



Working towards a Core Strategy for Wiltshire

Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy update

Wiltshire Core Strategy
Consultation January 2012

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This update has been published alongside the Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Document to explain the work undertaken so far in developing the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. The update should be read alongside the Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Document and Topic Paper 11: Green Infrastructure¹.
- 1.2 The paper begins by setting out the intended scope of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the timetable for the preparation of the strategy, including a brief summary of the opportunities for stakeholder involvement so far. It then explains the work undertaken to map the existing green infrastructure assets in Wiltshire, and sets out a draft vision and objectives for the strategy, as well as draft lists of key priorities and key cross-boundary green infrastructure linkages. The material presented in this paper is not intended to be exhaustive or final, and will be further developed and informed by ongoing stakeholder consultation.

2 Scope of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 2.1 The Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will provide a long-term vision and strategic framework for the delivery of a planned high quality, multi-functional network of green infrastructure across Wiltshire. This will work to improve existing provision and create new high quality green infrastructure to be included in an overall network across the county. The development sites identified in the Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Document provide potential for investment into green infrastructure projects, and the Green Infrastructure Strategy will assist in maximising these opportunities.
- 2.2 Green infrastructure is based on natural elements which range from woodlands to grassland, and includes watercourses, rivers and wetlands (sometimes referred to as blue infrastructure). All these natural elements work together to sustain ecological value and function. Green infrastructure can be defined as planned and managed networks of natural spaces (such as woodlands, areas of conserved indigenous species, rivers, streams and wetlands) and working landscapes (such as parklands, areas of formalised planting, city farms and allotments) that conserve the natural environment and provide associated social benefits for local human populations².
- 2.3 It is intended that the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will:
- Define the existing green infrastructure network in Wiltshire
 - Set out a vision and objectives for green infrastructure in Wiltshire
 - Identify strategic priorities for maintaining, enhancing and expanding the green infrastructure network
 - Identify priorities for green infrastructure in each community area, particularly where these will enhance the overall strategic network
 - Set out an implementation plan of actions needed for each of the strategic priorities identified.

¹ Topic Paper 11: Green Infrastructure, published alongside the Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Document

² Definition of green infrastructure adapted from www.greeninfrastructure.net

3 Preparation of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

3.1 The Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy is being prepared by Wiltshire Council, and will be fully informed by consultation with key stakeholders. The broad timetable for the preparation of the strategy is set out below:

- Targeted consultation on draft vision and objectives (August 2011)
- Workshops with key stakeholders to discuss priorities for green infrastructure in Wiltshire (December 2011)
- Identification of issues and opportunities at a community area level and preparation of draft strategy (Winter/Spring 2012)
- Minimum 6 week consultation on draft strategy (Spring/Summer 2012)
- Adoption of strategy (by end 2012).

3.2 A draft vision and objectives for the Green Infrastructure Strategy was circulated to key stakeholders in August 2011, and feedback received during this consultation has been used to further refine the draft vision and objectives presented later in this paper. Responses to the consultation were received from Bath and North East Somerset Council, British Waterways, Cotswolds Canals Trust, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Gloucestershire County Council, NHS Wiltshire, Natural England, RSPB, Swindon Borough Council and the Woodland Trust.

3.3 Two workshops were held during December 2011 to further inform the development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and to discuss the key priorities for green infrastructure in Wiltshire. The agenda for these workshops is shown in appendix 1, alongside a list of the organisations represented. A written record of the feedback received during the workshops is currently in preparation, and will be used to further inform the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.

4 The existing green infrastructure network

4.1 The Green Infrastructure Strategy will be based on a sound understanding of the existing green infrastructure network in Wiltshire, and the challenges and opportunities for maintaining, enhancing and expanding this network. A series of maps have been prepared to assist with this, including maps based on the following themes:

- Agricultural land use
- Cultural heritage
- Landscape character
- Natura 2000 network
- Rights of way
- Local and national conservation sites

4.2 The Green Infrastructure Topic Paper³ summarises a wide range of evidence relating to green infrastructure in Wiltshire, and this will be used alongside the assets maps to inform the preparation of the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy for consultation.

