

Winchester Local Development Framework: Green Infrastructure Technical Paper

Introduction

1. The purpose of this technical report is to highlight the contribution made by accessible green spaces to the character and environmental quality of the District. All such spaces provide varying benefits, including biodiversity, visual amenity, sport and recreation. A further aim of the report is, therefore, to ensure that both the key strategic spaces and smaller scale 'amenity green space' features are protected and enhanced and that, in all parts of the District, green space deficiencies in terms of both quality and quantity are properly evaluated and addressed. In addition, careful consideration needs to be given to the vital part played by linear green spaces in connecting places, facilitating - and positively encouraging, far greater routine movement on foot and by cycle.
2. The report is intended to inform the Council's Core Strategy and other elements of the Local Development Framework and to contribute to those elements of the Strategy which, in particular, will deal with housing, the environment and recreation. Consequently, the paper goes on to set out a number of issues to guide further discussion, with the object of opening up policy options to be considered for inclusion at the Core Strategy's 'Issues and Options' stage.
3. The Definition of 'Green Infrastructure'
4. The Government, through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, defined open space as "land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground". However, a more recent focus on the importance and wide ranging benefits of the many different types of 'open' or 'green' space, has resulted in subsequent Government guidance indicating that: "open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity" (PPG 17: Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation).
5. The Countryside Agency (which now forms part of 'Natural England'), in its early work on accessible green spaces, developed the following definition of 'green infrastructure' as being:-
6. "The physical environment within and between our cities, towns and villages - It is the network of open spaces, play space, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors and open countryside that brings many social and environmental benefits. These include nature conservation, recreation, landscape and regional development and promotion. Green infrastructure spans administrative and political boundaries. It is publicly and privately owned, semi-natural and man made".
7. The Importance of Green Infrastructure in the Winchester District
8. Quality of life is influenced, to a significant extent, by the condition of the surrounding environment. Supporting and enhancing Winchester's natural environment are, therefore, vital in maintaining the District's character and standing and can bring a range of social, economic and cultural benefits to the

District's communities. To help the Council understand how the modern District has been shaped a number of studies were commissioned, including:-

- Winchester City and Its Setting (1998): Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council *et al.*
 - The Future of Winchester Study (1999): Winchester City Council.
 - Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment (2004): Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council.
 - Winchester Biodiversity Action Plan (2005): Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.
 - Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study for Winchester City Council, Part 1 Final Draft Report (2007)
 - A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Urban South Hampshire, Research Report (2007): The Partnership for Urban South Hampshire.
 - Countryside Recreation: Hampshire County Council's Study of Supply and Demand within the Winchester District (2007): Winchester City Council.
9. The aim of the Local Development Framework is to build on this evidence base and, from it, set out a range of spatial policies which help to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment and further strengthen its contribution to the District's vitality, sustainability and community development.
 10. Such an approach would be in step with the Government's broad objective that, in supporting an 'urban renaissance': "Local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality".
 11. Similarly, the Government has indicated the importance of promoting 'more sustainable development': "By ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport".
 12. With regard to supporting a 'rural renewal', the Government also indicates that: "The countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and well being of people who live in rural areas".
 13. Taken together, national and regional policies and planning guidance expect development and growth within the Winchester District to underpin and improve the variety of its environmental assets and, in so doing, help to support the resilience and durability of both the local and global environments. In essence, this is about creating the right circumstances to allow the District to be handed on to future generations, in a condition from which they in turn can gain at least equal, or greater, benefit and enjoyment.

14. Government Guidance

15. There is now a body of Government Guidance which requires local authorities, in preparing both Local Development Frameworks and related policies and strategies, to consider and make provision for improving the built and natural environments and, not least, within and around urban and other built-up areas. Examples of such guidance are contained in the following:
16. PPS 1: 'Delivering Sustainable Development'. This advises that in promoting high quality inclusive design, development plan policies should take into account environmental issues, including "the need to improve the built and natural environment, in and around urban areas and rural settlements, including the provision of good quality open space".
17. PPS 3: 'Housing'. This will underpin the delivery of the Government's key housing policy objectives - to deliver more homes, but of a higher quality and to higher environmental standards, in order to meet the challenge from climate change.
18. PPS 7: 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas'. Among the Statement's key objectives for rural areas is "To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of thriving, inclusive and sustainable rural communities, ensuring people have decent places to live by improving the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods". With particular regard to the countryside around urban areas the Statement affirms that:
19. "Planning policies in LDDs [should] address the particular land use issues and opportunities to be found in the countryside around all urban areas, recognising its importance to those who live or work there and also in providing the nearest and most accessible countryside to urban residents. Planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of this land, whilst reducing potential conflicts between neighbouring land uses. This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through support for country parks and community forests) and facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities".
20. PPS 9: 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation'. Here, the aim is to ensure that local policies and consequent decisions integrate both biodiversity and geological diversity with other considerations and, as a result, help to conserve, enhance and restore natural habitats, ecosystems and species and contribute towards rural renewal and urban renaissance by "enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well being". LDFs are, therefore, required to adopt an integrated approach to biodiversity, to ensure that these are consistent with all levels of priority and formal protective designation. With regard to both rural renewal and urban renaissance, the Policy Statement stresses the importance of "Enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people" and "Ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment".
21. PPG 17: 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'. This sets out the Government's objectives for the delivery of high quality open spaces through all

