

Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

November 2014





Awarded to individuals and organisations whose vision leads the way in creating innovative and dynamic landscape

Winner

This award is presented to

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL

in the category of

LANDSCAPE POLICY & RESEARCH

for

**Green Infrastructure Guide
(Draft May 2013)**

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The Draft Green Infrastructure Guide was awarded "Winner" of the Landscape Institute Awards 2013 held in London. This is a highly prestigious national award and the judges commented that: "The guide clearly sets out the case and opportunities for green infrastructure in a way that will be accessible to developers."

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1. What is 'green infrastructure'?

1.1 Harrogate district contains a wide variety of green assets. Some of these, like nature conservation sites, green wedges, parks, allotments and public rights of way are designated. We also have undesignated green assets such as river corridors and woodlands. Some green assets are unintended consequences of other kinds of planning such as railway embankments and roadside verges. Until recently, these assets have generally been looked at individually. However, it is now widely recognised that by looking at our green assets as a connected network of multifunctional 'green infrastructure' we can deliver many more benefits for the economy, environment and the community.

1.2 The following are definitions of green infrastructure:

Natural England:

'Green Infrastructure (GI) is a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens.'

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)(2012):

Green Infrastructure is: 'a strategic network of multifunctional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life in sustainable communities.'



2. What is the purpose of the Green Infrastructure SPD?

- 2.1 The council's Core Strategy and National Planning Policy Framework set out the importance of protecting and enhancing networks of green infrastructure.
- 2.2 The overall aim of this SPD is to help applicants and developers to ensure that proposals for development across the district make the most of opportunities to improve existing and create new green infrastructure. To achieve the overall aim this SPD seeks to:
- make clear the importance and benefits of green infrastructure
 - provide guidance on the requirements of planning policy
 - show how good quality green infrastructure can be achieved on a range of development sites
 - provide more detailed guidance on how good quality green infrastructure can be achieved within the main urban areas and on large greenfield urban extensions
- 2.3 This SPD has been prepared with input from the council's Landscape Architect, Rural Strategy Officer, Senior Drainage Engineer, Conservation and Design Officers and Planning Policy Officers. Early discussion also took place with representatives from Natural England and North Yorkshire County Council.



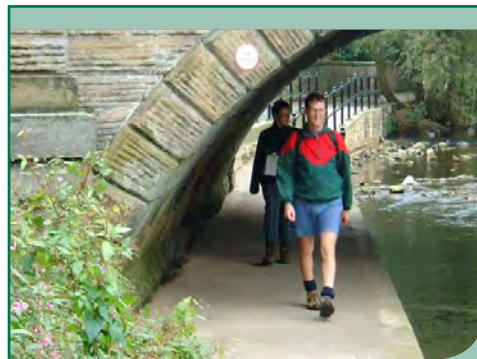
3. Why is green infrastructure important?

3.1 By looking at our green assets as a connected network of green infrastructure (instead of individually) there are many more benefits for our district's economy, environment and community. A piece of open space on a development site has the ability to provide many functions if careful consideration has been given to the opportunities for creating or improving green infrastructure early in the design process. For example, one carefully designed piece of open space

might provide a link to an existing Public Rights of Way (PROW), provide flood mitigation, encourage activity and enjoyment, provide an attractive setting for local business and help to conserve a protected species.

3.2 These are the main benefits of green infrastructure that proposals for development within this district should seek to achieve:

Green Infrastructure Benefits



Ripon canal

Connecting green spaces and routes

Better links between green assets can increase accessibility, leisure and recreation opportunities, improve links for biodiversity, increase tourism and make better use of urban green spaces. Improved access for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders can help to reduce the need to travel by car and improve links for tourism, recreation, leisure and employment.

Examples of How the Benefits can be Achieved

- Physical connections
- Visual connections
- Pleasant and safe pedestrian and cycle routes
- Improvements to rights of way network
- Consideration and improvement of radial routes
- Use of the shared space
- Tree lined streets
- Multi-function streets
- Landscape buffer zones
- Provision of linear park

Green Infrastructure Benefits

Examples of How the Benefits can be Achieved



Swinsty reservoir

Improving the setting and quality of place

Using the natural environment to create high quality living and recreational environments can help to increase land and property values and stimulate further economic investment. A high quality natural environment can inspire higher productivity amongst the workforce. Green infrastructure can help to improve the tourism 'offer' by improving the setting, functionality and accessibility of key destinations.

