The Milton Keynes & South Midlands Environment & Quality of Life Sub Group has been set up to put together principles and standards to ensure consistency and co-ordination in the delivery of environment and quality of life initiatives across the Sub-Region. The group’s remit includes developing guidance for the growth areas in relation to the provision of environmental and other quality of life infrastructure, and promoting a consistent standard of provision for these aspects across the Sub-Region. The group has a broad-based membership of senior representatives drawn from key national and regional organisations. EQOL reports into the Growth Implementation Group, the main body supporting and advising the MKSM Inter-Regional Board.

The information contained in this guide has been prepared by the EQOL Sub Group members and represents independent advice. It is not a statement of government policy.

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- English Heritage
- English Nature
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- Forestry Commission
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Introduction

High levels of growth are projected for the Milton Keynes & South Midlands (MKSM) Sub-Region. The population is expected to grow by 750,000 people. This increase in population will not only put pressure on existing Green Infrastructure (GI), which is essential for quality of life, but will require new GI provision to ensure that all residents and visitors have access to GI of all types.

The concept of GI has been endorsed by the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy by including specific references to GI as an integrated approach to master planning, design and development.

Today’s scale and pace of development requires major changes to the traditional ways of providing GI. Previously, GI has been developed at the local level and often in an opportunistic way. At times, this has led to schemes failing as insufficient resources were committed to aftercare. The lessons learnt from these experiences are incorporated in the principles, case studies and references in this guide.

In order to achieve sustainable communities, GI must be planned strategically and delivered in an integrated way across the whole Sub-Region and at all spatial planning levels. The principles of GI should be integrated into Local Development Frameworks and the investment plans of those responsible for the planning and delivery of growth and environmental management within the Sub-Region.

The purpose of this guide is to assist local delivery vehicles and local authorities in addressing the GI planning and delivery needs as set out in the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy, by providing

- A checklist of GI planning and delivery principles
- Relevant best practice case studies
- Signposts to further resources and information

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“Green Infrastructure” is a network of multi-functional greenspace, provided across the Sub-Region. It is set within, and contributes to, a high quality natural and built environment and is required to deliver “liveability” for new communities.

Green Infrastructure (GI) can be delivered through a planned network of multifunctional greenspaces and inter-connecting links which is designed, developed and managed to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of communities across the Sub-Region. It is set within, and contributes to, a high quality natural and built environment and is required to enhance the quality of life for present and future residents and visitors, and to deliver “liveability” for sustainable communities.

**Green Infrastructure Assets**

GI consists of public and private assets, with and without public access, in urban and rural locations, including:

- Allotments
- Amenity space, including communal greenspaces within housing areas
- Green corridors, including hedgerows, ditches, disused railways, verges
- Brownfield and greenfield sites
- Urban parks and gardens
- Registered commons and village and town greens
- Children’s play space
- Natural and semi-natural habitat for wildlife
- Playing fields
- Cemeteries
- Pocket parks
- Country parks
- Woodland
- Historic parks and gardens and historic landscapes
- Nature reserves
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Scheduled Monuments
- Locally designated heritage sites, including county wildlife sites
- Waterways and waterbodies, including flooded quarries
- Development sites with potential for openspace and links
- Land in agri-environmental management
- Public rights of way, cycleways and other recreational routes

**Benefits of Green Infrastructure**

Well-designed and integrated GI can deliver a range of benefits, often in combination:

- Improve health and mental well-being
- Promote a sense of community
- Help reduce crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour
- Provide opportunity for exercise, sport, active recreation, spiritual well-being and quiet contemplation
- Improve health as a result of increased physical activity, such as walking
- Provide community resources for learning and training
- Provide opportunities for community involvement
- Provide a leisure focus and attraction for people of all ages from the existing and the growth communities
- Help establish local identity or sense of place
- Improve environmental quality, e.g. better air and water quality, local climate control and noise attenuation
- Contribute to sustainable drainage and flood mitigation
- Provide the opportunity to protect, recreate and rehabilitate landscapes and habitats damaged or lost by previous development or agricultural change
- Help maintain and enhance biodiversity
- Contribute to the protection, management and enhancement of historic and natural sites and areas
- Improve and sustain land values
- Reduce land management costs
- Provide an enhanced environmental backdrop that will assist in attracting business and inward investment
Principles

The implementation of the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy will be achieved by a number of different organisations and stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to establish a set of overarching GI planning and delivery principles to guide development in the Growth Areas.

These principles should be adopted by all stakeholders to deliver “liveability” for new and existing communities and to create an attractive area for new economic and social investment. This will ensure that all key players share a common purpose and find ways of combining skills and other resources in order to maximise their impact on the delivery of growth and regeneration.

**Green Infrastructure should**

- Contribute to the management, conservation and improvement of the local landscape
- Contribute to the protection, conservation and management of historic landscape, archaeological and built heritage assets
- Maintain and enhance biodiversity to ensure that development and implementation results in a net gain of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats
- Be delivered through the enhancement of existing woodlands and also by the creation of new woodlands and forest areas
- Create new recreational facilities, particularly those that present opportunities to link urban and countryside areas
- Take account of and integrate with natural processes and systems
- Be managed and funded in urban areas to accommodate nature, wildlife and historic and cultural assets, and provide for sport and recreation
- Be designed to high standards of quality and sustainability to deliver social and economic, as well as environmental benefits
- Provide focus for social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning

These principles are expanded and explained in the following sections of the guide.
has been designed to meet current and future planning needs, and is now contributing to the development of a suite of criteria-based policies and specialist guidance to influence the emerging Local Development Frameworks.

Outcomes
It provides a solid foundation for developing recommendations on key environmental issues, making informed judgements and decisions regarding environmental guidance, planning policy and quality issues, guidance for GI and local development planning across the county.

It also provides an essential environmental baseline resource to inform a range of processes such as Regional Spatial Strategies, Strategic Environmental Assessments, Sustainability Appraisals, and State of the Environment reporting as well as the wider spatial and area based planning process that is integral to the new planning system.

Jason Longhurst
River Nene Regional Park, Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment

Introduction
The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment has developed a new approach that represents an important milestone in the evolution of the character assessment process. It differs from previous approaches in that separate detailed assessments of the current landscape, historic landscape and biodiversity character were carried out in isolation.

Key factors
Individual assessments were undertaken at 1:25,000 scale, describing recurring biodiversity, historic landscape or current landscape types, within which are geographically discrete character areas. The results of these discrete but co-ordinated studies were then brought together to create a composite environmental character map of the county.

Benefits
The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment project represents the most innovative and robust county scale assessment of character to date. It has been designed to meet current and future planning needs, and is now contributing to the development of a suite of criteria-based policies and specialist guidance to influence the emerging Local Development Frameworks.

CASE STUDY 1

Landscape Character

Principles
Existing and emerging Landscape Character Assessments must be used to
- Recognise and define the local landscape character
- Inform the development of strategic environmental policy involving land use change
- Guide the process of planning, designing, implementing and managing open space provision
- Inform the provision and management of Green Infrastructure (GI) network as an integral part of the form and design of new built development
- Identify potential constraints and opportunities across the Sub-Region
- Input into master planning to guide and shape development at a more localised level
- Consider the restoration of disused and derelict sites that are not suitable for development or have nature conservation or historic interest that should be conserved and properly managed

Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment

Illustrative Map of Environmental Character Areas

Crown Copyright. All rights reserved Northamptonshire County Council / LDA Design
The Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

Introduction
The Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment is an ongoing phased project, which started in autumn 2003. Land Use Consultants were appointed by the “Bedfordshire Local Authorities Design Forum”, a partnership of the District Councils, Luton Borough Council and the County Council.

The initial contract was to provide a
- Countywide Assessment (1:50,000) - the first comprehensive character assessment of the county, exploring the pressures, qualities and condition of the landscape and providing guidelines for management.
- District Level Study (1:25,000) of the growth areas identified in the Sustainable Communities plan. This covers all of South Bedfordshire and parts of the Marston Vale and Bedford’s southern urban fringe.

Funding
£115,000 was met largely by the County Council, with contributions from Luton Borough Council, South Bedfordshire District Council, The Countryside Agency and the Chilterns Conservation Board.

