

Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework



Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership
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Sunderland
Partnership

SUNDERLAND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Prepared for the Sunderland Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership by the Green Infrastructure Steering Group.

Contact: Barry Luccock, Deputy Manager, Planning Policy

Barry.luccock@sunderland.gov.uk

0191 561 1577

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

1.1 This document sets out the main elements that together will comprise an effective strategy for the improvement, protection and understanding of green infrastructure in Sunderland. It outlines a timetable for production of the strategy and also proposes a provisional vision and principles for green infrastructure in the city.

What is green infrastructure, or ‘GI’?

1.2 Green infrastructure, or “GI”, is the network of open spaces and countryside that surrounds towns and villages and permeates through built areas. It is largely comprised of countryside, parks, natural habitats and green links such as river and stream corridors, pedestrian, cycling or other transport links. It has been recognised in such reports as the Marmot Review “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” as having importance for achieving health improvements, enhancing bio-diversity, reducing the effects of climate change, encouraging social interaction and promoting feelings of well-being. GI therefore provides an infrastructure that is essential to urban living, providing more attractive living and working environments and consequently economic and social benefits.

1.3 Sunderland takes a pride in its public green spaces and in 2010 again won the Britain in Bloom Best Large City award. Sunderland has a wealth of parks, countryside and open spaces: think of Mowbray Park, Herrington Country Park and Penshaw Hill; Fulwell Quarries, Washington Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre, the River Wear and the coast and beaches. A GI Strategy will help make fuller use of the benefits that these places bestow upon the city’s landscape, its economy and its people.

Benefits and functions of GI

1.4 A report published by Natural Economy North West has identified that good quality GI in towns, cities and rural areas can provide a wide range of benefits. Green infrastructure can provide or be adapted to accommodate many functions, as outlined in the following table. Maximising the number of potential functions in a location should be a broad aim. Most functions may be possible to a significant extent in the largest green spaces and countryside, but local conditions, needs and resources should prevail in decisions on what functions to focus upon, particularly for small sites.

Potential benefits and functions of GI:

ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIAL	CULTURAL
Access to natural green space	Sport and active recreation	Image and investment
Flood management	Mental and physical health	Intrinsic value of a place to a community
Air water and soil quality	Land and property values	Landscape character/sense of place
Climate change adaptability	Education and life-long learning	Setting for tourism
Biodiversity	Social inclusion	Historic resource
Food, fishery and energy production	Connectivity within a network	Setting for culture
	Availability for social enterprises	

Source: based on North West Green Infrastructure Guide

The policy context for a GI Strategy

1.5 **National:** several of the Government’s planning policy statements (PPS’s) identify green infrastructure as a necessary element in ensuring the delivery of sustainable communities. The Government agency Natural England advocates that the provision of green infrastructure should be an integral part of the creation of sustainable communities throughout England. Networks of multi-functional greenspace providing a wide range of environmental and quality-of-life benefits should be identified in local plans and designed into all major new development and regeneration schemes from the outset.

1.6 The Planning Act 2008 includes the provision for local authorities to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), with green infrastructure one of its elements, to raise finance needed for new infrastructure from new development. If the council should seek to introduce a CIL an up-to-date green infrastructure strategy will help inform the funding calculations, whilst the subsequent fund could assist delivery of the GI strategy proposals.

1.7 **The sub-region:** The Regional Spatial Strategy (2008) proposed that an inter-district network of green infrastructure corridors should be established in the North East of England. The districts abutting Sunderland – Durham County, Gateshead and South Tyneside – are all preparing GI strategies, the former two in support of their ‘growth point’ status. The strategies will include green corridor cross-boundary connections with Sunderland and the city is working with these authorities to ensure cross-boundary connections are agreed and policies are consistent.

1.8 **City of Sunderland:** at the city level, the principal aim of the Sunderland Strategy 2008 - 2025 is:

“To ensure that Sunderland becomes a clean, green city with a strong culture of sustainability, protecting and nurturing both its built heritage and future development and ensuring that both the built and natural environments will be welcoming, accessible, attractive and of high quality”.

1.9 A key objective is for residential and employment areas to be set within a network of green spaces providing areas for recreation, natural habitats and attractive landscape settings. This is supported by the city’s Economic Masterplan (2010). The network will link the main urban areas, the coast, river and countryside with each other and with neighbouring districts. By 2025 the council and its partners intend to have created sustainable and environmentally friendly developments that open up and connect neighbourhoods with each other and to town centres and create common spaces shared by all communities.

Where are we now?

1.10 In 2003 the council’s open space register and map for the city was partly updated to take account of new national guidance in PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. The register and map identified the amounts of 10 types of open space from the largest country parks down to small amenity spaces. In 2008 a major review commenced that also included an analysis of site quality. This is currently being evaluated with local communities.

1.11 As part of preparation of the Sunderland Core Strategy Preferred Options 2007 the City Council engaged with a wide range of local community groups to establish the following green space vision for the city (as recommended by PPG17).

