

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.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

What is green infrastructure, or 'GI'?

1.1 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.

1.2 In February 2010 the Marmot Review "Fair Society, Healthy Lives" summed up the importance of green infrastructure in the following:

"Green space and green infrastructure improve mental and physical health and have been shown to reduce health inequalities. Green infrastructure networks reduce urban temperatures and improve drainage, reducing the risks to health associated with heat waves and flooding. Well designed and maintained green spaces can encourage social interaction, exercise, play and contact with nature. Well-designed, car free and pleasant streets encourage feelings of well-being, chance interactions and active travel; good quality and good access to public spaces contributes to pride in the community, integration and social cohesion."

1.3 GI therefore provides an infrastructure that is essential to urban living, helping towards better health, cleaner air, a more attractive living and working environment and consequently economic and social benefits. Well-developed and managed it can assist in reducing drainage and flooding problems and enrich the natural habitat of the area.

1.4 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 and will help to identify physical, functional and perceptual links within a wider green network.

1.5 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. 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."

Benefits and functions of GI

1.6 A report published by Natural Economy North West has identified that good quality GI in towns, cities and rural areas can be of benefit to the following:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation of impacts
- Flood alleviation and water management
- Quality of place
- Health and well being
- Land and property values
- Economic growth and investment
- Labour productivity
- Tourism
- Recreation and leisure
- Land and biodiversity
- Products from the land.

1.7 Green infrastructure can provide or be adapted to accommodate many functions, as outlined in the following list. 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 smaller scale sites.

Table 1A: Potential functions of GI:

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

Source: North West Green Infrastructure Guide

GI issues, influences and opportunities in Sunderland

1.8 In Sunderland there are issues that a GI strategy must tackle to achieve a successful outcome; there are matters where a GI strategy could be influential in achieving a more positive result; and there are initiatives that will provide opportunities for enhancing the city's GI.

1.9 Work on the Sunderland Core Strategy has identified from current reports and information, including the preliminary results of a green space audit, not only strengths but also several gaps and weaknesses in the provision of open space in the city. Information can be read in the LDF topic papers whilst the audit is discussed in more detail in Section 3. The provision or improvement of open spaces to remedy these shortfalls should preferably be undertaken through the application of GI principles (see Section 2) in designing new schemes and improvements.

1.10 A literature review has helped identify key features of GI and latest guidance and ideas on its development (see Appendix 1). In addition locally, the above-mentioned topic reports and a series of meetings with officers experienced in various aspects of GI functions and provision has helped identify GI issues, potential to influence economic and other development and opportunities for increasing GI in the city.

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

Main GI issues in Sunderland

- 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 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. However, 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
- 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
- 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 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 and the possibility of some future schools coming forward as private or community initiatives outside the control of the local authority
- 'Brownfield' land is a priority for new built development but its potential to contribute to the green infrastructure of the city should also be recognised, particularly where it has been naturalised
- 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)
- 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. GI corridors running through and around development, perhaps associated with SUDS (sustainable drainage schemes), could help reduce negative impact
- 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 GI: this would have to be addressed as an additional matter by the local authority
- 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 green spaces is, simply, a shortage of resources

Potential positive influences of GI in Sunderland

- 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 Housing Strategy and the emerging Allocations Development Plan Document. Its multi-functional nature will also affect future consideration of maintenance regimes
- GI can be designed/protected to mitigate storm flow in Critical Drainage Areas (defined by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment) and in areas prone to flooding, also help reduce high water tables, for example north of Washington
- The strategy can improve and guide the response of the private sector and other development agencies towards 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
- GI can help to improve mental and physical health in the poorest areas identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation and also be used towards breaking down educational and cultural barriers to outdoor recreation
- 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
- More accessible green spaces and trees could enhance the image and attract investment, particularly in and around the City Centre, older employment areas and major transport corridors, greening the city, enhancing biodiversity and improving outdoor recreation provision
- A GI strategy can visually help to define and give a setting to local neighbourhoods
- 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
- Broad areas of individual landscape character could be enhanced, such as the magnesian limestone escarpment through the Limestone Landscapes project
- Greater emphasis could be given to adding to the city's biodiversity habitats and improving connectivity of sites for wildlife, informed by ongoing ecological surveys across the city
- Local food production could be encouraged and enabled, connecting local communities with the land
- greater community action and local responsibility for neighbourhood green spaces can be an outcome.
- Identifying areas for calm and quietness in the city
- Supporting the city's Destination Management Plan for tourism and culture
- Supporting active lifestyles and wellness, with links to ActiveSunderland
- Supporting the Local Transport Plan's aim to improve air quality through GI, helping eliminate any future need for designation of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)
- Supporting the setting of heritage features such as St Peter's Church

Opportunities for enhancing GI in the city

- The Homes and Communities Agency has asked authorities producing local investment plans to 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 inclusion of green infrastructure is a requirement for the sustainable re-modelling of local communities into successful 'low carbon city villages', as proposed by the Economic Masterplan
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may be a mechanism to raise funds to deliver Green infrastructure projects. The Council is considering implementing CIL, which complements the use of planning obligations to raise funds from developers undertaking new development, to secure a wide 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. Where these works relate to GI corridors in Sunderland 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 Play and Urban Games Strategy Addendum 2010 includes proposals for 58 improved and new play areas across the city which could benefit local GI as well as take account of GI principles in their design and location
- 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 Football Investment Strategy has funding for a new playing pitches strategy, which could take account of GI functions in future pitch design
- 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
- The opening up of culverted or channelled streams, for example as proposed in the Seaburn Master Plan, could provide GI benefits
- Cross boundary working with neighbouring districts could secure economies of scale in the delivery of sub-regional networks

The policy context for a GI Strategy

1.12 **National:** the Government's Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12: Local Spatial Planning identifies green infrastructure as a necessary element in ensuring the delivery of sustainable communities. The Government agency Natural England believes 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. To help achieve its aims, Natural England is advocating that all local authorities adopt 'Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) in the provision of green infrastructure (see Appendix).

