area' to Bristol City Council (BCC). MVCG worked closely with the Council over the intervening years until Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area was officially agreed in October 1998. The conservation area boundaries were drawn around the 1920s/1930s development; after which time, the general expansion of Bristol swamped the village. There was some debate about the inclusions of green spaces. English Heritage agreed that the Malago Valley was Bishopsworth's natural setting and agreed with the inclusion of the whole of Manor Woods and Withywood Park in the Conservation Area. Conservation Area status provides additional protection against unsuitable development; however, the conservation area designation did not cover the extreme northeast end of the SNCI to the north of Cockershell Lane and the TV mast footpath.



Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area

In 1999 Bristol Water offered to help with the printing of MVCG's *My Manor Woods Book*. Coupled with a grant received from BCC. The book was launched on 11 July 2000, with the Deputy Lord Mayor, who was also a local councillor, Bernard Chalmers, officially launching it at a ceremony at Bishopsworth Manor House. In July 2006 copies of *My Manor Woods Book* were for sale at a Manor Woods Valley Celebration Fête and at a stall at the Cheddar Grove School fête.

MVCG was first contact by the BCC Local Nature Reserves Officer in August 2004, with a view to designating 20.18 ha of the area as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The newly named Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve was formally designated in January 2008. It was one of seven LNR's created in the city at the same time. BCC quickly installed new signs at each of the four entrances official entrances to the park. On 29 February, the Lord Mayor, Cllr Royston Griffey (who also happened to be the Lord of the Manor of Bishopsworth) and Andre' Coutanche, chair of MVCG, unveiled the sign at the main entrance behind Bishopsworth Library.

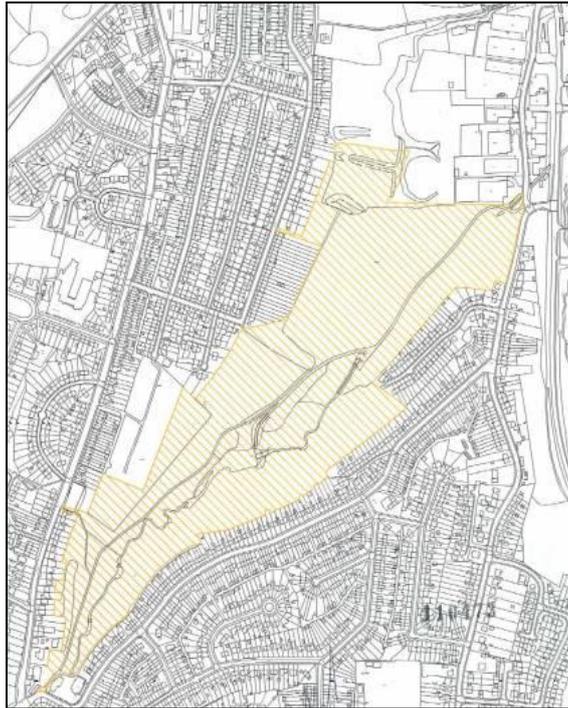


Dedicating Manor Woods Valley LNR 29 February 2008



The Quarries area, including Manor Woods Orchard, came under BCC Property Services, as it was designated for Industrial and Warehousing use (adjacent to Vale Lane industrial estate); however, it also had a designation as an SNCI. When the LNR was designated, the Quarries area was left out because Property Services wouldn't agree to its inclusion. It was considered more important to get the main designation rather than incur a delay by trying to include an area designated for development, that is, the Quarries, despite the desire of MVCG to see this latter area included in the LNR.

Manor Woods Valley was not mapped as an LNR on MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside), which is a governmental website that provides geographic information about the natural environment in map form, until February 2020, following pressure being brought to bear by the successor to MVCG, the Manor Woods Valley Group (MWVG).



Manor Woods Valley LNR (diagonal hatching) as designated by BCC

The LNR designation brought MVCG into contact with other LNR. groups in Bristol and increased involvement in the Bristol Parks Forum.

Sally Oldfield, BCC's Local Nature Reserve Officer left in September 2008 and was not replaced. As a result, MVCG got little support from the Council. Financial constraints and re-organisations within BCC started to become obvious at this time. These increasingly made communications and 'getting things done' difficult for those within BCC and interested groups wanting to progress actions in Manor Woods Valley.

BRERC assessed the condition of the SNCI in August 2008. Important habitats on the site were noted as:

Priority Habitat: lowland calcareous grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland, semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

Possibly Priority Habitat: lowland mixed deciduous woodland (Criteria 3), filled clay-pit & earth cliffs, hedgerows, scrub, stream & pond.