“Safe, clean and valued green spaces with amenities suited to local and other needs, that are easily accessible to all within every neighbourhood particularly by foot and cycle and include elements of wildlife habitat especially provision of trees and also opportunities for physical activity (both informal and formal) particularly walking.”

1.12 Subsequently the Core Strategy Preferred Options 2007 included an objective to ensure that all homes have good access to a range of green spaces linked across the city connecting major parks, the riverside, the coast and adjoining districts.

1.13 The Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership (A&ICP), part of the Sunderland Partnership, agreed in 2009 to oversee the preparation of a green infrastructure strategy for the city and included the proposal as part of its contribution to the Local Area Agreement Delivery Plan. Subsequently a GI Strategy Steering Group was

established to deliver the detailed strategy. This group, whose meetings are normally attended by some 15 – 20 representatives, is able to draw on a wide range of officers from the council and other organizations (see Appendix 4). An early task was the input to and consideration of a network of GI corridors and associated Core Strategy policies. This resulted in the basic network of corridors and policies included in the revised draft Core Strategy, approved by council for consultation purposes in March 2010 (see Appendix 2).

A vision for green infrastructure

1.14 The following provisional ‘vision’ for green infrastructure is proposed to help focus our work to meet the City of Sunderland’s future requirements. It is based on definitions published by Natural England and the Government’s policy in PPS12: Local Spatial Planning:

“The economic and social development of the city will be enhanced through its setting in surroundings of high quality green infrastructure that will be provided through a network of green spaces and links, including coastal, river and other water features, designed and managed to maximise their multi-functional potential.”

1.15 Sunderland’s Green Infrastructure will encompass existing and new green spaces, both rural and urban. It will support active and passive recreation, natural and ecological processes, as well as enhanced transport links, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. Sunderland’s Green Infrastructure will thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to the wider rural hinterland and adjacent local authorities. Consequently it will be delivered at all scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within the city’s local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringes and wider countryside. This Green Infrastructure will be integral to the city’s environment and enhance the health, quality of life and sustainability of its communities and potential for economic development.

GI issues, influences and opportunities in Sunderland

1.16 Work on the Sunderland Core Strategy and this GI Strategy Framework, including the preliminary results of a green space audit, has identified not only strengths but also several gaps and weaknesses in the provision of open space in the city. Meetings with officers experienced in various aspects of GI functions and provision has helped identify the issues, the potential of GI to influence economic and other development, as well as opportunities for increasing GI in the city.

1.17 The main matters so identified are referred to in the boxes on the next three pages.

Main GI issues in Sunderland

Distribution and quality

- The spatial distribution and quality of green spaces is quite varied across the city. The ongoing green space audit will identify mis-matches between provision and needs
- There is some overuse of football pitches, a mismatch of use and some poor quality pitches and facilities according to the Playing Pitch Strategy 2004
- New developments and the people who use them generally have a detrimental impact on wildlife, though through careful design and mitigation provisions a positive outcome should be possible.
- The Sunderland Parks Management Strategy 2004 aims for parks improvements based on the national Green Flags Award criteria. Whilst these criteria are wide ranging they do not specifically refer to parks being improved through the application of the principles of G.

Landscape issues

- The coast and River Wear are identified as key assets to the future prosperity of the city, supporting culture, leisure and tourism opportunities, where improvements to the environment are crucial to success
- 'Brownfield' land is a priority for new built development but its potential to contribute to green infrastructure should also be recognised, particularly where it has been naturalised
- Sunderland has an aging street tree population which over recent years has been substantially reduced. Replacement trees have historically been replanted, however in the light of current financial restraints the tree planting budget has been suspended. Should this situation be more than temporary street tree numbers will continue to decrease and the gap between young and over-mature trees will widen.

Accessibility

- Work towards LTP3 (the Local Transport Plan) has identified that public rights of way and cycle networks need linkages, both at the sub-regional and the local level.
- Barriers to linking some corridors into a complete network for both people and wildlife are major roads, particularly the A19 and A1, also the River Wear (though the latter is a natural feature of the city's wildlife ecology).

Provision, maintenance and resources

- There are no current council programmes for the provision of new parks or allotments, though they are occasionally developed as the result of an opportunity, for example Elba Park at the former Lambton Cokeworks. Without an objective to create new parks and allotments through a range of funding and development opportunities, areas short on provision are unlikely to see their position improved
- New or replacement school grounds have GI potential but for the moment these schemes and the council's influence on them has been much reduced by the demise of the Building Schools for the Future programme
- There is a consensus amongst experienced officers that an increased ranger service would greatly assist the protection and improvements of green spaces and corridors
- The major issue for the protection of species and habitats and the improvement and management of the countryside and urban spaces is, simply, a shortage of resources.