1.13 The Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1, *Planning and Climate Change* (2007), sets out how climate change considerations should be integrated into all aspects of spatial planning. Vegetation can beneficially modify the climate, especially in cities, where the 'heat island effect' makes city dwellers particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures. Urban green spaces can give a cooling effect of 1-2 °C. Green roofs can make buildings cooler in summer and warmer in winter compared to traditional roofs, as well as providing habitats for wildlife.

1.14 The Planning Act 2008 included the provision for local authorities to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to raise finance needed for new infrastructure from new development. Open spaces are included within the definition of infrastructure. Should the City Council decide to introduce a CIL for Sunderland an up-to-date green infrastructure strategy will help inform the CIL funding calculations, whilst GI proposals in the city could then take advantage of the subsequent fund.

1.15 Other national policy statements, for example PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation include messages emphasising the importance of green infrastructure in the achievement of modern, sustainable urban and rural environments, with enriched biodiversity.

1.16 The importance of green infrastructure was confirmed by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's 2007 report on the Urban Environment. Latterly the consultation draft PPS "Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment" has included policies for the incorporation of proposals for GI in local development frameworks.

1.17 **The sub-region:** in 2008 the previous Government designated a number of locations across England as 'growth points', where the priority would be an

increased amount of house building as well as new employment and other infrastructure. Two growth points were created adjacent to the city in South East Durham and Newcastle & Gateshead. A requirement of growth point status is that the development proposals should be accompanied by a strategy for green infrastructure. These districts have begun their strategy preparation, which will include green corridor cross-boundary connections to Sunderland. Recently South Tyneside began the preparation of a GI strategy as a supplementary planning document to its Core Strategy. Sunderland is working with all the authorities to ensure cross-boundary connections are agreed and policies are consistent.

1.18 **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”.

1.19 The strategy includes a key objective:

“Residential and employment areas will be set within a network of green spaces providing areas for recreation, natural habitats and attractive landscape settings. The network will link the main urban areas, the coast, river and countryside with each other and with neighbouring districts”.

1.20 Additionally it says:

“By 2025 the council and its partners will have created sustainable and environmentally friendly housing developments that open up and connect neighbourhoods with each other and to town centres and create common spaces shared by all communities”.

1.21 As part of the mechanism for delivery of the Sunderland Strategy a number of themed local strategic partnership groups has been established, including the Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership (A&ICP). This 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.

1.22 The Sunderland Economic Masterplan, approved by the City Council in September 2010, takes a broad perspective on the future economic development of the city towards delivering the long term Sunderland Strategy. It envisages improvements to the city's green infrastructure to create or enhance connections between green assets, routes into the City Centre and to the Technopole and between City Villages.

1.23As referred to in the 'opportunities' section, the Homes and Communities Agency expects local authorities to have (or have the intention to have) a GI strategy and has asked for an outline of a strategy as part of local investment plan submissions.

Where are we now?

1.24 An open space register and map for the city was partly updated in 2003 to take account of national guidance in PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. The register and map considered 10 types of open space in terms of quantity. All sites from the largest country parks down to small amenity spaces were individually included. In 2008 a major audit of the register and map commenced, also including (for the first time) a questionnaire analysis of site quality. This evaluation has still to be completed, and has yet to be scrutinised and evaluated with local communities. This audit and evaluation will complete a major strand of the Green Infrastructure Strategy as proposed in this framework and provide invaluable information for completing the strategy document.

1.25 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 a green space vision for the city, in line with PPG17, which was published in the Core Strategy as follows:

"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."

1.26 Subsequently consideration of the need for a Green Infrastructure Strategy to be developed from the green space work came about as a response to Policy 9.6a of the Regional Spatial Strategy (2008). This requires districts to develop sub-regional cross-boundary networks of GI for inclusion in LDFs. The Core Strategy Preferred Options 2007 had foreseen this and 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. Whilst the future for RSS is doubtful there is also support for a GI strategy within national planning policy (PPS12 and others), from the Homes and Communities Agency via Sunderland's Housing Priorities Plan, as well as in local policy, notably the Economic Masterplan, that points to continuing with the project.

1.27 The Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership (A&ICP) in July 2009 considered a report “A Proposal for Developing a Network of Green Infrastructure”.

Subsequently a GI Strategy Steering Group was established to deliver the detailed strategy on behalf of the Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership. This group can draw on a wide range of officers from the council and other organizations (see Appendix 5) to provide input. It meets to consider the various stages of work as well as to discuss national policy directions and local on-the-ground GI proposals.

1.28 An early task was the input to and consideration of a network of inter-districts and district GI corridors and associated Core Strategy policies. As a result the basic network of corridors and policies is now included in the revised draft Core Strategy, approved by council for consultation purposes in March 2010 (see Appendix 3).

1.29 The steering group has been involved with the drafting of this GI Strategy Framework report, which has taken account also of a series of informal meetings with officers from associated disciplines, e.g. the Countryside Officer and Parks Development Manager. These meetings have helped gain a better insight into the wide range of issues a GI strategy might need to take into account.