Key factors
- The study integrates information on ecology, cultural heritage and accessibility as well as the visual qualities of the landscape.
- Most of the budget was directed to the District Level Studies as it was felt Bedfordshire's landscape is strongly influenced by its geology, and that the main aim of the county study was to set the context for more detailed studies.
- Archaeology and historic landscape has streamlined the process, ensured accuracy and enabled the budget to be directed to assessment.
- Public consultation is a key element to help inform the MKSM planning process - one workshop has been held in South Bedfordshire. Two more public consultations are planned to cover Mid and North Bedfordshire.

General statements
- The County Study has identified 12 "landscape character types". These range from the arable clay plateau landscapes and wooded wolds in the north through to the Greensand Ridge, Flit Valley and chalk landscapes to the south.
- The District Level Studies tend to identify around 3 or 4 "landscape character areas" within each landscape character type. Key characteristics are described, followed by a judgment on positive landscape features, which would need conservation through management and sensitive land-use planning.

Benefits of the study
- The draft document is available to guide planning decisions, supply to developers, amenity groups and the public. It is the first record of the landscape resource, and so can be used as a baseline for monitoring change.
- The public consultation was well received - although the public are sceptical that such an academic study can influence the realities of extensive development.
- Landscape strategies for the character areas can be used to guide and support the GI work.

Outcomes
- The County Landscape Report, which will be supplemented by three individual District Studies.
- Involvement of communities - in contributing to the studies, they can influence local planning decisions.
- Raises profile of landscape as a resource.
- Provides a robust study which can be used to support planning policies to protect the wider landscape; before only areas with a local or national designation were afforded protection or restraint in Structure and Local Plans.
- Feedback given to the AONB Conservation Board re priorities for conservation and general awareness of the designation.

Alison Myers
Bedfordshire County Council
Historic Environment

Principles

- Green Infrastructure (GI) should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the historic dimension of the present landscape, including particular historic assets and their settings
- Ensure that all new development avoids damage to the existing designated sites and enhances them where possible
- Historic environment management plans should be produced for historic assets identified within GI networks, including options for conservation, enhancement and recreational and leisure use
- New opportunities for access to historic sites should be sought, especially where they secure the restoration of “at risk” assets
- Opportunities should be taken to take Scheduled Monuments out of arable cultivation, in order to reduce damage to significant archaeological sites by ongoing ploughing
- Opportunities for the restoration or recreation of historic landscapes should be identified, especially where they also restore or recreate wildlife habitats
- GI investment should provide for the restoration and management of urban parks, historic parks and gardens, and historic landscapes, where they could provide opportunities for countryside access, and other historic sites and features
- Locally distinctive materials and techniques should be used where appropriate
- The development of urban greenspace networks should take account of historic urban character
**CASE STUDY 3**

**Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy: Historic Environment Assessment**

**Introduction**
English Heritage in partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council and with the assistance of Bedfordshire County Council has provided an assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the historic environment in Milton Keynes to development. The area incorporates parishes from the northeast to southwest around Milton Keynes, covering 364km² of which 51% is within the Milton Keynes Council administrative area, 28% in Aylesbury Vale District and 21% in Mid Bedfordshire District.

**Key factors**
The Historic Environment Assessment uses techniques of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) with technical consideration of historic buildings and archaeological sites to consider the implications of future expansion of Milton Keynes for the historic environment. The study aims to demonstrate how appropriate recognition of the wider historic environment permits new development to be intelligently planned and designed.

**Benefits and outcomes**
Fifteen “historic character zones” have been identified through consideration of the dominant characteristics of the historic environment. The study demonstrates that the landscape to the west and south is more historically diverse, archaeologically richer, better preserved and of greater educational value.

The study was primarily undertaken as evidence to the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Examination in Public. However, such studies could help to inform choices about the location and design of new development across the Growth Areas, in the development of Local Development Frameworks, by providing an understanding of the wider historic environment. It can also be used to identify the opportunities for landscape restoration and enhancement and potential GI networks, as part of positive planning for sustainable communities. Indeed, work being undertaken in Northamptonshire on GI is utilising their landscape character assessment, which includes HLC, as well as information on the location of historic sites.

**Sandy Kidd**
Buckinghamshire County Council

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**Historic Landscape Zones**

- Milton Keynes Urban Area
- Calverton and North Whaddon
- Beachampton Old Enclosures
- Whaddon Chase
- Woburn Claylands
- Salden Manor
- Newton Longville Parish
- Brickhill & Woburn
- Clayland fringe
- Duke of Bedford Estate
- Bedfordshire Bricklands
- Woodland Border
- Central Clayland
- Sherrington Zone
- Aspley Guise and Woburn Sands corridor

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Further Resources

- Informed Conservation - understanding historic buildings and their landscapes for conservation
  - English Heritage
  - www.helm.org.uk

- The Open Fields of Northamptonshire - the case for the preservation of Ridge and Furrow (David Hall)
  - Northamptonshire County Council
  - www.le.ac.uk/archaeology

- Information for LDVs, local authorities and non-heritage specialists such as planners and highway engineers
  - English Heritage
  - www.helm.org.uk

- Information about the use of characterisation in development and planning
  - English Heritage
  - www.english-heritage.org.uk/Home>Conserving Historic Places

- Countryside Character Network Topic Paper 5, Understanding historic landscape character and Topic Paper 6, Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity
  - www.countryside.gov.uk and www.ccnetwork.org.uk

- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation, 2004
  - Jo Clark, John Darlington & Graham Fairclough, English Heritage & Lancashire County Council
  - www.english-heritage.org.uk > Conserving Historic Places > Promoting Characterisation

- Thames Gateway Historic Environment Characterisation, final report 2004
  - Chris Blandford Associates, English Heritage
  - www.english-heritage.org.uk > Conserving Historic Places > Promoting Characterisation

- Northamptonshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project
  - Northamptonshire County Council (RNRP)
  - www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Environment/Natural/LandscapeCharacterisation
  - Northamptonshire Environment Network
  - www.nen.org.uk/projects

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**Funding**

- Major habitat creation was carried out by Pioneer during the working phase of the site.
- A lump sum was commuted to Northamptonshire County Council to allow longer-term management of the site.
- Further enhancements have been grant aided by individual charities or through national schemes such as the Landfill Tax Credits Scheme.

**Outcomes**

- The Local Nature Reserve is a major site for breeding and migrating birds in the Nene Valley complex, and forms part of the proposed Special Protection Area.
- It supports a range of rare and scarce species, including mudwort, stone loach and a range of invertebrates.
- A tarmac car park, a network of accessible paths, bird hides and a bird feeding station have been created, providing access to people of all ages and abilities.
- Northamptonshire County Council oversee management of the infrastructure of the site - biodiversity management is undertaken by the Wildlife Trusts.
- Involvement of local volunteers was encouraged at an early stage by Northamptonshire County Council, which has led to a high degree of local “ownership” of the site and the formation of a volunteer warden group.

**Principles**

- Ensure that all new development avoids damage to existing designated sites and enhances them where possible.
- Ensure that development and implementation results in a net gain of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the Sub-Region.
- Seek to halt and reverse habitat fragmentation and species isolation of existing biodiversity assets by buffering existing sites and creating new wildlife corridors between them.
- Identify areas for habitat restoration and re-establish them at a landscape scale (also see “Historic Environment”).
- Integrate existing habitats into new development, ensuring development provides a green transition between existing and new habitats and landscape.
- Consider the appropriate management of wildlife corridors that are important for the migration and dispersal of wildlife and for the linking of habitats.

Biodiversity should also be an integral part of good urban design, construction and development. It should be incorporated at all levels into plans, from individual buildings and streets to master plans. It can be delivered as an integral part of delivering construction projects and greenspace provision.

Ecological surveys should be carried out to set an ecological baseline as part of the preparation for the new development where such information does not exist. This will ensure that development promotes the restoration and re-establishment of habitats and species in accordance with Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets and Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancement zone maps for the Sub-Region.

**Biodiversity**

**CASE STUDY 4**

**Summer Leys Local Nature Reserve**

**Introduction**

Summer Leys is a 47-hectare Local Nature Reserve which resulted from the extraction of gravel within the floodplain of the River Nene near Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. The gravel was worked by Pioneer Aggregates from 1998, which later became part of Hansons. The main lake area was flooded in 1992 and the site has been managed as a nature reserve ever since.