stages of the planning process and is intended to support social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being and, in addition, promote sustainable development. "Setting robust local standards based on assessments of needs and audits of existing facilities will form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process"

22. Consequently, the Companion Guide to PPG 17, 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities', requires local authorities to undertake a robust assessment of both the existing and future needs of their communities, in terms of open space, sports and recreational facilities. Part of this process will be to audit their existing provision, use and accessibility within the local authority area. The outcome of this audit should include mapped information as to any parts of the area deficient in each type
23. The full text of the above Planning Guidance and Policy Statement documents can be viewed and downloaded at the Department for Communities and Local Government's [web site:](http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/)
www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/
24. Strategic Guidance
25. The Government, the South East Regional Assembly, Sport England and Natural England all recognise that open spaces underpin quality of life. Within the Winchester District, the local community also places a high priority on the presence and accessibility of the District's open spaces, in addition to its wider countryside. It is, therefore, important to have a clear understanding of what the different types of open space have to offer and how they link with the network of settlements.
26. Following an Examination in Public of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East (The South East Plan), the Report of the Panel has now been published (August 2007). The Panel concluded that " Green infrastructure is by definition a cross-cutting issue: it encompasses the full range of natural and historic landscape and if proactively managed in a co-ordinated way can deliver positive outcomes in relation to a broad range of South East Plan objectives".
27. As a consequence, the Panel has recommended certain policy changes, to provide a strong strategic basis for the provision of new and better integrated green infrastructure. Among these is a new policy (Policy CC New: Green Infrastructure):-
28. "Green Infrastructure comprises managed networks of multi-functional open space which provide a link between town and country for the purpose of delivering economic, social and environmental objectives. Local authorities and partners should work together to plan for and provide connected and substantial networks of accessible multi-functional green space in urban and urban fringe areas and adjacent countryside to ensure that an improved and healthy environment is available for the benefit of present and future communities. This will be particularly important in the areas that are identified to accommodate the largest amounts of new growth but the provisions of this policy apply region-wide".
29. In addition, the Panel has endorsed the Draft Plan's other Policies which refer to green infrastructure. In the case of Policy NRM4: Conservation and Improvement

of Biodiversity, there is a specific requirement: “ In the development and implementation of plans and strategies, local authorities and other bodies shall avoid a loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region by [*inter alia*]: vii. Requiring green infrastructure to be identified, developed and implemented in conjunction with new development”.

30. Currently, local authorities are not obliged to provide or maintain green space as a statutory duty. On the contrary, the role of authorities has moved increasingly towards an enabling function. Nevertheless, planning policies can be used to protect open spaces and, in addition, have the potential to create further spaces and/or new linkages between them.
31. The Panel’s Report, following the Examination in Public, clearly supports the use of such mechanisms. However, the Panel does depart from an across-the-board approach, in stating that in its approach to Policy CC New: Green Infrastructure, “We would not recommend the inclusion of the wider countryside/agricultural land outside urban areas in the definition of green infrastructure since, in our view, this could devalue the concept as a planning tool”.
32. The draft South East Plan also recognises that the region has a well used public rights of way network, which provides a major opportunity to improve the well being of individuals and that this network should be maintained and enhanced to encourage enjoyment of the countryside. However, the Panel’s reasoned statement, referred to at 5.3 above, does draw attention to the fact that accessible green infrastructure and, in particular, any addition of new spaces or expansion of networks of spaces, should not compromise the business of farming or other related activities which take place in the countryside.
33. The Winchester District Community Strategy
34. The Local Development Framework is primarily concerned with the way that land and buildings help to shape the future of the District. Winchester’s Community Strategy, by comparison, covers a broader range of issues and deals with social, economic and environmental matters which affect the District.
35. The Community Strategy was prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership, comprising local community groups, major employers in the District and other public agencies, with the help and support of the City Council. The Strategy has initially identified five ‘outcomes’ which are intended to guide further action towards achieving the ‘Vision’ for the future. Of these the outcomes relating to Health and Wellbeing’, ‘High Quality Environment’ and ‘Inclusive Society’ are particularly relevant to any consideration of green infrastructure. The LDF’s Core Strategy will also take full account of those elements of the Community Strategy which contain a spatial dimension:
36. Outcome 1: Health and Wellbeing
 - Good health is enjoyed by everyone no matter where they live in the District.
 - A wide range of affordable sports and physical activities is available locally.
 - A wide range of leisure and cultural opportunities is available, affordable and easy to reach and their benefits to people’s health is maximised.

