



A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stafford The Strategic Plan

November 2009



Our Green Infrastructure Vision for Stafford

Stafford Borough will have a rich natural environment which is resilient to the effects of climate change, is well maintained and enhanced with more people enjoying the area as a place to live in, work in and visit. Our high quality green infrastructure network of accessible green spaces, waterways and landscapes will enhance our local distinctiveness and heritage, making the Borough an exceptional place for businesses, communities and wildlife – now and in the future.

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stafford Borough:

The Strategic Plan

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Glossary of Terms

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CLG	(Department for) Communities & Local Government
Green Infrastructure / GI	A term encompassing all physical resources and natural systems, including ecological, geological and historical assets
Green Gyms	Fitness trails set up along footpaths in natural settings such as parks or woodlands to encourage outdoor exercise
Growth Agenda	The Government's agenda for substantially increased house building across England
Growth Points	Specific areas that have been identified as a focus for increased house building under the Growth Agenda
IMD	Indices of (Multiple) Deprivation: a measure of deprivation across 7 domains – income; employment; health & disability; education, skills & training; barriers to housing & services; crime; the living environment. Produced by CLG in 2004 and revised in 2007
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NHS	National Health Service
NNR	National Nature Reserve
PBRS	Public Benefit Recording System: a GIS based tool that gathers together several different datasets to help guide the strategic decision making process
Public benefits	Social, economic and environmental goals acting in combination
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy: sets out regional spatial priorities and interventions (including proposals under the Growth Agenda)
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
Sustainable prosperity	Economic growth achieved alongside social inclusion and environmental enhancement

PREFACE

Stafford Borough is identified in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy as including one of the Region's key strategic towns (Stafford town) and has been designated as a Growth Point by the Government. It also has some outstanding urban and rural landscapes, but its development proposals are such that the Borough is under pressure to provide additional homes as well as associated and improved built (or 'grey') infrastructure facilities, and over time will become increasingly under threat from the implications of climate change.

The quality of the environment is an essential component in providing a quality of place for living, working and relaxing, and green infrastructure can be considered as an organising framework for integrating these physical resources and natural systems with socio-economic and environmental evidence: delivering environmental protection and enhancement alongside urban development and regeneration.

Planning for green infrastructure will inform the development of Stafford Borough Council's local plans and strategies such as Local Development Framework documents and Area Action Plans, and will assist the implementation of those plans by providing evidence and information for policy formulation and project development and delivery.

This is one in a suite of three documents that together make up Stafford Borough's Green Infrastructure Strategy:

The [Green Infrastructure Research & Evidence Base](#) considers the green infrastructure issues, opportunities and threats in the Borough, identifying the range of assets that are present and where there are gaps or areas of need. It particularly considers the potential impact of growth and built development both on the environment and on communities, and identifies the range of needs and opportunities that may be addressed via green infrastructure interventions.

The [Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan](#) uses the findings from the Research & Evidence Base to set spatial and thematic priorities for the delivery of green infrastructure in the Borough. It includes proposed actions that will integrate with development proposals to enhance, expand and protect the Borough's green infrastructure and deliver multiple (social, economic and environmental) benefits that respond to local needs and opportunities.

The [Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document](#) acts as a guide to planning officers and developers by setting out standards that will be required to meet the Borough's green infrastructure objectives.

All three documents are available from Stafford Borough Council



Chapter 1: A VISION & PRINCIPLES FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN STAFFORD

The research for this Strategic Plan¹ has indicated that green infrastructure must provide the setting and infrastructure for growth by:

- Supporting healthy, sustainable and cohesive communities
- Protecting and promoting local distinctiveness, heritage and cultural assets
- Adapting to and mitigating against the effects of climate change
- Enabling urban and rural economic growth and sustainable prosperity
- Improving accessibility and use of green spaces
- Protecting, enhancing and extending biodiversity resources and natural networks

Given this overarching approach, the vision for green infrastructure should embrace and reflect the visionary statements and aspirations that already guide the Borough's future development, particularly those in the Local Development Framework Issues & Options² paper and the Sustainable Community Strategy³, and their key aims for:

- A vibrant prosperous sustainable economy
- Strong, safe and cohesive communities
- Improved health and sense of well-being
- A protected, enhanced and respected environment.

On this basis, the vision for green infrastructure is:

Stafford Borough will have a rich natural environment which is resilient to the effects of climate change, is well maintained and enhanced with more people enjoying the area as a place to live in, work in and visit. Our high quality green infrastructure network of accessible green spaces, waterways and landscapes will enhance our local distinctiveness and heritage, making the Borough an exceptional place for businesses, communities and wildlife – now and in the future.

The following spatial framework and recommendations for enhancing, protecting and creating green infrastructure in the Borough are all set within this Vision and direct activities to its achievement in the long term.

In line with this Vision, and informed by the green infrastructure functions for the Borough, the green infrastructure network in the Borough will increase quality of life, enhance sustainability, reducing the impacts of climate change and improving health and well being across the following key objectives:

- **Networks of open spaces, natural corridors, access routes and watercourses will be enhanced and created to:**
 - protect the setting of landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and geodiversity) assets
 - reverse habitat fragmentation
 - provide recreational opportunities for new and existing communities
 - provide planned and designed open breaks between neighbouring residential areas and business developments.
- **The network of existing access routes will be improved and expanded to allow sustainable commuting, by:**
 - linking residential areas, employment centres and the wider countryside
 - providing safe, attractive and well-signed options for walking and cycling
 - including shared surfaces to reduce vehicle speeds
- **Local landscape and heritage features should:**
 - be retained as focal points for new neighbourhoods,
 - have their historic nature protected
 - act as attractive green and open spaces where communities can come together.
- **To alleviate the effects of climate change:**
 - measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems and street trees must be included in new developments and should be 'retro-fitted' into existing developments
 - green spaces will provide a flood storage/management function (where appropriate).
- **All new developments will:**
 - be set within a planned green infrastructure setting
 - provide a variety of spaces to meet the needs of people and nature
 - provide opportunities for sustainable transport
 - achieve at least the green infrastructure standards laid out in the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

These should be considered as the overarching principles that govern the planning and delivery of green infrastructure in the Borough, and will be the basis for green infrastructure standards which any interventions (specifically built development) must meet.

Chapter 2: THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIC PLAN

What does this Strategic Plan do?

This Plan provides the spatial and strategic response to the issues, needs and opportunities identified and detailed through the earlier chapters. It is presented at two levels: a Borough-wide Plan setting out key thematic responses and a more detailed specific set of recommendations and actions at the local level in two Local Strategic Frameworks, focused on Stafford and Stone as the Borough's key settlement areas. It sets out the framework for developing the Borough's green infrastructure now and in the future and aims to:

- Enable Stafford Borough to grow within sustainable means, providing a quality environment for all communities
- Protect and enhance the Borough's green infrastructure resources, particularly its landscapes, heritage and biodiversity
- Enable the communities of the Borough to adapt to the changing climate
- Ensure that access to quality green space is equitable and widespread throughout the Borough

The Plan is intentionally ambitious, with the key recommendations forming the core of the recommended actions.

What are the key drivers behind this set of objectives?

There are several key drivers for the development of this Plan. Stafford Borough is undergoing change as a result of Regional Spatial Strategy⁴ and Local Development Framework proposals, and through its recognition as a Growth Point⁵. Development in the Borough will need to proceed in a sustainable manner that considers both communities and the environment. In addition to this the decline in quality and the quantity of natural habitats needs to be addressed. Finally the changing climate will affect both the residents and wildlife of the Borough: flooding and increased temperatures during the summer months will - if not prepared for - create a situation where our towns and cities are uncomfortable in the summer and at risk of economic and social hardship due to the increase in flooding.

What have we considered?

The Strategic Plan has been developed from the findings of the Research and Evidence Base⁶, considering:

- Issues, opportunities and threats for green infrastructure in the Borough
- The public benefit potential of green infrastructure (social, economic and environmental needs and opportunities)
- Existing studies such as the PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy⁷, and the Historic Environment Character Assessment⁸
- Local Development Framework Core Strategy Issues and Options

- Growth Point Programme of Development.

It provides a broad strategic direction for spatial policy initiatives across the Borough, within which the two settlement area plans fit.

Key Recommendations

The Borough-wide plan sets out the key thematic recommendations for the Borough, including:

- Biodiversity intervention zones
- Watercourse corridors
- Movement corridors
- Strategic open spaces
- Landscape quality

Three key delivery projects have also been identified and are presented in detail in the Local Strategic Frameworks. These are:

- Penk & Sow Natural Parklands
- Stafford Common Community Park
- Stone Canal & Riverside Park

Together these form the core recommendations for green infrastructure planning and delivery in Stafford Borough, and are central to achieving the green infrastructure vision and will be a core element of meeting the Borough's development objectives in a sustainable manner.

