Towards a Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire

supporting the resilience of our communities, businesses & wildlife in a changing world

Overview of Emerging Strategy

Wiltshire Council

Key messages

Our rich and varied natural and historic environment makes Wiltshire an attractive place: it enhances our quality of life, improves physical and mental health, and underpins our economy.

Wiltshire's natural environment is undergoing substantial changes driven by factors including population growth, development and climate change.

A multi-functional network of connected and high-quality green and blue infrastructure assets underpin Wiltshire's natural capital, providing a range of ecosystem services that are of economic, social and environmental benefit for communities, businesses and visitors.

The Strategy sets out a high-level vision and framework for improvement of the network by a range of partners and stakeholders, working together at a variety of scales.

It identifies strategic priorities and opportunities for delivering green and blue infrastructure improvements in Wiltshire, including local opportunities to support sustainable development in and around settlements where growth is planned while adapting to climate change.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy provides a framework for informing and supporting the delivery of a range of the Council's strategies and plans, including the Wiltshire Local Plan.

The Vision for Wiltshire's Green & Blue Infrastructure

Wiltshire's multi-functional network of high quality, biodiverse and accessible green and blue infrastructure is widely valued by our communities, businesses and visitors.

Managed sustainably through strong leadership and partnerships, the green and blue infrastructure network provides a range of well-being benefits for people, places and nature across Wiltshire.

As a result of working with natural processes to support delivery of multi-functional ecosystem services, Wiltshire is better able to adapt to a changing climate and support the resilience of our regional biodiversity.

Networks of green and blue spaces and corridors in the countryside and our towns support access to nature and healthy lifestyles and provide high quality landscapes and beautiful places for people to live, work and visit.

What is green & blue infrastructure?

Green infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and '**blue infrastructure**' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies.

Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as **ecosystem services**.

Planning Practice Guidance on the Natural Environment (paras 004/005)

Strengthening networks of multi-functional green and blue infrastructure has an important role to play in nature recovery, building resilience to climate change and promoting healthy, resilient and safe communities.

In the context of the global climate emergency, biodiversity loss and the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, investment in the provision of high quality, biodiverse and accessible green and blue infrastructure has never been more vital.

Ecosystem services

REGULATING SERVICES
- Water, Air & Soil Quality
- Climate & Hazard Control
- Pest & Disease Control
- Pollination

PROVISIONING SERVICES
- Food
- Fresh Water
- Building Materials
- Energy & Fuel

CULTURAL SERVICES
- Spiritual Enrichment
- Cultural Heritage
- Recreation & Tourism
- Wellbeing

SUPPORTING SERVICES
- Soil Production
- Plant Growth
- Nutrient & Water Cycling

Green & Blue Infrastructure Networks

BUILDINGS

CONNECTIONS
- Footpaths
- Cycling routes
- Green corridors

ASSETS
- Green roofs
- Green walls
- Gardens or grounds
- Rainwater collection systems
- Driveways (permeable)
- Trellises/pergolas

STREETS

CONNECTIONS
- Footpaths
- Cycling routes
- Green corridors
- Blue corridors

ASSETS
- Boundary features (hedges)
- Street trees
- Grass verges
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (e.g. swales)
- Porous paving

NEIGHBOURHOODS

CONNECTIONS
- Greenways and trails
- Footpaths
- Cycling routes
- Active travel routes
- Green corridors
- Blue corridors

ASSETS
- Amenity greenspaces
- Public parks & gardens
- Play areas
- Allotments & community growing spaces
- Playing fields, sports pitches
- Cemeteries & churchyards
- Swales, reeds
- Urban woodlands
- Ponds
- Water courses
- Urban nature reserves

WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

ASSETS
- Historic parks and gardens
- Country parks
- Forests & woodlands
- Downland, grasslands & heathland
- World Heritage Sites
- Community woodlands
- Nature reserves
- Farmland

Shaping the strategy

The draft Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy was shaped in consultation with local nature, health and enterprise partnerships and neighbouring authorities.

The Strategy is supported by an evidence base and has links to planning guidance on green and blue infrastructure and settlement frameworks.

The Strategy was also shaped by, and reflects, the government's approach to delivering environmental protection and sustainable development in the context of UN goals.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

1 NO POVERTY
2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Wiltshire GBI Strategy

- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- National Pollinator Strategy
- Environment Bill
- Agriculture Bill
- UK 25-Year Environment Plan
- National Design Guide

Supporting local policy

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy has a key role to play in supporting delivery of the Council's Business Plan, Climate Strategy and Local Plan - in addition to a range of other partnership-based plans.