- Increase social gathering spaces
- Enhance landscape setting
- Responding to the site context and local landscape character
- Providing street trees
- Drawing up a maintenance/management plan for long term success of scheme



Birk crag

Encouraging activity and enjoyment

By increasing access to green space and routes people are more likely to walk, run, cycle and play. This can have real benefits for people's health, enjoyment and social interaction. Links between good quality green infrastructure and improved mental and physical health are well established.

- Providing places for meeting and events such as a community park
- Providing shelter
- Provision of areas for natural play
- Education and interpretation opportunities
- Sports facilities
- Seating
- Cycle storage



Unity allotments, Harrogate

Adapting to changes in climate, flood risk and growing food locally

Well-planned green infrastructure can help us mitigate and adapt to climate change by encouraging the north-south migration of habitats and species and helping urban cooling. Tree planting can help with natural air cooling, collecting nitrogen oxides and absorption of carbon dioxide.

- Flood mitigation measures and sustainable drainage systems such as wetlands, green swales, balancing ponds, ditches and ponds
- Tree planting
- Green roofs
- Ground cover plants on steep slopes to reduce run off and erosion
- Permeable surfaces and paving

Green Infrastructure Benefits

Permeable surfaces and open spaces can be used to reduce the risk of flooding from rivers and surface water run off and to incorporate sustainable drainage e.g. through flood water storage, tree planting, and protection of river corridors.

Creating space for food production, allotments, community gardens and orchards and connecting the local community to these assets via footpaths and cycle ways can benefit local communities in terms of improved health, social interaction, education and a more sustainable supply of food.

Examples of How the Benefits can be Achieved

- Soakaways as an alternative method of water retention
- Reedbeds and rainwater harvesting system
- Allotments and community orchards
- Schools and food projects



Ripley

Protecting and enhancing nature

Well connected green assets can benefit biodiversity by facilitating the migration of species and providing and using land improvements to deliver biodiversity gain. The creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity, including local sites and semi-natural habitats is particularly important.

Heritage

Well planned green infrastructure can help to protect and enhance the setting of our heritage assets. The Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) for the 53 Conservation Areas within the district are an important source of information for identifying open spaces and heritage assets important to the local community.

- Development relates to local character and safeguarding of existing views
- Good integration of existing and proposed features
- Opportunities to create new views and vistas
- Protection and enhancement of key priority habitats and species
- Alleviate pressure on existing sensitive wildlife sites through provision of alternative access to nature
- Improvement of species movement
- Community involvement and participation in habitat creation and on-going maintenance and management
- Design planting areas to create beneficial microclimate and to minimise maintenance requirements
- Undertake soil survey to allow for planting of appropriate species

3.3 Each development site will present different opportunities dependent on its characteristics. Case study examples of how green infrastructure can be incorporated into different types of development sites are included in section 6.

3.4 It is important to note that seeking to address these benefits

through the provision of good quality green infrastructure proposals for development will help to achieve all of the council's corporate priorities, for example, improving the attractiveness of the business environment, improving health, adapting to climate change and improving the environment and quality of life.

Harrogate town centre



4.1 This section provides an overview of current and emerging planning policy relating to green infrastructure. Current policy recognises that the provision of green infrastructure is not just an environmental matter; there are wide ranging benefits for the economy and society as well. Green infrastructure should be seen as an integral part of planning from the earliest stages in the design process, as with other types of infrastructure.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.2 In March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published, which sets out the government's planning policies for England. The focus of the NPPF is to help to achieve sustainable

development. 'Sustainable' is defined as 'ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations'.

4.3 There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF makes clear that, 'These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and



environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions.'

- 4.4 With reference to green infrastructure the NPPF makes clear that, *'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'* (paragraph 114).
- 4.5 In relation to climate change Paragraph 99 of the NPPF recognises the important role that green infrastructure plays in reducing vulnerability: *'Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.'*

Harrogate District Core Strategy

- 4.6 The Core Strategy was adopted in February 2009 and forms part of the development plan for the district. It sets out broad policies for development and conservation, including a sustainable strategy for growth. The vision for the district seeks to achieve the following by 2021:



- *'the residents of Harrogate district will enjoy an exceptionally high quality and diverse environment, a prosperous urban and rural economy, and better access to affordable homes, community facilities, including public open space and sport, and public transport and other facilities to encourage walking, cycling and less travel by car;*
- *the special character of the district's natural and built assets will be protected and enhanced, particularly through increased wildlife, increased woodland, more locally distinctive and high quality designed buildings, fewer historic buildings at risk, and more resource efficient development which minimises energy consumption, waste production and maximises renewable energy;*
- *the urban and rural economies of the district, including town centres will be more buoyant, more diverse, more complementary with neighbouring economies and more 'environmentally friendly'.*

- 4.7 Taking into consideration the benefits of green infrastructure set out in section 3, it is clear that green infrastructure has a key role in helping to realise the Core Strategy vision for the district.
- 4.8 Core Strategy policies that are relevant to this SPD include:
- Policy SG4: Settlement Growth: Design and Impact
 - Policy TRA1: Accessibility
 - Policy EQ1: Reducing Risks to the Environment
 - Policy EQ2: The Natural and Built Environment and Green Belt
 - Policy C1: Inclusive Communities

Harrogate Local Plan

- 4.9 A Local Plan is currently being prepared and is scheduled for adoption in 2018. It will contain development management policies and site allocations and cover the period up to 2035.

4.10 The Local Plan will set out the council's approach to integrating high quality green infrastructure as part of all proposals for development.

4.11 You can view the Local Plan at:
www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/LDF.aspx

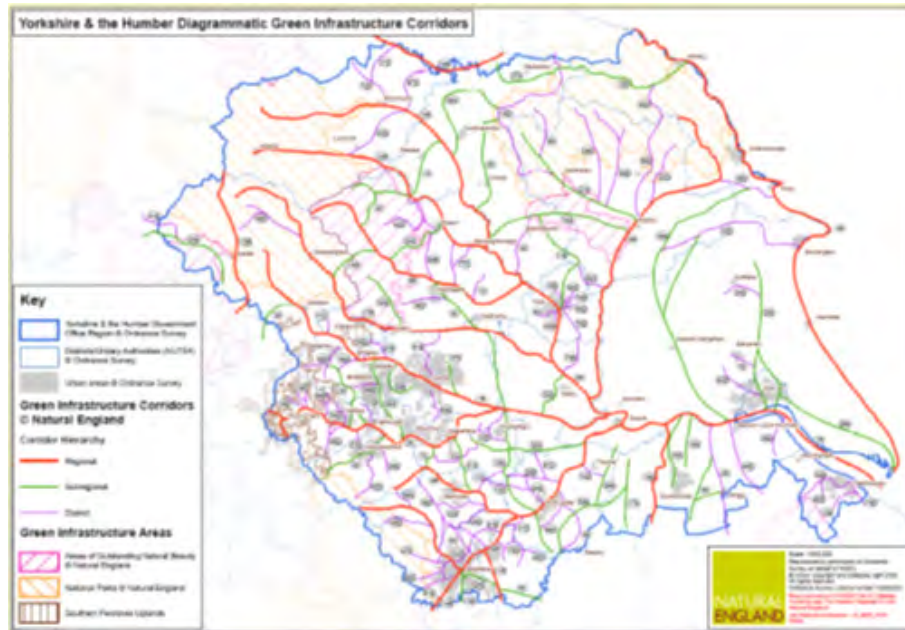


Sandwith Moor, Norwood



5. What other green infrastructure work is happening within the region?

Yorkshire and the Humber Green Infrastructure Mapping Project (2009)



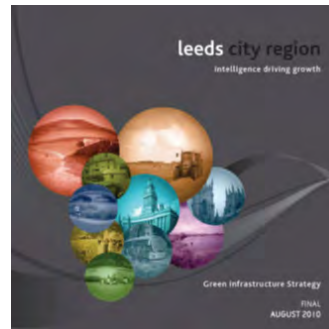
- 5.1 Natural England carried out this project, in consultation with local authorities, to produce a strategic evidence base to help local authorities protect and create green infrastructure. This project used 600 different data sets obtained from diverse sources including Harrogate Borough Council, other local authorities, wildlife trusts and major landowners such as Yorkshire Water and the National Trust. Over 130 green infrastructure corridors have been identified and placed in a hierarchy based on 15 green infrastructure functions. All the green infrastructure corridors have associated descriptions which identify their key functions.
- 5.2 This evidence base provides a starting point for more detailed and localised green infrastructure work. With regard to Harrogate district, work with Natural England highlighted the need to further explore opportunities for improving green infrastructure in the main urban areas.
- 5.3 The findings of the Yorkshire and Humber Green Infrastructure Mapping Project have been considered when drafting sections 6 to 8 of this SPD. This information should be used as a starting point in

order to identify whether a site is located within a green infrastructure corridor and if so, how it can contribute towards the characteristics/ functions of that particular corridor.