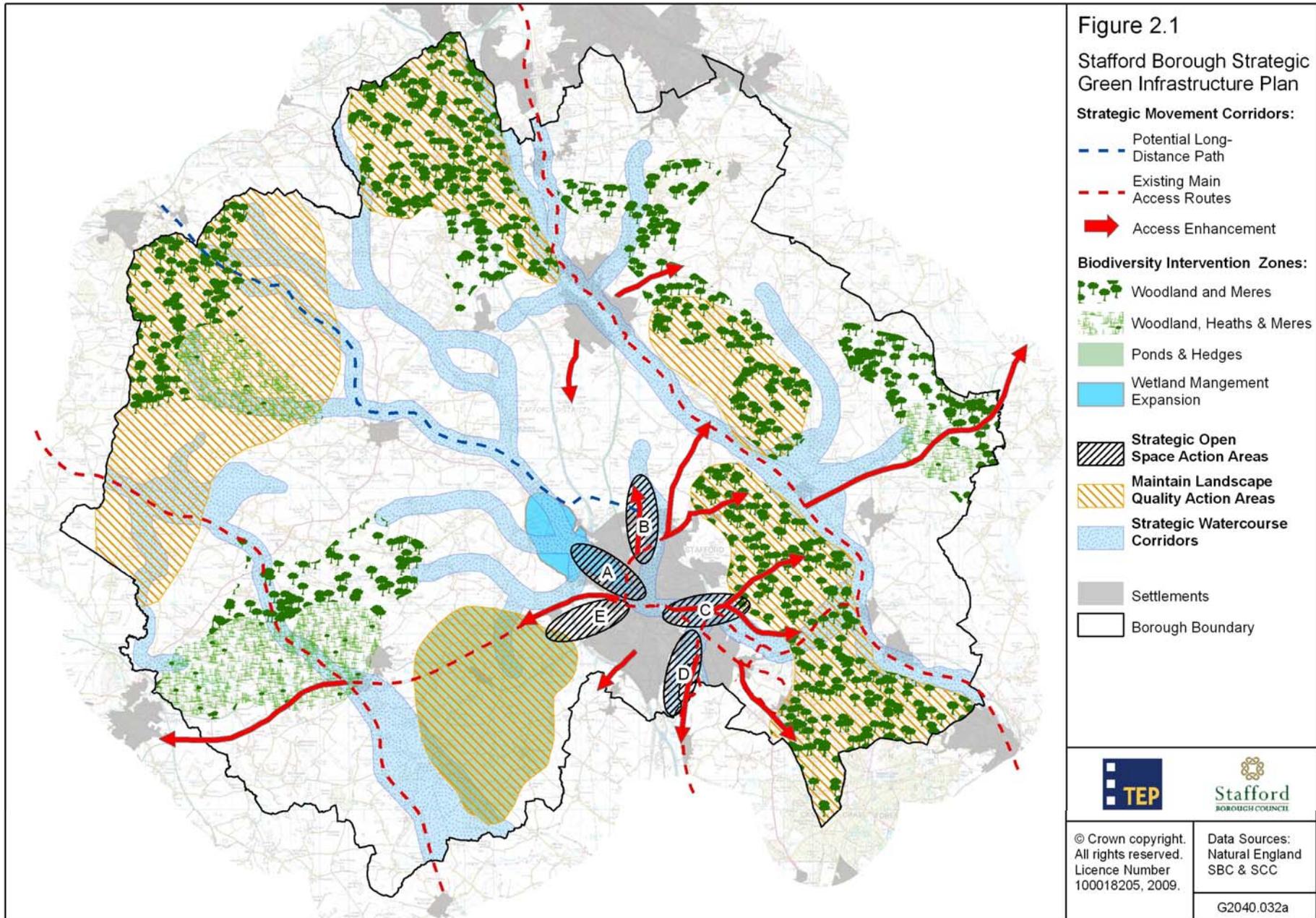
The Borough Wide Plan (figure 2.1)

The overarching Plan addresses those issues which because of their nature are applicable across the Borough, such as flooding, access, landscape protection and biodiversity.

Whilst each of the following recommendations is presented separately there is a great deal of synergy between them. Recommendations such as Strategic Movement Corridors and Strategic Watercourse Corridors can be developed in conjunction with each other to create a more multifunctional approach, nor should those areas outside of the specified zones be discounted. Land management and access improvements such as improved and more informative signage should be encouraged at a Borough-wide level.

Biodiversity Intervention Zones

The priority for action in biodiversity intervention zones is to conserve, enhance and where possible extend the quality and quantity of the priority habitats within them. The aim of these interventions is to improve biodiversity connectivity and long term sustainable management of these resources. Though it is not necessary to increase the level of public access in these zones more than the current level, improvements could be made in line with the other framework recommendations such as better signage and improved access in specific areas to better direct users towards less sensitive areas.



These zones focus on groupings of specific habitat and landscape types that contain a rich resource of natural biodiversity which due to their proximity to each other are a viable opportunity to increase connectivity for wildlife. These interventions will also reinforce the distinct landscapes that define the Borough's character. These zones include:

- Enclosed farmland, hedge and pond landscape around Haughton, Bradley and Church Eaton
 - Relaying and maintenance of hedge-lines
 - Clearing silted ponds
 - Buffering ponds from stock
 - Create corridors alongside hedges through unmanaged field margins
- Woodland around Hopton Heath, Knightley Dale and Oulton, Brocton, Fradswell and Oulton north east of Stone
 - Encourage native woodland planting and/or biomass planting on low quality agricultural soils
 - Maintenance of hedge-lines
 - Buffering of watercourses to reduce grazing and disturbance
 - Traditional woodland management regimes to restore the biodiverse character of woodland
- The river and canal networks particularly the Rivers Sow, Trent and Penk, Meece, Gayton and Wheatlow Brooks
 - Buffer the water networks to reduce grazing and disturbance and reducing erosion, protecting water quality from siltation & excess nitrate run-off
 - Encourage drainage ditch management that maximises biodiversity and connectivity
 - Increase and improve, where practical, access to the rivers
- The continued management by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and potential expansion of the Doxey and Tillington marshland area
 - Encourage the management of the land adjacent to the reserve to be managed in sympathy with the needs of the reserve
 - Buffering of the water network to reduce the siltation of the marsh caused by excessive soil loss upstream
 - Areas such as to the west, south and east of Doxey close to the reserve to be managed to promote wildlife and access reducing the numbers of people using the reserve
 - Maintain pathways in a condition that encourages use and discourages the use of the more sensitive parts of the reserve

Strategic Watercourse Corridors

The three main rivers that pass through the Borough, the Sow, Penk and Trent, and the canal network define its landscape and physical layout of its settlements. These rivers and canals are important as natural corridors for wildlife and in the case of the canals, important access networks for communities as well. Whilst the *above* biodiversity zones include the river corridors, this level of intervention is a broader approach to land use management along the river corridor.

Flooding is a major issue for the Borough and for the other settlements downstream. Through appropriate management techniques such as storage and/or allowing areas to inundate during heavy rainfall, the rate at which water entering the river system is reduced. This has the added benefit of supporting wildlife such as fish fry along the river corridors and where appropriate, combining public access to create multifunctional corridors.

In addition to this and of vital importance to the Borough is the growth of settlements and the effect on flooding and urban run-off. This run-off or at least the speed with which it enters the watercourse can be reduced in new and existing development through design. The creation of storage ponds or swales/SuDS and linking these to watercourses increases the extent of the natural connecting network. Created in combination with access routes they can become a community asset, linking communities with the wider green space network.

Zones identified are areas where Stafford Borough Council in conjunction with other stakeholders and partners should engage with landowners/managers to encourage sensitive land management practices such as timing and location of grazing regimes or application of fertilisers. In other areas around the country simply buffering the stream and river networks and reducing disturbance has brought about improvements in biodiversity and water quality.

Strategic Movement Corridors

Within the Borough there are several existing strategic movement corridors, including the canal network, Way for the Millennium, National Cycle Routes 5 & 55. These provide a good level of accessibility; however there are some settlements that would be better connected through extensions to the existing networks. Implementation of the Local Development Framework's proposals will put additional pressure on those existing networks, and new and expanded communities will require multi-user routes both to access new and existing multifunctional green infrastructure assets and for more sustainable transport options for all journeys, including commuting (work or school) and to access services – bringing associated health benefits to those communities.

Using the existing movement corridors where possible, and existing features which currently do not but could function as multi-user routes (e.g. disused railway lines), our proposals set the framework at the strategic level for a network of access routes and corridors that specifically link settlements and communities to each other and key green infrastructure assets. We have also sought to increase access to the rural areas from the settled areas, proposing additional connectivity and highlighting where connectivity needs enhancement. Key areas include:

- Extension of the NCN 5 route and Way for the Millennium through to Newport
- Access to the 'green wedges' around Stafford town for the town's communities
- New and improved connections to and along the canal corridors
- More sustainable access opportunities to Cannock Chase
- The potential for a long-distance route along the river to join with the Weaver Way

There is a need to increase the sustainable transport option in the Borough, to improve access to services, reduce emissions and to encourage participation in exercise. Following public benefits assessment (see the Research & Evidence Base Report) this supports the creation of the proposed expanded network of cycle routes (figure 2.2) and has suggested further potential extensions to the network that should allow improved connectivity between settlements and the Borough's green infrastructure assets.

In addition to this recommendations in the PPG17 Open Space Assessment suggested that improvements are needed to the rights of way network, particularly signage and access. This strategy also recognises this need and is supportive of these recommendations. There are several areas however that should be a priority for improvement including around the settlement edges to encourage use of the surrounding countryside, such as:

- Entrances or gateways to the Borough's large open spaces
- Within settlements - to direct people to the green infrastructure resources within the settlements and to the countryside, joining communities to assets outside of their immediate neighbourhood
- Areas close to important historic or visitor assets to widen the visitor offer, such as Stafford Castle or Eccleshall Wildlife Centre

These actions can be delivered alongside the Cycling for Health⁹ and Walking for Health¹⁰ initiatives in the Borough.

Maintaining and Enhancing Landscape Quality

These areas have been identified as having specific landscape qualities or character which can be reinforced through green infrastructure intervention and initiatives. There are five main areas that have been prioritised and shown on the framework diagram, although general principles or retaining existing landscape character apply Borough-wide. The five areas chosen are those where green infrastructure interventions that can enhance landscape character and provide further functions such flood control, biodiversity and supporting tourism.

The five areas prioritised or those delivering the widest range of benefits include;

- The hedge and pond landscape around Haughton and Bradley:
 - Re-establishing traditional hedge-line management techniques
- Cannock Chase and the area to the north around Hopton:
 - Linking woodland through small scale planting in similarity with the existing landscape structure

