

**Green Networks and Infrastructure
Background Paper**

Wycombe District Council

July 2011



Introduction

1. This paper sets out the background to the identification of the Green Infrastructure Network in Wycombe District
2. *“Green Infrastructure provides a vital life-support system, encompassing a network of green spaces, access routes, landscapes and natural and historic elements that intersperse and connect Buckinghamshire’s urban and rural settlements with each other and the surrounding countryside. Operating at all spatial scales it enables a holistic overview of the natural and historic environment, acknowledging its multi-functional benefits for economy, wildlife and health and well being of local people and communities”.*
3. This definition of Green Infrastructure was agreed by the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium (of which WDC is a member) and published in the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy in April 2009
4. A key feature of Green Infrastructure (GI) is its multi-functionality. The Wycombe District GI Network is made up of existing and proposed multi-functional green spaces and green links, both public and private assets, with and without public access, and in both urban and rural locations. These green spaces and links contribute to the high quality natural and built environment required for existing and future sustainable communities resilient to the effects of climate change in the long term.
5. The network highlights the potential for improvement to green spaces and links, for example to enhance movement opportunities for wildlife and people. Using a network approach enables a holistic overview of the natural and historic environment, its benefits for economy, wildlife and the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Core Policy Framework

6. The adopted WDC Core Strategy sets the context for our approach to green infrastructure in the following policies:

Policy CS 17 (Environmental Assets) requires the identification, retention and enhancement of Green Infrastructure assets.

Policy CS 19 (Raising the Quality of Place Shaping and Design) requires appropriate provision to be made for Open Space.

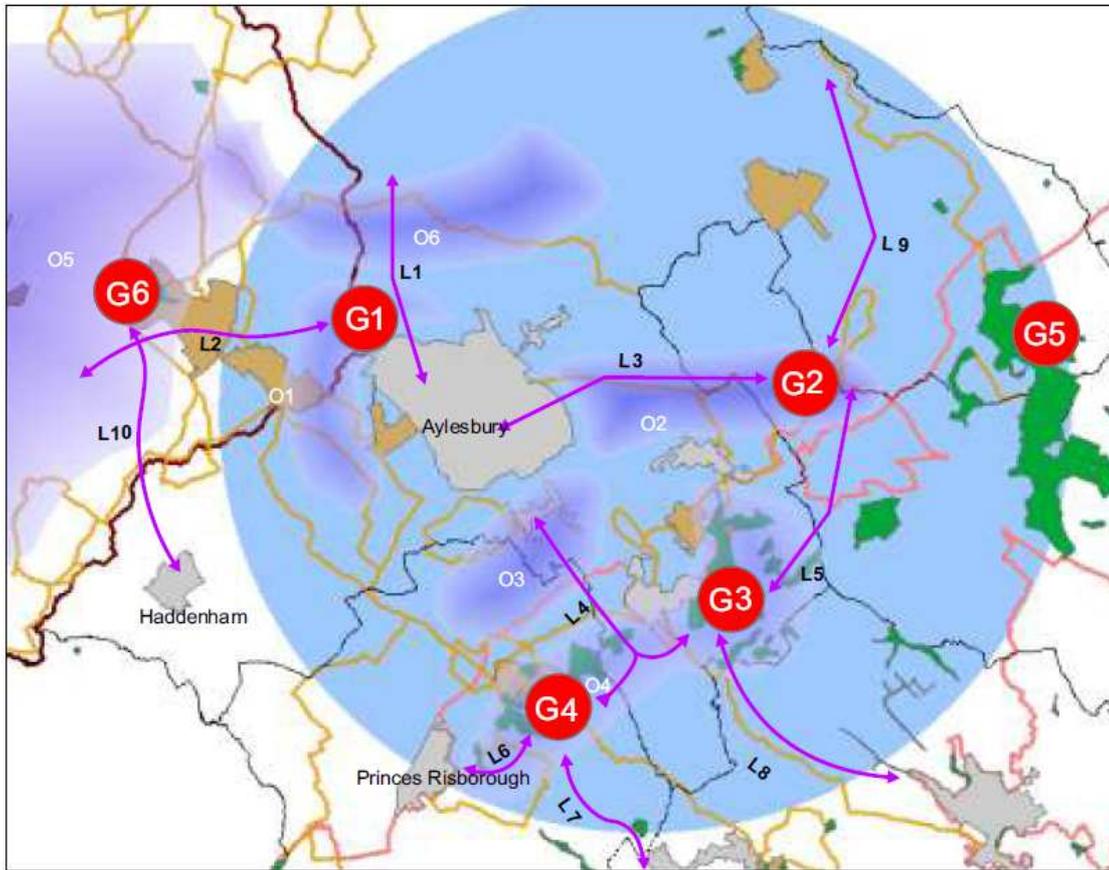
Policy CS20 (Transport and Infrastructure) requires the provision of safe, convenient and attractive access on foot and by cycle and connections with existing footways, bridleways, cycleways, local facilities and public transport.

