

Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy Appendix 1

Background and context

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1 Introduction

This appendix sets out the main documents which have influenced the development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy together with consideration of neighbouring authority strategies and plans.

2 Background documents

Green Infrastructure Guidance, Natural England, 2009

This document sets out the benefits and functions of GI and encourages a co-ordinated and consistent approach to GI planning. It states:

“Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality

of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.

Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside”.

Cambridgeshire Vision: Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 – 2021, Cambridgeshire Together, 2007

The Cambridgeshire Vision sets out the collective vision and priorities of partner organisations to ensure that public services meet the needs of the people of Cambridgeshire. It focuses on 5 key themes; growth, economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, equality and inclusion and safer and stronger communities.

Although there is no specific reference to GI, the Cambridgeshire Vision states that new development needs *“to provide infrastructure that encourages physical activity such as walking and cycling and environments that support social networks, which have a positive effect on mental and physical health”*.

Local Area Agreement 2008-2011

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008-2011 is the three year delivery plan for the Cambridgeshire Vision as described above. The LAA established county-wide priority areas and targets, using indicators from the national indicator set. Those of relevance to GI include:

- NI 5 – Overall/general satisfaction with the local area;
- NI 188 – Adapting to climate change; and
- NI 197 – Improved local biodiversity.

Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, Cambridgeshire Horizons, 2008

The Charter for Growth sets out principles for achieving high quality housing growth under four broad themes; community, connectivity, climate and character. The role of GI in achieving high quality growth are highlighted by the following principles:

- There should be a mixture of formal and informal green space, and interconnectivity between new and existing GI;

- New developments should contribute to the wider environmental goals for the Cambridge area and enhance the feasibility of walking and cycling;
- Biodiversity and wildlife should be encouraged through a network of green spaces and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS); and
- The creation of good landscapes is as important as the creation of good townscapes. Different kinds of spaces should be provided to give character to the neighbourhoods and improve biodiversity.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: Planning for Success, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2003

After the approval of the East of England Plan in May 2008 all but 13 of the policies in the Plan have been superseded. Those policies of relevance to the GI Strategy include:

- P4/4 Water Based Recreation
- P9/2b Review of Green Belt Boundaries
- P9/2c Location and Phasing of Development Land to be released from the Green Belt
- P9/8 Infrastructure Provision

The GI Strategy will support the development agenda for Cambridgeshire, both within and outside the green belt, by providing sufficient infrastructure to contribute to the needs of the county's residents.

Cambridgeshire Integrated Development Programme, Cambridgeshire Horizons, 2009

The Integrated Development Programme (IDP) considers the goals for Cambridgeshire's growth agenda, including housing and employment, and identifies the individual strategic infrastructure projects needed to deliver them. The IDP's principle purpose is to set out infrastructure projects of sub-regional scale within Cambridgeshire. These projects are strategic in nature, having greater than district-level impact. The IDP acts as an evidence base for sub-regional infrastructure needs.

Green Infrastructure is considered one of the four key infrastructure needs for the County, alongside water, energy and transport

Valuing Ecosystem Services in the East of England

This technical study was undertaken on behalf of The East of England Environment Forum, The East of England Regional Assembly and Government Office East. It assessed the value of some of the most important ecosystems services in the East of England. The study was based on five case study areas including the Cambridgeshire Fens. The findings were based on results by providing robust evidence, establishing a better

understanding of the value of some of the most important ecosystems services, and focusing on different specific issues in different case study areas to demonstrate how the ecosystems services approach can work in practice in a range of situations. The study aimed to ensure that mainstream planning and governance processes:

- Better reflect the links between ecosystems, human well-being and decision making;
- Better reflect the positive contribution that the region's natural assets provide (to the economy, socially and environmentally);
- Better understand how this could be applied through an Ecosystem Services Approach; and
- identify which policy and funding decisions it should be applied to.

Landscape Institute Position statement

The position statement recognizes Green Infrastructure as being an aspect of connected and multifunctional landscapes

TCPA worksheet: The essential role of Green Infrastructure: eco-towns green infrastructure worksheet

The TCPA recognises the essential role of Green Infrastructure in both the environmental sustainability and the long-term social and economic success of eco-towns.

Forest Research Report: Benefits of Green Infrastructure, October 2010

This report examines the importance of Green Infrastructure for delivering multifunctional benefits using an objectives-based approach. The report is structured around the objectives of climate change; health and well-being; economic growth and investment; land regeneration; wildlife and habitats; and stronger communities, and evidence and examples of how Green Infrastructure has been applied to maximize benefits for each objective.