Potential positive influences of GI in Sunderland

Improving the city's image

- More accessible green spaces and trees could enhance the image and environment of the city, particularly the City Centre, older employment areas, major transport corridors and heritage features such as St Peter's Church, attracting investment
- A GI strategy can visually help to define and give a setting to local neighbourhoods
- Broad areas of individual landscape character could be enhanced, such as the magnesian limestone escarpment through the Limestone Landscapes project
- Improved GI could support the aims of the city's Destination Management Plan.

Environmental benefits

- GI can be designed/protected to mitigate storm flow in Critical Drainage Areas and areas prone to flood (defined by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment) and help reduce high water tables, for example north of Washington
- Greater emphasis could be given to enhancing biodiversity habitats and improving connectivity of sites for wildlife, informed by ongoing ecological surveys across the city
- Areas for calm and quietness in the city can be identified in GI
- GI can help support the Local Transport Plan's aim to improve air quality.

Attractive local access

- GI links could provide attractive, convenient and safer routes for children to walk and cycle to school away from main roads. However main routes would have to be the subject of safe design, lighting and appropriate levels of maintenance for all-year round use, whilst alternative access from them into school grounds would have to be properly located and managed
- Action to complete gaps in sustainable access around the city can be proposed through a GI strategy, e.g. cycle routes, local connectivity, improved legibility and the re-construction of inadequate green footpath networks to attract increased usage.

Community inclusion and involvement

- GI can help to improve mental and physical health in the poorest areas and also be used towards breaking down educational and cultural barriers to outdoor recreation
- It can support active lifestyles and wellness, with links to Active Sunderland
- Local food production could be enabled, connecting local communities with the land
- greater community action and responsibility for local green spaces can be an outcome.

Enhanced plans, programmes and resources

- A GI strategy will help introduce the concept and principles of GI into a range of local plans, master plans and strategies, such as the Allocations DPD. Its multi-functional nature will also influence future maintenance regimes
- The strategy can improve and guide the response of the private sector and other development agencies in the provision of good quality, well planned GI associated with new developments
- Planning for multi-functional GI could have the potential to attract a wider range of funding for delivery of schemes than might normally be associated with public open space provision.

Opportunities for enhancing GI in the city

Investment plans and strategies

- Authorities producing local investment plans must include an outline of their strategy for green infrastructure. Sunderland's Housing Priorities Plan is looking towards a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features, designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities
- The Economic Masterplan proposes the inclusion of green infrastructure as a requirement for the sustainable re-modelling of local communities into successful 'low carbon city villages'
- The Play and Urban Games Strategy Addendum 2010 includes proposals for 58 improved and new play areas across the city which could benefit local GI
- The Football Investment Strategy has funding for a new playing pitches strategy, which could take account of GI functions in future pitch design
- Cross boundary working with neighbouring districts could secure economies of scale in the delivery of sub-regional networks.

New funding possibilities

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may be a mechanism to raise funds to deliver Green infrastructure projects. CIL, if introduced, could complement the use of planning obligations to raise funds from developers undertaking new development, securing a wider range of infrastructure including parks and green spaces
- The Local Transport Plan (LTP3) will include an accessibility strategy to be implemented by the individual Tyne and Wear local authorities. It will also be seeking to further develop and improve the rights of way and cycling networks and the funding provides an opportunity to enhance the city's GI
- The development of 'walk in the park' networks with Healthy City funding could lead to related GI improvements.

The development process

- New development and re-modelling of existing housing and employment estates can make contributions to green infrastructure through master plans, planning applications and legal agreements (S106). This already happens, for example by the provision of sections of the cycle network, new children's play parks and wildlife protection measures. However some developers see this as a hurdle to be got over through the minimum contribution, an attitude that needs to be changed
- The opening up of culverted or channelled streams, for example as proposed in the Seaburn Master Plan, could provide GI benefits.

Community initiatives

- Continued growth of local fora, such as the 17 Friends of Parks groups, could assist community involvement in and ownership of GI. The city Volunteer Strategy could also help enable community involvement.

2.0 PROVISIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR SUNDERLAND GI

2.1 A set of principles for GI in Sunderland has been drawn up after discussion and consultation with partners and other key organisations, taking account of some of the issues and opportunities identified earlier in this document. The following provisional principles are recommended as a basis for Sunderland's GI Strategy. They may be amended as a result of wider consultations and work on the detailed GI Strategy. However, in the interim, they are recommended to the council and other organisations as a basis for creating GI schemes and improvements.

Provisional Green Infrastructure Principles for Sunderland

1 *Connectivity*: seek to physically connect areas of open space; aim to have, as a minimum connecting feature, a green corridor with the capacity to incorporate a pedestrian and cycle route. Include the city's most important parks, habitats, other open space features, main rivers and the coast in the interlinked network of GI corridors. Link the main urban areas with the urban fringes and countryside and with adjoining districts.

