



A Vision for Green Infrastructure

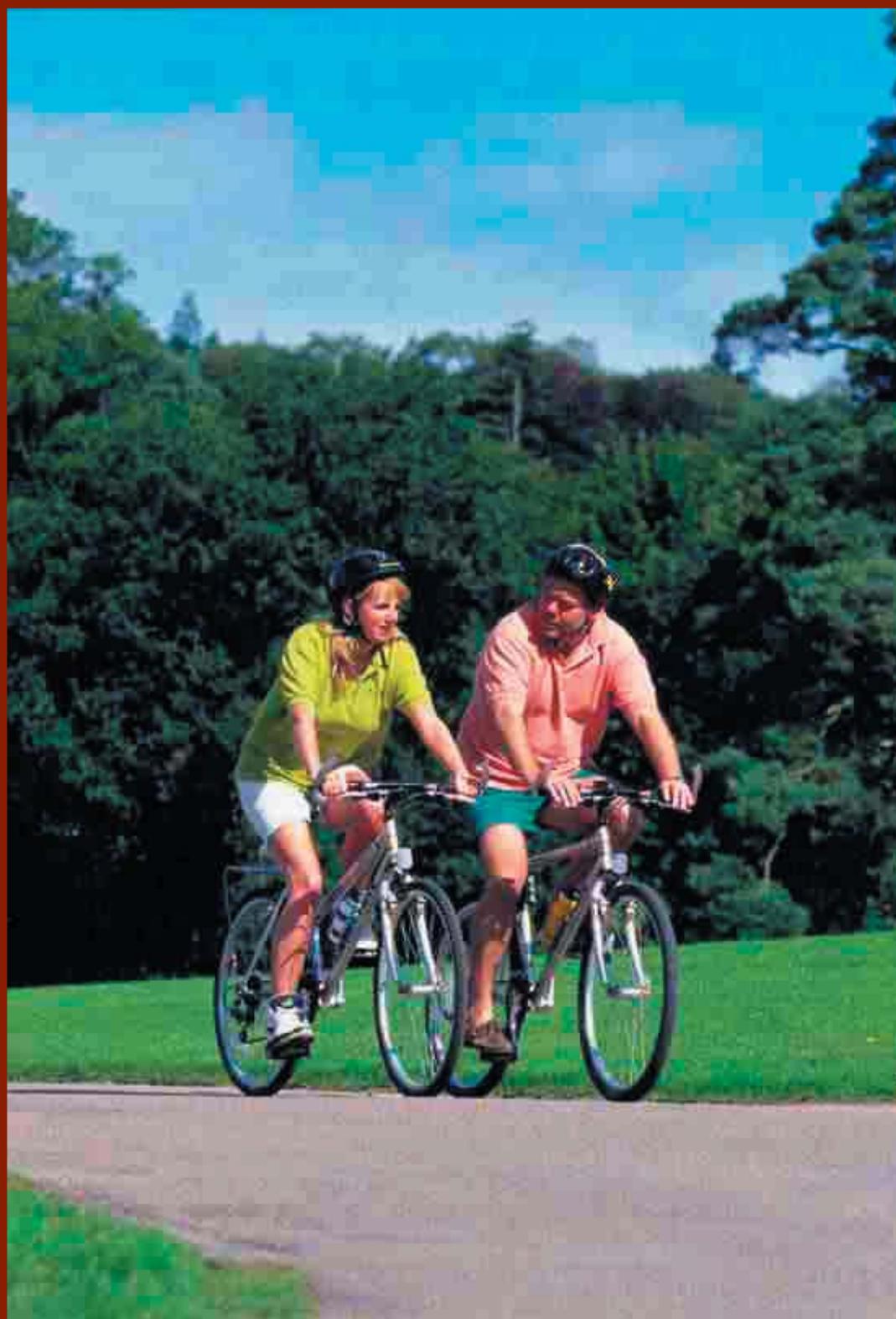
Introduction

Through the production of a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, the Council will promote a network of multi-functional green space with recreational, visual and biodiversity value. The Strategy will identify existing assets in need of protection, and propose action areas and practical measures for the provision and management of all GI. This will help deliver the Council's strategic objective to develop the local economy, while ensuring that growth is accompanied by a sustainable natural environment.