**Key factors**

An early understanding of the potential value of the site for biodiversity led to detailed consultation over the design of the site after restoration. This aimed to maximise the biodiversity value of the site in a number of ways:

- Ensuring the survival of key features during the extraction phase of the working, including a colony of tree sparrows.
- The restoration plan crucially looked at the ability to manipulate the flow of water on the site post-extraction to create habitat.
- Providing for the long-term management of the site, both through funding and provision of water level management infrastructure on-site.
- Ensuring that facilities were provided for visitor access which took account of the need to provide sheltered areas for feeding and breeding birds.

**Funding**

- Major habitat creation was carried out by Pioneer during the working phase of the site.
- A lump sum was commuted to Northamptonshire County Council to allow longer-term management of the site.
- Further enhancements have been grant aided by individual charities or through national schemes such as the Landfill Tax Credits Scheme.

**Outcomes**

- The Local Nature Reserve is a major site for breeding and migrating birds in the Nene Valley complex, and forms part of the proposed Special Protection Area.
- It supports a range of rare and scarce species, including mudwort, stone loach and a range of invertebrates.
- A tarmac car park, a network of accessible paths, bird hides and a bird feeding station have been created, providing access to people of all ages and abilities.
- Northamptonshire County Council oversee management of the infrastructure of the site - biodiversity management is undertaken by the Wildlife Trusts.
- Involvement of local volunteers was encouraged at an early stage by Northamptonshire County Council, which has led to a high degree of local “ownership” of the site and the formation of a volunteer warden group.

Matt Jackson
The Wildlife Trusts
Dunstable Downs and the Chilterns Gateway Project

**Introduction**
Dunstable Downs is a sinuous chalk escarpment in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, stretching out from the very edge of Dunstable. At 243 metres (798 feet) it marks the highest point in Bedfordshire, and is the most popular countryside site in the county, with over 400,000 visitors per annum coming to take in the stunning views, watch the gliders, picnic, walk and take part in a wide variety of other activities. 76 of the 113 hectares are also Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and there are two Scheduled Monuments on the site.

The site is owned by Bedfordshire County Council and the National Trust, and is managed by the Trust as part of a wider site management agreement with the County Council.

**Key factors**
As an established and popular countryside visitor attraction the Downs will be a natural focus for the enlarged residential and business communities of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis. There is an over-riding need to balance the needs of visitors with the management of the site to ensure biodiversity is maintained and enhanced.

Along with visitor pressure, scrub encroachment is a major problem on the site, reducing the area of botanically rich but scarce and vulnerable chalk grassland.

The Chilterns Gateway partnership was established in the late 1990s to address the problem of sustainably managing this resource. The partnership is led by Bedfordshire County Council and the National Trust, and also includes South Bedfordshire District Council, Luton Borough Council, the Chilterns Conservation Board and the North Chilterns Trust.

The partnership highlighted the need for a higher quality visitor facility, located away from its currently visually intrusive location, along with the removal of car parking from the top of the escarpment.

**Funding**
In late 2003 funding was secured from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Greenspaces Fund towards the feasibility and design work needed for the new facilities, with further funding towards construction being made available once all the necessary permissions have been gained.

Funding is also being sought to ensure that the new facilities will be accessible to everyone, regardless of ability, social or ethnic background. The Chilterns Gateway visitor centre will include educational facilities, an interpretive exhibition, shop and café. Access and interpretation around the site will also be improved, ensuring people can appreciate and learn about the site and its many features.

**Benefits and successes**
The additional revenue generated by the new facilities will be invested directly back into the site, and will help to provide an improved ranger service, educational and outreach activities. It will also help supplement Countryside Stewardship funding to ensure management of the whole site is improved and progress is made against the local Biodiversity Action Plan targets for chalk grassland restoration.

The site and new visitor facilities will serve the communities it is located adjacent to, both existing and future. They will provide a focus for community involvement and volunteering as well as opportunities for recreation and physical exercise for everyone.

**Jon Balaam**
Bedfordshire County Council

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**Further Resources**

CIRIA Working with Wildlife Handbook
CIRIA
www.ciria.org.uk

ENRR 479 (2003) - Development Control, Local Authorities and Protected Species Surveys
English Nature
www.english-nature.org.uk

ENRR 484 - Evaluation of development plans to assess biological and geological policy issues (2003)
English Nature
www.english-nature.org.uk

English Nature
www.english-nature.org.uk

Planning for Biodiversity (2001)
Royal Town Planning Institute
www.rtpi.org.uk

Biodiversity by Design
Town and Country Planning Association
www.tcpa.org.uk

Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancement Zones
East Midlands Biodiversity Forum
www.english-nature.org.uk

Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in Towns and Cities: A Review and Toolkit
English Nature Research Report Number 526. Author J Handley et al.
www.english-nature.org.uk

Biodiversity Targets for Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire
Appendix 2

Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan
www.buckscc.gov.uk/countryside/biodiversity/biodiversity_action_plan/index.stm

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan
www.northamptonshirebap.com
CASE STUDY 6

Forest of Marston Vale

Introduction

The Forest of Marston Vale is one of twelve Community Forests in England and covers 61 square miles between Bedford and Milton Keynes. The Forest is being delivered by the Marston Vale Trust, a registered charity dedicated to environmental regeneration and the delivery of GI throughout the Vale.

Rectory Wood, Cranfield

- Cranfield (population 5,000) is a rapidly growing village in the Vale with Brogbrough landfill site located just 2km to the south
- The Forest of Marston Vale raised £450,000 from a number of local and national organisations to purchase 70 hectares of farmland that extends from the southern edge of the village and runs between the landfill site and an area of ancient woodland (a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest)
- Strong local support for the project led to a contribution of £10,000 from Cranfield Parish Council
- The first phase of tree planting followed community consultation, with over 500 people attending 6 public planting events during the winter of 2003/4
- When complete, Rectory Wood will link the expanding local community to over 350 hectares of woodland and openspace, the combination of the restoration of the landfill site, the existing ancient woodlands and other young woods nearby, all linked and accessed via the new community woodland
- This new extensive area of well-wooded greenspace, delivered in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector partners, will help to reduce pressure on the ancient woodlands, provide informal recreational space for the local community, help repair a damaged landscape and deliver national and local biodiversity action plan targets
- The site is connected to other key greenspace in the Marston Vale by National Cycle Network route 51 (The University Way)

Funding

The Forest of Marston Vale has brought nearly £20 million in investment by working in partnership with government, planners, developers, business and local people.

The Vale is central to the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Growth Area and the ODPM has identified the Forest of Marston Vale as a key delivery vehicle for GI. In 2003, £2.7 million from the “Growth Areas Greenspaces Fund” was made available by ODPM for the delivery of 6 projects in the Forest of Marston Vale, including completing the purchase of Rectory Wood.

Benefits

- Contributes to a significant network of varied greenspace in the Marston Vale
- Designed with extensive community consultation to meet their needs
- Buffers and protects the SSSI ancient semi-natural woodland of Marston Thrift
- Accessible and available
- Sustainable
- Integral and coherent part of development in the Marston Vale
- Linked to other green assets in the Vale by the National Cycle Network route 51 (The University Way)

Tony Talbot
Forest of Marston Vale
**Biggleswade Linear Wood**

### Introduction
The aim of the project was to create a 2.4-hectare linear wood as part of a new urban extension to the town of Biggleswade. Mid Bedfordshire District Council produced a master plan for the woodland with technical advice from the Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project and local naturalists. The plan's objectives for the site were to:

- Maximise its biodiversity value
- Provide a wildlife corridor linking existing habitats
- Landscape mitigation for the new urban extension
- Provide compensatory habitat for amphibians
- Provide additional informal public access to the wider countryside

A financial contribution towards the creation of the woodland was secured from the developer under a Section 106 Agreement.

Work started on the implementation of the woodland master plan in 2002 and was completed in 2003, including the establishment of a boundary hedge, amphibian pond and informal public footpath and bridleway links.