- *Priority 1:* To stop the upward trend in obesity in children and adults by increasing physical activity...
37. Outcome 4: High Quality Environment
 38. People chose to walk or cycle for shorter journeys.
 39. Informal open space is available near all communities and accessible to disabled and elderly people.
 40. New communities are planned, designed and built to be sustainable and inclusive.
 41. Parks, sports facilities, playgrounds, public footpaths, roads and pavements are well maintained.
 42. Local distinctiveness is valued and enhanced.
 43. *Priority 21:* Maintain and enhance habitats identified in the Winchester District Biodiversity Action Plan
 44. In relation to this Priority it should, however, be noted that the role of more general management falls outside the role of planning. It is, therefore, important to ensure that planning acts in conjunction with other relevant agencies and stakeholders, to ensure that all such spaces are well located, designed and maintained in ways which will deliver maximum effectiveness and environmental value.
 45. Parish Plans
 46. A Parish Plan is community led and aims to identify: what a particular community needs; how to improve the quality of life for people who live there now and; how to make sure that people can continue to enjoy that quality of life in the future. There are currently published Parish Plans within the District, for Micheldever, New Alresford, Otterbourne, Wickham and Whiteley. A number of other Parishes have Plans currently in production. Each contains a programme of action that sets out the specific community needs of the area, as identified through public consultation. Such needs can include the availability of open space and the accessibility of this from within the area.
 47. Sustainability Appraisal
 48. Winchester's Sustainability Appraisal is currently being undertaken. Following on from the collection of baseline information, it is expected that that targets and indicators will be produced by the end of 2007. At the present time, draft objectives have been produced for the District under various topic headings. The topic headings are unlikely to change and the relevant headings concerning green infrastructure are as follows:
 49. Community Aspirations
 50. The Council carried out a series of wide ranging consultations in spring 2007, to obtain the views of communities and stakeholders in regard to planning a sustainable future for the District. The views put forward form part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents,

where appropriate. The results of this consultation programme were reported in detail in CAB 1472 Appendix A: “Report of Proceedings of the Winchester Local Development Framework Core Strategy Campaign ‘Live for the Future’”.

51. The results above are taken from participants at the community planning events and, as such, are indicative of the views of residents across the area of the District. However, variations between the different locations where events were held have been, to some extent, masked due to the results from the various events being combined.
52. The participants at the community planning events were also asked questions with regard to facilities in their area. Those from some of the larger settlements indicated that these were, to a degree, self sufficient with a good range of services and facilities, such as shops and schools. However, all taking part commented that it was ‘essential to have a car in order to access more specialised facilities’. Participants from both the rural areas and from Winchester made comments regarding cycling and walking ‘primarily relating to the lack of safe routes and the need for routes to link places’.
53. There was a general consensus from all participants that they had ‘reasonable’ to ‘good’ access to the countryside and to open spaces. In certain settlements, participants commented on the need for play/open space to be better maintained whilst others were concerned that sites for wildlife could be affected by new development.
54. In addition, a stakeholder event was held and attended by participants representing professional and technical organisations. In terms of ‘imagining the future’, participants felt that there will be more of a role for local agriculture, with an increased demand for local produce, speciality produce and organic farming. We will look at the countryside and value it differently, as a multi-use environment (e.g. farming, green infrastructure, habitat...). Green infrastructure and the preservation of green wedges and networks will be important’.
55. The ‘Live for the Future’ campaign included a community engagement questionnaire, which asked respondents to rank a series of statements in order of importance for achieving sustainable communities of the future. These were structured around four key elements of sustainable communities:
 - health, wellbeing and safe communities
 - economic prosperity
 - high quality environment
 - inclusive society
56. The questionnaire was distributed in paper form and was also available on-line. As with participants at the stakeholder event, respondents highlighted the importance of accessible green space. In addition, those who responded to the questionnaire generally regarded it as very important that any planned growth in housing should be met by a corresponding increase in facilities, services and other elements of infrastructure to ensure that ‘everybody has access to the services and facilities that they need’.