Wiltshire Landscape Strategy

Local GI Asset Plans

Catchment Plans

Neighbourhood Plans

Flood Risk Management Strategy

Wiltshire GBI Strategy

Wiltshire Community Plan

Wiltshire Climate Strategy

Wiltshire Council Business Plan

Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Swindon & Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy

Wiltshire Local Plan

Wiltshire Open Space Study

Wiltshire Minerals & Waste Plans

Wiltshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy

Wiltshire Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy

Wiltshire Tree & Woodland Planting Strategy

Wiltshire Transport Plan

Wiltshire Air Quality Strategy & Action Plan

Wiltshire Countryside Access Plan

Defining green & blue infrastructure

The Strategy considers Green & Blue Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities at two scales.

At the Wiltshire-wide level, three main elements form the backbone of the Strategic Network.

Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Sites

- Biodiversity Sites
- Priority Habitats
- Woodland
- Historic Environment Designations

Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Corridors

1. Thames Corridor
2. Bristol Avon Corridor
3. Kennet Corridor
4. Hampshire Avon Corridor
5. Test & Itchen Corridor
6. Stour Corridor

Sub-Regional Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure

A. Cotswolds
B. North Wessex Downs
C. Salisbury Plain
D. Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs
E. New Forest

This Network provides a framework for prioritising strategic action and investment by partners working together at a landscape-scale across Wiltshire and beyond.

Wiltshire's Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Network

Strategic GBI Sites
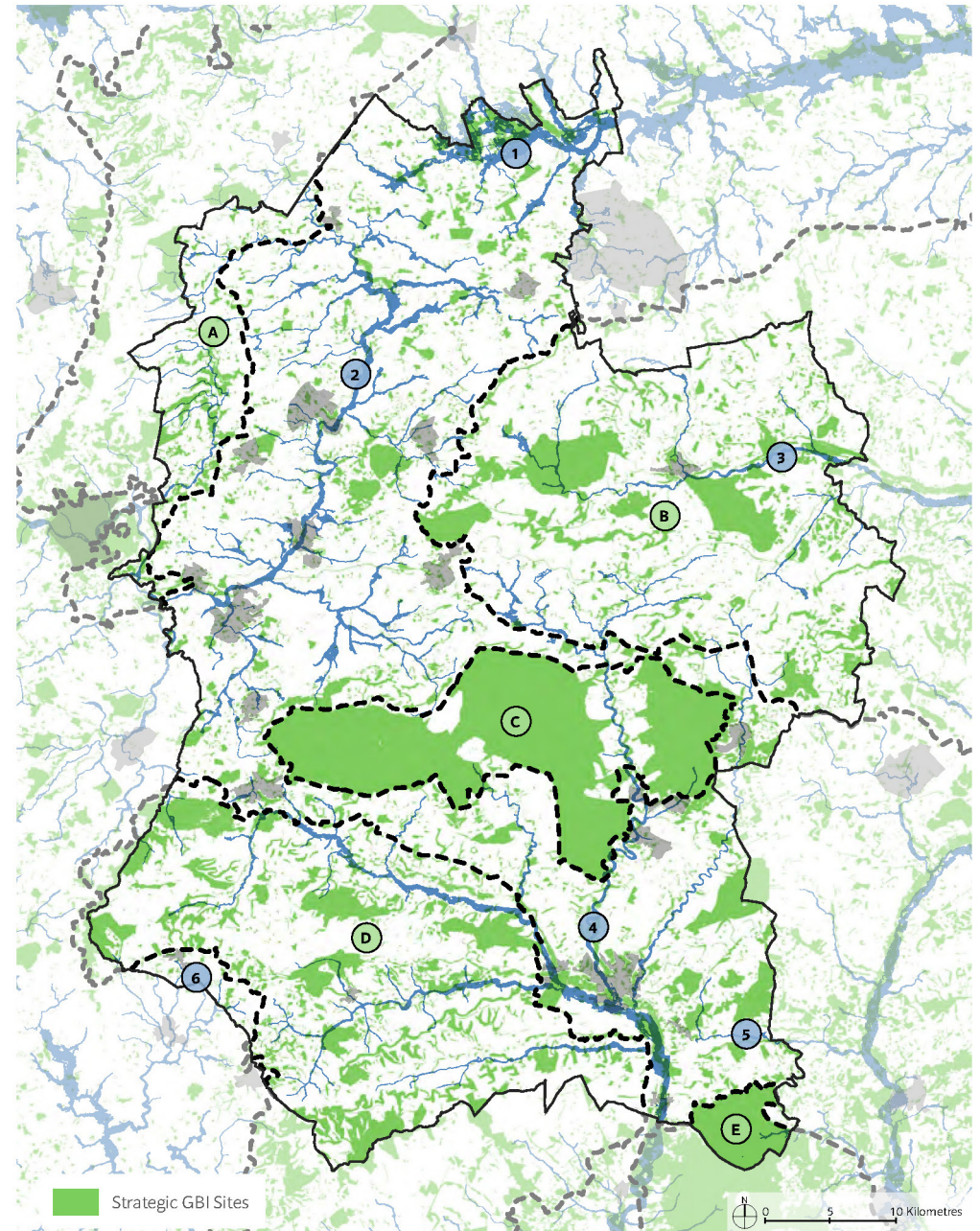
Defining green & blue infrastructure

In addition to looking at landscape-scale opportunities, the Strategy also focusses on areas identified for growth in the Local Plan to 2036.

