

Appendix A

Extracts from the Consultation Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy



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1. Introduction

This strategy is concerned with harnessing and sustaining the benefits of the natural environment to support the health, wealth, and wellbeing of local communities. It is about:

- protecting and improving/ (or) wise use of/ the natural environment
- growing a green economy
- reconnecting people and nature
- strengthening local communities
- new ways of working across different sectors

The strategy is designed to provide a framework to guide Council staff and their working partners concerned with social, economic and environmental planning and land use management

2. What is it all about?

The Bath & NE Somerset area benefits from a unique and outstanding natural environment. Where this is linked with good public access and recreational opportunities it provides invaluable assets for developing and supporting healthy, happy and vibrant local communities.

This Strategy is about harnessing and sustaining the full benefits of these assets. It's about improving health and well-being. It is about strengthening and empowering our local communities and local economy. It is about protecting and sustaining our precious places and natural resources. As such it offers cost effective, practical solutions to make a significant contribution to delivering the Councils vision and values.

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a term used to describe the networks of natural spaces and corridors across a given area. GI is made up of a wide range of green assets such as open spaces, parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, street trees, green roofs, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, meadows and grassland playing fields, as well as footpaths, cycleways and waterways. These are the “soft” places and edges of our built

communities and the natural habitats and beautiful landscapes of our rural areas that together quietly control the background to our health and well-being. Historically the important and multiple benefits that these assets can bring to people and society have often been over looked or at best under-valued. The concept of GI and GI planning has been developed to turn this around.

Green infrastructure is about sustaining and managing the natural environment in ways that deliver services essential to quality of life. It is about enabling people be active and to utilise natural spaces. It is about providing the natural infrastructure essential to help people live happier, healthier and more sustainable lives. It is about making our urban and rural landscapes much more permeable to people and wildlife. In order to realise these benefits GI needs to be at the heart of decision making.

Benefits of Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure can take many different forms, can be delivered at many different scales and can have many functions. It offers ways to: protect and enhance ecological networks; prepare for climate change; build economic success; manage flood risk and improve health and wellbeing. It can provide alternative active travel options and quality green spaces for exercise and socialising. It can help to enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness.

So, green infrastructure can deliver a range of natural services that will provide significant environmental, social and economic benefits. These benefits are well documented and include opportunities to:

- mitigate and adapt to existing and future effects of **climate change** through providing shade, sustainable drainage, flood alleviation, green energy and local food production
- support **healthy ecosystems** that provide many essential natural services including clean water and air
- protect and enhance **biodiversity** and create new habitats and wildlife linkages between them, reducing their isolation
- protect and enhance **landscape character**
- protect and enhance **historical and cultural** features including the World Heritage Site
- provide **green travel routes** including, walking and cycling routes, accessible river/canal corridors and green streets

- encourage **healthy lifestyles**
- deliver high quality, multifunctional and connected **open spaces**
- invigorate the **local economy** including natural tourism

Planning for GI

The management, promotion and development of green assets to deliver green infrastructure requires new ways of thinking and working together. This is needed to achieve added value and multiple benefits. It requires strategic thinking, site specific thinking and cross cutting thinking. 'Multifunctionality' is central to the green infrastructure concept and approach and it refers to the potential for one site or location to provide a variety of green infrastructure functions.

A key role of the strategy therefore is to provide a framework to achieve consensus and cooperation across council departments, external organisations and stakeholders. Consensus about what GI assets we have, what GI interventions are needed and about how we can best work together to deliver GI. This consensus will provide new and innovative ways for partners to work together. It will provide value for money by identifying projects that deliver multiple outputs for people and communities.

Working at different scales

Green infrastructure works across many different spatial scales from strategic levels (sub regional and district wide), to local neighbourhood and site specific levels. Strategic GI at the landscape scale provides the wider framework and context required to plan for GI at the more local levels. The strategic approach will enable the identification of the key strategic networks and spaces required to support and sustain the district's natural services and to link effectively with our neighbours. It also allows identification of key strategic projects that could be prioritised to optimise our strategic GI provision. At more local and site specific levels it allows the development and management of the finer grained green space and green assets required to support and invigorate local communities and also to deliver the benefits of strategic GI at a local level

This approach enables an integrated multi-functional network of green space to be developed operating at varying spatial scales, across neighbourhoods, towns and villages, through the urban/rural fringe and into the wider countryside.