Planning Policy

National planning policy statements and guidance and the adopted development plans of local planning authorities are outlined in the Planning and Sustainable Growth Appendix 4.

3 Neighbouring Authority Strategies

A review of all neighbouring county, district and unitary authorities was undertaken to identify where Green Infrastructure strategies and studies have been completed or are in development. Figure 1.1 and text illustrates the coverage and status of Green Infrastructure Strategies in neighbouring authorities.

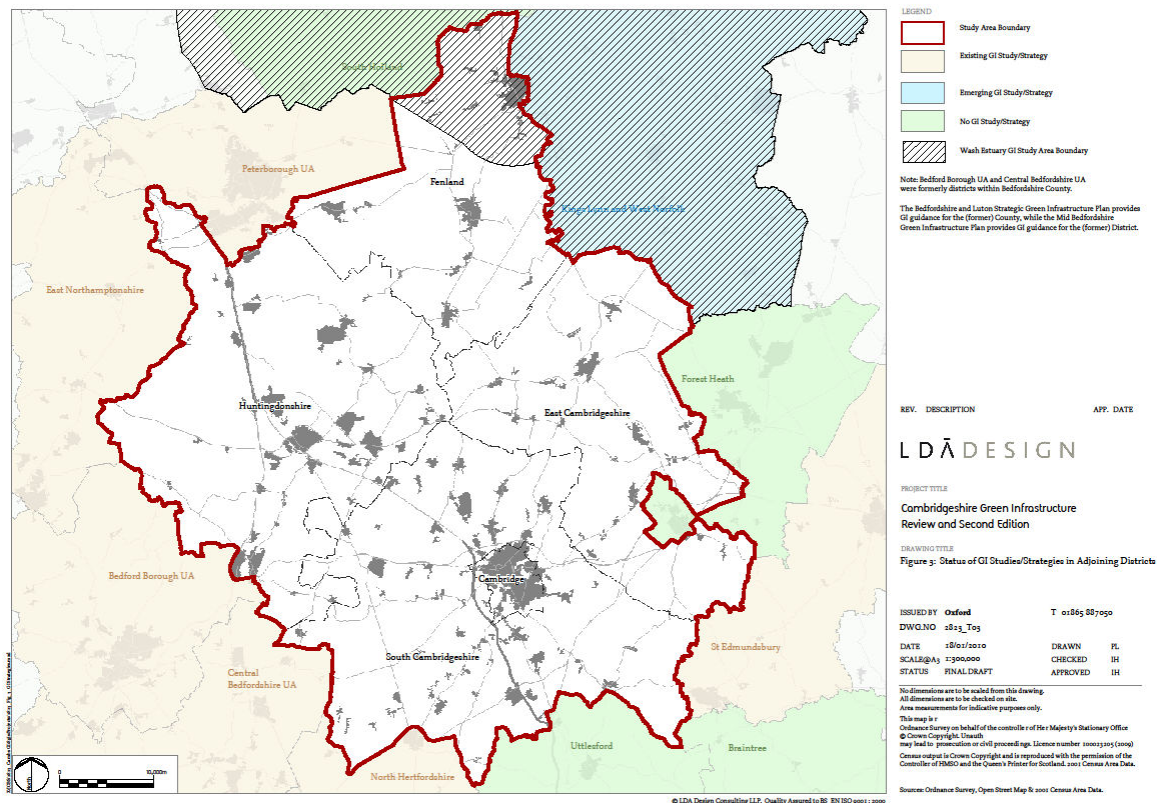


Figure 1.1 Status of Green Infrastructure studies/strategies in adjoining districts

Kings Lynn Growth Point Green Infrastructure Strategy Stage 1¹ - this identifies the strategic Green Infrastructure network of the Borough, together with the local Green Infrastructure networks for King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton. The Stage 1 report did not establish Green Infrastructure proposals although it did identify existing strategic Green Infrastructure corridors including:

- Peddars Way, a National Trail of 93 miles;
- River Nar and associated Nar Valley Way recreational route;
- River Great Ouse and associated Fen Rivers Way recreational route;
- River Nene and associated Nene Way recreational route;
- Little Ouse River, River Wissey, Middle Level Drain and Cut Off Channel, all linking to the River Great Ouse providing a network of waterways and recreational routes;
- Well Creek;
- The Wash and Norfolk Coast, comprising the North Norfolk AONB and Norfolk Heritage Coast;
- The Brecks, containing valuable heath and woodlands habitats; and
- The Ouse Washes, one of the largest area of washlands the UK.