The aim of the GI Strategy is to provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits to the community, including:

- **Safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity**
- **Adapting to climate change**
- **Improving economic prosperity through sustainable development, green tourism and local food production**
- **Creating a low carbon society**
- **Health and wellbeing through improved access to GI**

The Council aims to publish a Draft GI Strategy for public consultation in September 2011. It is envisaged that the Strategy will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in January 2012.



What is Green Infrastructure (GI)?

It is a network of multi-functional green space, which can include parks, gardens, woodland, allotments, footpaths, cemeteries, playing fields and agricultural land, to name only a few. GI also encompasses river systems, ponds and other water environments, sometimes referred to as 'blue infrastructure'.

Green infrastructure can be new or existing, rural or urban, and should form an interconnected environmental network that is vital to the sustainability of any urban area.

Public open space such as parks and play areas are classed as green infrastructure, but not all green infrastructure is public open space. GI should be seen as a much wider environmental, social and economic resource, encompassing both public and privately owned land.



Benefits of Green Infrastructure

- **Biodiversity and nature conservation**

The Green Infrastructure Strategy will consider what flora and fauna exist at present, what is in need of protecting, and opportunities for habitat creation. The GI Strategy will evaluate ways for GI and development to coexist and complement one another, to minimise and mitigate impacts to biodiversity, landscape setting and other aspects of GI.

- **Climate change mitigation and adaptation**

GI can help to mitigate and adapt to climate change through flood attenuation and water management, shading and cooling, and by providing accessible green transport routes as an alternative to car travel. In promoting carbon reduction and more localised ways of living, the GI Strategy will identify opportunities for renewable energy (e.g. wind or solar power), and the conservation and production of low carbon fuels such as coppicing of woodland or growth of oilseed rape.

- **Landscape setting and historic environment**

The Council is carrying out assessments of landscape and settlements within Mid Devon. While this work has its own focus and will not be repeated in the GI Strategy, it will help to identify the main characteristics of the Mid Devon landscape and heritage. This will inform GI policies for protection and improved access, education and ecology.

- **Local food production**

Reducing food miles and benefiting the local economy, the importance of productive farming land as an important GI resource should not be underestimated. A GI Strategy can establish ways of protecting and promoting local farming, while also identifying opportunities and funding for improved biodiversity, sustainable drainage or low carbon technologies on agricultural land.

- **Public health and wellbeing**

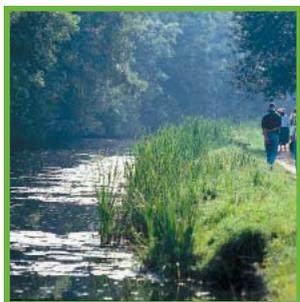
Access to public footpaths and cycle routes, playing fields and recreational open space is an essential aspect of public health and wellbeing. Just the sight of undeveloped land with no public access can also benefit health. High quality and visible green spaces, both in the immediate environment and as part of the surrounding landscape, will improve the attractiveness of new development for investors and the quality of life for the people living and working there.

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Mid Devon

There is no set recipe for the creation or management of GI. In planning for GI within and surrounding new development, the approach must be tailored to the unique circumstances of that place. However, the GI Strategy will identify the broad characteristics of GI in Mid Devon, with more detail on designated 'action areas', including policies for GI protection and enhancement as a basis for decision-making.

While green infrastructure encompasses land which is not necessarily public open space, the provision of play areas, sports fields, allotments and recreational green space is an essential part of any GI Strategy. In producing a GI Strategy, the Council will have regard to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGST) and the Fields in Trust (FIT) Six Acre Standard. These standards suggest maximum distances a person should be expected to travel to access GI of different types, and how much GI should be available per head of population.