Cross boundary working

The strategy for the B&NES area is being developed within the wider context of our neighbouring council areas to ensure that cross-boundary issues are properly addressed. The Council has worked with the other West of England Unitary authorities to develop a GI framework for the West of England area. The framework identifies strategic GI corridors and GI areas. The River Avon / Kennet & Avon Canal corridor is highlighted along with two strategic areas based loosely on the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds AONBs.

The council is also working with Wiltshire, Somerset and Mendips authorities to ensure consistency of approach with emerging GI strategies for these areas.

Collaborative working

Green Infrastructure also cuts across a wide range of agendas and responsibilities of many organisations. Successful outcomes will be very much dependant on a collaborative approach to defining strategy principles and priorities and subsequent delivery. A Strategy Development Workshop was held on 31 March 2011 marking the beginning of the formal process of developing the GI Strategy for the B&NES area. The event included key stakeholders including all of the neighbouring authorities in developing the strategy's direction and priorities (Ref workshop report appendix) .The workshop outputs have been used to inform the strategy. This was followed by consultation and launch events. The strategy has therefore been developed in full consultation with key partners and stakeholders, and wide endorsement of the strategy has been achieved.

Role of the strategy

The B&NES GI strategy provides a long term vision and framework to support the delivery of a well-used, well managed, high quality, multi-functional networks of green corridors and assets at all scales across B&NES and beyond into neighbouring areas.

The strategy provides a set of GI principles, sets out a strategic spatial structure and identifies the need for new working practices, which together will support the delivery of GI across the district and beyond. It

also identifies a number of emerging priority projects. The ambition is to provide a strategy that is a living, targeted document that will enable smarter working between stakeholders.

An overarching priority is to achieve a cultural shift in how decision makers, stakeholders and grey infrastructure delivery agents perceive the value of the natural environment. The concept of GI is firmly supported through national policy and its wide ranging benefits well evidenced. Despite this in practice the natural environment is still undervalued and at worst viewed as a constraint on development. To succeed, this GI strategy needs to affect a cultural shift by working with decision makers and project managers across a wide range of Council services to embed GI into project delivery. The Strategy must also engage the development sector and a key task will be to provide tailor made tools to support the Development Management process to ensure that GI principles are embedded in development proposals of all scales. The Strategy must also engage with local businesses and local people.

3. Strategy Aims

The key purposes of the strategy are to:

- Provide an agreed understanding of Green infrastructure and the aspirations and priorities for a multi-functional network of GI sites and corridors across the B&NES area.
- Provide a framework to guide coordinated delivery of priority projects and themed initiatives, enabling the targeting of limited resources on cost effective, multi output and sustainable solutions.
- Gain endorsement and buy in by all organisations involved in the use and management of natural spaces, providing a single point of reference for delivery by the council and its partners
- Explore/research existing and new delivery mechanisms to enable the network to be appropriately managed and maintained to realise its full potential into the long term
- Facilitate enhancements to the Bath & NE Somerset GI network at all levels.

4. Policy Context

The Government White Paper (June 2011) – the Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, states that:

“A healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustainable economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing”. It *“requires us all to put the value of nature at the heart of decision making”* and supports the development of green infrastructure to achieve this.

The White Paper, Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England, also recognises that the quality of the environment, including the availability of green space and the influence of poor air quality and noise, affects peoples health and wellbeing. The *“utilisation of green space for exercise/health reasons”* is referenced as an indicator in the Department of Health’s, “A public health outcomes framework for England, 2013-2016”.

The importance of green infrastructure is also firmly embodied in the new National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) which states *“Local planning authorities should: set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure”* and also in relation to meeting the challenge of mitigating and adapting to Climate Change.