2.0 PROVISIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR SUNDERLAND GI

2.1 A draft set of principles for GI in Sunderland was included in “A Proposal for Developing a Network of Green Infrastructure” (July 2009). After discussion and consultation with partners and other key organisations 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, it is recommended that the council and other organisations use them 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

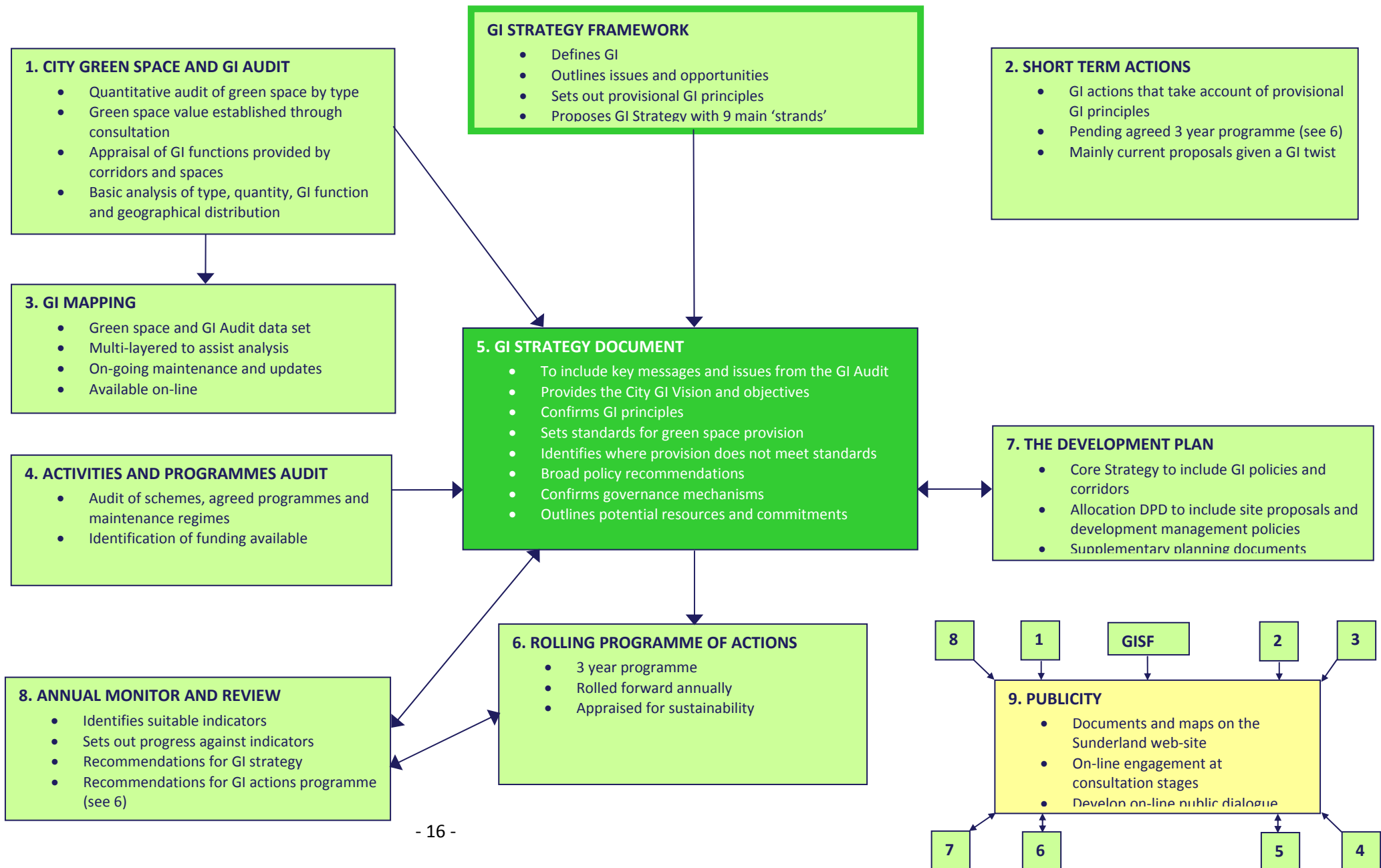
main functional considerations to be taken into account is given in Table 1A, whilst some matters particular to the city include:

- 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 THE SCOPE OF THE 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 strands of work, encompassing:

1. Completion and evaluation of a city-wide GI audit
2. Early on-the-ground actions
3. Mapping of green infrastructure
4. An audit of GI-related activities and programmes, for example.
Limestone Landscapes
5. Production of a GI Strategy document
6. A rolling programme of sustainable actions
7. The development plan
8. An annual monitor and review
9. Publicising the Green Infrastructure Strategy

Each strand of the strategy is described below with roles, responsibilities, timing and possible costs attached: Appendix 2 sets out the progression of each in a time frame.

Completion and evaluation of a city-wide GI audit.

3.2 This will be developed from the Green Space audit whose first stage of identifying, quantifying and surveying sites has been undertaken by the council's Planning Policy and Landscape teams, in accordance with the national guidance set out in PPG17 "Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation". The second stage of the Green Space audit requires 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.

3.3 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 e.g. storm water retention to reduce flooding, or providing a significant element of landscape character for an area. 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 sites for different uses, including green infrastructure, 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.

| ACTION | TIMETABLE | RESPONSIBILITY | COST IMPLICATION |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Complete sites audit | By December 2010 | Planning Policy | Staff time |
| Audit analysis | By April 2011 | Planning Policy + relevant in-house expertise | Staff time |
| Sites value community consultation | By February 2011 | Area Officers + Area Committees and Planning Policy | Staff time + consultation budget |
| Green Infrastructure support data | April 2011 | Planning Policy | Staff time |
| Conclusions and report | June 2011 | Planning Policy + committee endorsement | Staff time |

Early on-the-ground actions

3.4 This strand is the early identification of immediate actions that can be taken by the City Council and its partners whilst other strategy strands are in preparation, i.e. applying the provisional principles of GI, as proposed earlier in this paper, to current open space improvements, maintenance regimes, transport, regeneration, housing programmes, new schemes, new strategies and plans. A GI check list will assist identification of schemes. The principles to be applied are provisional pending their agreement as part of the GI strategy document (see below).