In addition to general policy and guidance (see Annex), the GI Strategy will take into account the following local plans and evidence:



A Vision for Green Infrastructure

- Mid Devon Core Strategy, adopted 2007
- Mid Devon Allocations & Infrastructure Development Plan Document, adopted 2010
- Supplementary Planning Document: the provision and funding of open space through development, adopted 2008
- Supplementary Planning Document: Air Quality and Development, adopted 2008
- Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy (consultation draft 2011)
- Mid Devon Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape Character Assessment 2007 (to be replaced by 2011 version)
- Town & Village Character Assessment (emerging 2011)
- Planning for Renewable Energy 2005 (an assessment of potential for renewable energy in Mid Devon)
- Low Carbon and Low Emissions Strategies 2009
- Crediton Air Quality Action Plan 2006
- Cullompton Air Quality Action Plan 2009
- Mid Devon Infrastructure Plan
- Sustainable Community Strategy for Mid Devon 2010-2015
- Mid Devon Corporate Plan 2010-2015
- Mid Devon Playing Fields Strategy 2010
- Open Space & Play Area Strategy 2006
- Rural Diversification Study 2006 (potential for diversification into non-agricultural economic uses)
- Community Housing Strategy 2010-2015 (consultation draft)
- Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan
- Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan
- Exe Flood Management Plan

Strategic Objectives for the Green Infrastructure Strategy

Four strategic objectives are proposed to give focus to the policies and implementation plan within the Strategy.

Objective 1

To promote sustainable growth and economic development by

- Increasing the attractiveness and quality of new and existing housing and employment land, to add value to development and attract investment
- Encouraging green tourism by providing improved bicycle and pedestrian access to and through the countryside, and enhancements to historic sites, disused railways and the Grand Western Canal.
- Promoting and safeguarding local food production

Objective 3

To adapt to and mitigate climate change by

- Influencing the design of new development in respect of sustainable water management, shading and cooling, onsite renewables and carbon reduction
- Improving flood attenuation and sustainable drainage
- Providing and enhancing green alternatives to unsustainable modes of travel, to encourage a low carbon society
- Promoting renewable energy, low carbon fuels and locally-focused consumerism

Objective 2

To encourage health and wellbeing by

- Enhancing rights of way and cycling networks to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles
- Improving air quality and visual amenity in urban and rural areas
- Improving the quality, availability and accessibility of outdoor sports facilities, play areas, allotments and recreational open space

Objective 4

To improve biodiversity by

- Protecting and enhancing recognised sites of particular biodiversity value
- Creating new habitats
- Improving linkages and connectivity between habitats to address habitat fragmentation and isolation of vulnerable species

Timetable for the Green Infrastructure Strategy

February 2011

Initial consultation with stakeholders
Assess existing green infrastructure in Mid Devon
Refine vision and objectives

March 2011

Identify deficiencies and opportunities for improvement and new provision
Establish priorities or target areas
Assess spatial and policy options

April 2011

Report to Planning Committee on progress of GI Strategy
Explore delivery mechanisms for spatial and policy options

May - July 2011

Develop spatial plan for GI network
Refine draft policies
Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy

August 2011

Planning Committee and Council

September - October 2011

Public consultation (6 weeks)
Produce summary of representations
Statement on how representations have been/will be addressed

November - December 2011

Final draft of Green Infrastructure Strategy

January 2012

Planning Committee and Council
Adoption of Green Infrastructure Strategy as Supplementary Planning Document

Annex

The following bibliography is not an exhaustive list of the guidance and information surrounding green infrastructure planning, but identifies the main documents to be used in the production of the Mid Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy.

- **Planning Policy Statement 12** – creating strong safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning, CLG, June 2008.
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- **Planning Policy Guidance 17** – planning for open space, sport and recreation, CLG, July 2002.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningpolicyguidance17>
- **Assessing Needs & Opportunities:** a companion guide to PPG17. CLG May 2002.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/assessingneeds>
- **Green Infrastructure Guidance, Natural England 2009.**
<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/NE176>
- **North West Green Infrastructure Guide Version 1:1,** North West Green Infrastructure Think Tank, 2008.
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<http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/open-space-strategies.pdf>
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