The overall vision for Bath & NE Somerset is set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2009 to 2026) and is being delivered through a variety of plans and strategies lead by organisations involved in the Partnership. Sustainability is essential to the future development of B&NES and green infrastructure will be key.

The Council’s own vision and values (Jan 2011) *“puts people first and communities at the heart of everything we do”*. The Vision is for a B&NES where everyone fulfils their potential, with lively, active communities and unique places with beautiful surroundings. GI provides an important delivery mechanism towards achieving this vision.

The Local Development Framework, including the Core Strategy, sets out our policies for planning and land use across the B&NES area. Core Strategy policy CP7 on Green Infrastructure sets out a requirement to protect and enhance a strategic GI network across the district and requires development of this GI Strategy. The Core strategy also recognises the River Avon/Kennet and Avon canal corridor as an essential element of the strategic network and this strategy will enable the development of high level aspirations for this key green corridor.

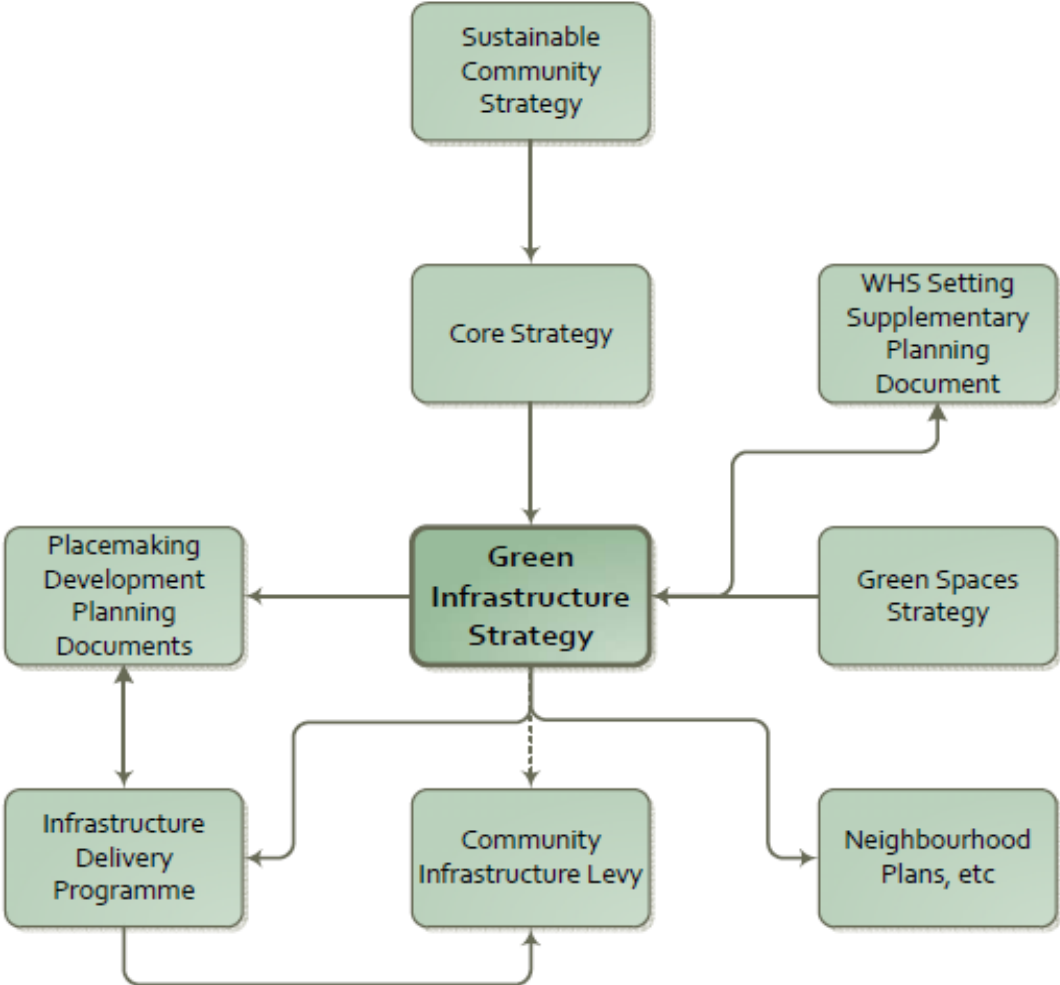
This strategy will inform and support a number of Local Development Framework documents including the Placemaking Plan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IPD) and Community Infrastructure Levy. It will also take forward key aspirations in the Councils Green space Strategy (GSS). This is particularly relevant to GI providing a review of the nature, extent and quality of public green across the district, and areas of deficiency and over supply.