| ACTION | TIMETABLE | RESPONSIBILITY | COST IMPLICATION |
|---|---|--|---|
| Identifying potential schemes from current programmes | Draft actions February 2011. Endorsement by next available A&I CP | All relevant sections and partners including GI Steering Group members, facilitated and co-ordinated by Planning Policy. Action plan to be endorsed by A&ICP. | Staff time |
| Review or preparation and costing of schemes to integrate GI principles | To meet appropriate programme timetable | All relevant City Council Services and partners; individual schemes to be approved by appropriate governance bodies. Overview of schemes by GI Steering Group. | Staff time and possible costs variation subject to revisions (could even involve cost reduction benefits) |

Mapping of green infrastructure

3.5 The development and on-going maintenance of a GIS map-based data resource of green infrastructure will assist the council and others with its current development plan and other activities now and in the future. By mapping the different functions of greenspace, 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, etc. 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 wide ranging geographically based resource, useful to a wide range of users.

| ACTION | TIMETABLE | RESPONSIBILITY | COST IMPLICATION |
|---|---------------|--|------------------|
| Complete the mapping of all Green Space audit sites by type and other information | By April 2011 | Planning Policy | Staff time |
| Incorporate GI function information as appropriate | By April 2011 | Planning Policy + assistance from other data holders and ICT | Staff time |
| Maintain the data base | On-going | Planning Policy + ICT | Staff time |

Audit of GI-related activities and programmes, for example Limestone Landscapes

3.6 This is essentially a documentation of current and proposed activities, programmes and maintenance schedules and standards that are aimed at creating green infrastructure or improving the nature of existing infrastructure. It will help identify current and possible future sources of funding as well as gaps. The document can be used in support of the LDF and in completing the Sunderland GI Strategy document.

| ACTION | TIMETABLE | RESPONSIBILITY | COST IMPLICATION |
|---|-----------------|--|------------------|
| Research and documentation of information | By January 2011 | Planning Policy supported by other council sections and partners with input from GI Steering Group members. Report to A&ICP. | Staff time |

Production of a GI Strategy document

3.7 This is the document that essentially draws together all the strands into one explanatory report. It will take into account the GI Audit results and include Sunderland's vision for GI and the final set of principles that will be applied to all schemes. It will set out provision and access standards for the distribution of GI; consideration of maintenance, supervision and public safety, proposals for enhanced connectivity and links to an ongoing action plan (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 and 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. Before the document is approved by the council it will be the subject of public consultation.

| ACTION | TIMETABLE | RESPONSIBILITY | COST IMPLICATION |
|--|-------------------|--|---|
| 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 |

A programme of sustainable actions

3.8 The actions and their individual priority and timescale will be included in a 3-year rolling programme linked with the main GI building blocks identified in the strategy document. Main likely sources of funding will include delivery mechanisms such as agri-environmental schemes, Section 106 planning agreements, public parks improvements etc and key participants, linked to the responsibilities of departments and organisations. 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 its scale and function involving, as appropriate, local people, schools, businesses and other interests. The actions will be assessed through a non-statutory form of sustainability

appraisal, on a similar basis to the appraisal designed for the Sunderland Strategy.

| ACTION | TIMETABLE | RESPONSIBILITY | COST IMPLICATION |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Scope the content of the 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 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 approved by appropriate committees | Staff time + some funding from consultation budgets |

The development plan

3.9 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 (a revised draft is in the process of being approved for consultation – see Appendix 2) and: 2) define in the LDF Allocations Plan the green infrastructure sites and areas to be enhanced, protected or created. The development plan strand may also include the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents that give more detail to supplement the development plan policies and how they might be applied to new developments, including details of delivery through the development process.

| 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 March 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 |

An annual monitor and review

3.10 An annual monitor and review of the strategy and actions will be undertaken, to include recommendations necessary to ensure the evolving strategy continues to be effective and successful. Some indicators of evaluating success could be: increasing % of population having the basic Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) criteria met; 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 |
| Produce report and recommendations | By June 2012 (first report to look back at previous financial year) | Planning Policy with information input from GI Steering Group representatives. Reported to A&ICP and relevant committees | Staff time |

Publicising the Green Infrastructure Strategy

3.11 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 February 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 to whether a small coordinating team (one or two officers) should be established. This would benefit the process of embedding delivery of GI in the council and LSP culture, ensuring joined-up thinking and actions as well as providing a focus for reporting.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Green infrastructure literature

Appendix 2 – Timeframe matrix

Appendix 3 – Green infrastructure in the 2010 Core Strategy

Appendix 4 – Access to Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt)

Appendix 5 – Green Infrastructure Steering Group (at December 2010)

APPENDIX 1: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE LITERATURE

The following literature has helped inform the preparation of this strategy framework.