### Key factors
- Master plan design was based on the need for the site to be multi-functional, in terms of meeting environmental and social needs
- Design objectives were informed by ecological assessment, which highlighted the need to accommodate an existing significant amphibian population
- Involvement of local naturalist group from the start of the project ensured that local knowledge informed the planning stage and is used in the ongoing monitoring of the site
- The master plan approach ensures that site design fits into surrounding environment, in terms of landscape character and wildlife habitat and public access linkages
- Used principle of natural regeneration for the establishment of woodland and pond plant colonisation

### Outcomes
- Strategic missing link secured in urban fringe rights of way network, enabling community to enjoy local circular walks
- Plants and invertebrates successfully colonising naturally
- Frogs and toads bred successfully in site pond in 2004 - the first season following pond construction
- Local naturalists involved in plant and amphibian monitoring
- Amphibian monitoring in first year has shown a significant reduction of numbers being killed on the adjoining road
- Contributing to achieving Biodiversity Action Plan targets for woodland and pond creation and associated species conservation

**Joel Carré**
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

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**Further Resources**

1. The Forest of Marston Vale, Breathing Space, and Natural Partnership
   - The Forest of Marston Vale
   - [www.marstonvale.org](http://www.marstonvale.org) or email info@marstonvale.org

2. England’s Community Forests
   - [www.communityforest.org.uk](http://www.communityforest.org.uk)

3. space4trees - a regional forestry framework for the East Midlands
   - [www.space4trees.org.uk](http://www.space4trees.org.uk)

4. Woodland for Life - a regional woodland strategy for the East of England
   - [www.woodlandforlife.net](http://www.woodlandforlife.net)

5. Seeing the Wood for the Trees - a forestry and woodlands framework for the South East Region
   - [www.seeonline.net/woodlandsframework](http://www.seeonline.net/woodlandsframework)

6. Involving People in Forestry - a toolbox for public involvement in forest and woodland planning
   - Forestry Commission
   - [www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox)

7. Social and Environmental Benefits of Forestry
   - Forestry Commission
   - [www.forestry.gov.uk/publications](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/publications)

8. Trees matter! - a review of the benefits of woods and trees in towns
   - National Urban Forestry Unit
   - [www.nufu.org.uk](http://www.nufu.org.uk)
Sport and Recreation

CASE STUDY 8

Milton Keynes - Bedford - Sandy Cycle Track
The University Way

Introduction
- The University Way is route 51 of the National Cycle Network which runs from Oxford to Cambridge.
- The National Cycle Network covers 10,000 miles around the country.
- The Marston Vale Trust has delivered the section between Milton Keynes and Sandy via Bedford over a five year period.

Key factors
- Two thirds of the delivered route is off-road with the remainder on minor roads.
- Bedfordshire County Council is committed to funding further off-road sections as development progresses in the Vale.
- The section to the east of Bedford follows the disused railway line and is off-road with the exception of one road crossing at Blunham.
- The route has been designed to link key GI assets in the Marston Vale.
- Where the cycle path follows the line of the bridleway, extensive consultation with user groups was carried out.

Funding and delivery
- This section of the University Way has cost £3.2m and has been funded by Bedfordshire County Council, Shanks First Fund and the ODPM Greenspaces Fund.
- Sustrans - the sustainable transport charity - works on practical projects to encourage people to walk and cycle in order to reduce motor traffic and were involved in the route.

Benefits and successes
- The Bedfordshire section of the University Way is a multi-user route for cyclists, walkers and (in places) horse riders, and has been designed to meet the needs of all of these users.
- The route connects the Milton Keynes “Redway” network to the new woodland (Rectory Wood) in Cranfield, the ancient woodland of Marston Thrift, the Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park, Priory Country Park in Bedford and the refurbished railway viaducts over the river Ivel.
- The connection from Sandy to Bedford enables commuter travelling as well as being a recreational route.
- Cycle hire facilities and refreshments are available at the Forest Centre, Priory Country Park and Danish Camp.
- A route map has been produced by Marston Vale Trust with funding from ODPM detailing tourist attractions along the route.
- Cycle counters have been installed along the route at Priory Park and Danish Camp to monitor 24-hour cycle flows. The counter registered 24,500 users in the twelve months to August 2004.

Catherine Ferris
Bedfordshire County Cycling and Walking Officer
Salcey Forest - River Nene Regional Park

Introduction
Salcey Forest is a 508-hectare ancient woodland lying on the Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge between Northampton and Milton Keynes. Rich in archaeology, the wood is an ecological treasure with a magnificent range of native flora and fauna. The forest is the southernmost point of the River Nene Regional Park, a new strategic GI “delivery vehicle” for the MKSM Growth Area in Northamptonshire.

The Salcey Forest Project - The Need and Opportunity in 2004
- In 2004, the facilities in Salcey Forest were tired having last been refurbished in the early 1990s. Falling visitor numbers reflected the decaying, part vandalised nature of an undervalued natural and historic asset.
- The Forestry Commission had plans to invest £80,000 in refurbishing the site, which, coupled with £40,000 from a private entrepreneur to open a café, gave the seed funding to the much larger project funded by ODPM via the River Nene Regional Park Project

Phase One Project Outputs
- New 5.5 mile circular family cycle route
- New 2.5 mile surfaced “all-ability” trail
- New 6.5 mile un-surfaced walking trail
- Re-surface original 1 mile “all-ability” trail
- 6 mile circular horse-riding trail formalised
- New woodland café opened
- Old car parks re-surfaced and new horse-boxing point created
- Old play area replaced
- All old signage replaced and new map leaflet produced
- The medieval 80-hectare wood-pasture system recreated and rare breed cattle re-introduced

In September 2004, TV personality John Craven joined around 1,800 members of the public to “Celebrate Salcey Forest” and open the new trails.

Phased Project
In 2005, the Phase Two Project will deliver a stunning 400m Canopy Walk, an inspirational structure taking visitors on a journey from the forest floor to the sky’s edge in the upper canopy of the majestic Napoleonic Oaks. The Phase Two project will be delivered by the Forestry Commission’s Civil Engineering Team using innovative stress laminated timber technology and ground breaking use of “radio mast” style bridges. The Canopy Walk aims to inspire visitors to the natural and spiritual beauty of the forest and our natural world.

In tandem with the projects, the Forestry Commission have recruited Wood Wardens to secure the site at night, and initiated a successful community volunteer programme aimed at engaging with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Both projects are designed to give visitors a quality experience, to cater for differing abilities and desires - maximising the value of Salcey Forest to the community whilst protecting and enhancing the ancient woodland.

Kevin G Stannard
Forestry Commission

Further Resources

Change 4 Sport in East Midlands - A regional Plan for Sport 2004 - 2008
Sport England
www.sportengland.org

Sport England
www.sportengland.org

Sport England, May 2004
www.sportengland.org

The Framework for Sport in England
Sport England, March 2004
www.sportengland.org

Game Plan: A Strategy for Delivering Government’s Sport and Physical Activity Objectives
Department for Culture Media and Sport / Strategy Unit, December 2002
www.culture.gov.uk

Sport England’s Policy on Health
Sport England
www.sportengland.org

Planning Obligations Kitbag - a Toolkit
Sport England
www.sportengland.org

River Nene Regional Park
Northamptonshire County Council
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/ Environment/RNRP
Northamptonshire Environment Network
www.nan.org.uk/projects
Natural Processes and Environmental Systems

**Principles**
- Green Infrastructure (GI) should, as far as possible, work with and contribute to natural processes and systems. Development has to take account of the impacts of natural processes and systems at the design stage.
- As the Sub-Region is largely dominated by low-lying land, all developments should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into the design both within and outside of flood risk areas.
- Creative enhancement of water courses as features for recreation and biodiversity can also benefit flood storage capacity, e.g. wetlands.
- Use more natural methods of protecting water quality where appropriate, e.g. use of reed beds which also act as wildlife habitat.
- Opportunities should be taken to improve local environments and contribute to sustainable development through providing GI, e.g. create new woodlands to improve air quality, reduce noise and light pollution, and act as long-term carbon sinks to offset carbon emissions and reduce the impact of development on global climate change.

**CASE STUDY 10**

**Upton SuDS**

"The Upton Urban Framework Plan and Design Codes are based upon development principles which promote sustainable urban growth and a distinctive, enduring environment”.

**Introduction**

Upton is part of the South West District of Northampton and is allocated in the local development plan for housing. The land is owned by English Partnerships which has worked with Northampton Borough Council, the Prince’s Foundation and EDAW (a consultant team) to use the area as an example of how large-scale development projects can adopt sustainable principles of urban growth.

**Key factors**

All developments at Upton will be required to meet Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). They will deliver social, economic and environmental aspirations, one of which will be the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS).