The GSS was adopted in March 2007 and is due to be reviewed and updated in 2013. Whilst there is a need to project forward the likely needs of the growth in population to 2026, as contained in the Core Strategy, the standards for green space included in the GSS are still valid and are incorporated into the broader GI Strategy.

These key policy inter-relationships are summarised on **Diagram 1** below

Other related strategies include the Cultural Strategy (2011- 26), World Heritage Management plan and the Public Realm and Movement Strategy. A full list is included in **Appendix B**.

Diagram 1



5. Vision for GI across B&NES

By 2026 the council and its partners have worked with the community to provide a well-used and expanding network of green infrastructure to realise a wealth of benefits for people, wildlife and the local economy and thereby contributing to making Bath & NE Somerset a place where:

- The local communities are connected through/to/by a network of green spaces and corridors which provide attractive spaces for play, recreation, relaxation, reflection, education and growing food.
- Local people are proud of this green network and people of all ages use it regularly for healthy exercise and so benefit from improved physical and mental health.
- Wildlife is thriving within urban areas, along the natural corridors and throughout the open countryside. The quality and integrity of the exceptional landscape and built heritage is valued and respected.
- The local economy and its workers continue to benefit from the high quality natural and built environment. A growing sector of green tourism respects and makes use of the area's natural and historic assets
- A well connected, signed and promoted network of green travel routes is well used by the community and visitors to travel throughout B&NES and into neighbouring areas.
- The river/canal corridors are recognised and valued as key green corridors through the district and beyond. The river Avon / canal corridor has achieved positive ecological potential and supports an increasing number of river related businesses.
- Green infrastructure plays an important role in making the area resilient to climate change. Street trees and urban greening schemes assist in cooling urban areas and natural drainage schemes within the River Avon catchment reduce flood risks.
- The stock of council owned land is well used to fill gaps and deficiencies in the provision of accessible green space and to address habitat connectivity and a growing number of communities are involved in managing their local green spaces
- Well-designed new developments respect and contribute positively to the natural environment and there are an increasing number of green roofs, natural drainage solutions and sustainable surfaces
- More people are involved in community food groups, individual growing plots and allotments, successfully contributing to their own food needs with innovative production methods and models.
- Many people monitor wildlife and are active custodians of a healthy and vibrant natural environment.

6. Strategy principles and delivery objectives

This section sets out the principles that will guide delivery of GI across B&NES. Each principle has a set of delivery objectives that detail what needs to happen to turn the principle into action. The principles include a mix of topic and process related guidelines. The Council is well placed to play a major role in championing GI and making things happen and this is reflected in the first overarching principle below:

The Council will champion GI and make it happen through:

- Working with key partners and stakeholders to establish a managed network of GI across B&NES
- Taking the lead on a number of the strategic GI projects identified through the strategy
- Recognising GI as a key delivery mechanism for the council's visions and values.
- Providing an accessible suite of mapping data and guidance to enable all forward planning and council projects to consider and deliver GI
- A programme of GI training events for members, directors and team leaders

1. GI and promoting the value of the natural environment - provide opportunities to raise public awareness and actively involve the community in benefiting from and caring for the natural environment by

- Clear concise accessible/non-technical documents
- Provide easy and accessible GI mapping information to support communities in neighbourhood planning
- Facilitating active involvement with the natural environment through community based activities and use as an educational resource