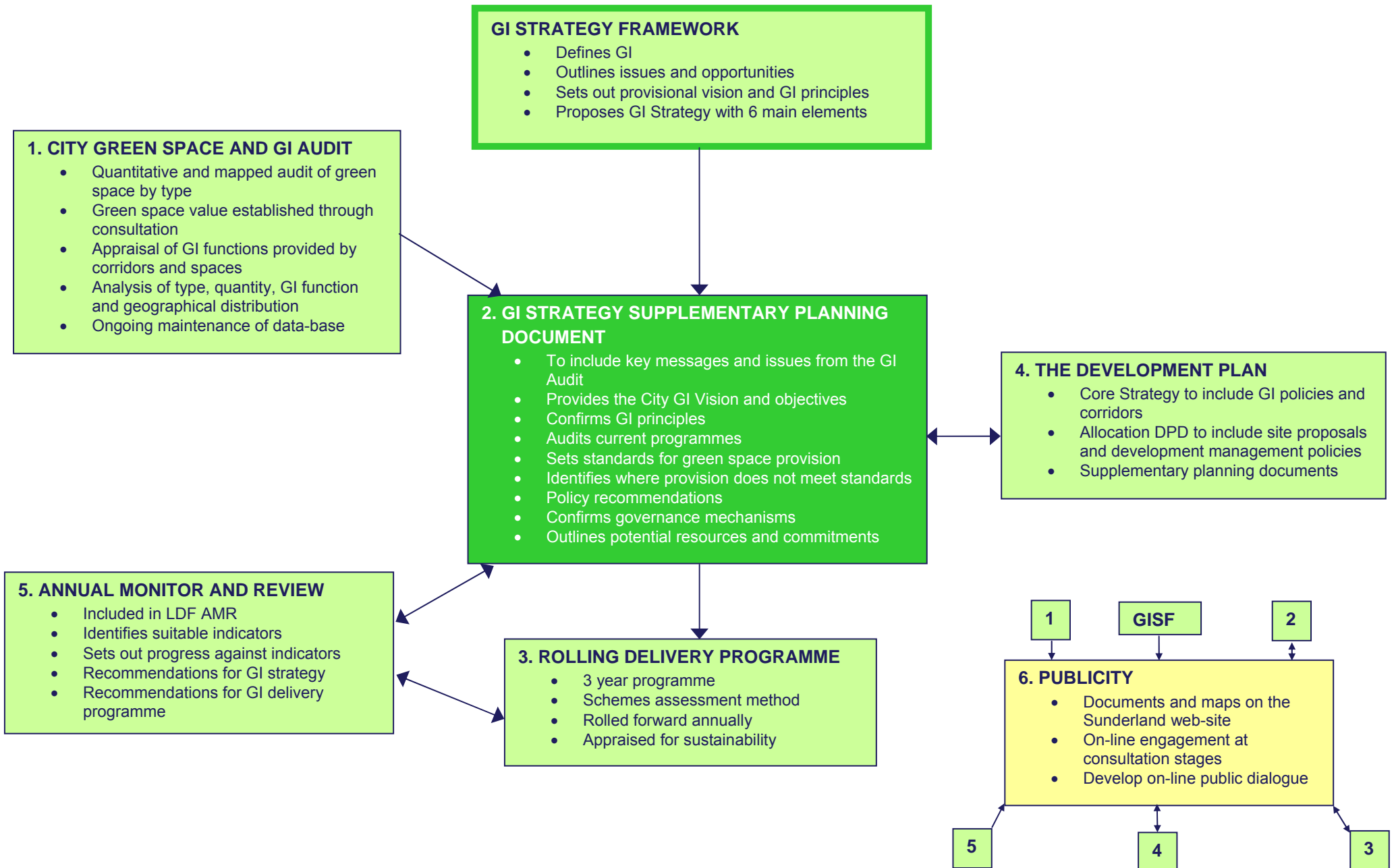
2 *Functionality*: maximise the range of environmental, social and cultural functions and features within corridors and sites appropriate to their scale and location, i.e. optimizing potential functions but not making spaces more multifunctional for the sake of it, where resources would not last. An outline of the main functional considerations to be taken into account is given in Table 1A, whilst some matters particular to the city include:

- assisting adaptation to and mitigation of local effects of climate change
- adapting open space use so that flood risk and drainage problems can be minimised, particularly in support of critical drainage areas
- improving and protecting woodland and tree coverage, including the Great North Forest, to improve carbon sequestration and air quality, create shade and recreation value
- preserving and enhancing related local heritage
- increasing biodiversity through habitat and corridor development, looking to remove barriers to key corridors so that wildlife (and people) can move from one area to another freely and safely. In this respect particular attention should be given to the magnesian limestone grassland (of which Sunderland holds a very significant proportion of the global resource)
- adapting relevant sections of the RoW network to enable walking, cycling and horse riding for all, for recreational and utility purposes
- maintaining or enhancing local landscape and townscape character
- maximizing the potential contribution to life-long learning
- considering the potential for small scale community food production through new and improved allotments.