**Benefits**

The SuDS will
- Ensure a more neutral approach to the treatment of rainwater on site
- Create a green framework and community recreational resource running through Upton
- Consist primarily of linked swales
- Be a fundamental element of the infrastructure, providing the underlying basis of the landscape structure
- Be monitored to establish its contribution to the enhancement of biodiversity

**English Partnerships**
Marston Vale Surface Waters Plan - Van Diemans Land

Introduction
The extensive development proposals for the Marston Vale, including residential, commercial and major transport infrastructure improvements, combine to create substantial surface water management problems and the potential for increased flood risks. The Marston Vale Surface Waters Group was created to seek innovative, integrated surface water solutions for the Vale. The Group comprises The Forest of Marston Vale, the Environment Agency, Bedford Group of Drainage Boards and the three local planning authorities.

The Surface Waters Plan lays out an integrated approach to surface waters management that is designed to deliver positive biodiversity, recreation and sustainability benefits to the environmental regeneration agenda that is being led by the Forest of Marston Vale.

One example of delivering the integrated approach promoted by the Marston Vale Surface Waters Plan is the Van Diemans Land project on the Bedford urban fringe.

Van Diemans Land
- As part of major residential and industrial developments to the southwest of Bedford an integrated greenspace and surface waters management scheme has been developed by partners of the Marston Vale Surface Waters Group.
- Working with the planning authority, the Forest Team successfully secured an 8-hectare site (known as Van Diemans Land) and £65,000 towards community woodland creation costs as part of the planning obligation for a major distribution development site nearby.
- An innovative and integrated design approach has resulted in the incorporation of a sustainable drainage scheme within the new woodland, as a component of wider flood risk management proposals in this area.

These proposals include the creation of wet woodland, a national priority habitat within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and other priority wetland habitats.
- The first phase of woodland planting at Van Diemans Land has already been delivered, including extensive involvement of the local community in order to foster a strong sense of "ownership" for the future.
- A further 40 hectares has been acquired by the Forest of Marston Vale using a variety of funds including developer contribution, ODPM Greenspaces grant and contributions from businesses, to create an extensive "Green Gateway" to Bedford which builds on and enhances the existing surface water management proposals in this area.

Benefits
- An integrated, strategic approach to surface water management.
- Increased opportunities for biodiversity and recreational gain.
- Provides a good model of a "green" sustainable drainage scheme.
- Creation of extensive public access greenspace and well wooded buffer between expanding settlements and transport corridors.
- Co-ordinated approach to delivering multi-functional greenspace in the urban fringe in parallel with major planned development.

David Thomas
Bedford Group of Drainage Boards
Managing Urban Greenspaces

**Principles**

The sympathetic and active management of existing and new greenspace is essential to ensure its benefits are realised. In particular it is important to ensure that:

- Urban greenspace is managed to accommodate nature, wildlife and historic and cultural assets, and provide for sport and recreation.
- The significance of greenspaces is understood, including their contribution to local character, as a necessary first step in protection and management.
- Adequate provision is made for formal and informal recreational activities, including those that rely on the use of natural features or resources.
- Urban parks and greenspaces are planned, managed and, where appropriate restored, with the active involvement of local communities.
- It is clearly understood that funding for the management of urban greenspace is the most critical aspect.

**CASE STUDY 12**

**Milton Keynes Parks Trust**

**Introduction**

Milton Keynes Parks Trust was established in 1992 as an independent charity. The ownership of the strategic parks was passed onto the Trust to be managed and protected in the long term. To fund this work, the Trust was endowed with commercial properties and other assets to generate income.

**Key factors**

The Trust has a 999-year lease on the 1800 hectares of greenspace that it manages, while its commercial properties are owned freehold.

The primary objective of the Trust is to:

*Provide, maintain and equip parks, gardens, landscaped areas, woodlands, open spaces, playing fields, playgrounds and recreational amenity space within Milton Keynes and the environs thereof ... for the benefit of the inhabitants and visitors to the area*.

The greenspace in the Trust's stewardship includes the linear parks, floodplains, ancient woodlands, transport corridors and parkways. It is committed to maintaining and enhancing the nature conservation value of the city's park system. As Milton Keynes continues to expand, the Trust works with the planning authorities and developers to ensure that greenspace provision is included in development plans, and that any further provision of greenspace is adequately resourced to ensure its long-term management in perpetuity. The Trust continues to adopt new areas of greenspace from developers and English Partnerships as the city expands.

**Funding**

The Trust is self-financing. Its assets generate the income needed to maintain the green estate. The parks are also used for fundraising by charities and in 2003 over £500,000 was raised through sponsored walks and cycle rides. Over 200 volunteers assist at events, helping with wildlife surveys and contributing to conservation tasks.

**Benefits**

The Green Flag award-winning lakeside parks at Willen are a good example of Trust managed greenspace, with exceptional recreational facilities centred around the south lake, and a peaceful, tranquil nature reserve on the north lake.

The Trust continues to improve its estate, and planning permission has recently been granted to restore a mineral extraction site to the North of Milton Keynes to a floodplain forest. This 80-acre site will form a managed natural feature linking the new town with the open countryside.
CASE STUDY 13

Aylesbury Vale Park

Introduction
Vale Park is the principal area of recreational and amenity public open space in the town centre of Aylesbury, which acts as spare flood capacity, creating restrictions as to what structures and materials can be placed in certain areas. The park was purchased and established in 1929 in the "Victorian municipal" park style with facilities for a local population with few other formal leisure opportunities.

Key factors
To create a quality, modern urban park that meets the need of a diverse community, providing interactive, active and passive leisure and recreational facilities for as wide a range of users as possible.

Key Statements
To ensure the project is deliverable, the redevelopment of the park falls into 3 main phases, each subject to adequate funding being available, as follows:

Phase 1 Creation of an Activity Zone focusing on the construction of new and replacement facilities - a multi-use games area, tennis courts, artificial bowls green (requested by the bowls club) and children’s play area. Lighting will be provided across the activity zone to increase the time that facilities can be used throughout the year.

Phase 2 Opens up the central area to increase the amount of informal openspace for people. Refurbishment of the toilets and addition of space for storage and attendants is proposed in this phase.

Phase 3 The final phase delivers new entrances and formal gardens for the park. The central “spine” footpath requires the repositioning of the entrance to the corner of the park; this will create a more direct link with the town centre, car parks and underpass.

Funding
Phase 1 has been funded through the grant aid secured from the ODPM as part of the Green Spaces Fund bid and from S106 contributions from nearby developments.

Phases 2 and 3 will be delivered through S106 funding from other developments, as well as seeking grant aiding from bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Benefits
- Improved quality of provision
- The consultation exercise has recognised the requirements of the community and incorporated these within the design
- Better use of space allows people to improve their physical and mental well-being

Outcomes
- Public areas that are well maintained and enhanced
- Council services that meet the needs of the whole community
- A reduction in the factors that diminish the health of individuals, and an increase in those that promote it

Roger Glithero
Aylesbury Vale District Council

Further Resources

The Value of Public Space
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

A Guide to producing Park and Green Space Management Plans, 2004
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
www.odpm.gov.uk

Green Space Strategies, a good practice guide, May 2004
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

Is the grass greener?...Learning from international innovations in urban greenspace management, July 2004
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

Does Money Grow on Trees? March 2005
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

The Milton Keynes Parks Trust model - a brief introduction
www.mkparks.co.uk

Parks need People need Parks: the skills shortage in parks, a summary of research. August 2004
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

River Nene Regional Park
Northamptonshire County Council
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Environment/RNRP
Northamptonshire Environment Network
www.nen.org.uk/projects
Design

Principles

- Each local delivery vehicle should create examples of Green Infrastructure (GI) to a high design quality standard at an early stage, to act as exemplars for other parts of the Sub-Region and other growth areas.
- The design of new GI should create a distinctive sense of place.
- Good quality design should incorporate the objectives of sustainable development that will deliver social and economic as well as environmental benefits.
- The design of GI must be fundamental to the planning of town form, helping to integrate any new urban extensions with existing settlements and the surrounding landscape. It should also conserve and enhance the character of distinctive settlements and prevent urban coalescence. Landscape and urban characterisation should inform the design process.
- Design must seek creative green solutions to the infrastructure demands of increasing population pressure.
- All new developments must be built to the highest environmental standards and contribute to improved environmental sustainability including water efficiency measures, e.g. SuDS, grey water recycling, rainwater butts, avoid planting vegetation that requires large amount of water, design for drier summers.
- Design should seek to manage flood risk at a spatial and local level through green and openspaces. Where appropriate locally, sustainable solutions such as SuDS are a key measure to reduce flood risk and have a whole range of biodiversity, water quality, water resources and recreational benefits.
- GI should contribute to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour through well-designed public space, taking into account its use at night as well as during the day.
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans should be used to create and improve Public Rights of Way and ensure a linked network providing access both to the greenspace on the doorstep and the wider countryside. The needs of all users should be taken into account, whether walking, cycling or horse riding.
- GI offers the opportunity to build community cohesion and design should offer cultural diversity of space and encourage access to such space for everyone.
Aylesbury Vale - Weedon Hill Design Code

Key statements
“The Major Development Area (MDA) will deliver a high quality urban development that is related positively to its setting, reflecting local distinctiveness”.