NATIONAL POLICY AND STUDIES

- PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- PPS1 Supplement “Planning and Climate Change”
- PPS3 Housing
- PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- PPS12 Local Spatial Planning
- Draft PPS “Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment”
- The Marmot Review “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” 2010
- The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report “Urban Environment” 2007

REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL POLICY AND STUDIES

- Regional Spatial Strategy – The North East of England Plan 2008
- Durham Biodiversity Action Plan 2006
- Durham Heritage Coast Plan
- Tyne and Wear Nature Conservation Strategy 1996
- Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan
- Groundwork - Concluding Comments: North East Community Forests and Green Infrastructure 2009
- South Tyneside Core Strategy 2007
- North East Wildlife Trusts – “Living Landscapes”
- Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy

LOCAL POLICY AND STUDIES

- A Proposal for Developing a Network of Green Infrastructure 2009
- The Sunderland Strategy 2008 – 2025
- Sunderland Unitary Development Plan 1998
- Core Strategy Preferred Options 2007
- Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options 2010
- Parks Management Strategy 2004
- Allotments Management Strategy 2004
- Allotments Review 2010
- The Playing Pitch Strategy 2004 – 2011
- Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2005
- Play and Urban Games Strategy Addendum 2010
- Football Investment Strategy
- Volunteer Strategy
- Draft Landscape Character Assessments 2006
- Economic Masterplan 2010
- LDF Green Space Topic Paper 2009
- LDF Coast and River Topic Paper 2009

- LDF Countryside Topic Paper 2009

GI GUIDANCE AND STRATEGY STUDIES

- Natural England Green Infrastructure Guidance 2009
- Natural England North East – ANGSt Standards 2009
- Natural England – Coastal Access consultation 2009
- Natural England – Coastal Access Approved Scheme 2010
- Natural England – ‘Nature Nearby’ Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance 2010
- North West Green Infrastructure Guide
- CABI/National Housing Federation – “Decent Homes Need Decent Spaces”

APPENDIX 2: GI STRANDS TIMEFRAME MATRIX

| DATE | 1 GI AUDIT | 2 EARLY ACTIONS | 3 MAPPING | 4 ACTIVITY AUDIT | 5 GI DOCUMENT | 6 ACTIONS PROG | 7 LDF | 8 ANNUAL MONITOR | PUBLICITY |
|-------|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|------------------|-------------------|
| 12.10 | Site audit complete | | | | | | | | |
| 1.11 | | | | Complete research and document of information | | | | | |
| 2.11 | Complete workshops | Agree draft action with Steering Group | | | | | | | Develop web page. |
| 3.11 | | Report to A&ICP | | | Agree format and scope of document with SG | | Corridors and policies in Core Strategy to Cabinet | | |
| 4.11 | Audit analysis + GI data | | Map all sites + GI functions | | | | | | |
| 5.11 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6.11 | Final report to committee | | | | Draft GI Strategy document | Scope AP programme document | | | |
| 7.11 | | | | | | | | | |
| 8.11 | | | | | | | | | |
| 9.11 | | | | | Publicity and consultation | | | | |
| 10.11 | | | | | | | | Agree indicators | |
| 11.11 | | | | | Final strategy document | Programme with input of community | | | |
| 12.11 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.12 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.12 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.12 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.12 | | | | | | | | | |
| 5.12 | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|----------------------------|--|
| 6.12 | | | | | | | | Produce 2011 -12 report | |
|------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|----------------------------|--|

APPENDIX 3: SUNDERLAND CORE STRATEGY MARCH 2010 - GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective

18. Green infrastructure

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

Green Space Vision

A green space vision was formulated as part of the Core Strategy community engagement work that envisages:

“Safe, clean and valued green spaces with amenities suited to local and other need, 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”.

CS1 Policy

CS1.5 Environment

b. The City Council will establish a network of green infrastructure comprised of linked open spaces and produce a strategy for its improvement that will provide an accessible context for sustainable communities and economic development sites. The interlinked green corridors will connect Sunderland’s countryside, coast, riverside and urban open spaces across the city and with neighbouring districts.

Supporting text

5.32 A network of good quality green infrastructure (GI) can assist the city in meeting several of its spatial objectives by improving land for recreation purposes, improving local access and biodiversity, assist in mitigating against climate change and enable sustainable drainage. A GI Strategy for the city will be developed to support these key objectives.

5.33 The wide variety, quality and quantity of green infrastructure in Sunderland contributes significantly towards the creation of safer, healthier and more sustainable neighbourhoods, and in turn will protect and improve citizen’s health and welfare.

5.34 The City Council seeks to complete an interconnected network of routes that enable safe and convenient movement for wildlife, walkers and cyclists. This will ensure that greenspace is easily accessible to local communities and provides a high quality environment within and around residential and other areas of the city.

CS2 Policy

The City Council will seek to ensure that Sunderland will become a more sustainable city, with a strong sense of place, by creating an attractive city with a high quality built and natural environment through:

d. Protecting and enhancing inter-district green infrastructure corridors, seeking ways of establishing links where restricted in urban areas:

- i. The coast**
- ii. The River Wear**
- iii. Green Belt and open countryside west of A19**
- iv. Northern boundary Green Belt**
- v. Part of the Coast to Coast (C2C) cycle route**
- vi. Part of the Walney to Wear (W2W) cycle route**

e. Protecting, conserving and enhancing:

- i. The varied landscape character within the city, and separate identity of its settlements, through the retention of important open-breaks and wedges within and between settlements, where possible**
- ii. Valued green infrastructure (including sites designated for their geological value) to improve its quality, integrity, community value, multi-functionality and accessibility particularly in areas of identified deficiency and to increase provision in these areas. Permission for other uses on these sites will only be acceptable if robust justification is provided**
- iii. Habitats and species identified in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan (DBAP)**

f. Conserving and enhancing where necessary designated nature conservation sites, with inappropriate development being resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its local, national or international importance

g. Encouraging the retention of trees which make a valuable contribution to the character of an area through Tree Preservation Orders

Supporting text

6.48 Six inter-district green infrastructure corridors within the city have been identified (as shown on the Key Diagram):

- The Coast: a corridor incorporating land and sea, offering considerable wildlife habitat. Improved access is needed to the coast at Hendon and sensitively along the full length of coast, in line with European wildlife protection status
- The River Wear: the river estuary and its banks provide a major corridor from Roker to Fatfield and into County Durham. Providing a range of habitats including semi-natural woodland. Further access and habitat creation is feasible within Central Sunderland
- Green Belt and Open Countryside west of A19: a very wide corridor of Green Belt and open countryside extending from South Hetton northwards to the River Wear and via Nissan to South Tyneside. The corridor is bisected by major roads, and narrows at Turbine Park. Limited public access exists north-south
- Northern boundary Green Belt: straddles the Sunderland and South Tyneside boundary. There is limited habitat variety and tree cover, and limited public access west of the A19. Bisected by major roads
- Part of the Coast to Coast (C2C) cycle route: a narrow corridor from Fatfield into County Durham. Exists as a national cycle route and provides a range of habitats within the former rail corridor
- Part of the Walney to Wear (W2W) cycle route: incorporates a former railway as well as open countryside west of Hetton, and extends into County Durham. The corridor,

which includes the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment, narrows in Hetton and is incomplete at the A182.