3 *Enhancing residential and economic communities:* Seek to permeate, connect and enhance residential and employment areas, the City Centre and other main functions (such as schools), connecting physically, emotionally and intellectually with communities. Especially look at green infrastructure improvements where they can benefit areas with severe health inequalities and aspects of multiple-deprivation. Give consideration to encouraging active lifestyles and community interaction in the design of schemes and accessibility.

4 *High standards:* set standards for high quality enhancement of the image of the city, for development of new and rejuvenated green space and water features and standards for accessibility to a full range of GI across the city (including access to Accessible Natural Green Space – ANGSt) as well as for maintenance, in relation to the features and functions.

5 *Sustainable GI:* design schemes to optimise low maintenance consistent with achieving the desired function(s) and quality of the site or corridor.



3.0 ACTION PLAN FOR A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

3.1 The strategy for improving, developing, securing and maintaining a network of green infrastructure in the city will need to successfully incorporate several main elements, encompassing:

1. Completion, mapping and evaluation of a city-wide GI audit
2. Production of a GI Strategy document including an audit of GI-related activities and programmes, for example Limestone Landscapes
3. Delivery programme
4. The development plan
5. Annual monitoring and review
6. Publicising the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

3.2 Each element of the strategy is described below with roles, responsibilities, timing and possible costs attached: Appendix 1 sets out the progression of each in a time frame.

Completion, mapping and evaluation of a city-wide GI audit.

3.3 This will be developed from the Green Space audit whose second stage is an evaluation of community views about the existing provision and whether it meets their needs. This is a substantial piece of work that, to be robust, needs to include community engagement at a local level with local interest groups, a range of users and local people generally.

3.4 The Green Space audit process proposed by PPG17 essentially focuses on nine different main types of open space, for example public parks, or sports pitches. Assessing the quality of green infrastructure requires further examination of the range of functions that each site or corridor may provide, for instance storm water retention to reduce flooding, or providing a significant element of local landscape character. The audit of Green Space/Green Infrastructure is important to the completion of the Local Development Framework for the city, particularly for the Allocations Development Plan Document. This is presently programmed in the Local Development Scheme for adoption in February 2013. The initial identification of specific GI sites will be undertaken in preparing the Preferred Option that is programmed to go on consultation beginning June 2011 (note: there may be revisions to the LDF timetable to take account of the production of the Core Strategy). It is important therefore that the audit is completed to assist the timetable. In the first place a brief has been prepared outlining the scope of the survey and required skills, expertise and timetable. The audit is being undertaken by officers of the council.

3.5 Mapping the green spaces is integral to the audit. The development and on-going maintenance of a GIS map-based data resource of green infrastructure

will assist the council and its partners with the development plan and other activities now and in the future. By mapping the different functions of green space, the spatial distributions of the type, quantity and quality of provision will be made clear, helping to inform existing strategies and to direct funds to where improvements are most needed. It will help provide an evidence base as well as a resource that will allow monitoring of change. A well-run and maintained mapping database will enable analysis to be made over the years of such matters as the impact of climate change on the city, or the success or otherwise of biodiversity intervention policies. Consideration could be given to integrating the mapped data with other such data being compiled by the City Council's ICT Team to give a geographically based resource, useful to a wide range of users.

ACTION	TIMETABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	COST IMPLICATION
Complete sites audit	By February 2011	Planning Policy	Staff time
Complete sites value community consultation	February/March 2011	Area Officers + Area Committees and Planning Policy	Staff time + consultation budget
Complete the mapping of all Green Space audit sites by type and incorporate appropriate GI information	By April 2011	Planning Policy + other data holders and ICT	Staff time
Audit analysis	April 2011	Planning Policy + relevant in-house expertise	Staff time
Conclusions and report	June 2011	Planning Policy + committee endorsement	Staff time
Maintain the data base	On-going	Planning Policy + ICT	Staff time

Production of a GI Strategy supplementary planning document

3.6 This is the document that essentially draws together all the elements into one explanatory report. It will take into account the GI Audit results and also include an audit of GI-related activities and programmes, for example the Limestone Landscapes project. This aspect will document current and proposed activities, programmes and maintenance schedules and standards. It will help identify current and possible future sources of funding as well as gaps in provision.

3.7 The strategy document will establish a final GI vision and principles for the city. It will set out provision and access standards for the distribution of GI, for instance in relation to 'Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt – see Appendix 4); proposals for enhanced connectivity; and links to a delivery programme (see below). It will set out the main building blocks in a series of

policy recommendations for the successful integration of a network of GI in the city, for its maintenance, long-term governance and resourcing. The main delivery agencies will be identified, including where GI will be expected to be delivered by the planning system.

3.8 Whilst the strategy will aim to inform the council and a wide range of other interests, it will be prepared as a supplementary planning document in support of the emerging policies of the Sunderland Local Development Framework (LDF). In this respect it will be screened during preparation as to the need for sustainability appraisal (SA). Before the document is approved by the council it will be the subject of public participation.