2. GI and achieving a Cultural shift - in decision makers, infrastructure delivery agents and development sector by

- Targeted activity to engage the development sector to improve ownership and understanding of the value of GI
- Influence decision makers to embed GI principles in project delivery across all sectors (within Council and without)
- securing some early wins to raise profile of GI working/concept
- Clarity of governance and reporting systems required to deliver GI
- Nominating GI champions across key services and sectors

3. GI delivery through Partnership working within B&NES and cross boundary by:

- Working with neighbouring LAs and bodies to ensure continuity of approach for key strategic GI assets and corridors including: River Avon, K&A Canal, Mendip Hills, Cotswolds, Bristol Bath Railway path
- Linking GI priorities into emerging Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs), Bristol Avon Catchment pilot, Cotswolds Scarp Nature Improvement Area (NIA), AONBs, Avon Frome Partnership agendas
- Working collaboratively with key stakeholders to deliver GI improvements

4. GI and development - new developments of all scales, including improvements to existing structures, well linked into the existing green infrastructure and which contribute positively to its functionality by:

- Developing a specific tool/checklist, with the development sector, to facilitate delivery through the development management process.

(See illustration below)

<p>Development proposals should seek to:</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all green areas are multi-functional 2. Ensure all development proposals include as much or more permeable surfaces in landscaping than the existing site. An increase in hard, impermeable surfaces such as tarmac should not be introduced to sites. 3. Encourage private gardens with permeable surfaces as defensible space in front of new residential proposals. 4. Protect the plants and animals that already live on a

site (ecological survey).

5. Apply Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to every development proposal e.g. permeable surfaces, green roofs or swales to slow the rate of water to the drains.
6. Integrate management of green infrastructure into development proposals e.g. green spaces in front of residential buildings can be brought into the individual plot boundaries.
7. Maximise opportunities for access to green infrastructure both physical and visual.
8. Maximise opportunities to connect green infrastructure assets.
9. appropriate development to contribute to achieving “good” status of river ecology quality
10. Consider retrofitting existing buildings with GI features such as green walls and roofs

5. GI and green travel/access - develop opportunities to support healthy lifestyles through provision of attractive multi-functional green corridors by:

- Developing new “GI corridor” walking and cycling routes
- Encouraging access to existing green spaces via “GI corridors”
- Increasing use of existing walking and cycling routes through improved quality (greening/permeable surfaces), management, signing and promotion
- Improving bridleway network
- Linking new developments into the existing GI network
- Maintaining and enhancing habitat connectivity within new and existing “GI corridors” including using wildlife friendly forms of lighting along urban green access and river corridors

6. GI and green spaces/recreation- establish culture and processes for long term management and multifunctional use of council owned green spaces by:

- Develop opportunities to improve access to and quality of green corridors and spaces to support healthy lifestyles, community well-being and quality of life.

- Improve the quality/function of green spaces
- Develop a multifunctional approach to managing Council owned green spaces to provide multifunctional green spaces for sport, play, informal recreation and nature
- Promoting the council's approach as exemplar to influence other major landowners
- Explore better "GI" use of council owned land held for planning use

7. GI and Health – encourage greater usage of Green Infrastructure to benefit health, wellbeing and quality of life by:

- Improving general awareness of, accessibility to and enjoyment of green spaces
- Addressing (cultural) barriers preventing community use of green spaces
- Targeting specific GI interventions and initiatives on areas with lowest life expectancy, the young and the elderly

8. GI and local food security- maximise opportunities for the community to get involved in growing local food on the green spaces and corridors across B&NES by:

- review use and management of Council parks, open spaces and periphery of sports pitches to achieve multifunction, including growing food
- Considering opportunities for food production along cycleways and river corridors – through planting fruit trees etc.
- Ensuring that community space for food growing is designed into new developments - from small spaces to allotments for new communities.
- Encouraging schools to grow food within school grounds

9. GI and woodland, trees and green streets - raise awareness of and realise the multiple benefits of trees and woodlands to community health, wellbeing and natural (ecosystem) services by:

- Improving access to woodlands within and on edges of settlements based on the Woodland Access Standards
- Prioritising new woodland planting within and close to settlements
- Active plan for protecting and increasing number of street trees within settlements

- Including in design requirements for new developments
- Encouraging community groups to address woodland and trees as part of neighbourhood plans
- Strengthening existing networks of woodlands and hedgerows to reduce habitat fragmentation
- Considering new planting in association with water management/flood initiatives
- Exploring the role of wood fuel as a renewable energy source within the district
- Working with the NHS Trees and Forestry Commission Great Tree Plant initiatives
- Ensuring accessible woodlands are clearly signed and promoted

10. GI and Landscape- respecting and contributing to the local landscape by:

- Designing GI that respects and builds on the variation in local landscape character, including opportunities to reinforce distinctiveness
- Close dialogue with the AONB partnerships to ensure GI principles and priorities are addressed in their respective management and delivery plans
- Designing GI that facilitates access & appreciation of important view points

11. GI and natural and cultural heritage - respecting and improving access to local heritage by:

- Safeguarding and enhancing access to local heritage
- Ensuring that important historical relationships between built and natural heritage are understood and respected, including preservation of key views by careful management.
- Protecting and where possible preserving below-ground Archaeology in situ through the strategic placement of GI assets
- Taking opportunities to conserve and enhance the WHS and its setting through appropriately designed green infrastructure improvements

12. GI and ecosystem Services – protect and enhance natural services by:

- Working with key partners to agree an “ecosystem position statement”
- Facilitating landscape scale habitat restoration
- Promoting wiser use and management of natural resources
- Use of green solutions to minimise need for engineered/built infrastructure

13. GI and Biodiversity –Maintaining and creating robust ecological networks i.e. “more, bigger, better and joined” by reducing fragmentation, habitat restoration and re-creation and involving people by:

- Working with wildlife partners to establish priorities/interventions to achieve cross boundary enhancements
- Good quality accessible and relevant data by more systematic data collection supported by BRERC - promote one stop shop
- Design new GI projects to help address habitat fragmentation across both rural and urban areas through creation or enhancement of natural habitat corridors
- recognise, protect and develop the main rivers as strategic GI corridors
- Maintain dark corridors to help sustain and enhance important bat populations
- Develop a woodland link project
- New GI initiatives that help deliver AWTs Living landscape restoration targets
- Design new GI projects to include new areas of native, species-rich, semi-natural habitat
- Facilitate public engagement with biodiversity monitoring
- Establish a strategic nature park within the District
- Maximise benefits of council owned land for people and wildlife

14. GI and Climate Change - GI to make an important contribution to tackling climate change by adapting to and mitigating its impacts through:

- Flood risk management, using SUDs and safeguarding water resources
- Using trees, including street trees, for urban shading
- Promoting land uses that absorb carbon dioxide
- Improving green travel options to reduce motorised transport

- Utilising GI related opportunities for renewable energy
- Prioritising projects and interventions which help to address habitat fragmentation

15. GI supporting a vibrant local economy through:

- Increasing opportunities for “natural” tourism
- Creating attractive environments that attract inward investment

16. GI and the River Avon and Kennet & Avon Canal Corridor- realising its potential as a functioning green corridor by:

- Developing a framework and set of GI principles to enable an integrated approach to the whole green corridor
- Establishing a governance structure to achieve integrated delivery
- Contributing to the Bristol Avon River Catchment pilot project to define key catchment related issues and solutions
- Seeking to enhance and increase the GI functions that this green corridor provides including through development of a strategic country park to incorporate recreational and habitat corridor, flood alleviation, wood fuel
- Providing high quality, clearly signed and well promoted green access to, along and across the corridor

17. GI and Water Management - improving the management of water resources, flood mitigation and reduced flood risk through sustainable urban drainage systems

- Through the emerging Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Prioritising the consideration of natural solutions to water issues
- Ensure that duty to have regard to River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) is delivered across the district and the river Avon achieves “good” ecological potential

7. Making it happen

The successful delivery of the strategy vision will be dependent on coordinated, targeted activity and strong working relationships with many partners including the local community. Delivery will be achieved in a wide variety of ways and by different bodies taking the lead.