57. In terms of a ‘High Quality Environment’ respondents regarded it as being ‘most important’ that “existing natural habitats are protected and enhanced and new ones created”.
58. The Role of Green Spaces
59. In addition to enhancing the character and quality of the environment and helping to provide the long-term basis for more sustainable settlements, accessible green spaces, within or adjoining towns and villages, are of vital importance in providing both communities and individuals with regular contact with local wildlife, ideally, in its more natural surroundings. Indeed, in the early phase of work on this issue, the Countryside Agency described such spaces as “The countryside in and around towns”.
60. To carry forward and promote this concept, which enables decision makers to evaluate and re-focus on green assets in a spatial context, Natural England (as the successor to English Nature) firmly advocates the following:
- Everyday contact with nature is important for well-being and quality of life.
 - Everyone should be able to enjoy such contact in safety, without having to make any special effort or journey to do so.
 - Green space in towns and cities can play an important part in helping to safeguard our natural heritage of wildlife and geological features.
 - Accessible natural green spaces give everyone an excellent opportunity to learn about nature and help to protect it in practical ways.
61. Natural England’s urban green space standards for ‘Accessible Natural Green Space’ (ANGSt) now provide a benchmark for ensuring access to places of natural and wildlife interest. Therefore, these standards indicate that provision should be made for at least two hectares of accessible green space, per 1000 population and go on to recommend that people living in towns and cities should have:
- An accessible natural green space less than 300 metres (5minutes walk) from home.
 - The availability of statutory Local Nature Reserves, to a minimum level of one hectare per thousand head of population
 - At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home; one accessible 100 hectare site within 5 kilometres of home and; one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home.
62. The standard covers a wide range of accessible green space, including that which is currently the subject of the Council’s PPG 17: Open Space Assessment. However, the standard does not include rights of way or linear access, both of which are recognised as being important resources, nor does it relate in general terms to informal recreational use/access, other than on foot.
63. PG17: Assessment of Open Space and Recreation Facilities.
64. The starting point for the study currently being carried out, on behalf of both the City Council and East Hampshire District Council, has been the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: ‘Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation’ (PPG17) and its Companion Guide ‘Assessing Needs and

Opportunities’. This latest Guidance Note places a requirement on local authorities to undertake audits and assessments of open space, sports and recreational facilities, in order to:

- Identify the needs of the population.
- Identify the potential for increased use.
- Establish an effective strategy for open space/sports/recreational facilities at the local level.

65. Following this guidance, the aim of the joint study and its resulting Assessment for the Winchester District is to help in meeting one of the primary objectives of PPG17, which is to provide local people with networks of accessible, high quality open space, sports and recreation facilities, in both urban and rural areas. Overall, such facilities should meet the needs of residents and visitors alike, be fit for purpose and be situated in sustainable locations.
66. Detailed research and analysis have already taken place and Part 1 of a final Draft ‘Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study’ has been prepared and submitted to the Council and will be the subject of a separate report to this meeting of the Committee (Report CAB 1545 LDF, refers). The results of this Study will provide a comprehensive and robust evidence base for planning policies in the Local Development Framework and will enable the City Council to prepare a local strategy for the provision or enhancement of open space, sports and recreational facilities throughout the District.
67. Among the Study’s findings regarding natural green space is that, set against the existing quantity and distribution of provision, “It is not possible to achieve an average across the District”. “As a result, a proposed quantity standard for natural green space has much more significance for new [housing] provision and, therefore, a minimum level of provision of 1.0ha. per. 1000 people is suggested, both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision across the District. This is considered to be realistic and capable of delivery, through developer contributions...The space provided should be of an appropriate shape and character to allow for meaningful recreational use and its possible integration with other types of open space opportunity...Wherever possible local provision should be of at least two hectares in size”.
68. The Study goes on to point out that: “In the longer term there might be value in developing a hierarchy of provision, as suggested by the ANGSt guidance and offering a range of smaller and larger opportunities set within a geographical dimension. However, it is felt strongly that the focus should initially be on improving provision and accessibility within easy walking distance”.
69. Turning to issues of quality, the Study’s ‘Key Issues and Recommendations’ with regard to natural green space include the statement that: “The District is well provided for in terms of natural green space, with significant tracts of woodland and heathland, offering a rich and wide variety of habitats with both biodiversity and recreational value. This asset should be maintained and protected”.
70. In addition, the Study finds that: “The quality of management for biodiversity is good, with appropriate levels of access balanced with areas for biodiversity. Mostly, this is achieved as a result of the large size of many of the areas which are large enough to provide for recreation and biodiversity”.
71. Landscape and Green Space