ACTION	TIMETABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	COST IMPLICATION
Agree format and scope with steering group	March 2011	Planning Policy	Staff time
Document activities and programmes	By April 2011	Planning Policy supported by other council sections and partners with input from GI Steering Group members.	Staff time
Screen for SA	May 2011	Planning Policy with assistance of Scott Wilson (LDF consultants on SA)	Staff time + consultant's costs through LDF funding budget
Draft GI Strategy document	By June 2011	Planning Policy, through the Steering Group, to be endorsed by the A&ICP and approved for consultation by appropriate council committees	Staff time
Publicity and consultation on approved draft	By September 2011	Planning Policy assisted by the Consultation Manager	Staff time + possible limited funding from consultation budgets
Final strategy document	By November 2011	Planning Policy, through the Steering Group, to be endorsed by the A&ICP and approved by Cabinet and City Council	Staff time

Delivery programme

3.9 The strategy document will be supplemented by a 3-year rolling programme of schemes and other actions linked to the GI strategy principles and vision. The programme will provide input to the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It will set out:

- Where GI schemes will be provided
- When they will take place

- Who will deliver them
- How the infrastructure will be delivered
- Clear arrangements for management will be made and
- Arrangements for monitoring delivery.

3.10 The main likely sources of funding will include mechanisms such as agri-environmental schemes, the Community Infrastructure Levy, Section 106 planning agreements and parks improvements amongst others, linked to the responsibilities of departments, organisations and the private sector. The schedule will be rolled forward as part of the annual monitor and review of the GI Strategy. Main actions included in the programme, both in principle and in detail, will be subject to a community engagement process relevant to their scale and function involving local people, schools, businesses and other interests as appropriate. The actions will be assessed through a non-statutory form of sustainability appraisal.

3.11 Prior to establishing the first rolling programme a pilot study will be carried out to establish a method for assessing how well new green space proposals meet the principles of green infrastructure. The draft method will be tested against some recent and up-coming green space schemes. Consideration will also be given to whether different assessment methods might be needed for different circumstances, such as planning applications or small community-led schemes.

ACTION	TIMETABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	COST IMPLICATION
Draft GI scheme assessment methodology and test against recent and current schemes	By April 2011	Planning Policy assisted by the GI Steering Group	Staff time
Scope the content of the delivery programme document	By June 2011	Planning Policy + GI Steering Group	Staff time
Produce the action programme through community engagement, including its sustainability appraisal	By November 2011	Co-ordinated by Planning Policy assisted by Area Officers and Area Committees. Endorsed by A&ICP and approved by appropriate committees	Staff time + some funding from consultation and/scheme budgets
Produce annual revisions	To follow each annual monitor	Co-ordinated by Planning Policy assisted by Area Officers and Area Committees. Endorsed by A&ICP and	Staff time + some funding from consultation and/or scheme budgets

		approved by appropriate committees	
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The development plan

3.12 The development plan – the Local Development Framework - will essentially :

- 1) identify strategic GI corridors and include spatial planning policies for the development of GI in the city through the LDF Core Strategy; and
- 2) define in the LDF Allocations Plan the green infrastructure sites and areas to be enhanced, protected or created. Appendix 2 shows the corridors agreed in the Core Strategy Draft Revised Preferred Options (March 2010). A further revised draft Core Strategy is in the process of being approved for consultation.

3.13 The aforementioned GI Strategy document will be a supplementary planning document (SPD) in support of the broad policies of the Core Strategy. However more detailed SPD concerning GI may also originate from the proposals of the LDF to provide detailed development management guidance.

ACTION	TIMETABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	COST IMPLICATION
Include proposed GI Corridors and related GI policies in the Revised Preferred Options for consultation	Cabinet and City Council approval of CS for consultation June 2011	Planning Policy	Staff time + LDF consultations budget
Progress the draft Core Strategy through its statutory procedures for adoption	In line with a revised Local Development Scheme	Planning Policy	Staff time
Identify and prepare GI supplementary planning documents	As appropriate	Planning Policy	Staff time

Annual monitoring and review

3.14 An annual monitor and review of the strategy and actions will be undertaken as part of the Annual Monitoring Report for the LDF. It will include recommendations necessary to ensure the evolving strategy continues to be effective and successful. Some indicators of evaluating success could be: increasing % of population that meet Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt); increasing the % of sites having Country Park Accreditation/ green flag status, etc.

ACTION	TIMETABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	COST IMPLICATION
Identify and agree indicators for monitoring	By November 2011	Planning Policy + GI Steering group	Staff time
Monitor GI strategy and programme as part of the LDF AMR	As agreed for the LDF	Planning Policy	Staff time

Publicising the Green Infrastructure Strategy

3.15 This would involve a publicity strand including use of the City Council web site and other electronic means. It should seek to not only publicise the developing strategy, including the initial approval by the City Council of this strategy framework, but also seek to engage the public and organisations to give opinions and ideas for local GI. In particular it would use a variety of means to reach local people.