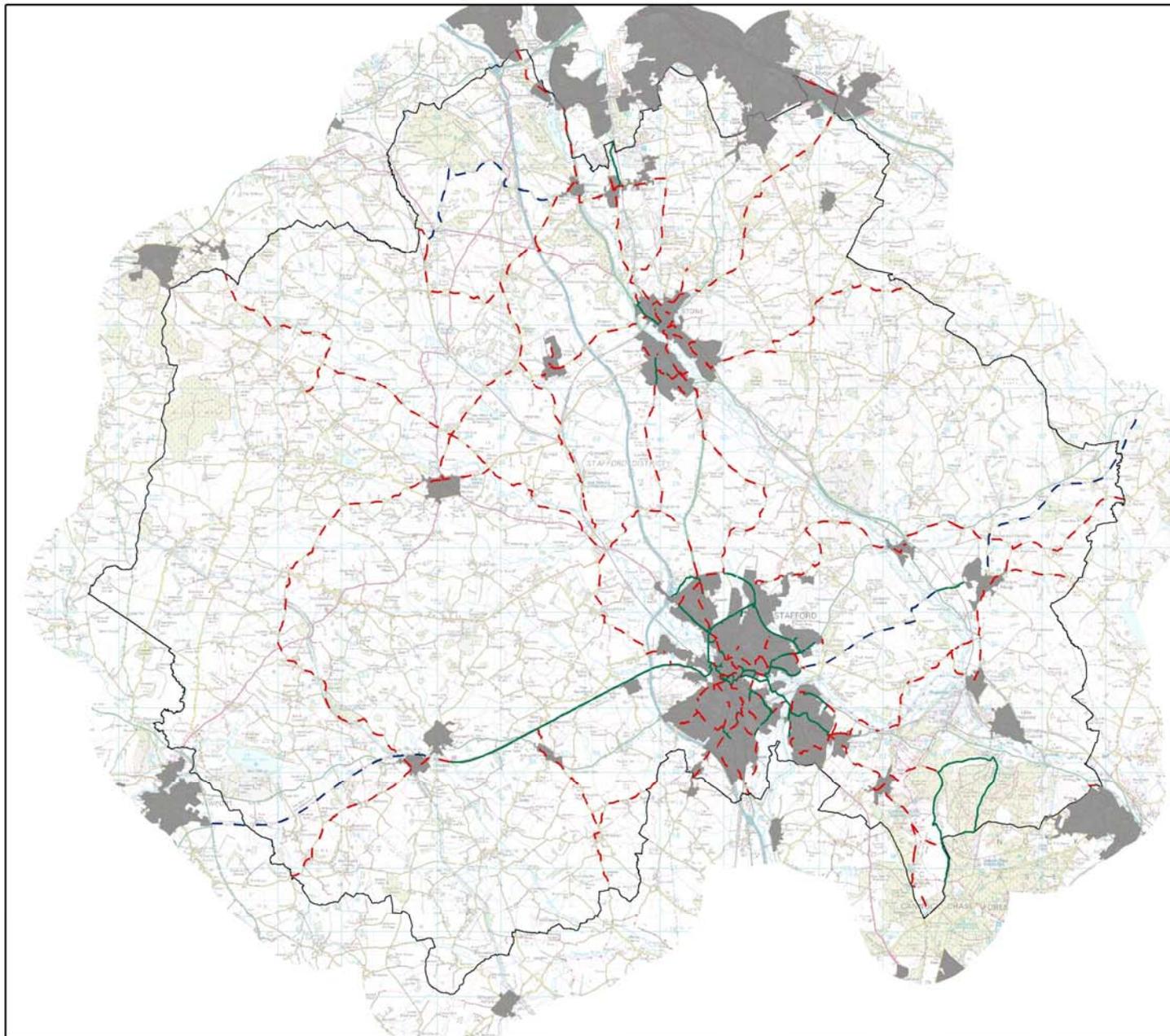


Figure 2.2
Stafford Borough Cycle Network

- Existing Cycle Routes
- Planned/Suggested Routes (SCC)
- Other Suggested Cycle Routes
- Urban Areas
- Stafford Borough Boundary



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Data Sources:
 Natural England
 SBC & SCC

G2040.034a

- Sandon Park and surrounding landscape:
 - Encourage re-establishment of hedge-lines to connect the blocks of woodland in the area
- Trentham Park and surrounding landscape:
 - Link the Park and the existing access network and Stone
 - Encourage adjacent land owners to adopt management regimes that create connectivity in the landscape for wildlife
- Landscape between Aqualate Mere and Loggerheads:
 - Replanting of some woodland to reinforce the character
 - Adopting more traditional woodland management regimes

Strategic Open Space

The research carried out for this strategy and subsequent PBRS analysis has indicated that there are several areas that would be ideal candidate location for a large strategic and multifunctional green space. These are areas where the needs of the community and the environment coincide, issues such improved access to quality and natural green space, biodiversity enhancement and flood mitigation. In addition to these are areas that would also serve the expanding communities and would also provide large, open and accessible green spaces, which could reduce the numbers of people who need to visit Cannock Chase simply for recreation that could be provided closer to or within Stafford town. The strategy has identified five such strategic areas each displaying different levels of need and benefit and the types of intervention that would likely be needed, they are;

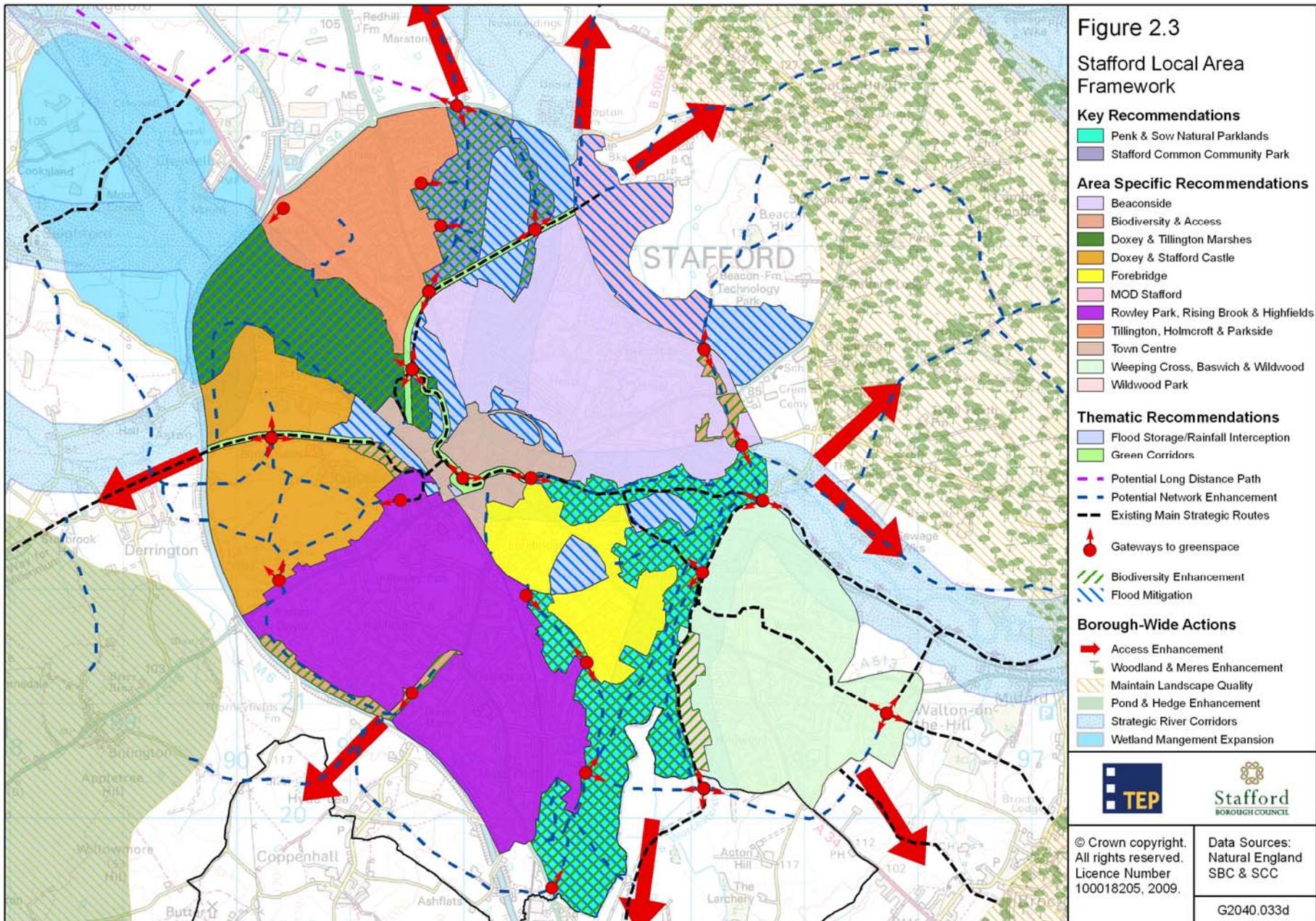
- A. Doxey and Tillington Marshes
- B. Marston and Sandyford Brooks and the land between Parkside and the Industrial Estate (proposed as Stafford Common Community Park)
- C. River Sow Corridor between Littleworth, Baswich and Forebridge
- D. River Penk and Canal Corridor between Queensville, Wildwood and Rickerscote (proposed as the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands)
- E. Stafford Castle/Golf Course between Doxey and Weston Downs

These areas – and particularly the recommendations for the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands and the Stafford Common Country Park - are discussed in greater detail in the Stafford Town Local Area Framework.

Stafford Town Local Area Framework (figure 2.3)

The Stafford Town Framework responds to the overarching thematic priorities in the Borough-wide Plan, and provides a set of detailed, locally appropriate recommendations that arise from the research findings to address local needs and take advantage of opportunities in the town.

Key among these recommendations are the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands and Stafford Common Community Park.



Penk & Sow Natural Parklands (figure 2.4)

This is the most ambitious project area for Stafford town, but will yield many benefits including *recreational areas* providing health and community benefits, access to the countryside providing respite from summer heat and pollution, *flood mitigation*-reducing downstream flooding and *biodiversity*-providing river and marshland habitat areas. The area provides links between town and countryside and compliments the Riverside Walk, canal network and Way for the Millennium routes. Its western extents reach into areas of Stafford town that display high levels of health deprivation and large numbers of young people and will provide opportunities for exercise and education.

The scale of the Parklands and using the existing landscape pattern of the stream and river networks will make a large contribution to preserving and enhancing the Borough's biodiversity and reduce the effect of Stafford's urban area on the flooding of the Rivers Penk and Sow. The visitor appeal of the Parklands is reinforced by the canal network and the marina at Wildwood – giving the area the potential to help reduce visitor impacts on the more sensitive areas within Cannock Chase by providing high quality, accessible landscape and recreational attractions for residents and visitors closer to the town.

By definition, the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands will remain very natural and would retain all of the key existing landscape features. Management practices should seek to increase the functionality of the area to deliver biodiversity (e.g. wildflower meadows), flood management (e.g. flood storage ponds) and wooded areas for relaxation and recreational use, whilst current agricultural practices are anticipated to remain a major land use. The installation of well signed, accessible multi-user trails will link the Parklands to surrounding neighbourhoods and the wider recreational access network, and so will become a major part of a sustainable Stafford.

Key aspects of creating the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands

- Provide links (access routes, gateways and interpretation) to surrounding communities, neighbourhoods and the wider recreational access network
- Increase the multifunctional (flood mitigation, recreation and biodiversity) potential of the Parklands through appropriate management
- Ensure that the Parklands are accessible to all members of the community and of all levels of ability

Stafford Common Community Park (figure 2.4)

This area currently serves as common access land and its value to the community is clear from the many desire lines (unofficial footpaths) that cross it. It connects the areas of Tillington, Holmcroft and Parkside to the employment areas to the east at the industrial estates and to the wider cycle network. The site also contains Sandyford Brook which is culverted for part of its length. The Brook leads straight into Stafford town and, along with Marston Brook, is already subject to flooding. Areas within the site and along the Brook can be used for flood storage during periods of heavy rainfall, and can provided refuge and habitat for wildlife and accessible open natural space for the surrounding communities.