Introduction
The Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan allocates land at Weedon Hill as an MDA for residential development, community facilities and public open space.

The site is 48.6 hectares of agricultural land located on the northern fringes of Aylesbury. The development brief was prepared in consultation with Aylesbury Vale District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council.

Key factors
The document draws on and expands on the following urban design principles established within the Weedon Hill Development Brief.

- Urban structure
- Connectivity to the existing area
- Street design to reinforce local distinctiveness
- Promoting priority in pedestrian and cycle movement
- Greenway design
- Urban grain - scale, height and massing
- Using perimeter blocks with variations in size and dimensions to promote richness of place and a human scale
- Consideration of density ranges
- Types of buildings with regard to their forms, character and their heights, scale and architectural treatment
- Local centre - Market Square
- A mix of compatible uses such as retail, leisure, employment and residential
- 24-hour activity and an active edge and frontage with “eyes on the street and the public spaces”
- Good circulation and permeability for all, with a pedestrian friendly environment

Benefits
The code is to be used as a tool to inform discussion and shape detailed proposals, promoting successful dialogue between developers and the local authority design teams. The code illustrates what is expected from developers and provides scope for innovative design solutions and individuality.

Outcomes
The design code has established clear urban design guidance for the planning and regulation of the development to achieve a high quality, sustainable, safe, attractive and desirable environment in which to live, work and play.

Faulks, Perry, Culley & Rech and Hallam Land Management

Illustration of new development at Cardington, Bedford courtesy of LDA Design
Community Involvement

Principles

- Green Infrastructure (GI) should provide a focus for social inclusion, education, training, health and well-being through community involvement and life-long learning.
- Encourage community involvement from the outset in design, implementation and care as local communities are often well placed to identify the type of GI that suits their needs best and it helps ensure long-term management and ownership of GI sites.
- Encourage the involvement of special interest groups as they can have a fundamental role in building strong local commitment to the changing landscape.
**CASE STUDY 15**

Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green, Shefford, Bedfordshire

**Introduction**
- In 1998, Shefford Town Council commissioned the Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project (IOCP) to produce a development plan for a new 2.6-hectare public greenspace on the town’s urban fringe.
- Following extensive community consultation, including facilitated workshops and a household questionnaire, a plan was drawn up based on the following objectives:
  - To allow easy access for elderly and disabled
  - To provide a safe and accessible greenspace for young families
  - To conserve and enhance wildlife and landscape interest
  - To encourage and provide for educational use
  - To provide a venue for community events such as summer fetes and picnics
- In 1999, a community trust was formed to take the plan forward, including securing title of the land and necessary funding (£42k) and support.
- The trust commissioned IOCP to lead the initial development work (including planting, fencing and path creation) either using contractors or organising volunteer work parties involving local residents.
- Over time and with additional training, the local residents have become the practical arm of the community trust and now oversee the management of the site with only very occasional external support.

**Key factors**
- The town council was key in providing initial drive and support to get the project underway to a point where the community trust was in place to take over running it.
- Key individuals within the council and local community helped to drive the project forward.
- Professional support was required to assist the council, and subsequently the community trust, in managing and developing the project, including community consultation and capacity building.
- This took time (1 year) to build to the point where the community is now self-reliant.

**General statements**
- Prior to the development plan, the site attracted antisocial activities (such as unauthorised motor cycle scrambling and vandalism).
- Now it is a valued local amenity across all sections of community, young and old, and the antisocial activities have disappeared.

**Benefits and successes**
- Project development process engaged community.
- Antisocial activities on site now no longer a problem.
- Focus for community events, such as “village fete” and “school picnic”.
- Increased community use of site.
- Heritage value of site protected and enhanced.

**Outcomes**
- Empowered community with greater skills and confidence.
- Stronger sense of community and community spirit.
- More attractive and rich environment.
- Valued and respected community resource.

**Joel Carré**
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

**Further Resources**

- Quality of Life Assessment Toolkit
  The Countryside Agency
  [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

- Making Space: A Manual for Community Groups that Manage Greenspace
  The Countryside Agency
  [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

- Information on Concept Statements, Town and Village Design Statements
  The Countryside Agency
  [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

- Involving People in Forestry - a toolbox for public involvement in forest and woodland planning
  Forestry Commission
  [www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox)

- England’s Community Forests
  [www.communityforest.org.uk](http://www.communityforest.org.uk)

- Involving Young People in the Design and Care of Urban Spaces, 2004
  CABE Space
  [www.cabespace.org.uk](http://www.cabespace.org.uk)

- No particular place to go? - Children, young people and public space
  Ken Worpole, Groundwork UK
  [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)

- Details about the Countryside Agency’s Doorstep Greens work, creating and enhancing greenspaces near to people’s homes
  [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

- A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise
  [www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk](http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk)
A net gain in GI should be secured by applying the following sequence of actions

i. Protect and enhance all existing natural and historic assets wherever possible

ii. Significantly improve the management of existing GI

iii. Provide for the creation and management of new GI assets to meet identified needs

iv. If GI is created as compensation for the loss or damage of an existing asset, the aim must be at least to create an equivalent asset. However, it must be recognised that some assets are irreplaceable.
GI should be used to provide a network of greenspaces that is attractive and easily accessible, serving the needs of both rural and urban communities and strengthening the links between them. GI should be multi-functional wherever possible. Integration with the planning system is essential to deliver GI across the Sub-Region. Strategically significant potential routes and sites for green infrastructure should be safeguarded, where appropriate, within local development frameworks and supplementary planning documents. There should be a co-ordinated approach in relation to natural assets across the Sub-Region to ensure assets are viewed as inter-linked regional assets not isolated pockets. The planning system provides a framework within which LAs and LDVs can work in partnership to deliver GI.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans must address how the Public Rights of Way network meets the needs of people now and in the future. Routes within developments will need to be created or improved, as will the links from new development to the countryside; some routes will need improvement to cope with higher usage. This kind of linked network creates access for the widest range of users, providing more opportunity for more people to be physically active.

Well-designed public space can contribute to crime reduction and this is an important factor when considering green infrastructure in spatial planning. Attention should be given to the design of green routes, for use during the day and at night, in order to provide greenspace while ensuring people’s sense of comfort and safety.

Green Belt land should be retained, unless in exceptional circumstances there is a strategic need for release, in accordance with government guidelines and where appropriate extended, to prevent urban coalescence. Its amenity value as openspace should be enhanced and greater biodiversity encouraged.

### Model Local Development Framework (LDF) Policy

What is achievable at any given location will depend on local circumstances and the scale of development taking place, but innovative solutions need to be encouraged at every level. The local area’s important environmental and cultural assets, some of which are of national or regional significance, not only need to be protected but also, where appropriate, enhanced. The Growth Area provides opportunities for this and for access and management for the benefit of an increased population.

Throughout the Sub-Region, the following will be sought in order to achieve a net gain in GI including:

- Protecting and enhancing existing natural, historic and recreational assets, including recreational routes and sports facilities, and countryside character
- Improving the management of existing assets and provision of new GI to meet growth requirements
- Establishing a network of multi-functional greenspaces in urban areas, urban fringe and the wider countryside, as part of the process of developing more sustainable, safer, secure and attractive natural and built form
- Ensuring good accessibility of GI provision that promotes healthy lifestyles and can be used for formal and informal recreational and educational purposes
- Maintaining and increasing the local area’s stock of strategic GI assets

### Location Hierarchy

GI should have a multiple hierarchy of provision, in terms of location (from urban neighbourhoods to the open countryside), function, size and levels of use - at every spatial scale across the Sub-Region.