6.49 These corridors will build on the existing network, seeking to broaden the range and quality of functions that green infrastructure can bring to the city. Due to the nature of the corridors, which include private as well as public open space, not all will be accessible to the public.

6.50 Inter-district green infrastructure corridors will link Sunderland to the wider region. A strategic, though lower order of district corridors that have particular relevance to local communities will also be protected and enhanced, (see Policies CS6-10). The network of the green infrastructure corridors is shown on Figure 5.

6.51 The city has a diverse landscape, encompassing parts of two national landscape character areas, the Durham Magnesian Limestone escarpment and Tyne and Wear lowlands. The protection of the former is now the subject of study through the Limestone Landscape Partnership and also includes the Durham Heritage Coastline and River Wear Estuary. These areas require continued conservation, enhancement and protection where necessary. The main threats to these landscapes include new development, loss of key characteristics and loss of damage to wildlife habitat.

6.52 At a local level, the draft Landscape Character Assessment for Sunderland will be used in line with Natural England and Heritage Coast designations to provide sufficient protection for those areas of landscape that lie outside of nationally designated areas but which are also highly valued locally.

6.53 The broad extent of open breaks between settlements will be retained in order to support the development of green infrastructure, focus of development on urban areas and to help retain the distinct physical characteristics of local neighbourhoods within the city.

6.54 The city contains a wide diversity of green infrastructure that includes the coast, River Wear, large country and urban parks, regional and other sports facilities, wildlife habitat, allotment sites, play areas, cemeteries and churchyards and open countryside. Though overall provision of green space has improved over the last 15 years, the spatial distribution and quality of green space available remains varied especially in the older neighbourhoods in and around Central Sunderland. It is therefore important to protect valued green space from adverse development and create and enhance new green space where this will achieve higher quality value and greater distribution.

6.55 Whilst the City Council has quantified and surveyed almost all green space in Sunderland, in accordance with PPG17, its value to the local community is still to be established in detail through a survey to be undertaken in 2010. Experience and responses to LDF frontloading community engagement suggests that all but some minor areas of amenity space are valued. Where sites are deemed to be of low local value, opportunities to adopt or to dispose of some sites will be considered, provided that they will support the quantity of neighbouring greenspaces and facilities.

6.56 The City Council has successfully reclaimed a number of former industrial areas resulting in the creation of country parks and nature reserves such as those at Herrington and Hetton Lyons, while remediation of an opencast site led to the creation of Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve.

6.57 Due to the geology of the city, Sunderland has many sites of botanical interest and a variety of habitats of value to wildlife, including parts of two Natura 2000 sites, the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) which protects species and the Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which protects habitats. These sites are protected by European Union legislation and the impact of this plan on them has been considered in an 'Appropriate Assessment' in accordance with UK regulations.

6.58 There are also a further 17 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 10 of which are identified for both biological and geological or geomorphic value, 68 Local Wildlife Sites and five Local Nature Reserves within the city.

6.59 The City Council will continue to work in partnership with the Durham Biodiversity Partnership for the successful delivery of the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan (DBAP) and its key targets. The DBAP will form the primary mechanism for achieving both the UK BAP targets and regional targets, within Sunderland. Local Geodiversity Action Plans are also proposed to set out action to provide a framework for the delivery of geo-conservation.

6.60 It is recognised that survey and monitoring work could identify further sites of nature conservation value during the plan period. Such sites will be identified in the Allocations DPD.

6.61 The city has an overall low level (4%) of tree cover, considerably lower than the national average (12%) and significantly lower than the average in other parts of Europe (44%). Woodlands and trees play an extremely important role in the landscape and environmental quality of an area. It is essential that tree planting continues, that both new and existing woodlands are managed and protected to facilitate the widest range of visual, recreational, wildlife and economic benefits. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are particularly important in controlling the felling and pruning of trees or woodlands which make a significant contribution to the environment. New orders will continue to be made where trees of amenity value are at risk.

CS6 – Central Sunderland

f. Seeking to enhance existing spaces and create new public open spaces in the city centre

g. Maintaining the balance between development and conservation particularly in areas close to sensitive natural sites along the River Wear

Supporting text

10.27 The sub-area has a number of major open spaces and parks, such as Mowbray Park (which is identified as a historic park), Galleys Gill and Claxheugh which provide vital

areas of recreation and form part of wider green infrastructure corridors. However, the sub-area is restricted in terms of the quantity of available land to help increase provision and as such emphasis has been concentrated on improving the quality of existing spaces. The opportunity to create new open spaces and public squares in the city centre as part of large redevelopment schemes will be pursued.

10.28 A number of Local Wildlife Sites are located on the riverside and another at Galleys Gill. The Coast and River Wear are seen as a strategic asset and a great open space resource within the city, because of this there are often competing pressures/ demands on their use. It is important to protect the city's coastline and river corridor, including flora, fauna, geological features, heritage features, and architectural, historical and archaeological areas of interest, whilst extending the opportunities for recreational, educational, sporting and tourist activities.