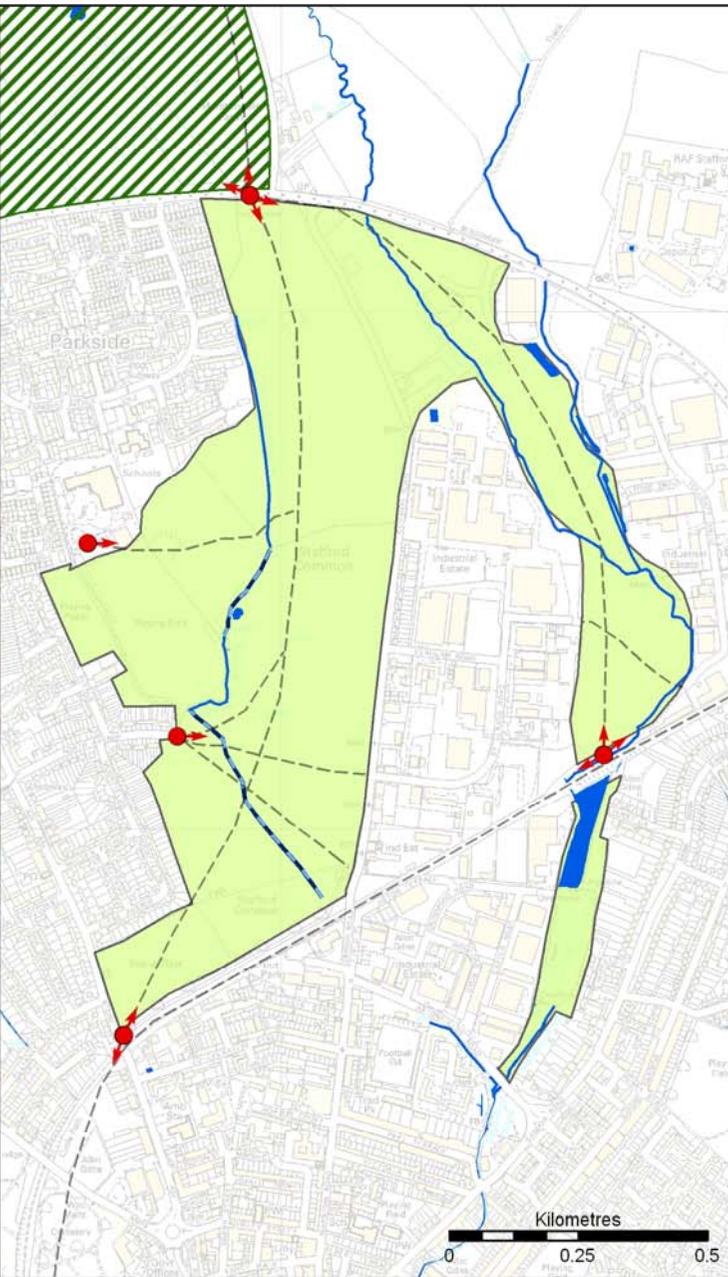
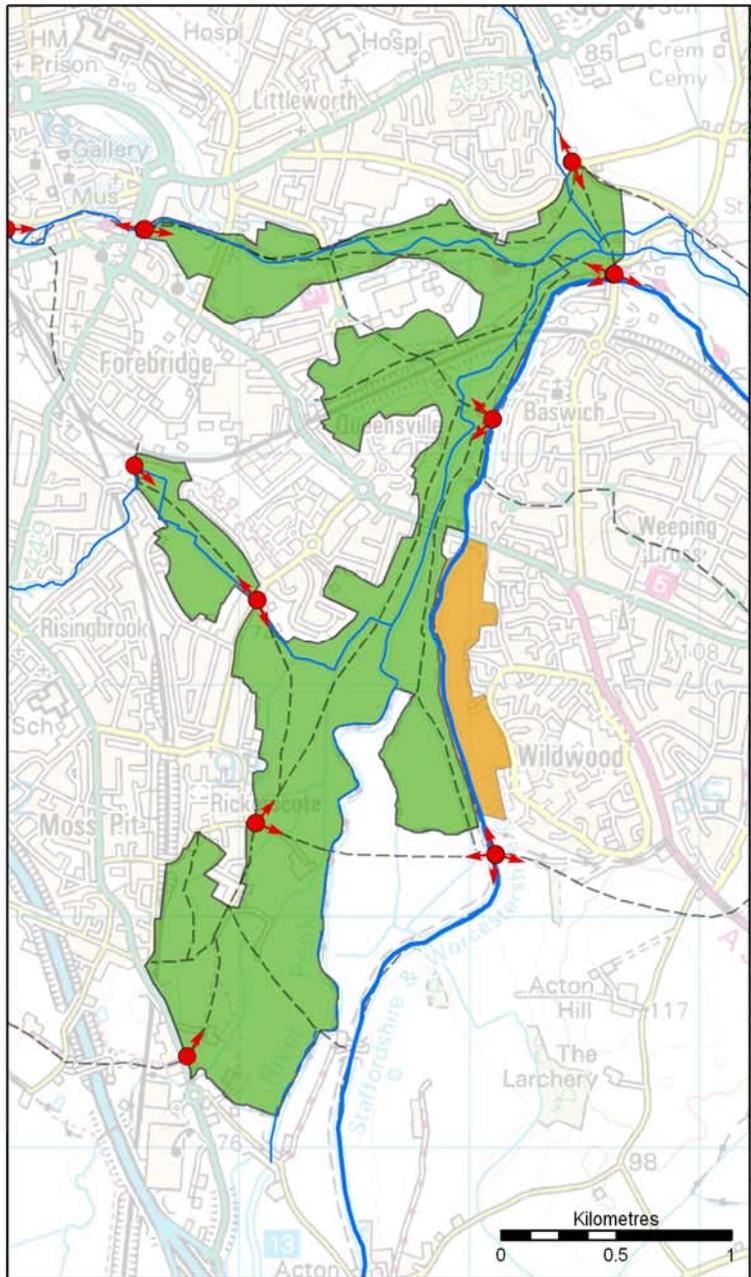


Figure 2.4
Stafford Town Local Area
Framework:
Key Recommendations

- Penk & Sow Natural Parklands
- Stafford Common Community Park
- Gateways to greenspace
- Pathway Enhancement & Creation
- Watercourses & Waterbodies
- Potential Deculverting of Sandyford Brook (Indicative subject to survey)
- Wildwood Park
- Potential Park Expansion

	
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Stafford Common is an important green space in the spatial context because of the lack of green space and poor quality environment of the adjoining neighbourhoods. Development of this area as a community park can also reduce the user-pressure on the more sensitive Doxey and Tillington Marshes Reserve to the west and south. The communities that live adjacent to this site also display poor levels of health and deprivation. Connecting the park to these communities and the wider access network can allow traffic-free access to sites across the town, including those that are within the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands.

CASE Study: The River Quaggy & Sutcliffe Park

The enhancement of the River Quaggy and surrounding Sutcliffe Park in Lewisham was similarly approached. From initially being a simple and somewhat underused amenity green space this park now provides flood protection for some 2,500 people, properties and businesses. In addition, since work was carried out to improve the water course, enhance the access and biodiversity of the site there has been a 73% increase in the numbers of people using the site. This park is now a valued community and a truly multifunctional asset.

There may also be potential to extend the Park to the north of Parkside. This would be particularly important when considering the rights of Commoners to use the area for grazing, since it may be appropriate to agree a 'land swap': encouraging and enabling Commoners to continue grazing their animals on another part of the Common, leaving other parts free for community use. Further consultation with the Commoners and agreement as to their continued use of the land must be carried out as part of the key actions for the Common's development.

Key actions

- Retain common function for grazing (in consultation with Commoners)
- De-culvert or 'skylight' Sandyford Brook to increase biodiversity, landscape value and flood resilience
- Where the topography allows, create a series of flood storage ponds, to reduce flooding during heavy rainfall
- Create gateways and interpretation areas at the entrances from the residential areas
- Involve the communities that already use and value the area
- Promote the park and its links to the town centre and wider recreational network
- Implement management regimes that encourage biodiversity

Other *area specific recommendations* include:

Beaconside

This area contains Stafford General Hospital, Stafford's HM Prison, ambulance station and part of the Ministry of Defence land Stafford in the north. Amongst these institutions there is housing, most of which has access to private gardens, although the housing to the west of Sandon Road (a main thoroughfare into Stafford town) particularly around the Victoria Terrace area have much smaller gardens. Various sizes and types of green space can be found in this area, some areas such as the Garrod Square have more than others such as Mynors Street and Bedford Avenue in the south.

The area does boast a very large allotment site at Coton Field. There are several sites that where multifunctionality could be increased such as reducing flooding or increasing biodiversity.

Key actions

- Road Corridor Greening, tree planting and/or planters – Sandon Road, Corporation Street, Beaconside A513,
- Creation of flood storage areas on existing green space – Gladstone Way/Melbourne Crescent Area, land at the Junction of Sandon Road and Astonfields Road
- Increase functionality of hospital grounds, flood control/water storage and increased woodland planting through the NHS Forest Plan – Staffordshire General Hospital
- Manage edges of sites for biodiversity, wild flower/tree planting/small ponds – Playing Fields off Henry Street, Recreation Ground off Cambridge Street, Land off Sandyford Street, pocket parks in the Garrod Square area, roadside verges

Doxey and Tillington Marshes

This site is nationally important for biodiversity as well as a community and flood prevention asset. The sensitive nature of the site and the neighbourhoods that surround it mean that it is vulnerable to damage through over-use, likely to become more so in a changing climate. It is expected that land to the north west of the site will be managed in such a way that as to buffer the site and increase its biodiversity holding capacity.

Key actions

- Ensure that existing footpaths are accessible to all and maintained to ensure that new desire lines are not created through the avoidance of poor pathways
- Provide interpretation at the entrances/gateways to the site to explain its importance and responsibility of users and its contribution to Stafford town and its communities

Doxey and Stafford Castle

This area is highlighted as one of the options for Stafford town's urban extensions. It contains one of the Borough's key heritage sites and an area of biodiversity value in the north associated with the Doxey and Tillington Reserve, although access to this site is limited. In the east of the area there are outdoor sports facilities and crossing the site are various rights of way and the Way for the Millennium multi-user trail. For this area, ensuring access and the heritage value of the area is protected will be a key aspect of ensuring sustainable development. Around Doxey there are also a few areas that could be improved both in community and wildlife value.