7. Green Infrastructure extends across all spatial scales, from the regional to the local. At a sub regional/county scale Green Infrastructure is being addressed by the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium, which is a multi-agency forum working to plan and deliver strategic Green Infrastructure at the county level. The 2009 Strategy for Buckinghamshire identifies several opportunities within Wycombe District in two Priority Action Areas:

Priority Action Area 2 (Aylesbury Environs) see Figure 1

Countryside Access Gateway G4 (Bacombe and Coombe Hills)
Access Link L6 (Princes Risborough to Bacombe, Coombe and Whiteleaf Hills)
Access Link L7 (Bacombe, Coombe and Whiteleaf Hills to Amersham)
Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zones O4 (Chiltern Escarpment)

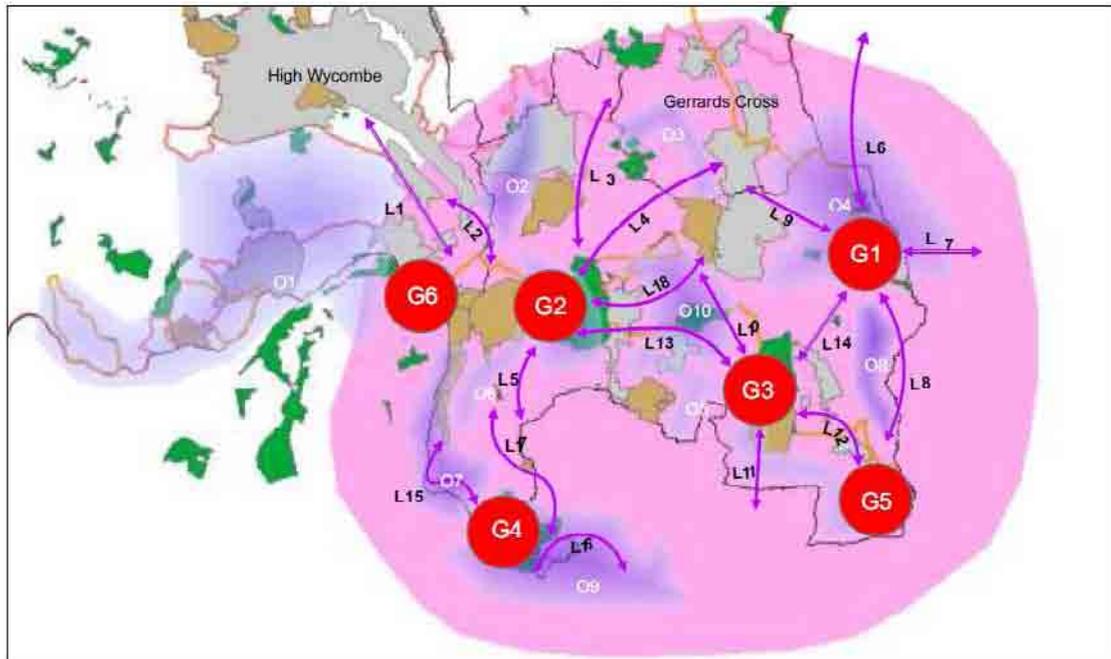
Figure 1 Priority Action Area 2 (Aylesbury Environs)