GI must be located to link or extend the network of existing sites, providing green corridors for wildlife and people from urban through suburban to the rural environment. It should be based upon an analysis of local needs and opportunities and seek to apply the general location hierarchy

- Areas within new development
- Adjacent to new development
- Within the Local Development Framework area
- Across Local Development Framework areas, including cross regional boundaries
Green Infrastructure (GI) provision requires funding and delivery processes (e.g. further public finance and the use of a developer contribution framework) based upon the principles outlined in this guide. This would identify the types, sizes and locations of assets required, and the contribution levels expected to assist in their delivery, including the improved management of existing GI assets and future management of new assets. The funding of new assets, facilities and services should not prejudice the viability of existing assets and projects.

Where there are existing environmental enhancement mechanisms with delivery plans that are endorsed locally (e.g. Forest of Marston Vale Forest Plan that is endorsed by both the relevant Local Planning Authorities), developer contributions that are in line with the endorsed plan should be sought.

Although development should make a significant contribution to the creation and establishment of new GI, developer contribution alone will not deliver sufficient funds to provide a step change in GI. Therefore, it is essential that key players, e.g. local delivery vehicles, coordinate efforts to attract funding over the long-term to resource necessary GI that will deliver the aspirations for the Growth Areas and affected communities across the Sub-Region. While there may be opportunities for central government funding, existing good practice from elsewhere and within the three regions in securing funding should be used as a starting point. Lottery funding may be available for some existing facilities.

Acknowledging the multi-functional aspect of GI can help to secure funding over the long term. For example, actively managing reed beds in an environmentally appropriate context can form part of an area’s management of surface water and increase biodiversity. This need to manage GI in the wider environmental and social context may open opportunities to attract match funding from a range of funding organisations.

When creating new projects long term maintenance and management must not be forgotten. Endowments or other sources of ring-fenced funds should be sought from development and set aside for future revenue requirements.

Opportunities also exist for increasing the contribution of rural areas to GI through improved management and access. This may be achieved through the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme, as the landscape largely falls outside planning control.

Examples of longer-term governance models include:
- An informal partnership of supportive organisations
- A semi-autonomous, formalised partnership of supportive organisations
- A group of existing Local Delivery Vehicles
- An independent Trust or Company
- A new Park Authority or similar organisation
- A Regional Park Development Company

The framework for securing the delivery of strategic and local infrastructure through land value capture, based around the planning system, was set out in a paper produced for the Milton Keynes-South Midlands Inter-Regional Board in October 2004. This advocates a joined-up approach to the delivery of infrastructure through developer contributions, encouraging local planning authorities and local delivery vehicles to consider how a range of developments can contribute to the delivery of necessary infrastructure. Local authorities and the local delivery vehicles in West and North Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes have responded positively to the request from the ODPM to pilot this approach within the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Region Growth Area and work has already begun to engage Chief Executives and leaders in the process.

(PPG17), July 2002, on Open Space, Sport and Recreation advocates that local authorities carry out detailed assessments of all their areas of open space. Additional resources would enable this to be carried out across the Sub-Region. CABE Space has funds to provide specialist advice to local authorities through their Enabler scheme.

Using funding from the New Opportunities Fund for Greenspaces (now the Big Lottery Fund), NSport (the strategic lead for sport in Northamptonshire, made up of key stakeholders who deliver and support sport on behalf of the Northamptonshire Authorities) carried out a playing pitch assessment and prepared a playing pitch strategy for each district. This could be replicated through the regions to identify local needs and set targets for playing fields. Appendix 4 contains a summary of the Northamptonshire Playing Pitch Assessment and indicated areas of under provision.
CASE STUDY 16

The Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure Project 2005, River Nene Regional Park

Introduction
Northamptonshire County Council, ODPM, East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA), and the Government Office for the East Midlands are committed to ensuring that the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy delivers sustainable communities through economic, social and environmental investment.

Key factors
In order to meet the environmental need, and in particular contribute to GI, Northamptonshire County Council, in partnership with local authorities and statutory agencies, is undertaking an assessment of GI provision across the county within the context of the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Growth Area. The project represents an important evolution of the GI approach. Previous studies have addressed a predominantly urban context, but here it is being applied for the first time to a largely rural study area.

The project aims to meet regional and sub-regional aspirations with regards to GI in the Growth Area, and will deliver a clear strategy for greenspace within Northamptonshire that will inform the preparation of emerging spatial plans. The project will also act as an enabler to identify areas for enhancement or linkage of existing GI, and the creation of new GI in areas of low provision. As a consequence the process will inform strategies aimed at improving, amongst other things, health, fitness and access to nature.

Benefits
- Achieve an overarching framework, which respects the character and qualities of the existing environment and links existing and planned communities through a connected, easily accessible greenspace network
- Achieve an evolving strategic framework that will support and guide new development and greenspace provision, whilst adopting a sustainable approach to the management of environmental assets
- Guide the delivery of GI within the development and regeneration process underway within the county, and therefore link national and regional environmental needs to a local scale

Outcomes
The project will build upon previous environmental baseline studies undertaken within the county, namely the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment, detailed Landscape Character and Access and Recreation studies completed for the Nene Valley and the feasibility study for the River Nene Regional Park.

The first phase of the project will focus on the production of a GI strategy for the North Northamptonshire LDV Area, within which the major part of the River Nene Regional Park area is located. In parallel to this, a pilot local GI assessment will be undertaken for Corby. Both areas of work will provide working methodologies which will subsequently be rolled out to the River Nene Regional Park Project Area that lies within West Northamptonshire, in respect of the strategic study, and the key growth settlements of Kettering, Wellingborough, Northampton and Daventry in respect of the local study.

Key to the success of the project will be the establishment of effective working partnerships with stakeholders and consultees. Local authorities and statutory agencies will play a vital role in taking the initiative forward, in evolving the strategy and with its delivery in the longer term.

Jason Longhurst
River Nene Regional Park, Northamptonshire County Council

Further Resources

The countryside in and around towns, a vision for connecting town and country in the pursuit of sustainable development
The Countryside Agency, ref CA 207
www.countryside.gov.uk

Natural Assets and Opportunities - a framework for developing green infrastructure in Northamptonshire
English Nature
www.english-nature.org.uk

Providing Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities
English Nature
www.english-nature.org.uk

Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in Towns and Cities: A Review and Toolkit
English Nature Research Report Number 526
Author J. Handley et al.
www.english-nature.org.uk

Biodiversity by Design
Town and Country Planning Association
www.tcppa.org.uk

Green Space Strategies: a good practice guide, May 2004
CABE Space
www.cabespace.org.uk

Quality of Life Assessment Toolkit
Countryside Agency
www.countryside.gov.uk

Information on Concept Statements, Town and Village Design Statements
Countryside Agency
www.countryside.gov.uk

Northamptonshire GI Project included in the “RNRP - The Review of Tangible Projects”
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Environment/RNRP

Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan Development Brief, February 2005
Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium
Email: joelc@bedsrcc.org.uk

Information on Public Rights of Way
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
www.defra.gov.uk

Towards a Level Playing Field, 2003
Sport England
www.sportengland.org

Planning Obligations Kitbag - a Toolkit
Sport England
www.sportengland.org

Cleaner Safer Greener Communities - a government initiative, including a HOW TO programme covering town centres, residential areas, and parks and openspaces
www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk

For examples of longer-term governance see
River Nene Regional Park Feasibility Study
www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Environment/RNRP
Milton Keynes Parks Trust
www.mkparks.co.uk
Forest of Marston Vale
www.martonvale.org
**Appendix 1**

**Glossary**

**Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt)** - these standards recognise the importance of nature in the urban context in terms of improving the quality of people’s lives and people’s entitlement to have access to, and experience of, nature near to where they live.

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** - designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as having national landscape importance. The primary purpose of Designation is the conservation and enhancement of this natural beauty.

**Area Action Plan** - used to provide a planning framework for areas of change and areas of conservation. Area Action Plans will have the status of Development Plan Documents.

**Biodiversity** - all living things, their habitats and the relationship between them.

**Brownfield** - an area of land in a town or city that was previously used for industry and where new buildings can be built.

**CABE Space** - part of the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment (CABE) and was set up in May 2003. CABE Space champions excellence in the design and management of parks, streets and squares in our towns and cities.