Key actions

- Retain all existing footpaths in development design layout
- Create a buffer around Stafford Castle to prevent the character of the site from being affected by new development; this could be in the form of a Castle Park or in conjunction with the golf course.

- Create new access routes around Doxey included a dedicated link to the Way for the Millennium route
- Promote Stafford Castle as a gateway, improved signage and interpretation
- Ensure the Castle area is connected to the Way for the Millennium in development design layout
- Protect hedge-lines and woodland patches through development control to maintain a level of landscape character and connectivity for wildlife

Forebridge

The centre of the Forebridge area is dominated by works, a retail park and divided by the railway. Private gardens in this area are on average smaller than the rest of the town. For this area the focus should be on improving the quality of the more local spaces and access to the adjacent Penk & Sow Natural Parklands. This area is also home to a high percentage of older people whose requirements for green space will be close to home. Improvements in the street scene, such as planters and tree planting can help create an atmosphere and sense of place in which people of limited mobility can enjoy exercise. The main thoroughfares of Wolverhampton Road and the A34 mean that this area is also subject to airborne pollution. Increased planting can reduce the harmful effects of pollution and provide shading in the summer months, important in a changing climate for people of limited mobility.

Key action areas

- Increased tree cover on roads leading off Wolverhampton Road
- Access to the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands off Silkmore Road, footbridge off Siemens Road, St Leonard's Avenue
- Creation of a pedestrian friendly and accessible for all access route to the town centre between the corner of Telegraph Street and Friar's Terrace and Victoria Park
- Small circular and easily accessible routes leading into the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands

Ministry of Defence (MoD) land at Stafford

Within the land held by the MoD in Stafford town there is an opportunity to reduce the flood risk for the town. Much of the land is grassed over areas with limited function for communities, wildlife and/or possibly military. The large amount of roof surface area means that the buildings on the site have a major impact on run-off during heavy rain. Flood alleviation measures such as SUDS in this area would make a positive contribution to the town's flood prevention measures. There is also the benefit of creating areas for wildlife in an otherwise sterile environment. There is an opportunity to create a partnership at an early stage between the MOD and Stafford Borough Council that can help address other issues that may arise during the proposed future expansion of the base.

Rowley Park, Rising Brook and Highfields

This area has a large amount of green space and other assets such as allotments and outdoor sports facilities. In addition to this housing in the area have private gardens. The area lacks clear connections to the countryside and many of the green spaces are little more than amenity grassland. The area is home to large numbers of young people and has a high level of health deprivation. Green infrastructure in this area must therefore concentrate on addressing the issue of health inequality and provide access to the countryside and activities for young people. Rowley Park is a key asset in this area and has adequate open space to allow for other functions/needs to be delivered within and on adjacent land.

Key actions

- Creation of green gyms in selected areas around the area
- Provision of areas dedicated to young people activities such as skateboarding, BMX riding or other activities that should be identified through consultation with those groups of potential users
- Create natural open space to the south west of the area as identified in the Biodiversity and Access section of the strategy
- Create access routes that connect not only to this space but the wider access network reaching into the countryside and in the east, connecting to the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands
- Position gateways/interpretation/access points at key strategic sites to encourage use of the network and assets

Tillington, Holmcroft, Trinity Fields and Parkside

These neighbourhoods are amongst the most deprived in the Borough, with health deprivation being a major issue. There are few green spaces, particularly in Trinity Fields, and many of the streets are without tree cover. The area is bordered by the busy A5013 and A34 leading into Stafford town bringing with it issue of health and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition to the creation of a Stafford Common Community Park as described above there are other aspects of green infrastructure planning that need to be implemented:

Key actions

- Ensure no green space is lost to development, including existing garden space
- Prioritise this area for street tree planting to provide shading, rainfall interception and pollution mitigation
- Use planting to create visual corridors which lead to green space and the access network, such as along North Avenue towards the Common
- Consider community adoption of small local and underused spaces such as corners and verges
- When land becomes available, its use as green space should be a *priority*, especially in the Trinity Fields area.

Town Centre

Town and village centres all over the country are under pressure, for reasons of convenience and ease of access; many choose to shop at larger supermarket areas often on the outskirts of settlements. Although some areas cannot compete with issues such as access and convenience they can deliver on experience, where the quality of the local environment is part of the experience. For Stafford town there is an opportunity to support the high street shops and create a pleasant environment for users of the town centre, this includes not only shoppers and visitors but also for those who work there. The already pedestrianised nature of the main retail area is ideal for providing tree cover or planters. Increasing the tree cover will also maintain a pleasant experience as summers become hotter. They will also help reduce the amount of urban run-off as well through interception and evapotranspiration.

It is important to improve those areas leading from the parking areas to the main retail centre and from the centre to the parks and spaces such as Victoria Park. Car parks can also perform a flood alleviation function, storing excessive run-off in small storage gullies or swales.

Key actions

- Increase tree cover and planting in the town centre
- Provide visual corridors between parking areas and the town centre and green spaces using planting
- Promote the use of the Riverside Walk and Cycle way as a sustainable travel option
- New car-parks and potentially existing car parks could be designed or modified to store their own run-off
- Create attractive routes along the road corridors into Stafford town

Weeping Cross, Baswich and Wildwood

This area is separated from the main and central part of Stafford town by the River Penk, canal corridor and farmland and as such has a very distinctive character. With the canal running along its northern and western edges it is located well on the Borough's main strategic recreational network, although access to canal is limited with the towpath occupying the opposite bank to the settlement. It is also the gateway to Cannock Chase and has good footpath links to the Chase.

The area contains a high percentage of older people, and has low deprivation compared to the rest of the Borough. Large open green space in the area is restricted to the periphery of the area including Wildwood Park (see below), although some large green spaces do exist within the centre, small local spaces are at a premium especially in the north-west. Although the generally large gardens do help redress this lack of small local spaces, there is a lack of community spaces in which interaction can take place. There are some smaller corner spaces which could fulfil this function.

Key actions

- Create small local/neighbourhood spaces for meeting and low impact exercise

- Access to the canal should be seen as gateways to the wider countryside
- Support the development of visitor facilities such as the marina or park and ride (bicycles) facilities to Cannock Chase

Wildwood Park

As mentioned above this is one of the key open spaces in the south east of Stafford town and serves the communities of Wildwood, Weeping Cross and Baswich. Its location close to the canal network and marina with views across the landscape mean that this could be an asset for visitors as well as the surrounding communities. This space will become the buffer for the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands, providing activities for those that cannot for mobility reasons enjoy the Park such as families with young children or less-mobile older people.

Key actions

- Enhance the Park through creating exercise routes and associated infrastructure such as green gyms
- Explore the possibility of linking Wildwood Park to the Penk Valley through installing a pedestrian bridge across the canal
- Ensure that new facilities for younger people do not affect the peaceful nature of the Park

The broader *thematic recommendations* for Stafford Town also include reference to specific areas where it is felt that actions are particularly important for enhancing, extending and protecting both the green infrastructure assets and the benefits they can provide.

Gateways to Green Space

Within Stafford town and the Borough's other settlements are sites that act as natural hubs or nodes where several access routes converge, clusters of assets can be found, or where areas on the edge of communities lead to open spaces. These sites should be promoted as such within the Borough's local communities and where appropriate within visitor literature such as walking guides. The gateway to green space theme is about interpretation, information and direction in locations where it can deliver the greatest benefit to local communities and visitors to the Borough and its settlements. They are key areas where the signage and access recommendations from the PPG17 Open Space Survey could be employed to achieve maximum benefit.

To support the creation of gateways and to promote them to communities and visitors alike, signage directing people to the gateways should be placed in neighbourhoods, town and village centres and visitor and community assets. Places such as the canal marina in Wildwood and its connections to Cannock Chase and River Penk valley or at Tillington where access to the town centre, Doxey and Tillington Marshes, Stafford Common and the National Cycle Route make it ideal location for a gateway.

Enhancing the Access Network

These routes have been identified for their contribution towards making the existing network a more comprehensive and inclusive asset for the Borough. Along some of these routes there are

already existing footpaths or tracks, in others there may be a need to create new links. The routes shown compliment the existing strategic network and connect communities with the many assets within and around the Borough's settlements.

Where existing footpaths contribute to these routes the intervention should be directed to improving surfaces and infrastructure such as gates/stiles. Where possible biodiversity improvements can be made in conjunction with these routes such as along watercourses or in areas where environmental stewardship schemes are operating. In addition, enhancing existing GI assets such as woodland, hedges and watercourses helps to support landscape character. In areas of comparatively low landscape quality these improvements can make areas more attractive to users of the access network and can reduce the pressure on the potentially more sensitive landscapes that are currently the focus of visitor attention, such as Cannock Chase AONB. This approach is in line with the recommendations of the SAC's Visitor Impact Mitigation Strategy, which promotes responsible access but also aims to reduce visitor pressure by redirecting visitors to less sensitive areas.

Key action areas

- Improve connections between The Way for the Millennium and the cycle path at Castletown.
- The north bank of the River Sow past St Thomas's
- North of Hyde Lea
- Along the River Penk & Sow Corridors
- Across Stafford Common
- Doxey and Tillington Marshes

Biodiversity and Access

Three areas – listed below - have been highlighted for biodiversity and access because of their proximity to communities, links to other green space and biodiversity enhancement opportunities. It is expected that these areas will be managed to maximise the wildlife potential of the sites whilst providing safe and equitable access for the town's residents. Although these three areas below have been highlighted as specific areas for biodiversity, it is expected that across the town, green space management will adopt more wildlife friendly management practices where practical.

Key action areas

- Strip of land adjacent to the M6 motorway between the A518 and Rising Brook leading towards West Way
- Disused Tip close to Doxey Drain and Burley Fields Siding
- Kingston Pool Covert LNR

Flood Storage/Rainfall Interception

These areas are where there is an opportunity to decrease the flood risk for Stafford town through either storage of rainfall in overflow ponds and/or wetland or through interception and storage of

surface run off. Of the areas identified several could provide a biodiversity and community access role as well as flood prevention. For those areas within the heavily built-up industrial estates and works, it is envisaged that flood prevention measures could be in the form of storage on site or adjacent land in temporary ponds for slow release into the river network.