Following the completion of the stage one report a Strategy, Action Plan and Business Plan² was developed to promote and support the delivery of Green

¹ King's Lynn and West Norfolk Green Infrastructure Strategy - Stage 1 Report – Final for Approval, September 2009

² King's Lynn and West Norfolk Green Infrastructure Strategy - Stage 2 Final Report – May 2010

Infrastructure in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough. High priority projects included in the Action Plan included:

- Fens Waterway Link - Ouse to Nene (King's Lynn);
- Fens Waterways - Sea Lock at Great Ouse Relief Channel (King's Lynn);
- King's Lynn/Wash/Norfolk Coastal Path (King's Lynn);
- Brecks Regional Park (Borough Level);
- Countryside and Recreation Zone (King's Lynn);
- Gaywood Valley (Borough Level);
- Hardwick Industrial Estate (King's Lynn);
- Nar Riverside Park (King's Lynn);
- Waterfront Regeneration Area (King's Lynn);
- Wissey Living Landscapes (Downham Market);
- Allotments (Borough Level); and
- The development of SUDS (Borough Level).

A further 22 projects have been identified at King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton or at Borough level which are of medium and low priority.

St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Strategy³ - this considers existing and proposed Green Infrastructure in the borough, primarily as a response to future growth at Bury St. Edmunds. It establishes the baseline in terms of environmental character and existing Green Infrastructure initiatives, along with need and demand analysis. It also sets out a vision for Green Infrastructure in the borough and a framework for delivery.

The Strategy identifies three types of proposed Green Infrastructure assets; Green Corridors, Green Infrastructure Projects and Action Zones. In relation to Cambridgeshire the Haverhill Action Zone, comprising the river valley and disused railway, and the Ancient Farmland Action Zone, characterised by ancient field boundaries, small settlements and village greens, ancient woods and medieval deer parks, adjoin South Cambridgeshire district.

The Strategy identifies a number of projects within the Haverhill Action Zone which are of relevance to the Cambridgeshire Strategy. These include:

- E.1: Improve and expand the Meldham Washlands site to provide a nature reserve;
- E.2: Improve 'gateways' into and out from Haverhill;
- E.4: Enhance woodland planting along the A1017 bypass road; and
- E.7: Advance landscape planting in relation to development sites in and around Haverhill.

In relation to proposed corridors, the Stour Brook Valley Green Corridor extends from Haverhill, reconnecting the town to its river valley, with links to the Meldham Washlands and the Stour Valley Path. The corridor extends into South Cambridgeshire.

³ St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Strategy – Final Report, September 2009

North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan⁴ - this provides a framework for the future growth of Stevenage and North Hertfordshire towns, planning for adequate and appropriate new green spaces and links. The Plan comprises strategic and local level green and blue links. The strategic tier identifies opportunities for radial connectors or spokes across the district, while the local tier outlines a 'green print' for individual settlements.

The strategic Green Infrastructure network is of most relevance identifying a series of projects within or near South Cambridgeshire district. These include:

- ST3 - Icknield Way enhancements and interpretation, to include upgrading of surface to cater for cyclists and horse riders;
- ST5 - Grassland restoration to the west and south west of Therfield Heath;
- ST6 - green link to the west of Royston, to connect the Icknield Way and Chain Walk; and
- ST8.3 - Peri urban greenway for Royston to link existing green transport and enhance the urban rural fringe.

Hertfordshire are now in the process of preparing a 'Green Infrastructure Prospectus' for the county, however, it is likely this document will support the findings and recommendations of the North Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan

Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan⁵ - this provides a strategic framework for the (former) County, within which Green Infrastructure can be identified, prioritised, extended and implemented in concert with planned growth. The Plan comprises a series of corridors, within which there are a series of proposals for the creation of new and enhancement of existing assets.

The Lower Great Ouse River Valley (corridor 3) extends from the centre of Bedford east towards St Neots. Existing Green Infrastructure assets within this corridor include the Ouse Valley Way, National Cycle Route 51, Bedford Park and Priory Country Park. Proposals include the Bedford River Valley Park, encompassing and extending the existing Priory Country Park eastwards along the River Great Ouse valley. The corridor also provides an opportunity to address the perceived deficiency in strategic accessible green space to the south of St Neots.

Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan⁶ - this builds upon proposals in the county-wide Green Infrastructure plan, providing guidance for the former Mid Bedfordshire district (now Central Bedfordshire UA). The Plan identifies a number of Action Areas, which include a number of specific projects. South Cambridgeshire district is adjacent to the Irwell Valley Action Plan Area, and the Southern Clay Ridge and Vale sub-action area identifies a series of Green Infrastructure Projects of relevance to this study, including:

⁴ North Hertfordshire District Green Infrastructure Plan - Final Report, August 2009

⁵ Bedfordshire and Luton Strategy Green Infrastructure Plan, February 2007

⁶ Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan, September 2008

- C3 - Rolling Arable farmland, an extension of an area of farmland stretching northeast through Cambridgeshire which is of national significance for farmland bird populations; and
- C4 - Potton Wood, a substantial block of ancient woodland with public access where there is potential for co-operative management and habitat linkages with similar woods in South Cambridgeshire.