Who is responsible - a wide variety of individuals, groups and organisations, responsible for GI or benefiting from it, have a potential delivery role to play. Those already signed up to contributing to delivery are listed in Appendix B - to follow

Action planning process - following approval of the Strategy a delivery plan will be developed collaboratively with partners to work up and programme delivery priorities and emerging strategic projects and tasks. A rolling action plan will be monitored and updated to focus on delivery as and when resources are available.

Governance - the first priority is to agree and put in place an appropriate governance structure to oversee development of the delivery plan and to monitor progress.

Essential building blocks - successful delivery will require a number of enabling “building blocks” to be put in place at an early stage including:

- Accessible Mapping base
- Guidance for developers and project managers
- Portal for disseminating information to support increased use of GI (Outdoor West)

Promoting value of GI - training programme - to initiate cultural change and promote the wider value of the natural environment to decision makers, key groups including development sector, business and the community.

Strategic Projects - the GI vision will also be delivered through a number of bespoke strategic and local projects. The emerging strategic projects will be validated and worked up in detail as appropriate in the delivery plan process to validate approach and then plan implementation.

Integrating GI principles - significant delivery can be achieved by embedding/integrating the GI principles and priorities into Councils agendas including the Placemaking DPD, Green Spaces Strategy review and ROWLIP. Similarly with partner initiatives and existing work programmes including the Management Plans for the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds AONBs and the Avon Frome Partnership. The strategy will also provide an agreed framework to influence the targeting of existing funding streams such as Agri-environment and woodland grants

Funding

Much can be achieved with existing resources including invaluable volunteer efforts. The merit of the GI approach is that it provides opportunities to add value to existing programmes, by highlighting more sustainable solutions, making optimum use of existing budgets and resources to achieve multifunctional outcomes. Evidence has shown that some sustainable solutions can be less expensive than an engineered approach.

The strategy will also provide the supporting framework to access funding sources external to the council including health, Water Framework Directive funds and a platform for bidding for heritage Lottery funds or similar. Opportunities also occur through Development Management processes to influence allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106. Some seed funding may be required to explore and pilot new approaches, for example to managing land that could ultimately produce savings.

The Council's role

The council has an important role to play in GI planning and delivery with its broad environmental, health /social and economic responsibilities. In addition to coordinating the development of the Strategy and initiating the action planning process the council will champion GI and lead on a number of initiatives:

- Planning and development management process - by developing tools such as the development GI checklist and GI mapping system to secure GI opportunities through growth
- Securing the cultural change within the Council to put the value of the natural environment at the heart of decision making, through for example a targeted training programme and influencing project development processes, so that GI is addressed at the start of project development.

- Reviewing opportunities for multifunction and different management regimes for Council owned land
- Taking the lead on a number of strategic projects such as the River Avon/canal corridor, Wansdyke Greenway and further development of Outdoor West as an information portal to encourage greater use of GI.

8. Emerging priorities and strategic projects

A number of priorities and potential projects have emerged through the strategy development and these will form the starting point for developing the delivery plan.

Potential priorities comprise:

- Cross cutting “building blocks” that underpin delivery of the whole strategy
- Strategic “multifunctional” projects that will deliver across a number of GI principles
- Sector generated activity largely relating to the delivery of a specific principle

An initial assessment of emerging projects against the potential GI benefits they might provide is summarised in **Appendix A**.

Local drivers will also be used to sift through and prioritise possible GI activities and direct limited resources. These are also listed in **Appendix A**.

Emerging strategic projects to be explored and then progressed if viable through the delivery plan are shown on the emerging strategic GI Diagram – **Map 9**:

1. Wansdyke Greenway
2. Central Greenway
3. North- South corridor
4. River Avon / Kennet and Avon Canal corridor
5. AONB Linkway
6. Landscape scale restoration project