**Community Strategy** - local authorities are required by the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare these, with the aim of improving the social, environmental and economic well-being of their areas. Through the Community Strategy, authorities are expected to co-ordinate the actions of local public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

**Concept Statement** - a simple, clear expression of the kind of place the new development should create. It briefly explains how development on the site should contribute to the local authority’s vision.

**Conservation Areas** - areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

**Core Strategy** - sets out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority area and the spatial objectives and strategic policies to deliver that vision. The Core Strategy will have the status of a Development Plan Document.

**Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** - spatial planning documents that are subject to independent examination, and together with the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, will form the development plan for a local authority area for the purposes of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Green Belt** - an area of land designated in Development Plans that restricts new built development in order to achieve a number of specific purposes, such as preventing the sprawl of large built-up areas. Green Belts are expected to offer long-term certainty, with their boundaries being altered only in exceptional circumstances.

**Greenfield site** - an area of land, usually in agricultural use, that has not previously been developed.

**Green Infrastructure** - a network of multi-functional greenspace, provided across the Sub-Region. It is set within, and contributes to, a high quality natural and built environment and is required to deliver “liveability” for new communities.

**Greenspace** - the outdoor environment of habitats, public access areas, formal and informal recreational facilities, historic sites and areas, woodlands and rural and urban landscapes contributing to Green Infrastructure.

**Listed buildings** - buildings of special architectural or historic interest held on a list administered by English Heritage. Decisions on changes are made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The buildings or structures are graded I, II* or II to reflect their relative importance. Listing gives statutory protection to historic buildings against unauthorised alteration or demolition. Special permission is required for works that may affect their character or appearance.

**Liveability** - creating a good quality of life for people to live and work.

**Local Development Documents (LDDs)** - the different types of planning policy documents (Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents) which together make up the Local Development Framework (LDF).

**Local Development Framework (LDF)** - a portfolio of local development documents that will provide a framework for meeting the community’s economic, social and environmental aims.
Local Delivery Vehicles (LDVs) - partnerships which bring the public and private sectors together to deliver large-scale social, economic and environmental change.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) - a statutory term denoting an area of land designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as being of importance for nature conservation and where public understanding and enjoyment of nature conservation is actively promoted.

Local transport plan - a five year integrated transport strategy for the county authority covering all modes of urban and rural transport.

Milton Keynes & the South Midlands Sub-Region (MKSM) - one of four major growth areas located in southern central England identified in the Sustainable Communities Plan.

National Nature Reserve - a statutory term, denoting an area of land designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 or the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as being of national (and sometimes international) importance. May be in a variety of ownerships, but the essential characteristic is that they are primarily used for nature conservation.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) - created as a central government department in May 2002. It is responsible for policy on housing, planning, regional and local government and the fire service.

Parish Plan - a vision of how the community would like their town or village to be. For many communities it has been a stepping stone to applications for other grants.

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) - set out the Government’s national policies on different aspects of planning. The policies in this statement apply throughout England and focus on procedural policy and the process of preparing local development documents.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) - policy framework set by Government at the regional level on the basis of advice supplied to it by Regional Planning Bodies. The RSS is produced by the Regional Planning Body and amended and confirmed by the Spatial Strategy (see PPS11).

Scheduled Monument - monuments included in the Schedule of Monuments of National Importance, which the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport has a duty to compile and maintain under Section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Section 106 - Section 106 Planning Agreements secure community infrastructure to meet the needs of residents in new developments and/or to mitigate the impact of new developments upon existing community facilities.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - a statutory term denoting an area of land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) as being of special nature conservation interest. SSSIs include wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms.

Statutory - denotes something that is defined in legislation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - the analysis and evaluation of the environmental effects and implications of a proposed policy, plan or programme. It aims to help achieve sustainable development by integrating environmental considerations into policies and plans. It became a formal requirement in the UK in 2004 when the EU Directive on SEA came into force.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - this guidance elaborates upon the policy and proposals in DPDs but does not have development plan status. Their weight as a material consideration will reflect their status as part of the LDF.

Sustainable development - making provision for the needs of the existing population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Town & Village Design Statement - informs local people, developers, architects and planners etc how new development can fit into the character of an existing town or village.

Quality of Life Assessment - a tool for maximising environmental, economic and social benefits as part of any land-use planning or management decision. It provides a systematic and transparent evaluation framework for all scales of decision making, integrates environmental, economic and social issues, and combines professional and local community views.
Appendix 2

Biodiversity Targets

The following range of biodiversity assets should be sought as a priority:

- Heathland and acid grassland restoration and creation
- Calcareous grassland restoration and creation
- Wetland restoration/creation
- Woodland recreation and restoration

The following tables list only readily quantifiable biodiversity targets from the existing Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Buckinghamshire, and from ongoing revisions of the relevant BAPs for Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. Where target dates have passed, English Nature is collating information nationally on the achievement of those targets. Further information is available from the relevant BAP partnership.
### Table 1a Habitat Creation Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National / Local BAP Habitat</th>
<th>Creation Targets</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hectares (unless otherwise stated)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Heath</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Dry Acid Grassland</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Calcareous Grassland</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Hay Meadows / Neutral grassland</td>
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<td>Wet and Marshy Grassland</td>
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<td>Cereal Field Margins / Beetle Banks</td>
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### Table 1b Habitat Restoration and Management Targets

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<th>Habitat Management / Restoration Targets</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Heath</td>
<td>c. 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Dry Acid Grassland</td>
<td>c. 113</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowland Calcareous Grassland (incl. Quarries and Gullets)</td>
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<td>c. 8,750</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cereal Field Margins / Beetle Banks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Greenspace and Openspace Targets

English Nature has developed Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) for towns and cities and recommends that people living in towns and cities should have:
- An accessible natural greenspace less than 300 metres (in a straight line) from home
- Statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) provided at a minimum level of one ha per thousand people
- At least one accessible 20-hectare site within 2km of home
- One accessible site within 5km of home
- One accessible site of 500 hectares within 10km of home

The "1 hectare per 1000 people" standard has since been adopted by the Audit Commission as a Quality of Life indicator and the greenspace standards (but not those for LNRs) have also been included as a benchmark in Government guidance on greenspace strategies.

PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation, is accompanied by a companion guide, “Assessing Needs and Opportunities”. This provides guidance and interpretation of the PPG itself. Among the tools and techniques it recommends are the English Nature Research report 526, Accessible Natural Green Space Standards: A Review and Toolkit.

An initial assessment of the current standard of provision was made in response to the MKSM SRS consultation, based upon the LNR standard and an openspace target being used in Derby. The results are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LA Area</th>
<th>Incidental Openspace Hectares 2001/11</th>
<th>Incidental Openspace Hectares 2011/21</th>
<th>Major Openspace Hectares 2001/11</th>
<th>Major Openspace Hectares 2011/21</th>
<th>Openspace Total</th>
<th>LNR Total Hectares</th>
<th>GI/LA Total Hectares</th>
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<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>81</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>294</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>130</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Aylesbury Vale IA*</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>122</td>
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<td>154</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedford/Kempston/North Marston Vale*</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>174</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Marston Vale</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Luton/Dunstable/H Regis</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>1738</td>
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</table>

* to 2016

Openspace standard
- Incidental Openspace - 1.4 hectares per 1000 population
- Major Openspace - 2.4 hectares per 1000 population
Calculations assume household figures in MKSM SRS have 2.3 people per household

Incidental Openspace is children’s play areas, small amenity areas
Major Openspace is neighbourhood, city or district parks
Openspace does not include open countryside
## Northamptonshire Playing Pitch Assessment 2002

### Pitches required to meet demand on peak days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shortfall / surplus of adult football pitches</th>
<th>Shortfall / surplus of junior football pitches</th>
<th>Shortfall / surplus of cricket pitches</th>
<th>Shortfall / surplus of rugby pitches</th>
<th>Shortfall / surplus of Synthetic Turf pitches for hockey</th>
<th>TOTAL SHORTFALL</th>
<th>Shortfall / surplus of Synthetic Turf pitches for hockey (if all teams played in their home base)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
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<td>-9.1</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daventry</td>
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<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
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<td>-2.3</td>
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<td>-2.3</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>-101.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>36.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>-3.5</strong></td>
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</table>

Further information on the Playing Pitch Model and playing pitch assessments -
[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)