Priority Action Area 3 (Wycombe District South and South Bucks) see Figure 2

Access Link L1 (High Wycombe to Bourne End)
Access Link L2 (Wooburn to Burnham Beeches)
Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zone O1 (Little Marlow Gravel Pits)

Figure 2 Priority Action Area 3 (Wycombe District South and South Bucks)



8. At a district scale Green Infrastructure is being addressed by the identification of a Green Infrastructure Network which includes public parks, river corridors, public rights of way, cycle routes, playing fields, informal green spaces, woodland and former railway corridors. It will provide suitable and sufficient green spaces for recreation, amenity and biodiversity purposes, connected by a series of green links that provide attractive, convenient routes for both wildlife and people.
9. The methodology for identifying the Wycombe District Green Infrastructure Network reflects that proposed for Parish & Town Green Infrastructure plans. This approach is being promoted by the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium.
10. The Green Infrastructure Network is based on mapping of the five key themes listed below (see table 1). Only areas that comprise two or more of the elements within these themes satisfy the criteria of multifunctionality and have therefore been included in the Green Infrastructure Network.

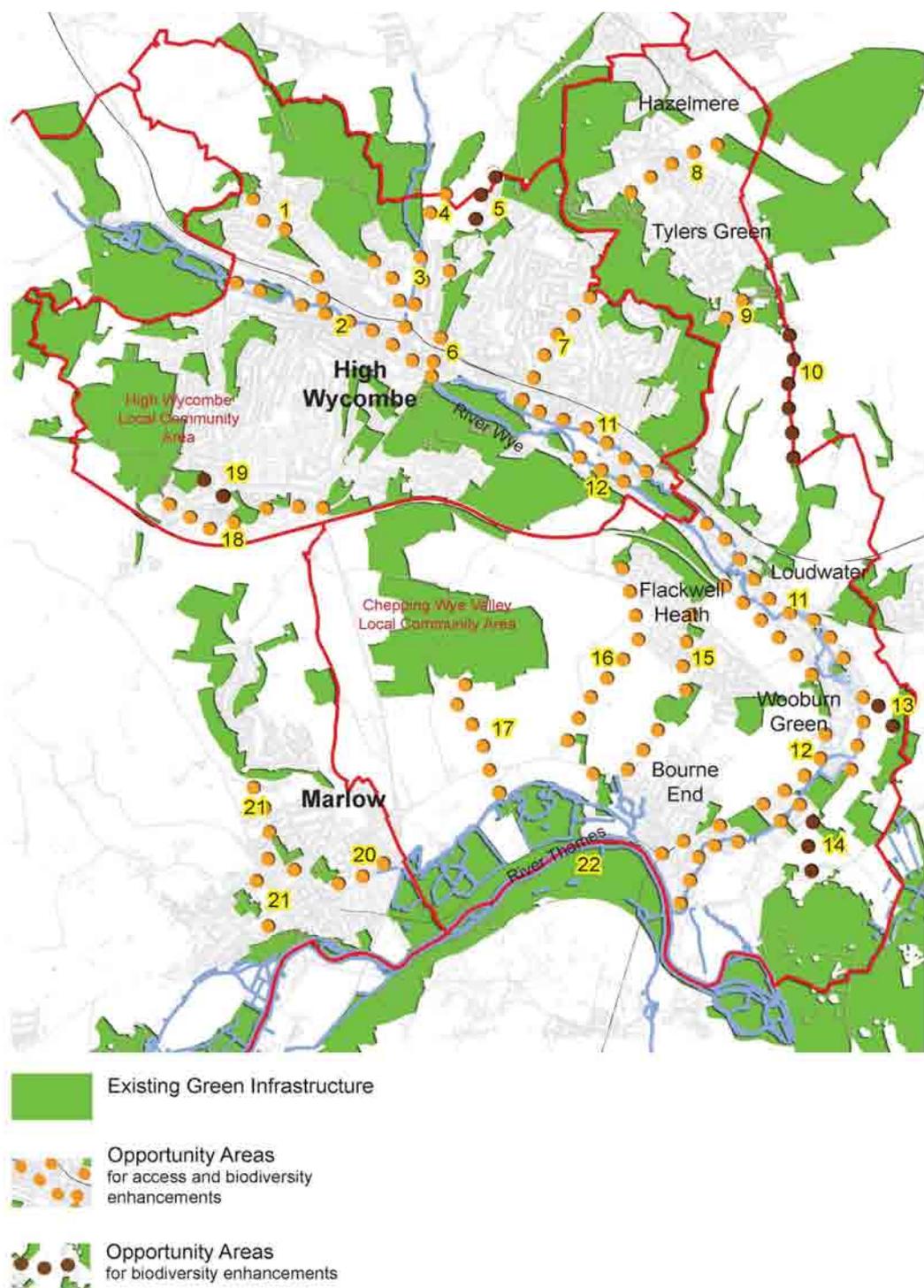
Table 1

Key Themes	Elements
Landscape	Eg. Private and public woodland, open countryside, river corridors
Biodiversity	Eg. Statutory and non-statutory nature conservation designations, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas as well as other important habitats
Historic Environment	Eg. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest
Public Open Space	Eg. Greenspace, Incidental Open Space and other areas identified in various open space studies including the Council's Open Spaces Framework
Access	Eg. cycle ways, Public Rights of Way and former railway corridors.

11. Policy CS2 of the Adopted Core Strategy identifies areas within Wycombe District where new development will be principally focussed. These are High Wycombe

and the adjoining settlements of Downley, Hazlemere/Widmer End/Tyler's Green, Loudwater and Wooburn Green. These areas are located within the High Wycombe and Chepping Wye Valley Local Community Areas and it is in these areas where the identification, protection and enhancement of a local Green Infrastructure Network has been prioritised (see Figure 3). In the long term the network will be defined district-wide.

Figure 3 High Wycombe and Chepping Wye Valley Local Community Areas - Green Infrastructure Network