³ Topic Paper 11: Green Infrastructure, published alongside the Wiltshire Core Strategy Submission Document

5 Draft vision and objectives

5.1 The following draft vision and objectives for the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy have been prepared taking into account feedback received during the initial stakeholder consultation (August 2011). The vision and objectives will continue to be further refined, taking into account comments received during the December 2011 workshops and any further feedback.

5.2 A 20 year vision for Wiltshire's Green Infrastructure (draft December 2011)

Working in partnership with neighbouring authorities, other strategic agencies and environmental bodies to develop, over the next 20 years, a planned and managed network of high quality and highly valued multi-functional green infrastructure that contributes to making Wiltshire a great place to live, work and visit by:

- Promoting healthy lifestyles, through exercise, leisure, play and relaxation within the natural environment.
- Providing attractive and inspirational environments in which Wiltshire's communities can thrive and businesses are attracted to invest.
- Helping to make development and growth in Wiltshire sustainable with a strong emphasis on place shaping, working with communities to provide places that have clear identities.
- Helping Wiltshire adapt to unavoidable climate change by providing shading and cooling in urban areas, making Wiltshire's natural environment more resilient, and assisting with flood alleviation.
- Connecting Wiltshire's communities to outstanding countryside and cultural heritage through the creation of green access corridors and high quality urban green space.
- Sustaining and enriching Wiltshire's distinctive natural and historic environment, and landscape character, through improving and expanding existing assets, linking fragmented habitats, and providing migration routes for wildlife.

5.3 Objectives for the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (draft December 2011)

Health and well being

- Develop opportunities to support healthy lifestyles through the provision of green routes for walking, cycling and horse-riding, and multi-functional green spaces for sport, play, recreation and amenity. These opportunities will be inclusive of the county's waterways which provide a wide range of opportunities for recreation and amenity.
- Improve the quality of life for Wiltshire's communities through place shaping and careful design that brings natural features into neighbourhoods, improving community health and well-being.

Links and connectivity

- Provide high quality green infrastructure that strengthens the connectivity between Wiltshire's urban and rural landscapes, creating attractive and accessible places for children and adults to enjoy the beneficial effects of direct and regular contact with the natural environment.
- Provide connections into the network from residential areas and community centres and use signage to encourage people to make use of the network as it is developed.

Economic growth and development

- Encourage the sustainable development of future growth in Wiltshire by enhancing the design of new communities and helping to create a sense of place whilst conserving its heritage and historic nature.
- Deliver high quality, attractive environments that support and increase levels of business investment and tourism, enhancing Wiltshire's economy.

Water management

- Support the efficient management of water, helping to reduce the likelihood of flooding events through the use of sustainable drainage systems, the appropriate management of permeable ground and the provision of flood storage areas.
- Specifically work to increase overall vegetation levels and protect green corridors adjacent to county waterways to reduce run off, increase infiltration and recharge groundwater, and prevent erosion of the banks of watercourses.
- If necessary, and where possible, return to or design natural drainage systems to reduce flood risks and to improve wildlife habitats within or alongside the watercourse.

Ecosystem services

- Support the delivery of functioning ecosystems that provide a wealth of ecosystem services such as water, clean air, soil, and the maintenance of biodiversity.

Healthy natural environment

- Maintain and enhance the health of Wiltshire's natural environment by increasing ecological connectivity, reducing habitat fragmentation and increasing its ability and resilience to adapt to the challenges brought about through climate change.

Education and understanding

- Increase the understanding and appreciation of, and responsibility for, natural features, through greater community involvement and sense of ownership in

green infrastructure projects at the local scale in Wiltshire, and by educating Wiltshire's children and young people about the value of the natural environment.

Climate change

- Green infrastructure will work to mitigate climate change by assisting in reducing emissions levels through encouraging sustainable activities and travel and increasing vegetation levels to act as a carbon sink or as urban cooling agents.
- Green infrastructure will aid adaptation and levels of resilience to the impacts of climate change by protecting flood plain areas and enhancing levels of vegetation to assist in reducing run off and soil erosion.