Key areas for green space flood prevention/storage/SUDS areas

- Works to the west of Queensville Bridge
- Works south of Doxey Road and west of Castle Street
- The Car Parks between Castletown and Broadfield
- Business Park and Industrial Estate to the West of Greyfriars Street and Gate Street
- Common Road and Tollgate Drive industrial estates in the north of Stafford town
- Stafford Technology Park and University area
- Land either side of Queensway (opportunity for wildlife enhancement as well)
- Land north of the A518 opposite Portal Road adjacent to MOD Stafford (opportunity for wildlife enhancement as well)
- Works east of Fairway and to the south of the River Penk

Green Corridors

The three main green corridors that pass through Stafford town are the Way for the Millennium, Riverside Walk and the multiuser trail passing Doxey and Tillington Marshes and Stafford Common. These are important routes that allow traffic-free access within the town and to the surrounding countryside and communities. There are several areas in which routes could be improved, such as creating links between these and other recreational routes and assets such as the Castle and the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands. The land either side of these routes can also make an important contribution to the natural networks needed by wildlife.

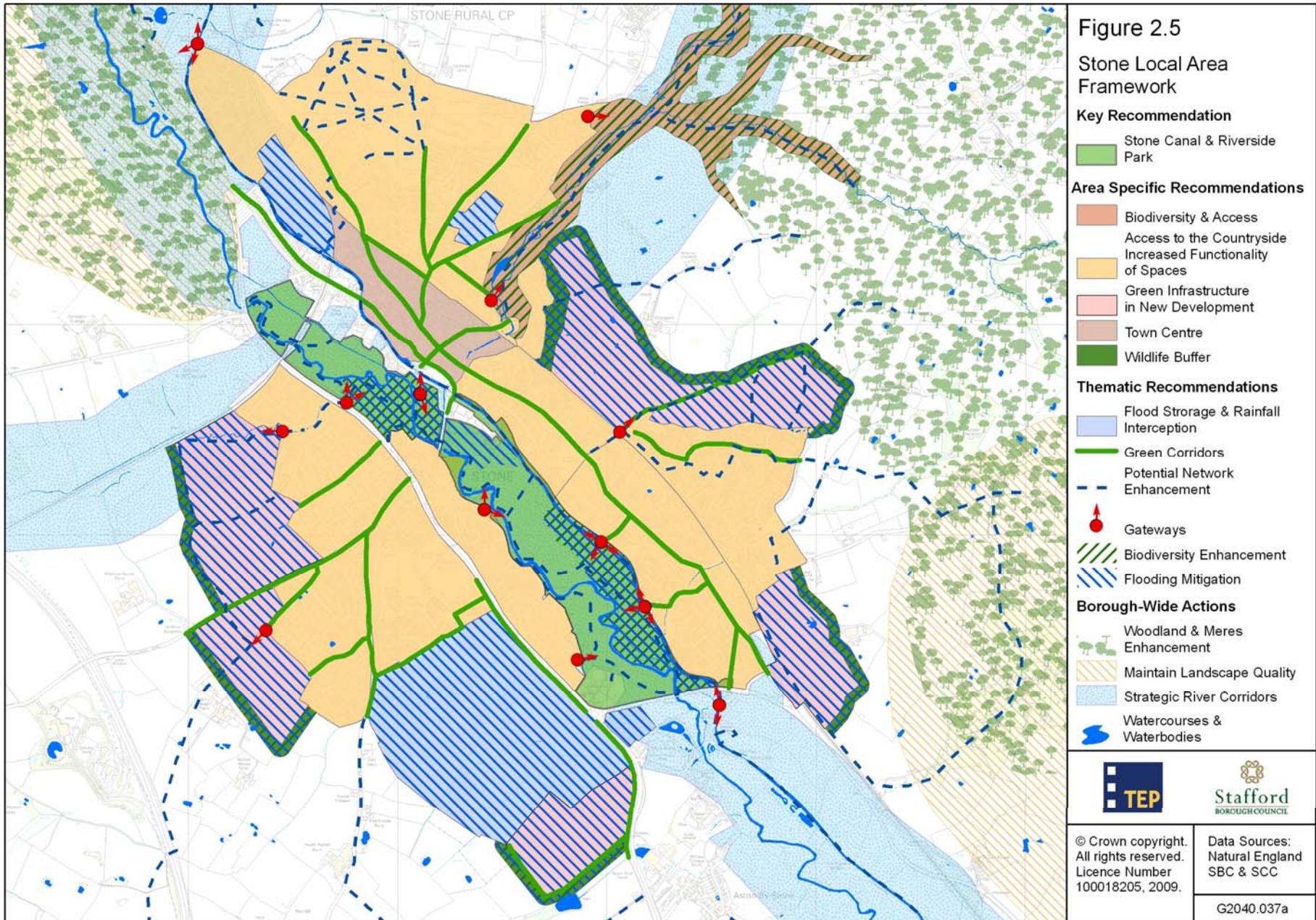
Key action areas

- Improve the connection between the Way for the Millennium and Castletown
- Improve connections to the Way for the Millennium, Doxey and Stafford Castle
- Continue the cycle route out of the north east of Stafford town
- Continue the Riverside Walk to the Penk & Sow Natural Parklands and out towards the canal network

Stone Local Area Framework (figure 2.5)

Although Stone and Stafford town are different in character and landscape with separate issues arising from development and connectivity, there are several recommendations that span both settlements. They include the need for gateways to green space, improvement of existing access network, flood storage and interception and the creation of more accessible natural green space.

The key recommendation for Stone is the creation of the Stone Riverside & Canal Park.



Stone Canal & Riverside Park (figure 2.6)

The town of Stone sits astride the River Trent, the Trent and Mersey Canal and the associated floodplain. Access to the canal is comprehensive with several bridges spanning the waterway along its passage through Stone and the canal towpath which in some parts of the town can be found on both banks. Access to the riverside and across the River however is limited, whilst future development around Stone will mean that those communities at the centre of the settlement will most likely have reduced access to the surrounding countryside.

Creating an area of accessible land in the heart of Stone based around the two watercourses can ensure that most areas of the town can have access to green and open space of a natural essence. Combining access improvements for flood control and biodiversity enhancement measures, whilst retaining the majority of the agricultural function of the space, will make this area between the two halves of the town a truly multifunctional space, and contribute to the future sustainable prosperity of Stone providing recreation opportunities for the communities of the town and an attractive asset for visitors.

This proposal reflects Stone's Town Centre Vision which considers the canal corridor as a main contributor to the town's future prosperity and an attraction to visitors, potential and new residents. Stone Town Council is also in the early stages of plans to link their own site, Crown Meadow LNR, with the Council owned Goodall Meadow LNR to the north. Early plans include negotiating permissions with the private landlord of the land between the sites and a crossing over the Trent to connect these two key areas in the centre of Stone.

Key aspects of delivering the Stone Canal & Riverside Park include:

- Create a series of multiuser pathways within the Park and linking to surrounding communities
- Engage with landowners to increase biodiversity through changes in management
- Install signage in and around Stone directing users to the Park
- Ensure that existing land uses such as farming are retained

Plans should be developed in partnership with Stone Town Council and Friends of Stone Meadows¹¹.

Other *thematic recommendations* include:

Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces

This applies to all of the existing development in Stone and its green spaces. Many of Stone's neighbourhoods have inadequate green space and those that do exist are often of singular function such as recreation fields or allotments. What Stone does have is a large central green and open space running between the two halves of the town. In addition to this the outskirts of the town and the canal corridor provide further opportunities for recreation and exercise.

For those green spaces that do exist within the town, it is necessary to understand their function and determine whether they can offer more, such as flood storage or biodiversity improvements. Equally it is important because of limited green space that access routes to the countryside and canal/river corridors are signposted as such and are accessible. In combination with green corridors and gateways, these more strategic spaces can attract more users, allowing specific, more localised needs to be delivered in the lesser spaces such as play areas for young children or quiet relaxation areas for older people.

Biodiversity and Access

In similarity with the proposals for Stafford town, areas in and around Stone have been identified as having biodiversity value and being a potential link and corridor into the countryside from Stone's northern neighbourhoods, likely to increase as development progresses. This area should be managed as a patchwork of woodland and meadow helping to maintain the biodiversity connectivity that already exists. Access improvements should be unobtrusive and yet directive enough to dissuade walkers from straying from the route.

Key action area

- The section of Scotch Brook valley that runs north from the railway crossing at Mill Street towards The Hayes

Enhancing the Existing Access Network

Key action areas

- Scotch Brook to The Hayes and Ivy Mill
- Common Land to the east of Oulton Cross
- Blackie's Lane, Railway and The Hayes Circular
- Canal corridor
- Various sections along the river valley
- In new development areas on the edges of existing residential areas

Flood Storage/Rainfall Interception

Within Stone are several areas where existing development can help reduce urban run-off. The industrial and employment area in the south has green and open space in close proximity in which excessive rainfall can be stored before slow natural release into the water table. Two other areas in the north of Stone also have the capability to adopt similar run-off interception methods.

Key action areas

- Stone Business Park, Stone Enterprise Centre and Industrial Park
- Works between Oulton Road and Longton Road
- Stonefield Industrial Estate

Green Corridors

Green corridors are designed to lead the eye and therefore the pedestrian towards Stone's green and open spaces. They are important in helping define the routes between communities, spaces and services such as those in the town centre. They can be achieved either through street tree planting, roadside verge managed more favourably for wildlife such as wildflower planting or something simple like hanging baskets on more residential streets where trees or planters are not practical. In addition to giving the impression of a route they also improve the image of the town, important for Stone with its aspirations for the canal area. For Stone there are several areas where these green corridors could take the form of screening to reduce visual obtrusion such as industrial estates.

Key action areas

- Screening the industrial estate and proposed employment site in the south of Stone on the A34
- The main thoroughfares through the town centre
- Oulton Road, Old Road, Longton Road, Newcastle Road and Victor Street/Field Terrace
- Lichfield Road
- Pirehill Lane

Green Infrastructure in New Development

There are potential development areas on the perimeter of Stone, raising issues of reducing the access of existing communities to the countryside. In addition to this there are flooding and run-off issues that need addressing.

Within these new areas new access routes should be developed through to the countryside that link up with existing and popular routes. In these new development areas there is the potential to address the shortfall in green space provision that exists in some neighbourhoods. To the benefit of wildlife and the landscape character an area buffering the developments should be managed for wildlife, as well as being a storage area during periods of heavy rainfall. In the case of the new employment area on the southern approach into the town, this buffer could perhaps become more of a screen to partly disguise the industrial/employment areas.

Town Centre

The actions needed in the town centre are a combination of the above recommendations. Stone's aspiration of linking its canal/river corridor resource to the town centre can be partly accomplished through green corridors and the attraction of open green space adjacent to the canal.