12. The Green Infrastructure Network includes numbered Opportunity Areas which have been identified where there is a potential to enhance green links between existing areas of Green Infrastructure. These green links already have one of the elements from the five themes listed above but are not multifunctional and therefore require further enhancement for them to be included as Green Infrastructure. These green links can be enhanced by creating, for example, a walking/cycling route along a river, an open space alongside an existing public footpath or a wildlife habitat within an existing open space. It is within these Opportunity Areas that new development will be expected to focus on enhancement of the Green Infrastructure Network for instance by increasing their number of elements.

13. A table has been produced below, which lists each of the Opportunity Areas, briefly describes their condition in GI terms and identifies what scope there is for enhancement to increase their functionality and therefore their contribution to the Wycombe GI Network. This table is seen as being the first step towards producing a strategy and action plan to identify and programme future improvements.

14. Key strategic areas with potential for Green Infrastructure enhancements identified at this stage are:

- former High Wycombe to Bourne End railway corridor (Opportunity Area 12)
- River Wye corridor from Desborough through to Bourne End (Opportunity Areas 2,11 and 12)
- Hughenden valley corridor (Opportunity Area 3)
- Little Marlow Gravel Pits (Opportunity Area 22)

Opportunity Area	Existing	Scope for Enhancement
1	Some disconnected PROW and greenspaces	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and gardens and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor
2	Existing route of River Wye. Culverted in parts.	Access: increase public access alongside river. Biodiversity: enhance habitat along river in line with targets set out in Chalk Rivers Biodiversity Opportunity Area
3	Some lengths of disconnected PROW and greenspaces	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor. Enhance habitat along river in line with targets set out in Chalk Rivers Biodiversity Opportunity Area
4	Continuous PROW	Access: possible enhancements to PROW if required Biodiversity: enhance planting along field boundary in line with targets set out in Hughenden Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area
5	Continuous PROW and some disconnected greenspaces	Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and gardens and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor in line with targets in Upper Hughenden Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area
6	Some disconnected PROW and greenspaces and other vegetation	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor
7	Some disconnected PROW and greenspaces	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and gardens and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor

8	Some disconnected PROW and greenspaces. Some well vegetated gardens in places.	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and gardens and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor
9	Continuous PROW	Access: possible enhancements to PROW if required Biodiversity: provide and enhance garden and street planting to provide wildlife corridor in line with targets in Gomm Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area
10	Continuous PROW and some disconnected vegetation	Biodiversity: Enhance and extend existing habitats to create wildlife corridor in line with Gomm Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area
11	Some existing PROW but mostly disconnected from river. Limited vegetation associated with river.	Access: extend public access to river environment. Biodiversity: Provide and enhance riverside habitats in line with targets in Chalk Rivers Biodiversity Opportunity Area
12	Continuous PROW although sometimes disconnected from river. Continuous PROW along former railway line. Some recent creation of riverside open space and habitats and some disconnected lengths of vegetation.	Access: increase amount of PROW and public access to riverside and upgrade PROW to include cycleway Biodiversity: enhance existing and create new habitats along length of route to create wildlife corridor. In parts that fall within Chalk Rivers Biodiversity Opportunity Area enhance and increase amount of riverside habitat in line with targets for those areas.
13	Continuous PROW	Biodiversity: enhance field boundary vegetation in vicinity of PROW to provide wildlife corridor

14	Existing PROW. Some disconnected areas of greenspace and woodland.	Biodiversity: enhance existing and create new habitats along length of route to create wildlife corridor
15	Disconnected PROW. Disconnected but significant areas of garden and field boundary vegetation. Some disconnected greenspaces	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route. Dedicated walking and cycling facilities to be provided in section between Coldmoorholme Lane and Station Rd as part of Round Wycombe Walking & Cycling Network Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces, gardens and streets and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor
16	Disconnected PROW??? Some disconnected lengths of vegetation.	Access: enhance existing PROW and connect to provide continuous route Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces, gardens and streets and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor
17	Continuous PROW. Some disconnected vegetation and areas of greenspace	Access: clearer signage required in vicinity of farm Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces and provide additional planting, particularly on field boundaries, to create continuous wildlife corridor
18	Some PROW and some on road access. Disconnected greenspaces and garden vegetation	Access: incorporate more off road PROW where possible Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces, gardens and streets and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor
19	Some PROW and some on road access. Disconnected greenspaces and garden vegetation	Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces, gardens and streets and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor

20	Some PROW and some on road access. Disconnected greenspaces and garden vegetation	Access: incorporate more off road PROW where possible. Dedicated walking and cycling facilities to be provided in vicinity of allotment gardens and Rookery Gardens as part of Round Wycombe Walking & Cycling Network Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces, gardens and streets and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor.
21	Some PROW and some on road access. Disconnected greenspaces and garden vegetation	Access: incorporate more off road PROW where possible. Biodiversity: enhance wildlife habitats in existing greenspaces, gardens and streets and provide additional planting to create continuous wildlife corridor.
22	Some PROW and permissive paths. Existing extensive areas of greenspace	Access: enhance and extend existing PROW to create circular or linking footpaths and cycleways for both recreational and utility purposes and create good links to longer distance routes such as the Thames Path, the Chiltern Way and Shakespeare's Way. Refer to the Sustrans national cycleway route between High Wycombe and Maidenhead, the Round Wycombe Walking & Cycling Network and the Little Marlow Gravel Pits Supplementary Planning Guidance and to involve the County Councils Rights of Way and Access Group and the Little Marlow Gravel Pits Community Partnership. Biodiversity: enhance existing wildlife habitats and create new habitats, linking with the wider Thames corridor. In parts that fall within Thames Valley County Biodiversity Opportunity Area, enhance and increase amount of riverside habitat in line with targets for that area.

Access: Additions/upgrades to PROW's to be in line with requirements of Rights of Way Improvement Plan BCC
Additions/upgrades to cycle network to be in line with requirements of the Round Wycombe Walking & Cycling Network
WDCBiodiversity: Creation/enhancement of habitats supported by South East Biodiversity Strategy and should reflect targets in both regional Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and emerging local Biodiversity Opportunity Areas