72. The District's diverse countryside, much of which is productively farmed, is widely regarded as being one of Winchester's most valuable assets. This distinctive mixture of topography and different landscape character type provides a setting of high quality for all of the District's settlements and forms an attractive backdrop to almost every aspect of living and working within the District. The need for a formal 'Landscape Character Assessment' of the District (see paragraph 2.1, above) was, therefore, a clear reflection of the recognised importance of Winchester's landscape, both locally and nationally and the pressures that are being placed upon it. The resulting Assessment fully endorsed the need to protect and enhance the strong identity of Winchester's landscape, whilst accommodating necessary development and change.
73. The District's network of parks, natural green spaces, amenity areas, rivers and streams is equally valuable. Not only do these represent an important resource in their own right but they also provide a vital containment and sense of definition for transport corridors, help to connect and soften urban streets, break up elements of hard infrastructure and enhance and give identity to different areas and types of development. In addition, they make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of both individuals and wider communities and, furthermore, provide an ecological resource which is of great benefit to the biodiversity of the District.
74. Therefore, among the main objectives of the LDF must be a requirement to conserve and enhance the District's natural heritage and the many distinctive qualities that it displays. Further key issues to be addressed are:-
75. Protecting and increasing biodiversity and the 'green infrastructure', as part of the normal processes of growth and renewal.
76. Continuing the current focus on new development taking place within urban boundaries and the District's built up areas will, inevitably, place further pressure on their more natural elements and, consequently, their biodiversity and habitat quality.
77. Not all development can be realistically accommodated within existing urban areas. Therefore, a District strategy for additional housing provision in line with the requirements of the emerging South East Regional Plan will be likely to specify additional areas of development which, for reasons of maximum sustainability, are closely associated with existing settlements or planned areas of major development. Such development will bring forward further area-specific pressures and, with these, a need for enhanced green space provision.
78. The southern part of the District is now subject to the policy influence of the PUSH initiative and the wider effect that this now has on the Regional Spatial Strategy. This is likely, therefore, to result in significantly increased development pressure being generated, both to the south and north of the main M27 corridor. Although much of this new development is likely to be centred beyond Winchester's southern boundary its proximity would, nevertheless, add to other, internal impacts on the infrastructure and economy of the District's southern and central areas.
79. In the light of these factors, it will be essential to direct attention and investment towards improving the quality, accessibility and connectivity of existing green assets: promoting the creation of new or improved landscapes, as well as

supporting urban greening initiatives and the enhanced provision of public parks and access areas as part of the development process.

80. Responding to the importance of maintaining the character of the many key landscapes present within the District. Overall, the aim should be not only to protect the natural setting of Winchester and the District's other settlements, but to enhance and broaden the appeal of those physical, cultural and educational links which bring together townscapes, countryside and green space.
81. Recognising and supporting the growing contribution of green infrastructure to the health and wellbeing of urban communities. This should include the contribution made by green corridors in encouraging more sustainable travel modes, especially walking and cycling; which help to deliver against carbon emissions targets and also provide opportunities for beneficial exercise.
82. Assessing the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space within the District and using that evidence as the basis for developing appropriate standards for the provision of 'green infrastructure' which can be progressively applied throughout the District.
83. Protecting and enhancing trees, tree belts and other landscape or ecological features, particularly where these make a significant contribution to the character of an area. Within the City and some of the District's larger settlements there is an ongoing issue of declining tree populations. The effect of this is particularly significant with regard to those well-defined tree belts, groups and, in some instances, individual trees which make such a valuable and, often, historic contribution to townscape and environmental quality. To maintain the stature and impact of this type of tree cover, sufficient land needs to be incorporated in development proposals to allow appropriate planting to be made and to allow the future growth to maturity of native specimen trees.
84. Acknowledging that certain areas of earlier development may have paid a more limited regard to local topography or landscape setting and, consequently, still lack a well-defined character or integration with the surrounding area. In such circumstances, any further development opportunities should be used to counteract this.
85. Recognising that, in the event of the confirmed designation of a South Downs National Park, the overall management strategy and land use requirements within the National Park will change and that any such changes would be likely to impact on other, adjoining areas within the District.
86. Supporting communities and local enterprises, in order to encourage and enable their improved participation in decisions about green infrastructure, including its provision and management.
87. One response to the many and varied challenges to the health and vitality of countryside within and around towns has been to pay particular attention to those green spaces which often help to mark out the urban-rural fringe. This approach, which is now gaining widespread acceptance, has been based on the view that this is a spatial infrastructure which, in addition to its other benefits, can be just as important to the successful delivery of basic services and standards as any other element of social or built infrastructure.