CS7- South Sunderland

CS7.4 Environment

The City Council will seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment of the area through the following measures:

- a. Protect and enhance district green infrastructure corridors:**
 - i. Barnes Park – A19 to Eden Vale**
 - ii. Stephenson Trail – River Wear to A690/A19**
 - iii. Ryhope to Silksworth – coast to Silksworth Recreation Centre**
 - iv. Cherry Knowle to Venerable Bede and Mill Hill**
 - v. Burdon and Ryhope Dene**
 - vi. Ashbrooke to the Port- via Mowbray Park**
 - vii. Ashbrooke to Tunstall Hills**
 - viii. Claxheugh to Silksworth - via King George V park**
- b. Maintain balance between recreation and conservation particularly in areas close to sensitive natural sites along the Coast and River Wear**

Supporting text

11.14 Green space is at a premium in much of the sub-area due to the densely built-up nature of the area. Residential communities on the periphery are separated by open breaks and wedges which preserve their distinct identities.

11.15 Eight district green infrastructure corridors have been identified in South Sunderland:

- i. Barnes Park:** the park, and its extensions form a linear corridor into the heart of the urban area. It has limited habitat variety, limited tree cover and is bisected by roads
- ii. Stephenson Trail:** the trail provides a narrow corridor through the centre of Sunderland, again bisected by roads, and links to Silksworth Recreation Centre
- iii. Ryhope–Silksworth:** this settlement break provides a range of habitats and links into Tunstall Hills. Ryhope Road and the Southern Relief Road provide connectivity barriers

- iv. Cherry Knowle-Venerable Bede-Mill Hill: provides two narrow settlement breaks between Mill Hill, Silksworth and Tunstall Bank, offering limited habitat variety and tree cover. Allotments at Silksworth provide a partial connectivity break
- v. Burdon-Ryhope Dene: this corridor includes neighbouring farmland, and is mostly within Green Belt. Includes ancient semi-natural woodland
- vi. Ashbrooke to the Port: an incomplete link between Ashbrooke and the Port, utilising private gardens and school playing fields and linking to Backhouse and Mowbray Parks
- vii. Ashbrooke to Tunstall Hills: an incomplete link incorporating Southmoor and Hill View school playing fields. Limited habitat variety and tree cover
- viii. Claxheugh to Silksworth: an incomplete link incorporating King George V Park and connecting to the River Wear. The link has greater potential as a cycling corridor. Bisected by major roads.

11.16 The City Council, in association with partners and developers, will seek to ensure every corridor offers high quality, accessible and locally valued functions, thereby providing multiple benefits for both people and wildlife in the area.

11.17 The Coast and River Wear are seen as a strategic asset, and are a great open space resource within the city, often with competing pressures/ demands on their use. It is important to protect the city's coastline and river corridor, including flora, fauna, geological features, heritage features, and architectural, historical and archaeological areas of interest, whilst extending the opportunities for recreational, educational, sporting and tourist activities.

CS8-North Sunderland

CS8.4 Environment

The City Council will seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment of the area through the following measures:

- a) **Maintain the balance between recreation and conservation particularly in areas close to sensitive natural sites along the Coast and River Wear**
- b) **Protect and enhance district green infrastructure corridors:**
 - i. **Fulwell Quarries to River Wear- via Thompson Park**
 - ii. **A19 Corridor – Town End Farm to North Hylton**

Hylton Dene – A19 to Hylton Park

Supporting text

12.10 The Coast and River Wear are seen as a strategic asset and a great open space resource within the city; because of this there are often competing pressures/ demands on their use. It is important to protect the city's coastline and river corridor, including flora, fauna, geological features, heritage features, and architectural, historical and archaeological areas of interest, whilst extending the opportunities for recreational, educational, sporting and tourist activities.

12.11 Three district green infrastructure corridors have been identified in North Sunderland:

- i. Fulwell Quarries to River Wear: an incomplete link incorporating Thompson Park. Monkwearmouth provides a major connectivity barrier. Varied wildlife habitat
- ii. A19 Corridor: a narrow woodland shelter belt along the east of the A19 from Town End Farm to North Hylton. Very limited public access. The A1231 forms a major barrier
- iii. Hylton Dene: a well-wooded corridor from the A19 through Hylton Dene to the River Wear. The A1231 again forms a major barrier.

12.12 The City Council, in association with partners and developers, will seek to ensure every corridor offers high quality, accessible and locally valued functions, thereby providing multiple benefits for both people and wildlife in the area.

12.13 North Sunderland has a varied landscape including areas of arable land, parkland, Magnesian Limestone Grassland, semi natural woodlands, sandy beaches and riverbanks. The area faces pressure from residential developments, as well as public pressures, and it is therefore vital that the City Council continues to protect the natural beauty of these areas and enhancing features where possible.

CS9 Washington

CS9.4 Environment

The City Council will seek to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment of the area through the following measures:

- a) **Protect and enhance district green infrastructure corridors:**
 - i. **Springwell Village and A194M**
 - ii. **Princess Anne Park and A195**
 - iii. **A194(M) to Washington Village and River Wear**
- b) **Ensure commercial and residential development do not impact on the rural character of the north bank of the River Wear**

Protect the distinct identity of Washington New Town, protecting landscaped areas and open space from development; requiring new development to achieve and maintain the high standard of landscaping within the New Town; maintaining the separation of residential villages from other uses.