The Settlement Frameworks & Planning Guidelines highlight key needs, opportunities and good practice principles for improving **Local Green & Blue Infrastructure Networks** in and around towns to support sustainable growth.

As well as supporting the Local Plan's place-making approach in growth areas, the Frameworks also provide a tool to help inform prioritisation of local Green & Blue Infrastructure projects by town and parish councils.

Local Settlement Frameworks
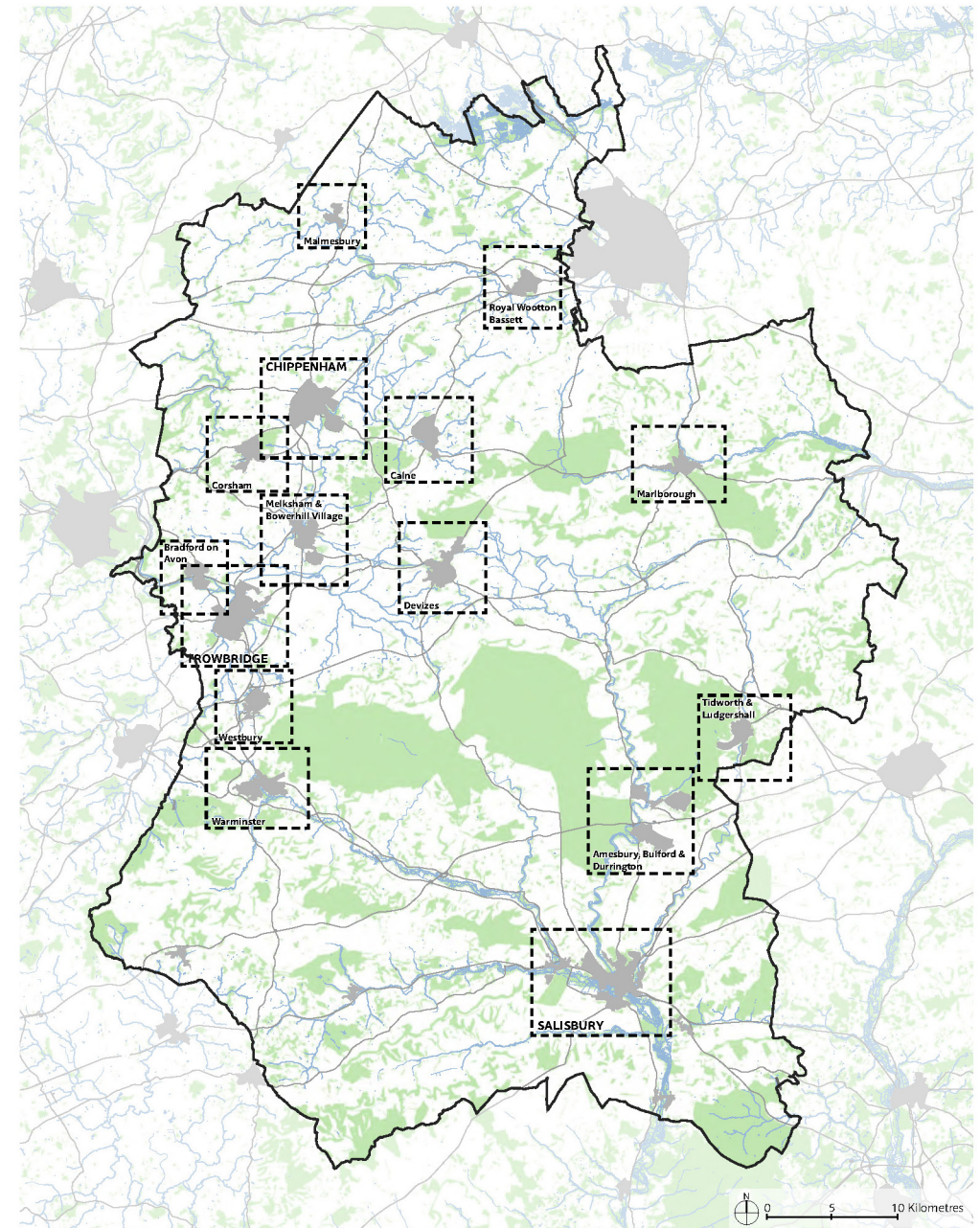
Our shared vision and goals

The Green & Blue Infrastructure vision in a nutshell

- **More & bigger GBI** – creating new GBI assets to protect, enhance and expand what we already have.
- **Better, higher quality GBI** – improved and well-managed, resilient and multifunctional GBI Networks
- **Joined up & better connected GBI** – networks that link people and wildlife throughout our towns and countryside.