88. Over the years there have been a number of programmes, led by the Countryside Agency and others, aimed at raising awareness of the value of green spaces for urban residents. More recently, the concept of a 'green infrastructure' has been developed in order to focus on and advance what are essentially more positive and dynamic methods of analysing and promoting green spaces of various types and fulfilling different functions, especially in the context of increasing urban development pressure. Natural England, which has taken over significant parts of the former Countryside Agency's work, is now taking the lead in advocating the development of national standards for maintaining and enhancing the green infrastructure.
89. Countryside Recreation and Green Infrastructure
90. Recently, Hampshire County Council has undertaken a study to assess the supply of and demand for, countryside recreation within the South Hampshire sub-region. The resulting report considers the likely future demand for informal recreational activities such as walking, dog walking, cycling and horse riding, within the sub-region.
91. The report also examines the demand for formal recreational activities and considers how this demand is being met. It then goes on to identify factors which may influence future provision. The report and its findings are now being used to inform a Green Infrastructure Strategy for South Hampshire, which is being undertaken on behalf of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) and is due to be published in late 2007 - early 2008.
92. In terms of preparing the ground for a Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Study document has focused on the impact of pressures and trends resulting from projected and inherent economic and population growth, from society's behavioural changes and from other external influences, such as climate change. The Study has, therefore, identified those areas where there are particular threats and where the Strategy document needs to consider particular priorities for green infrastructure provision:
93. Instances where green infrastructure is present in a high priority area. Here the strategy will be to conserve, enhance and secure long-term management.
94. Areas where there is, or is likely to be, significant demand for the public benefits to be had from green infrastructure, but where provision is low. Here the strategy will be to create new assets.
95. Areas where there is considerable pressure, both now and in the future, on existing green infrastructure. Here the strategy's response will be to enhance existing and create new assets.
96. The Study further indicates that "The development of a green infrastructure strategy for South Hampshire should be clearly embedded in national, regional and local policy, to demonstrate 'strategic fit' with key policy requirements". A review of present policies also suggests that there is "strong support within the policies that everyone should have the right of access to high quality green space, which is 'fit for purpose', clean, safe and close to home and work".
97. Recognition is also given by the Study to the benefits of locally accessible landscapes, in terms of enhancing urban environments and protecting the countryside. Especially in the latter case, sensitive sites designated for their high

value can benefit from the wider distribution of increasing recreational and other pressures. The Study notes that this will be a particularly important function in and around the New Forest and South Downs National Parks, in terms of diffusing visitor pressure, whilst spreading the financial benefits of tourism to other neighbouring areas.

98. In terms of development pressures, the Study notes that the “Green Infrastructure Strategy must consider issues of public benefit in relation to the creation of new communities in the two Strategic Development Areas (and, indeed the Major Development Area), particularly where there is a lack of resource or low functionality of existing green space provision. The SDAs and MDA must have a high standard of environmental design and provision of neighbourhood green space. They also require provision of a strategic green space within their boundaries, or failing that, excellent multi-user access to the nearest strategic green space which, for Fareham [SDA] could be West Walk or Whiteley Woods”.
99. Countryside Recreation: HCC’s Study of Supply and Demand within the District
100. A more recent report produced for the City Council by Hampshire County Council, in September 2007, summarises the results and conclusions of those original reports covering the South Hampshire sub-region and the Central Hampshire and New Forest areas but then focuses specifically on the Winchester District area. Partly by using Mori residents’ survey data, which provides detailed information on the current use of the countryside, the County has developed an approach to assessing the likely future demand for recreation infrastructure.
101. The main findings of the report can be summarised, as follows:
102. *The rights of way network in Winchester District is slightly more extensive than the county average.* Similarly, a higher percentage of this network is available for cycling and riding than the county average figure. It has been recognised that in the Forest of Bere area there is a high demand for equestrian access to the countryside but a lack of suitable rights of way. Whilst only a proportion of the district is within the Forest of Bere the Study has, nevertheless, found evidence to suggest that across the district there has been an increase in equestrian facilities.
103. *There is likely to be an increased demand for countryside recreation activities from residents of Winchester District.* The population of Winchester is predicted to increase by 17%, from 2006 to 2026 (based on the recommendations in the draft South East Plan). The demand for access to the countryside via the footpath and bridleway network is likely to increase by 16%, whilst visits to countryside sites (including country parks) will increase by 15.6%.
104. *There is [currently] a lower than average propensity for people living in the Winchester area to visit a countryside site (including country parks).* Currently, 29.25% of the population in the Winchester District visit a countryside site or park, per annum, which is slightly lower than the county average. The survey has shown a decline in both visits to countryside sites and the use of footpaths and bridleways by Winchester residents, between the 2004/05 survey and the 2006/07 survey. This information should be treated with caution, as the sample sizes are small and there is no explanation for this drop, although it is worth noting in case this indicates the start of a trend.
105. *The greatest demand for countryside recreation activities is likely to be from people aged 35 or over.* Winchester District is likely to experience a significant