In addition to this the town centre's retail area would be enhanced through improved environments delivered by increased tree planting (where this is appropriate in terms of traffic and pedestrian movement and in engineering terms) which provides cooling and shade and helps reduce run-off. Green corridors leading into the centre from the main approach roads give a good first impression for visitors, pleasant corridors from the canal quay to the centre of town guide canal users to the services.

Chapter 3: DELIVERING THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIC PLAN

The delivery of green infrastructure interventions in Stafford Borough firstly needs to consider the mechanisms for delivery, including funding, partnerships and policy approaches. We then need to consider how the quality of green infrastructure can be assured by identifying standards that interventions should meet.

Mechanisms for Delivery

There are five elements to the mechanism for delivering green infrastructure in Stafford Borough.

1. Planning conditions, obligations and tariffs

Stafford Borough Council currently seeks planning obligation contributions for affordable housing, transportation, education and public open space. The Core Strategy Issues and Options paper also sets out a range of potential interventions that could be delivered via Community Infrastructure Levy contributions. Many of these, such as improvements to parks serving a broad population and the conservation, restoration and enhancement of the historic environment, would help to achieve the recommendations set out in the Strategy.

Stafford Borough Council should clearly establish green infrastructure provision as a beneficiary of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds in the emerging Developer Contributions SPD. Actions that can be supported by these funds should be derived from the recommendations in the green infrastructure strategy, and should be focused on those areas identified as priorities in the spatial plan. This should allow for contributions to be used on green infrastructure outside of the immediate development footprint in response to the cumulative impact of development and the broader requirements of the Borough (although this may only be an option for CIL and not Section 106).

Funds should not be made available to developers to achieve the green infrastructure standards laid out below. Instead, they should be targeted towards additional activities that will enhance the provision and quality of green infrastructure in addition to those actions required to make a development acceptable in green infrastructure terms.

CASE STUDY: Tameside Council Developer Contributions SPD

Tameside Council has produced a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This aims to introduce a more streamlined and accountable system of local tariffs for provision of new and improved greenspace, education facilities and highways in conjunction with an approved Section 106 Agreement regime. It will allow the Council to effectively mitigate for detrimental impact on the Borough's existing infrastructure, facilities and services from new development by providing a capital budget for implementation of a prioritised programme of works in these services.

<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/planning/ldf/spd/developercontributions>

2. Partnerships & co-provision

The Staffordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) lists the key partners for delivering aims under the priority for “a protected, enhanced and respected environment”. Stafford Borough Council should actively engage with these partners as a priority, making them aware of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and negotiating activities that will deliver common objectives. This is particularly important where recommended interventions cross political boundaries, such as Cannock Chase AONB and the Woodlands and Meres intervention zones in the north west of the Borough.

As major land holders in the Borough, the MoD, HM Prisons Service and the NHS also have the potential to deliver the Strategy’s green infrastructure recommendations in the management and development of their sites. Stafford Borough Council should ensure that these key organisations are informed about the green infrastructure strategy and are aware of its recommendations – particularly those that allow for co-provision and delivery of objectives via green infrastructure actions.

CASE STUDY: *The Campaign for Greener Healthcare and the NHS Forest*

The Campaign for Greener Healthcare is working with the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust, NHS Trusts, Natural England, the Sustainable Development Unit and others to develop partnerships between the NHS and other organisations and to identify land where trees could grow.

The resulting NHS Forest will consist of trees on every NHS campus and in the local surrounding area, giving an excellent opportunity for involvement from the wider community and contributing to what has been called the Natural Health Service, namely the presence of trees, bushes, flowers, birds and butterflies on every campus, of great benefit to both patients and staff. As well as transforming the core business of the health service it is an opportunity to literally green the NHS: to improve air quality and visual surroundings for staff and patients; to reduce the need for artificial air cooling in buildings and to reduce the organisation’s impact on the environment.

<http://www.greenerhealthcare.org/nhs-forest>

3. Community and voluntary sector engagement

Stafford Borough’s Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) provides the vehicle for engaging with the public and with voluntary and community organisations. The SCS includes a priority for “a protected and enhanced environment” and includes actions to achieve this over a three year period. The SCS is revised every three years, and at its next review (2011) actions and aims, particularly those relating to the environmental priority, must reflect the priorities and recommendations within the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The Borough’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)¹² sets out Stafford Borough Council’s commitment to engaging with the local community of Stafford Borough in preparing the new development plan for the future. It provides an illustration of the relationship between the community and Stafford Borough Council Services:



Under the SCI, Stafford Borough Council are obliged to consult with various community and other groups as part of the LDF process. Whilst the Green infrastructure Strategy itself is not a statutory document, it is part of the LDF evidence base and will inform decision making in the Borough and should be referred to as within the consultation process. This will draw attention to the Strategy and make wider communities and partnerships aware of its objectives and vision.

Among these are Borough, Parish and Town Councillors. It is particularly important that Borough Councillors are made aware of and kept informed about the Strategy, recognising both their political weight, local knowledge and focus, and their influence in facilitating, considering and responding to community representations on planning policy (including LDF development) and planning applications. Similarly, town and parish councils can be very influential, and the inclusion of priorities for local areas within the Green Infrastructure Strategy in the relevant Parish Plans and associated action plans should be advocated.

4. Funding

Site specific interventions may be suitable for funding under the various schemes described in chapter 7 (such as Heritage Lottery or the Safer & Stronger Communities Fund), but these opportunities would need to be assessed on a project specific basis.

Public funds available largely to private landowners will also be important, and Natural England's Environmental Stewardship and Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme in particular can both deliver green infrastructure benefits that are aligned with funding scheme objectives.

5. Policy Interventions

The Green Infrastructure Strategy forms part of the evidence base for the LDF, and the associated SPD will advise on the strategic integration of green infrastructure with development. Whilst the SPD will play a vital role at the development level, it is essential that green infrastructure in relation to the Borough as a whole is reflected within statutory policy.

The Vision for the Borough set out in the Issues & Options paper has a very strong environmental and quality of place focus, and this must be taken forward into Core Strategy. The inclusion of a specific policy on green infrastructure within Core Strategy would also be welcome, and would reinforce both the importance of the Strategy and the many benefits a planned approach to green infrastructure can deliver. The following draft text for a green infrastructure policy in Core Strategy is adapted from the vision, objectives and priority interventions set out in chapter 2 and should be accompanied by the Green infrastructure Framework map (figure 2.1):

The Borough's green infrastructure network will be protected, enhanced and expanded to enhance quality of life, increase sustainability, reduce the impacts of climate change and improve health and well being across these overarching objectives:

- Networks of open spaces, natural corridors, access routes and watercourses will be enhanced and created to:
 - protect the setting of landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and geodiversity) assets
 - reverse habitat fragmentation
 - provide recreational opportunities for new and existing communities
 - provide open breaks between neighbouring residential areas and business developments.
- The network of existing access routes will be improved and expanded to allow sustainable commuting, including:
 - shared surfaces to reduce vehicle speeds
 - providing safe, attractive and well-signed walking and cycling routes between residential areas, employment centres, green spaces and the wider countryside.
- Local landscape and heritage features should:
 - be retained as focal points for new neighbourhoods,
 - have their historic nature protected
 - act as attractive green and open spaces where communities can come together.
- To alleviate the effects of climate change:
 - measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems and street trees must be included in new developments and should be 'retro-fitted' into existing developments
 - green spaces will provide a flood storage/management function (where appropriate).

- All new developments will:
 - be set within a well designed, attractive, green setting
 - provide a variety of spaces to meet the needs of people and nature
 - provide safe opportunities for sustainable transport
 - achieve at least the green infrastructure standards laid out in the SPD

Key strategic interventions include:

- Biodiversity intervention zones
- Watercourse corridors
- Movement corridors
- Strategic open spaces
- Landscape quality

Key delivery projects are:

- Penk & Sow Natural Parklands
- Stafford Common Community Park
- Stone Canal & Riverside Park

These are illustrated on the Green Infrastructure Framework Strategic Map.

It is also important that the Strategy is referred to and its principles and recommendations incorporated into other Borough plans and strategies, particularly future iterations of the Staffordshire Local Area Agreement and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (and associated action plans).

Green Infrastructure Standards

Green infrastructure standards set the framework for planning and developer decision making and delivery that is grounded in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and are based on existing (recognised) standards for green infrastructure and sustainable communities that have been developed or are endorsed by national agencies and initiatives (particularly Natural England and CABE).

Achievement of the standards will not only help to meet statutory targets, it will also contribute to the delivery of local and regional policy objectives as well as delivering green infrastructure outcomes that contribute towards the spatial vision for the Borough as set out in Core Strategy. As such, the standards form part of the SPD for developers and so contribute to the development control planning process.

The Standards are laid out at three spatial scales:

Borough-wide Standards: Guiding Planning Officers

The Borough wide standards are derived directly from the core green infrastructure principles set out in Chapter 2. They incorporate the quality, quantity and accessibility of Stafford Borough's green infrastructure network and will contribute towards the achievement of statutory targets (noted in brackets).

Planning Officers will evaluate and monitor development proposals to ensure that all new development (including housing, employment, retail and office developments) will provide:

Enhancements to existing and creation of new open spaces, green corridors and watercourses will actively:

- Protect landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and geodiversity) assets
- Reverse habitat fragmentation

Improvements to and expansion of the network of existing access routes will:

- Link residential areas, employment centres and the wider countryside
- Provide safe, managed and well-signed options for walking and cycling

New housing developments will:

- Retain natural, landscape and heritage features
- Provide high quality, accessible green and open spaces where communities can come together
- Include measures to alleviate the effects of climate change

New employment areas, office developments and retail developments will:

- Retain natural, landscape and heritage features
- Be well designed within a high quality green setting
- Include measures to alleviate the effects of climate change
- Include provision for sustainable transport

Development Area Standards

The Development Area Standards will specifically guide developers in the production of development plans and designs. All developers will be required to make a commitment that their proposals and activities will:

- a) Not damage or reduce the area or functionality of the Borough's existing green infrastructure, and
- b) Make a contribution towards improving or extending the Borough's existing green infrastructure, or to creating new green infrastructure asset/s.

Both of these undertakings will apply to all types and scales of development, and impacts and activities on and off site.

Table 3.1 presents a standards checklist that developers must respond to regarding how their site will contribute towards the Borough-wide Standards. This has been derived from Building for Life, Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Guidance and Natural England’s ‘Green Test’ for new development, and sets out for each criteria which of these it links to. Examples of the kind of green interventions that could be delivered to meet the requirement are given.