Long term management

- Ensure the effective, long term management of Wiltshire's green infrastructure network through the development and implementation of appropriately designed and funded management schemes.

Working in partnership

- Work in partnership to deliver specific projects and initiatives that contribute to the development of a high quality and highly valued multi-functional network of green infrastructure in Wiltshire.
- Work particularly closely with adjacent local authorities to fulfil the strategic nature of green infrastructure projects and maximise the benefits to Wiltshire's community.

Funding

- Identify and acquire sufficient funding to implement the objectives and actions of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Use contributions from development to implement new green infrastructure as well as enhancing and improving existing provision.

6 Draft list of key priorities for green infrastructure in Wiltshire

6.1 A number of key priorities for the enhancement of the strategic green infrastructure network in Wiltshire have been identified as follows:

- The delivery of green infrastructure within the Cricklade Country Way, in line with the Green Infrastructure Plan for the Cricklade Country Way.
- The continued restoration and enhancement of the canal network in Wiltshire.
- The delivery of green infrastructure in the Cotswold Water Park, through the delivery of relevant objectives set out in the Cotswold Water Park Strategic Review and Implementation Plan (Master Plan).
- The delivery of the objectives of the Great Western Community Forest Plan.
- The maintenance and enhancement of existing country parks, and the provision of new country parks in strategic locations.

- Improvements to the rights of way network across Wiltshire to maintain access to the countryside and improve the quality of routes, through the delivery of relevant objectives set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- The development and improvement of sub-regional green corridors, including river corridors.

A number of suggestions for additional priorities were raised at the December 2011 stakeholder workshops, and these will be considered as the draft Green Infrastructure strategy is prepared.

7 Key cross-boundary green infrastructure linkages

7.1 A review of work undertaken by neighbouring authorities has led to the identification of the following key cross-boundary green infrastructure linkages:

- The Kennet and Avon Canal
- The Bristol and Hampshire River Avon corridors
- The Cotswolds Water Park
- The Cricklade Country Way
- The Great Western Community Forest
- The New Forest National Park
- The North Wessex Downs AONB
- The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
- The Cotswolds AONB.

This list will be further developed through discussion and consultation with neighbouring authorities and other interested parties.

8 Next steps

8.1 Work to prepare the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy will continue alongside the Core Strategy process. In the immediate future this work will focus on responding to the feedback received during the December 2011 workshops and identifying specific green infrastructure assets and opportunities in each of the 20 community areas across Wiltshire. A draft Green Infrastructure Strategy will then be prepared, and will be subject to consultation later in the year. It is currently intended that the Green Infrastructure Strategy will be adopted towards the end of 2012.

Appendix 1: Wiltshire green infrastructure workshops

Agenda for Wiltshire green infrastructure workshops (7th and 9th December 2011)

1. Welcome and introductions.
2. Introduction to green infrastructure and scope of the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.
3. Progress so far with the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and the draft vision and objectives.
4. Identifying priorities for the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy: review of evidence and draft list of priorities. Are there additional sources of evidence? Are these appropriate priorities?
5. Cross-boundary linkages: review of cross-boundary green infrastructure assets and projects. Are there additional assets or projects we should be aware of?
6. Next steps for the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.
7. Round up and AOB

Organisations/interests represented at workshop 1: Wednesday 7th December, 2-4pm, County Hall, Trowbridge

Bath and North East Somerset Council, British Waterways, Cotswolds AONB, Cotswold Canals Trust, Cotswold Water Park, Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, Great Western Community Forest / Swindon Borough Council, Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, North Wessex Downs AONB, Wilts and Berks Canal Trust, Wiltshire Council.

Organisations/interests represented at workshop 2: Friday 9th December, 10am-12noon, County Hall, Trowbridge

Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, NHS Wiltshire, Natural England, RSPB, Salisbury Greenspace Initiative, Sustrans, Wiltshire Local Access Forum, Woodland Trust, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council.