increase in the population aged 65 and over. This is expected to have an impact on the demand for both visits to countryside sites and parks and the use of footpaths/bridleways. However, the predominant users, in terms of numbers, are still predicted to be from within the 35-54 age range.

106. The County Council's Report 'An Assessment of Countryside Recreation Supply and Demand in Winchester', is attached to this report as Appendix A.
107. The South Downs and the East Hants. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
108. Currently, a decision is awaited regarding the designation of a South Downs National Park. If the designation is confirmed, following what may well need to be a second Public Inquiry, this would have a direct effect on the overall control and, in particular, the planning administration of a sizeable part of this District. Currently most, though not all, of the proposed Park area is subject to Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status.
109. From a countryside management perspective, the AONB has previously been supervised jointly by Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Council. However, in anticipation of what may well change to National Park status, interim management arrangements have been put in place to cover this period of uncertainty and, in the event of the National Park designation being confirmed, provide a prototype for the establishment of a controlling National Park Authority. These arrangements are currently overseen and implemented by the South Downs Joint Committee.
110. As a separate matter, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities, whose administrative areas include an AONB, or part of an AONB, to prepare an appropriate management plan. After a lengthy period of preparation and major alterations to accommodate the Government's intention to create a new National Park, the Joint Committee is now entering the adoption phase of a South Downs Management Plan, on behalf of Winchester, East Hampshire District and all those Hampshire and Sussex authorities subject to the National Park designation.
111. The Management Plan is intended, not only to look beyond the boundaries of the East Hampshire and Sussex Downs AONBs, taking in the additional area of the proposed Park, but is intended to apply to the adjacent areas of the two AONBs until such time as the National Park is confirmed. The final revised draft of the South Downs Management Plan, together with its associated South Downs Planning Guidelines and Partnership Action Plan can be viewed at The Joint Committee's web-site: www.southdowns.gov.uk
112. The Main Issues to be Addressed
113. In the forthcoming plan period different parts of the District are likely to be subject to different amounts of new development and, therefore, varying pressures on available green space. The effect of major strategic developments, driven forward by the Regional Spatial Strategy and centred on the South Hampshire 'hubs' of Portsmouth and Southampton, is likely to have a particularly strong and, to an extent, 'displaced' impact on the southern and south-central parts of the District.
114. In terms of the regeneration objectives of the sub-regional strategy, the locations for the proposed Fareham and Hedge End Strategic Development Areas are

intended to offer advantages when compared to other potential options within the sub-region. Nevertheless, in terms of: the local and wider environmental implications; the protection and enhancement of landscape quality; protecting and maintaining the integrity of existing surrounding settlements; road traffic and other transport impacts; the need to provide for additional infrastructure and; those measures necessary for mitigation purposes, these two SDAs will have pronounced long-term consequences for Winchester District. In addition, the effects of the Major Development Area West of Waterlooville and any other significant development area in the central part of the District need to be considered.

115. Overall, future housing development within the District will significantly change the accessibility of certain woodland, forest and other green areas and many rural green spaces will, for the first time, be in close proximity to housing. Therefore, accessibility needs to be planned and strategically developed in conjunction with housing provision. Such sites will come under increasing recreational pressure and will require funding and other methods of support to sustain and enhance the access opportunities
116. Added to this, to the north and east of the area subject to the PUSH Partnership initiative (and the additional development pressures likely to result from that), is the extensive downland tract (some 40% of the total area of the District) currently subject to designation as a South Downs National Park. If designation is confirmed this could have a marked impact on the future use of this area for recreational and countryside access purposes and could help to offset some of the effects of development and increasing urbanisation in other parts of the District and beyond.
117. The main issues which need to be addressed in the Local Development Framework are:-
118. Should any additional measures be put in place, in order to establish more precisely the extent, nature and condition of existing green infrastructure provision within the District and, in addition, identify any current or anticipated deficiencies?
119. What actions should the Core Strategy's 'Issues and Options' identify for the maintenance and enhancement of the District's existing green infrastructure assets?
120. Should the Core Strategy, or a Development Control DPD, set targets for accessibility to natural green space which match Natural England's ANGST standard (see paragraph 6.3, above) or were more, or perhaps less, challenging than these?
121. Should any such targets be applied equally across the District or should they be adjusted to reflect the adopted development strategy for the District and, therefore, take account of development distribution, scale and densities, together with additional cross-boundary influences i.e. increasing urbanisation and associated pressures both within the PUSH area and its wider zone of influence?
122. Should the LDF indicate a need to make positive allocations of land under the provisions of the Site Allocations DPD, to meet green infrastructure needs at the earliest stage and, in some instances, include measures to secure implementation in advance of actual growth and/or development?

