

## Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure

B.274 Green infrastructure comprises the network of green spaces and features in both urban and rural areas including the following: parks and gardens (including historic parks and gardens), natural and semi-natural green space, green corridors (including cycleways and rights of way), outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space, children's play space, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, accessible countryside in urban fringe areas, river and canal corridors, woodlands, nature reserves, green roofs and walls.



B.275 Securing adequate green infrastructure is an important component of achieving sustainable communities. Green Infrastructure networks can deliver both environmental and social benefits including conserving and enhancing biodiversity, recreation, landscape, water management, social and cultural benefits to underpin individual health and well-being, contributing to local distinctiveness and helping communities to be more resilient to the effects of climate change. Policy ESD 17 will be used to secure an adequate green infrastructure network in Cherwell District.

B.276 Many sites which contribute to the District's green infrastructure network are not in the Council's ownership or control and partnership working will therefore be required to plan, provide and manage the network to achieve the objectives of the policy.

B.277 Within Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington the key components of green infrastructure are areas of open space, sport and recreation, sometimes linked by public rights of way. Public rights of way are protected in law and comprise four types: footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic (BOAT). The County Council has responsibility for Public Rights of Way, and as such publishes a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and promotes routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders in order to encourage sustainable access to the countryside. In recognition of the health benefits of walking, cycling and horse riding this Council also promotes a number of circular walks and rides. Elsewhere in the District the dominant strategic features include the River Cherwell and Oxford Canal corridors, statutory designated sites such as Local Nature Reserves, and other areas such as RSPB Otmoor reserve and BBOWT reserves. The Conservation Target Areas (indicated on the Policies Map) are the most important areas for biodiversity in the District where targeted conservation action will have the greatest benefit, and form an important component of the green infrastructure network of the District which can be enhanced over the period of the plan.

B.278 Assessments of open space, sport and recreation provision highlighted various deficiencies in both urban and rural areas of the District, as detailed in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'. In addition an assessment by Natural England and the Forestry Commission indicated a lack of

accessible natural green space provision in the district compared to their standards, with 72% of Cherwell's households meeting none of its requirements. This reflects the relatively low numbers of country parks and common land in the District; however there are a number of smaller areas of open space, and countryside which is accessible solely by Public Rights of Way, which was not taken into account in the initial Natural England analysis. The District has developed its own local standards of provision in accordance with government advice, which differ from those advocated by Natural England. Other than provision in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington there are few accessible large areas of green space within the District; however parks such as Blenheim, Rousham and Stowe are located in close proximity to it. The Council's proposed country park to the north of Banbury will also help to address this issue.

B.279 Protection and enhancement of open space, sport and recreation sites and sites of importance to nature conservation will assist in maintaining the green infrastructure network. Green corridors consist of canals, river corridors and hedgerows, together with public rights of way. These can provide areas for walking, cycling and horse riding and also provide opportunities for wildlife migration, which on a strategic scale can help to address the impact of climate change on biodiversity. Development proposals will be expected to retain and enhance existing green corridors, and maximise the opportunity to form new links between existing open spaces.

B.280 Development proposals, particularly on larger sites, can offer the opportunity to improve the green infrastructure network. Policy BSC 11 usually requires open space provision on site and biodiversity enhancements secured by 'Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment' can contribute to the network by maintaining existing habitats and reducing fragmentation. The incorporation of sustainable drainage systems can contribute to green infrastructure provision and can perform dual roles of helping to alleviate flooding and being beneficial to biodiversity. New landscaping areas, particularly in the case of the strategic sites, will be required to assimilate development into the landscape and assist in the transition between the urban edge and rural areas. Effective links in these areas can enable the urban fringe to provide a recreational resource, providing accessible countryside within walking distance of urban dwellers. Proposals should include details of management and maintenance of green infrastructure to ensure areas are secured in perpetuity. Further guidance on green infrastructure provision is provided in the South East Green Infrastructure Framework - from Policy to Practice (available at <http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk>).

B.281 In Banbury and Bicester successive local plans have sought to establish a series of open spaces in the towns, and this plan includes proposals for a new country park in Banbury ('Policy Banbury 14: Cherwell Country Park'). Additional detail is contained under Section C: 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'. The key open space components of existing green infrastructure provision in Banbury and Bicester are shown on the maps for each town (Appendix 5: Maps). Green infrastructure provision will be examined in more detail and progressed through the town masterplans and the Local Plan Part 2. A county level Green Infrastructure Strategy is also being formulated with the District Council being represented on the stakeholder working group.

B.282 South of the Canalside development (Policy Banbury 1) the opportunity exists to turn part of the existing floodplain of the River Cherwell into a managed habitat. This will be explored in more detail through the preparation of the Banbury Masterplan.

### **Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure**

The District's green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced through the following measures:

- Pursuing opportunities for joint working to maintain and improve the green infrastructure network, whilst protecting sites of importance for nature conservation
- Protecting and enhancing existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network and improving sustainable connectivity between sites in accordance with policies on supporting a modal shift in transport (Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections), open space, sport and recreation (Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision), adapting to climate change (Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change), SuDS (Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), biodiversity and the natural environment (Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment), Conservation Target Areas (Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas), heritage assets (Policy ESD 15) and the Oxford Canal (Policy ESD 16)
- Ensuring that green infrastructure network considerations are integral to the planning of new development. Proposals should maximise the opportunity to maintain and extend green infrastructure links to form a multi-functional network of open space, providing opportunities for walking and cycling, and connecting the towns to the urban fringe and the wider countryside beyond
- All strategic development sites (Section C: 'Policies for Cherwell's Places') will be required to incorporate green infrastructure provision and proposals should include details for future management and maintenance.