Supporting text

13.15 There is an extensive amount of high quality green infrastructure in Washington, three district green infrastructure corridors have been identified:

- i. Springwell Village-A194(M): open countryside (protected as Green Belt) forms a corridor along the west side of the A194(M), providing limited habitat variety. The corridor has limited public access and also narrows at Peareth Hall Road
- ii. Princess Anne Park and A195: a narrow corridor of grass verges and trees surround the A195 from Follingsby to Washington Village. Private gardens enable the link to connect to Glebe Park and Princess Anne Park, which then links to the River Wear
- iii. A194(M) to Washington Village and River Wear: an incomplete corridor extends from Donwell to Albany Park, Glebe Park and the River Wear. Numerous roads provide major barriers to overall connectivity.

13.16 The City Council, in association with partners and developers, will seek to ensure every corridor offers high quality, accessible and locally valued functions, thereby providing multiple benefits for both people and wildlife in the area.

13.17 Areas of Green Belt are allocated North of the River Wear aiming to protect the attractive rural nature of the riverside, emphasise the separation of uses between Fatfield and the Pattinson Industrial Estate and further prevent Fatfield from encroaching into the Wear Valley.

13.18 Washington has unique design characteristics, such as inter-village walkways, the separation of potentially conflicting land uses and the provision of substantial landscaping, particularly between main roads and residential areas. Where development or redevelopment takes place, proposals should respect the planning characteristics of town. The town has one conservation area, Washington Village.

CS10 Coalfield

CS10.4 Environment

The City Council will seek to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment of the area through the following measures:

- a) Protect and enhance district green infrastructure corridors:**
 - i. Leamside Line- Victoria Viaduct to Rainton Meadows**
 - ii. Central Route – Shiney Row to Rainton Meadows**
 - iii. Herrington Burn – Herrington Country Park to Lambton Country Park**
 - iv. Lambton Colliery Railway – Philadelphia to Lambton Country Park**
 - v. Houghton Colliery Railway – Success to Houghton town centre**
 - vi. Rough Dene Burn – Hetton Bogs to Copt Hill**
 - vii. Hazard Railway – Low Moorsley to Rainton Bridge**
 - viii. Rainton Bridge and Hetton Park**
 - ix. Southern Boundary – Pittington to Snippersgate**
- b) Pursue greater protection of agricultural land in nationally important landscape of the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment, in the southern Coalfield from inappropriate development**
- c) Measures to promote and preserve the Coalfield’s distinct identity and cultural heritage will be supported**
- d) No development will be permitted that could cause unnecessary sterilisation of Eppleton Quarry**
- e) Develop Herrington Country Park as a regional outdoor events area.**

Supporting text

14.16 There is an extensive amount of high quality green infrastructure in the Coalfield, nine district green infrastructure corridors have been identified:

- i. Leamside Line:** a corridor with varied habitat either side of the railway line linking the River Wear to Rainton Meadows. The corridor links into Lambton Country Park. Bisected by major roads
- ii. Central Route:** a settlement break and floodplain between Houghton and Fence Houses, scheduled to include a new road (the Central Route). Habitat variety and tree cover could be improved

- iii. Herrington Burn: an incomplete corridor between Herrington and Lambton Country Parks, via Herrington Burn. The A182 provides a major barrier to the corridor
- iv. Lambton Colliery railway: an incomplete and narrow corridor along the former railway. Philadelphia Workshops provide a major barrier to the corridor
- v. Houghton Colliery Railway: the former railway corridor provides a link from Lambton to Houghton town centre. The A182 provides a barrier from the corridor to the Green Belt to the east
- vi. Rough Dene Burn: a settlement break with limited public access exists between Houghton and Hetton, following the burn. The A182 provides a barrier to the corridor
- vii. Hazard Railway: open countryside that includes the former railway, extending from Low Moorsley to Rainton Bridge. The A690 separates the corridor from Rainton Meadows
- viii. Rainton Bridge and Hetton Park: a corridor along the Rainton Burn extends through Hetton Bogs and Hetton Park and on to Hetton School. This corridor offers considerable habitat variety
- ix. Southern Boundary: open countryside along the city boundary forms a corridor between Pittington and Snippersgate, south of Easington Lane. Habitat variety and public access is limited

14.17 The City Council, in association with partners and developers, will seek to ensure every corridor offers high quality, accessible and locally valued functions, thereby providing multiple benefits for both people and wildlife in the area.

14.18 The Coalfield has the widest variety of habitat as the Magnesian Limestone gives way to the acidic Tyne and Wear Lowlands. The countryside in the south and the east of the area does not have any specific policy protection, though studies by The Limestone Landscape Partnership recognises the quality of the landscape here and its importance for biodiversity. The Magnesian Limestone Escarpment is the city's most significant geodiversity and biodiversity asset and therefore should be protected from development that may result in its unnecessary erosion or disfigurement.

14.19 The Coalfield has a rich and varied historic environment and includes the ancient townships of Houghton-le-Spring and Hetton-le-Hole. The current urban form has largely been shaped by the development of the mining industry; as a result the area includes many settlements, each with their own identity. It is important the individual identity of each is retained and enhanced. New developments should be well integrated into existing settlements, ensuring settlements and villages do not just become commuter areas, thereby sustaining services and facilities.

14.20 Four Mineral Safeguarding Areas have been identified in the Coalfield. Extraction at Warden Law, Great Eppleton and Pittington Hill could have consequences for the city's Green Belt and open countryside. Both of the city's operational quarries, Hetton Moor House Farm and Eppleton Quarry, are located in the Coalfield.

14.21 The former Herrington Colliery has been reclaimed and developed into Herrington Country Park. It is home to various outdoor events and features one of the largest open-air

concert sites in the North East. It will be further developed as a premier regional outdoor events area with the capacity to stage large functions.

Fig. 5 Policy CS1 - Green Infrastructure Corridors



APPENDIX 4: 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 tranquility.

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:

- a) Improving access.
- b) Improving naturalness.
- c) 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 5: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STEERING GROUP (AT DECEMBER 2010)

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