This area is also described as the East Bedfordshire Arable Landscape Opportunity Area, characterised by the large-scale fields, dispersed blocks of woods and smaller settlements. It generally has an open, undeveloped quality, which extends into the Cambridgeshire countryside and the opportunity exists to enhance the traditional features and reinforce the pattern of the landscape.

Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure Strategy⁷ - this identifies areas for Green Infrastructure Investment across the county, illustrated by the identification of sub-regional and local Green Infrastructure corridors. It also identifies two networks, comprising biodiversity and sustainable movement, which identify opportunities for new and enhanced connectivity.

In relation to the biodiversity network, a number of woodland habitats/links are identified adjacent to Huntingdonshire district. The entire eastern edge of Northamptonshire is identified as an opportunity for extensive landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements, extending from the Whittlewood Forest, into the Middle Nene Valley and on into Rockingham Forest. There are also several movement corridors identified between East Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, including the proposed Corby to Aldwinckle Green Way.

The biodiversity and sustainable movement networks, along with other Green Infrastructure assets and destinations, areas of settlement growth and key development projects define the sub-regional and local Green Infrastructure corridors. These include the Nene Valley (corridor 2) and Yardley, Salcey and Whittlewood Wooded Ridge (corridor 4) which broadly follow the eastern edge of Northamptonshire. From this extend several local corridors, providing connections and identifying Green Infrastructure opportunities between East Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, including:

- 21 – Thrapston to Bythorn;
- 26 – Achurch to Clopton; and
- 30 – Oundle to Great Gidding.

Peterborough's Green Grid Strategy⁸ seeks to identify gaps and opportunities in the ecological and recreational networks and ensure that the growth planned for Peterborough protects existing and provides for new Green Infrastructure. There is also a distinct emphasis on creating opportunities to attract tourism and visitors, with the Green Grid identifying both proposed projects and existing 'destinations'. The Green Grid seeks to identify three types of projects; corridors - providing a network of routes; sites

⁷ <http://www.rnrpenvironmentalcharacter.org.uk/> - accessed September 2009

⁸ Peterborough's Green Grid Strategy, May 2007

– green hubs with the network of corridors; and wider area initiatives – designed to enhance landscape character or biodiversity interest.

In relation to Cambridgeshire, two Green Infrastructure corridors are of relevance, G3 & 5 - River Nene – Old Course/ Fen Edge route and G4 - Great Fen Project connections to Peterborough. Both of these corridors seek to promote landscape improvements and access routes from Peterborough to the foot of the clay escarpment and fens and beyond to the Great Fen. There are also several sites along the Peterborough/Cambridgeshire border, which the Strategy seeks to promote as ‘destinations’ and connect through the use of corridors. These ‘destinations’ include:

- A - Great Fen Project (within Huntingdonshire); extension of the existing Fenland habitats at Woodwalton and Holme Fen throughout the Great Fen Project area;
- C - South Peterborough Green Park Visitor Attraction; development of a regional resource that promotes the geological, biodiversity and economic history of the area;
- F - Crown Lakes Country Park; development of existing facilities and activities; and
- K - Normans Cross (partly within Huntingdonshire); development of Norman cross as centre to promote of cultural history, arts facilities and open space.
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In addition to these projects, there are also two area wide initiatives of relevance:

- the ‘South Peterborough Green Parks’ which aims to protect, enhance and extend the mosaic of lakes, water features and woodland within the former brick pits to the south of Peterborough.
- All around Peterborough urban area where the landscape is identified as a priority for HLS and EWGS applications, which seek to achieve greater access to and multi-functionality of agricultural land through the take up of agri-environmental initiatives

The Wash Estuary Strategy Group (WESG) is a partnership which includes, amongst others: Lincolnshire County Council, South Holland District Council and King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council. Their aim is “to promote the sustainable use of the area’s resources while trying to maintain the balance that allows the local communities to prosper and safeguards the heritage, wildlife, land and seascape features for future generations.”

WESG are currently producing a Green Infrastructure Masterplan for the Wash Area, which will help to deliver positive gains for wildlife, countryside access, maritime activities and the rural economy across The Wash. The study area extends across the Fens, and the Green Infrastructure Masterplan will therefore need to work in partnership with the King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy in and around Wisbech.