Important species noted by BRERC were Ash, English Oak. Goldilocks Buttercup and Yellow Archangel, with good populations of ferns, Corky-fruited Water-dropwort, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Oxeye Daisy, Green-winged Orchid, Grass Vetchling and Yellow Rattle.

The site was assessed against numerous SNCI criteria. It was found to strongly meet the criteria for naturalness, habitat diversity, geographic position, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats, age/continuity, community or amenity value, visual access, education value, and landscape or aesthetic value. It moderately met the criteria for size, species diversity, species rarity, habitat rarity, fragility, typicalness/representative, important populations, BAP species, physical access and recorded history. An assessment of recreatability/irreplaceability of the SNCI could not be made.

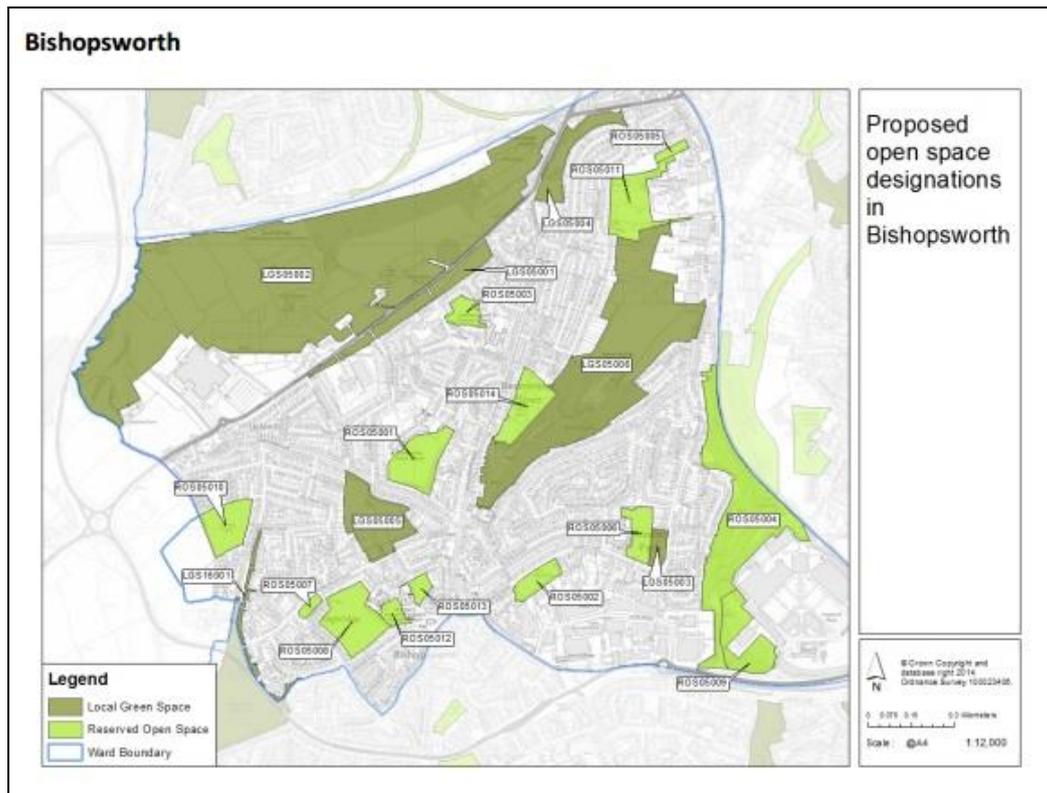
The BRERC report included boundary updates with amendments from BCC made in December 2009. The resulting SNCI had an area of 28.45ha. The somewhat complex planning history and SNCI designation related to Manor Woods Orchard is discussed in the Claypits Brick and Tile Works Quarries Pits and Manor Woods Orchard chapter.

BCC adopted a planning Core Strategy in 2011 and a Site Allocation and Development Management Policy in 2014. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of 2012 introduced the concept of Local Green Space (LGS), which was retained within the revised NPPF of 2019. The designation of land as LGS is a way to provide special protection against inappropriate development for open spaces which are of particular importance to communities. The NPPF requires that policy for the management of these designations is akin to that for the Green Belt. To bring the policy and background evidence up-to-date, and in accordance with the NPPF, BCC proposed that the Local Plan Review introduced an LGS designation and a new designation of 'Reserved Open Space' (ROS) for other open spaces of significance.