The checklist is intended to be strong enough to protect and deliver green infrastructure as part of the overall network and for local provision, but not so stringent as to act as a barrier to development. Developers will be required to respond to the checklist as part of the planning (development control) process, with certain types or locations of development being required to meet certain of the standards or criteria as a planning condition. The checklist is directly linked to the Borough-wide standards that Planning Officers will use in reviewing applications, allowing Developers to incorporate a range of measure that directly respond to Planning Officers’ expectations.

Site Specific Standards

The PPG17 Assessment deals with individual sites and sets accessibility, quantity and quality provision standards for a number of green space typologies that together make up the green infrastructure resource in Stafford Borough, including:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Multi-functional Greenspaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amenity greenspaces Churchyards and cemeteries Natural greenspaces Parks and gardens |
| Other public spaces: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green corridors Civic spaces |
| Activity Spaces: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotments Formal play provision |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowling greens Grass cricket, football and rugby pitches Tennis Courts |

The Council will take these standards into account when appraising planning applications that incorporate specific plans for individual green and open space sites, and provide a guide for developers on the quality of provision the Council will expect them either to provide or fund. However, as these standards relate to individual types of open spaces rather than being set within the context of green infrastructure they must be considered within the planning process alongside the broader development and Borough standards outlined above.

Table 3.1: Development Specific Standards Checklist

Borough-wide Standard	Development Area Criteria The development will:	example activity	Developments MUST meet this criteria under the following circumstances	GI Strategy area reference
Enhancements to existing and creation of new open spaces, green corridors and watercourses will actively:				
Protect landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and geodiversity) assets	Fit into surrounding countryside and landscape character & setting	e.g. use of local stone, incorporating existing features, following existing layouts/landform	All developments	Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Maintaining Landscape Quality, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Infrastructure in New Development
Reverse habitat fragmentation	Support an increase in priority species & habitats		Located in an area shown in the GI Strategy as biodiversity intervention area	Biodiversity Intervention Zones, Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Strategic Open Space, Maintain Landscape Quality, Biodiversity and Access, Daxey and Tillington Marshes, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Accessible Natural Green Space
	Create new wildlife sites and corridors	Includes measures for connecting fragmented habitats, expanding existing wildlife sites	Located in an area shown in the GI Strategy as biodiversity intervention area	Biodiversity Intervention Zones, Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Strategic Open Space, Maintaining Landscape Quality, Biodiversity and Access, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Accessible Natural Green Space
Improvements to and expansion of the network of existing access routes will:				
Link residential areas, employment centres and the wider countryside	Integrate with existing streets, paths & surrounding development	Provision of walking/cycling links to neighbouring settlements, to schools, business parks and service centres	Located within an area shown in the GI Strategy as being a priority for access interventions	Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Access to the Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces, Green Infrastructure in New Development
	Connect to or incorporate sustainable transport routes	Includes existing or planned walking or cycle routes	Adjacent to existing or planned routes Located within an area shown in the GI Strategy as being a priority for access interventions	Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Access to the Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces, Green Infrastructure in New Development
Provide safe, managed and well-signed options for walking and cycling	Provide public spaces and access routes that are/feel safe	Ensuring that routes are open and give a feeling of personal safety Includes provision of new routes and improvements to existing routes	All developments: - Developments of 5 or less housing units or <500m sq floorspace should demonstrate that these issues have been considered in design/development proposals - Developments of more than 5 housing units or greater than 500m sq floorspace should include physical measures to provide/improve routes connecting to or impacted on by development	Strategic River Corridors, Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Wildwood Park, Weeping Cross, Baswich and Wildwood, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
New housing developments will:				
Retain natural, landscape and heritage features	Conserve existing landscape, heritage, natural features and structures	Includes: - structural features (trees, hedgerows, etc) - geological/topographical features - key views - historic monuments, landforms	All developments	Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Maintaining Landscape Quality, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Infrastructure in New Development
Provide high quality, accessible green and open spaces where communities can come together	Provide public green space - within 5 minute walk (300m) of all dwellings for amenity greenspaces of at least 0.1ha in size - within 15 minute walk (900m) of all dwellings for natural greenspaces of at least 0.1ha in size	Includes measures for providing new spaces or enhancing accessibility to or functions of existing sites	All developments: - Developments of 5 or less housing units or <500m sq floorspace should demonstrate that these issues have been considered in design/development proposals - Developments of more than 5 housing units or greater than 500m sq floorspace should include physical measures to provide new spaces or enhance access to/functionality of existing spaces (commensurate with the size of development)	Strategic River Corridors, Strategic Open Space, Gateways to Green Space, Biodiversity and Access, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Tillington, Holmcraft, Trinity Fields and Parkside, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces, Accessible Natural Green Space, Green Infrastructure in New Development
	Provide opportunities for active recreation	e.g. green gyms, health walks, cycling routes Includes provision for enhancing existing opportunities by providing improved access to, improving or extending current facilities	All developments: - Developments of 5 or less housing units or <500m sq floorspace should demonstrate that these issues have been considered in design/development proposals - Developments of more than 5 housing units or greater than 500m sq floorspace should include physical measures to provide new facilities or enhancing existing provision	Strategic River Corridors, Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Wildwood Park, Weeping Cross, Baswich and Wildwood, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
	Provide public spaces and access routes that are/feel safe	Ensuring that routes are open and give a feeling of personal safety Includes provision of new routes and improvements to existing routes	All developments: - Developments of 5 or less housing units or <500m sq floorspace should demonstrate that these issues have been considered in design/development proposals - Developments of more than 5 housing units or greater than 500m sq floorspace should include physical measures to provide new routes/improve routes connecting to or impacted on by development	Strategic River Corridors, Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Wildwood Park, Weeping Cross, Baswich and Wildwood, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
Include measures to alleviate the effects of climate change	Incorporate SUDS	In the form of permeable paving or swales	Developments in flood zones Developments in areas shown in the GI Strategy as having potential for wetland management Areas with specific proposals for flood water management Areas prone to surface water flooding	Beaconside, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Flood Storage/Rainfall Interception, Ministry of Defence Stafford, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Town Centre, Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Green Infrastructure in New Development, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
	Include tree planting to provide shading/cooling		Town Centres	Flooding/Rainfall Interception, Town Centres, Tillington, Holmcraft, Trinity Fields and Parkside
New employment areas, office developments and retail developments will:				
Retain natural, landscape and heritage features	Conserve existing landscape, heritage, natural features and structures	Includes: - structural features (trees, hedgerows, etc) - geological/topographical features - key views - historic monuments, landforms	All developments	Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Maintaining Landscape Quality, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Infrastructure in New Development
Be well designed within a high quality green setting	Includes spaces which provide opportunities for passive recreation and interaction	Includes provision of new sites and/or routes, enhancing existing sites/routes quality/functionality/accessibility	All developments	Daxey and Stafford Castle, Stafford Common Community Park, Gateways to Green Space, Green Infrastructure in New Development
Include measures to alleviate the effects of climate change s	Include provision for green roofs		Areas prone to surface water flooding	Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Town Centres, Green Infrastructure in New Development
	Include provision for water balancing measures	e.g. stormwater ponds/lagoons, street trees to reduce run off	Developments in flood zones Developments in areas shown in the GI Strategy as having potential for wetland management/areas with specific proposals for flood water management Areas prone to surface water flooding	Beaconside, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Flood Storage/Rainfall Interception, Ministry of Defence Stafford, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Town Centre, Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Green Infrastructure in New Development, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
	Incorporate SUDS	in the form of permeable paving or swales	Developments in flood zones Developments in areas shown in the GI Strategy as having potential for wetland management Areas with specific proposals for flood water management Areas prone to surface water flooding	Beaconside, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Flood Storage/Rainfall Interception, Ministry of Defence Stafford, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Town Centre, Strategic Watercourse Corridors, Green Infrastructure in New Development, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
	Include tree planting to provide shading/cooling		Business Park developments Town Centres	Flooding/Rainfall Interception, Town Centres, Tillington, Holmcraft, Trinity Fields and Parkside
Include provision for sustainable transport	Connect to or incorporate sustainable transport routes	Includes existing or planned walking or cycle routes	Adjacent to existing or planned routes Located within an area shown in the GI Strategy as being a priority for access interventions	Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Access to the Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces, Green Infrastructure in New Development
	Provide public spaces and access routes that are/feel safe	Ensuring that routes are open and give a feeling of personal safety Includes provision of new routes and improvements to existing routes	All developments: - Developments of 5 or less housing units or <500m sq floorspace should demonstrate that these issues have been considered in design/development proposals - Developments of more than 5 housing units or greater than 500m sq floorspace should include physical measures to provide new routes/improve routes connecting to or impacted on by development	Strategic River Corridors, Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Wildwood Park, Weeping Cross, Baswich and Wildwood, Access to Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces
	Integrate with existing streets, paths & surrounding development	Provision of walking/cycling links to neighbouring settlements, to schools, business parks and service centres	Located within an area shown in the GI Strategy as being a priority for access interventions	Strategic Movement Corridors, Gateways to Green Space, Enhancing the Existing Network, Daxey and Stafford Castle, Green Corridors, Penk and Saw Country Park, Stafford Common Community Park, Access to the Countryside and Increased Functionality of Green Spaces, Green Infrastructure in New Development

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Chapter 1: Vision & Principles for Green Infrastructure

- ¹ A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stafford Borough: the Research & Evidence Base (2009) TEP for Stafford Borough Council
- ² Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough: Issues & Options (February 2009) Stafford Borough Council
- ³ Shaping our Borough for the Future: Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2020 (2008) Stafford Borough Partnership

Chapter 2: The Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan

- ⁴Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (January 2008) Government Office for the West Midlands
- ⁵ New Growth Point: Stafford Programme of Development (October 2008) Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County Councils
- ⁶ Available as a separate document from Stafford Borough Council
- ⁷ PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (March 2009) Kit Campbell Associates for Stafford Borough Council
- ⁸ Historic Environment Character Assessment: Draft Final Report for Stafford Borough Council (April 2009) Staffordshire County Council
- ⁹ See www.staffordbc.gov.uk/live/welcome.asp?id=6367
- ¹⁰ Walking for Health Action Plan 2008-2011 (2008) Stafford Borough Council
- ¹¹ See www.staffordbc.gov.uk/live/welcome.asp?id=2812

Chapter 3: Delivering the Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan

- ¹² Local Development Framework - Planning For Our Future: Statement of Community Involvement (Adopted 26 July 2006) Stafford Borough Council
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