ACTION	TIMETABLE	RESPONSIBILITY	COST IMPLICATION
Develop a page as part of the Sunderland web-site	By March 2011 to be in place for publication of this GI Strategy Framework	Planning Policy with Communications and ICT assistance	Staff time
Use the site as appropriate for publicity, consultation and community engagement exercises	As necessary	Co-ordinated through Planning Policy	Staff time
Media publicity as appropriate	As necessary	Planning Policy and others via Communications	Staff time

4.0 WORKING PROCEDURES, GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES

4.1 The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be published by the Sunderland Partnership and Sunderland City Council, with its production being overseen through the Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership. Detailed work will be undertaken by the GI Steering Group. This is already in place and meets to consider the main documents, schemes and other relevant information. The steering group will report to A&ICP at key stages identified in Section 3 of this Framework. As the strategy develops from the planning stages through to detailed development and specific on-the-ground actions the composition of the steering group could change to suit the work.

4.2 It is also suggested that as the strategy develops and gains momentum consideration should be given the establishment of a small coordinating team of one or two officers. This would benefit the process of embedding delivery of GI both in the council and with the council's partners. This specific matter and resources necessary will be considered in preparing the GI Strategy document.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: GI ELEMENTS TIMEFRAME MATRIX

DATE	1 GI AUDIT	2 STRATEGY DOCUMENT	3 DELIVERY PROGRAMME	4 DEVELOPMENT PLAN	5 ANNUAL MONITOR	6 PUBLICITY
2.11	Complete sites audit					
3.11	Complete sites evaluation with community input	Agree format and scope of document with Steering Group				Develop web page.
4.11	Complete mapping And audit analysis	Document GI activities and programmes	Draft and test GI assessment method			
5.11		Screen for SA				
6.11	Draft final report for committee	Draft GI Strategy document	Scope delivery programme document	Corridors and policies in Core Strategy to Cabinet		
7.11						
8.11						
9.11		Publicity and consultation				
10.11					Agree indicators for inclusion in AMR of LDF	
11.11		Final strategy document	Produce delivery programme with input of community and SA			

Fig. 5 Policy CS1 - Green Infrastructure Corridors



APPENDIX 3: ACCESS TO NATURAL GREENSPACE STANDARDS (ANGSt)

Extracts from “Nature Nearby” published by Natural England 2010.

A proxy measure when mapping naturalness

The definition of natural space within ANGSt is “places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate”. When using this definition, actually deciding at which point a feeling of naturalness predominates may be difficult to determine, and it can be argued that there is considerable room for interpretation.

Therefore, in practice some form of proxy for a feeling of naturalness will be necessary, particularly where GIS is used for identifying accessible natural greenspace. Recent research by Aleksandra Kazmierczak of Salford University has used land use categorisation as a proxy measure for naturalness, creating a four stage rating. All land should be mapped to indicate its naturalness using the four levels below:

Level 1

- Nature conservation areas, including sites of special scientific interest (SSSI)
- Local sites (including local wildlife sites, regionally important geological sites – RIG)
- Local nature reserves (LNR)
- National nature reserves (NNR)
- Woodland
- Remnant countryside (within urban and urban fringe areas).

Level 2

- Formal and informal open space
- Unimproved farmland
- Rivers and canals
- Unimproved grassland
- Disused/derelict land, mosaics of formal and informal areas scrub etc
- Country Parks
- Open access land

Level 3

- Allotments
- Church yards and cemeteries
- Formal recreation space

Level 4

- Improved farmland

Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard

Access to the natural environment through local green spaces varies widely across the country, and even within a single local authority area. ANGSt aims to address this by setting a range of accessibility standards for natural sites and areas within easy reach of people’s homes. A broad view is adopted on what constitutes ‘natural’. Natural does not necessarily mean it has to be rare or notable enough to be designated. Users will find nature in wildlife, open landscapes, seasonal changes and places of tranquillity.

ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace:

- of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and

- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population

ANGSt is based on three principles:

- Improving access.
- Improving naturalness.
- Improving connectivity.

a) Improving access

Improving access, and the distance thresholds used in the Standard, is based on what we know of people's behaviour. We know for example that the majority of parents are unwilling to allow their children to be unaccompanied more than 300m from home. Although local circumstances may lead to variations on this distance, adopting this as a standard would ensure that the majority of children do have a natural space near their home, which they are able to use freely.

These distance requirements are set at a level that takes into account the need for local spaces, as well as larger strategic spaces. Because ANGSt takes a broad view of what constitutes natural greenspace, the requirements can be met through a wide range of different types of space, from local parks, greenways and footpaths, areas set aside for sustainable urban drainage systems, woodland and heathland. The 300 metre and 2 km standards are valuable standards to apply for new housing developments, growth areas, and in the master planning process.