Goal 1
Adaptation & resilience to climate change

By 2036, we will have increased our ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change through adoption of nature-based solutions...

Working in partnership, we will do this by:

- Contributing to national targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions (including from land use, land use change, the agriculture and waste sectors).
- Implementing climate change adaptation, resilience and management strategies.
- Reducing risks of harm from natural hazards through adoption of natural flood and water management approaches alongside traditional grey infrastructure.
- Improving air quality in locations that fail to meet national standards, thereby contributing to national targets to reduce effects of air pollution on people and wildlife.
- Contributing to national targets for reducing over-abstraction of water, and meeting water quality objectives for biodiversity and drinking water.

Goal 2
Halting loss of & improving biodiversity

By 2036, we will have gained a more biodiverse and resilient ecological network in Wiltshire...

Working in partnership, we will do this by:

- Helping to restore our terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.
- Creating or restoring wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network, focusing on priority habitats as part of a wider set of land management changes providing extensive benefits.
- Taking action to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species of animals, plants and fungi, and where possible to prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species.
- Increasing carbon storage capacity of woodlands in England in line with the Government's 25-year Environment Plan aspiration of 12% woodland cover by 2060 in England involving planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042.

Goal 3
Contributing to health & well-being

By 2036, we will have increased the health and well-being benefits of access to nature, and improved the sustainable use and health of our natural resources...

Working in partnership, we will do this by:

- Safeguarding and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty and character of our landscapes to enhance a sense of place and support the local economy.
- Help make sure that there are high quality, accessible green spaces close to where people live and work, particularly to help adapt to climate change in urban areas.
- Encouraging more people to be active outdoors, participate in active travel opportunities and get involved with community food growing.
- Empowering communities to get more involved in the management and protection of local GBI, taking ownership of local GBI assets and managing them for the benefit of the whole community where necessary.
- Improving our approach to sustainable soil, food and forestry management.
- Enhancing biosecurity measures to protect our wildlife and livestock, boost the resilience of plants and trees to pests and diseases and tackle invasive non-native species.

Our key priorities for action

The Strategy will need to be flexible and evolve as things change. However, we have identified some immediate priorities**.**

1. **Creating more and better green spaces in our towns** to help prevent flooding and attract people to live, work and invest in the area.

2. **Planting the right trees in the right places** to provide vital shade during heatwaves, encourage wildlife and improve air quality.

3. **Supporting walking and cycling** to reduce congestion, improve our health and wellbeing, and connect us to nature.

4. **Encouraging environmentally sensitive farming** in ways that enhance soil quality and encourage wildlife, produce food and provide employment.

5. **Supporting energy-efficient and resilient developments** to save people money, provide warm dry homes and reduce carbon emissions, and to provide an environment that encourages healthy living.

6. **Supporting a green economic recovery** from the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic

7. **Supporting nature recovery** and landscape management

Delivering the vision

The Strategy is the start of a new way of partnership working to achieve the shared vision and goals for Green & Blue Infrastructure.

It is envisaged that action will be focussed around 7 delivery themes.

Delivery themes

- Flooding & Water Management
- Sustainable Farming & Land Management
- Nature Recovery & Landscape Management
- Woodland & Trees
- Healthy Living
- Sustainable Development
- Economic Recovery & Valuing Natural Capital

To help guide future initiatives and decision-making, a set of delivery principles are provided.

Delivery principles

- Partnership Working
- An Integrated Approach
- Goal Oriented and Mainstreamed
- Evidence-led
- Nature-based Solutions
- Planning Principles

The way forward

Through the Strategy, we will:

- Work collaboratively in partnership with land managers, owners and service providers, and Community Area Boards, towards the shared vision for Green & Blue Infrastructure

- Commit to following the common set of principles, priorities and opportunities for strengthening the resilience and connectivity of Wiltshire's Green & Blue Infrastructure networks

- Pool resources to support a planned approach to project delivery and investment

- Identify opportunities to manage our Green & Blue Infrastructure assets more sustainably for the long-term

Governance, funding and monitoring delivery

- Wiltshire Council will play a key leadership role

- A new forum will be established to co-ordinate delivery of this Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy alongside the Climate Strategy

- We will empower communities to take ownership and responsibility for managing local Green & Blue Infrastructure assets

- We will explore opportunities to access a wide range of potential sources of funding to support delivery of our priorities for action

- We will monitor delivery of the Strategy and respond flexibly to changing priorities and opportunities as necessary

Working towards a vision for more, higher quality and better connected multi-functional green and blue infrastructure in Wiltshire...