The BCC Local Plan review consultation 2018 showed the whole of Manor Woods Valley LNR, along with Manor Woods Orchard and The Quarry to be a proposed LGS. This designation to be for subsequent use in Local and/or Neighbourhood Plans. The review stated that 'Land identified as Local Green Space will be retained as open space. Development that results in harm to the Local Green Space's characteristics, appearance or role will not be permitted. Ancillary development of a proportional scale that supports the function and role of the Local Green Space may be acceptable provided it does not have a harmful impact on the space as a whole.'

A small area of 'Pony Paddocks', between the northern edge of The Quarry and the green lane between Vale Lane and the TV mast, was to be designated as ROS, as was the green area north of Cockershell Lane (this latter area is not usually mapped as 'Manor Woods Valley'). The review states that 'Whilst not all open space has the characteristics of specially protected Local Green Space, the city contains numerous open spaces of importance that are considered appropriate for proportionate policy protection in the local plan. These open spaces have current public value and are proposed to be designated as Reserved Open Space. The policy approach also allows local communities to consider and review the approach to open spaces in their areas. Reserved Open Spaces will be re-assessed during future reviews of the local plan and may be reviewed through any new neighbourhood plans.'

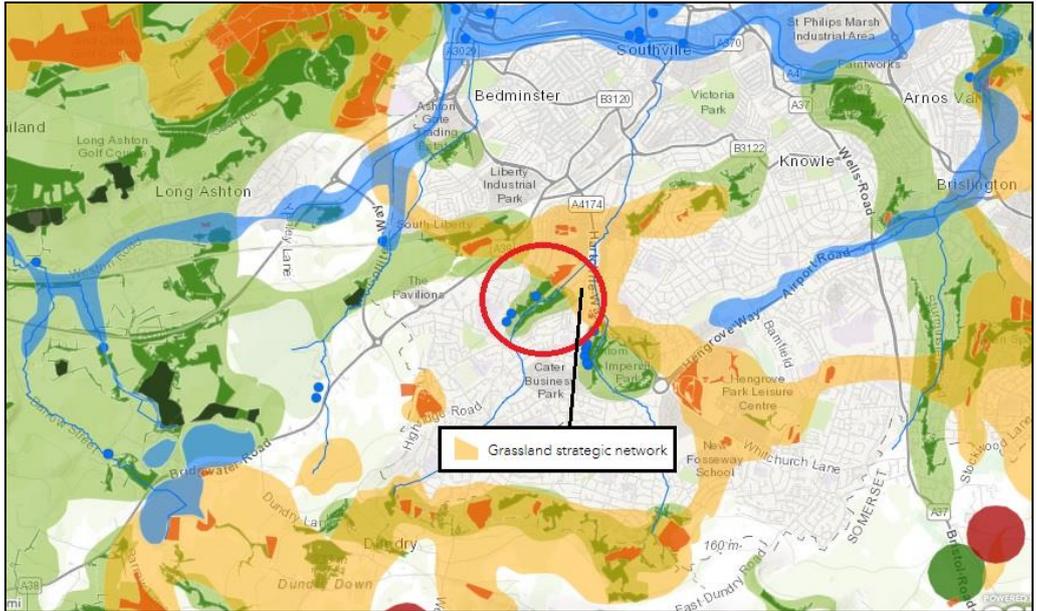
MWVG replied in the affirmative to this consultation. These proposed designations were carried forward into the second consultation draft of March 2019, entitled 'Bristol Local Plan Review – New Protection for Open Space'. This document is designed to form part of Bristol's Local Plan that is timetabled for adoption in 2023.



'Bristol Local Plan Review – New Protection for Open Space' – March 2019

The West of England Nature Partnership (WENP) is a cross-sector partnership working to restore the natural environment in the West of England through embedding the value of nature in decision making across spatial planning, public health and economic development. Established in 2012, WENP is the designated Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for the West of England (Bristol City, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset). LNPs are a key commitment from the 2011 Government White Paper, *The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature*, which recognised the need for a more joined-up approach to reverse the loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems and to secure nature's return to health. WENP is hosted by AWT and funded by BCC, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Wessex Water and Bristol Water. The WENP has led the development of a vision for a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) in the West of England as a joined-up network of marine and terrestrial habitats where nature and people can thrive.

Strategic mapping is the main output and tool of the WENP. The NRN map includes the northeast portion of Manor Woods Valley within a proposed 'grassland strategic network' that links sites in south Bristol with the countryside to the south and the Ashton Court estate and beyond to the northwest.



Manor Woods Valley within the WENP Nature Recovery Network