Natural England has piloted a number of projects that improve access to the natural environment and people's connection to it. Some site examples are provided in [Annex 6](#). Accessibility should not only be seen in terms of distance from people's houses and access into and within a site. People need to know where their local green spaces are, and should feel comfortable in using them. This requires active management and promotion by taking all reasonable means to deal with any physical and social barriers that there may be to their use.

Managers need to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995), which makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of his or her disability. It does not outline specific standards but requires that reasonable provision should be made. Public bodies should positively promote equality of access. This means that all those responsible for providing access to accessible greenspace and the wider countryside must justifiably consider provision for disabled people across a whole range of services including physical access, information, interpretation and signage. Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment will help to ensure that green spaces are planned to accommodate all potential users whatever their age, ability or cultural background and will help to identify any barriers to access, both physical and psychological.

b) Improving naturalness (and biodiversity)

Many locally accessible spaces, through their nature, layout and the way that they are managed, may not offer a very wide range of biodiversity. There are ways in which habitat improvement can be achieved in green space areas that are not rich in biodiversity. Opening culverts, naturalising streams, creating meadow areas on slopes, wild flower planting, and differential mowing around the edges of open spaces are just some of the improvements that can be made to improve biodiversity. Involving local people and schools in improving the wildlife value of open spaces will be important in making these areas richer and encouraging local ownership. It will also help to meet the Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities (NERC Act, Section 40) and achieve National Indicator targets (NI197) for local sites. This is a duty placed on local authorities to establish systems, in partnership with others, incorporating biodiversity considerations into authority-wide services and functions. It requires that local authorities are able to demonstrate their achievements in this respect. Further guidance can be found in [How to encourage biodiversity in Urban Parks](#) published by CABI Space and in the Town and Country Planning Association document: [Biodiversity by Design – a guide for Sustainable Communities](#).

c) Improving connectivity

Providing a welcoming atmosphere to all visitors to accessible natural greenspace, from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, will provide opportunities for individuals and communities to engage and connect with their local environment. It can provide a focus for educational activity, community events and social activities. Engaging with the environment can be at a variety of levels. Opportunities will depend on how spaces are designed and managed and on a range of active interventions, for example:

- Encouraging users to develop an affinity with a familiar area and enjoy the changes that the seasons bring
- Through active interpretation
- Providing information and opportunities to give feedback through social networking
- Encouraging participation in events such as guided walks
- Giving people the opportunity to volunteer and become involved in management decisions, maintenance and activities

Engagement can lead to involvement and both can increase awareness and understanding of the natural environment. Green spaces should be managed, where possible, for multi-functionality both within a site and across a number of sites serving a neighbourhood. Green spaces may, for example, provide opportunities to play, exercise, relax and enjoy being outdoors, alongside grazing land, shelter belts and bio-fuel production. Getting the balance right between these elements demands spaces of the right size, design and management regimes.

Natural England's position on access is based on the belief that:

- There should be provision of the widest range of access opportunities for people of all abilities, ages, ethnic groups and social circumstances to actively engage in, value and enjoy the natural environment
- Access opportunities should aid healthy activity and be integral to people's daily lives particularly close to where they live
- Access should contribute to achieving the transition to a low carbon economy by encouraging sustainable leisure use. Integrating people with landscape and wildlife is an essential outcome for all our work.

APPENDIX 4: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STEERING GROUP (AT DECEMBER 2010)

ORGANISATION	SECTION/TEAM
City Council	Active Sunderland
	Area Officers
	Chief Exec Policy Team
	Children's Services
	Design and Conservation
	Countryside Team
	Diversity and Inclusion
	Environmental Services
	Healthy Cities
	Housing Strategy
	Landscape and Reclamation
	Parks
	Planning Implementation
	Planning Policy
	Project Service Development
	PROW/Cycling Officer
	Sport and Leisure
	Sunderland Partnership
	Sustainability
	Wellness
Council for the Protection of Rural England	Council for the Protection of Rural England
Durham County Council	Durham County Council
	Heritage Coast Officer
Durham Wildlife Trust	Durham Wildlife Trust
	Durham Biodiversity Partnership
English Heritage	English Heritage
Environment Agency	Environment Agency
Forestry Commission	Forestry Commission
Gateshead Council	Planning Policy
Gentoo	Gentoo Green
	Gentoo
Groundwork	Groundwork North East
Home Builders Federation	Home Builders Federation
Housing and Communities Agency	Housing and Communities Agency
Living Streets	Living Streets
National Farmers' Union	Environment & Land Use
Natural England	Natural England (North East)
NHS	South of Tyne and Wear NHS
Northumbria Water	Northumbria Water
RSPB	RSPB
South Tyneside	Planning Policy
Sport England	Sport England
Sustrans	Sustrans (North East)
Tyne and Wear City Region	Tyne and Wear City Region
Woodland Trust	Woodland Trust
University of Sunderland	University of Sunderland