- 5.4 You can view the results of the green infrastructure mapping project at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/yorkshire_and_the_humber/ourwork/yandhgreeninfrastructuremappingproject.aspx

Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy (August 2010)

- 5.5 This strategy has been prepared by consultants in partnership with the Leeds City Region Secretariat, Natural England and local authorities within the Leeds City Region. It has a strong focus on how green infrastructure can benefit the economy. It recognises that the economy is dependent on a high quality environment in order to attract investment and to ensure a happy and efficient workforce. It makes clear that:



'In the midst of an economic recovery, competition for public sector funds as well as the short term viability of regeneration schemes could pose a risk to investment in a high quality natural environment. However, we know the green infrastructure is a value generator, not a costly add-on. Investing in green infrastructure will not only help the city region out of recession in the short term; it will also support our ambitions to become a low carbon, sustainable economy and continue to attract quality businesses and create jobs for many years to come.'

- 5.6 The strategy is intended to shape the future economic, social and environmental success of the Leeds City Region by harnessing the potential of existing environmental resources to promote sustainable economic growth and to tackle climate change. The strategy identifies a number of investment programmes, strategic projects, and supporting projects. The programmes and projects relevant to Harrogate district are:

- IP1 Urban Green Adaptation
- IP2 Greening our Economic Potential
- IP3 Carbon Capture
- IP4 Woodfuel
- IP5 Rivers for Life
- SP2 Cure Landscape Project
- Green Hub (supporting project)
- LCR Eco Skills Audit (supporting project)
- Water Cycle Study (supporting project)

- 5.7 Find out about about the Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Guide at: www.the-lep.com/

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)

- 5.8 In its Natural Environment White Paper the government recognises that partnership working is key to delivering our ambitions for the natural environment. The White Paper sets out a vision for Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs).

- 5.9 On 17 July 2012, the government announced the 41 successful bids for LNP status, this was followed by a further seven successful bids in October 2012. There are



successful bids in October 2012. There are three LNPs that fall within the boundary of Harrogate district:

- North West Yorkshire LNP
- North Yorkshire and York LNP
- Northern Upland Chain LNP

5.10 The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) website provides the following description of the purpose and scope of LNPs:

'The ambition for LNPs is that they will help their local area to manage the natural environment as a system and to embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. To do this effectively they will need to be self-sustaining strategic partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people with the credibility to work with and influence other local strategic decision makers. There are currently 48 LNPs across England:

The overall purpose of an LNP is to:

- *Drive positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities involved and identifying ways to manage it as a system for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.*
- *Contribute to achieving the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including the identification of local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities.*
- *Become local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, in particular, through working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards.'*

5.11 LNPs will help to deliver green infrastructure for the benefit of the environment, people and the economy, for example through the development of local ecological networks. A partnership approach with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) demonstrates recognition of the economic benefits of green infrastructure. The Yorkshire West LNP is using the information within the Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy (see section 4) to help make a positive contribution to the economy of the city region.

White Rose Forest Partnership

5.12 Harrogate Borough Council is one of many stakeholders that have signed the White Rose Forest Agreement to be a member of the White Rose Forest (WRF) Partnership.

5.13 The WRF was set up to be a delivery partnership. It does this through its working parties, which are made up of specialist officers from a wide range of organisations who collaborate to identify, develop and deliver projects on the ground. The working parties also attend the WRF steering group to share information and build up a co-ordinated approach to green infrastructure.

5.14 The partners of the White Rose Forest Partnership carry out activities to help manage and improve the environment, attract resources and help shape policies. You can find out more about the White Rose Forest Partnership and its current projects by visiting: www.whiteroseforest.org.uk/



Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

- 5.15 Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) is currently developing an ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity by championing links between its nature reserves, other protected sites and nature corridors through the wider countryside so that whole landscapes and ecosystems may be restored, resulting in abundant and flourishing wildlife that everyone has access to through wildlife-rich green-spaces.
- 5.16 Living Landscapes identified in Harrogate district include the River Ure Corridor, Nidderdale Moors and Knaresborough Nidd woodlands. Harrogate Borough Council will work with YWT and other partners to maximise biodiversity enhancement, including the living landscapes identified by the YWT. See www.ywt.org.uk/living-landscapes