123. Should the Core Strategy introduce additional policy provisions to create and protect linkages between open spaces, not only as a means further developing pedestrian and cycle-friendly access routes but as a way of enhancing nature conservation and natural habitats?
124. Should measures be included in the Core Strategy to ensure that appropriate biodiversity is incorporated within open spaces subject to, or affected by, development proposals in order to ensure maximum sustainability and the more effective use of development land.
125. What would be the differences in overall green space strategy and its application, assuming that a South Downs National Park is confirmed or, conversely, the consequences of the current designation not being confirmed by the Secretary of State?
126. The Core Strategy's 'Issues and Options' should indicate that appropriate and accessible green space is a critical infrastructure component, necessary to support major growth within the sub-region which must, nevertheless, contribute to meeting multiple social objectives including biodiversity and an effective response to the threats posed by climate change.
127. Part of the Core Strategy's purpose is to take a broad strategic approach to developing policies that address the issue of green infrastructure. In advance of that stage it will, therefore, be necessary to decide the level of detail which is appropriate to the Strategy and, consequently, whether more detailed guidance is needed, either as a further DPD on green infrastructure, a policy element in a Development Control DPD or as an SPD.



Hampshire
County Council

*An assessment of countryside recreation
supply and demand in Winchester*

September 2007

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1. Introduction

The aim of the report is to summarise the results and conclusions of the original reports covering the South Hampshire sub region and the Central Hampshire and New Forest area, focusing on the Winchester District Council area. The Central Hampshire report holds a full account of the research, information used and method of assessment and should be read in conjunction with this report if such detail is required. Further information regarding associated plans and policies that have influenced this work, such as The Draft South East Plan, can be found in the Central Hampshire report.

This report is concerned with the current and likely future demand for access to the countryside for informal recreational activities such as walking, walking dogs, cycling and horse riding in the Winchester District. It will assess:-

- The future supply and demand for Countryside Recreation Network
- The future supply and demand for Countryside Recreation Open Space
- Other evidence

2. Brief Overview

Winchester is home to 113,048 people and this is estimated to increase by 17% by the year 2026¹. The district is included in both the Central Hampshire and New Forest area and the South Hampshire sub region. Based on the Draft South East Plan proposals the population within the Central Hampshire and New Forest area is predicted to increase by 1.9% by 2026 and within the South Hampshire sub region by 7% by 2026.

Winchester District is a large and varied area which extends from Winchester to Micheldever in the north, and to Waterlooville in the south-east. The district is mainly rural in character with local countryside providing for a range of contrasting land uses and activities that are important for quality of life and

¹ HCC Long term projections from proposals in the Draft SE Plan

environmental character. The district is well served by the strategic road network with the proximity of the A34 and M3 providing good links to London, airports and the rest of the country.

3. Assessment of Countryside Recreation Supply and Demand

Hampshire County Council has developed an approach to assess the likely future demand for countryside recreation infrastructure utilising relevant research and information, in particular the Mori residents' survey, which provides detailed information on the current use of the countryside.

A total of 841km (Table 1) of rights of way within the Winchester District provide access to the wider countryside for walking, cycling, horse riding and carriage driving but footpaths, allowing pedestrian access only, are far more prevalent than other classifications of rights of way.

3.1 Supply of access network

The total length of rights of way in the county of Hampshire (including Southampton and Portsmouth) is 4,583 km and this can be broken down by rights of way type, or classification, and expressed as metres per hectare. Table 1 shows that the total metres per hectare in Hampshire is on average 12.5. The average amount of rights of way in Winchester District is very slightly higher at 12.7m per ha².

Table 1: Current Supply of Rights of Way

Rights of way type	Hants M	M per ha	Winchester M	M per ha
Footpath	3,337,600	9.1	557773	8.4
Bridleway	745,100	2.0	170395	2.6
Restricted Byway	223,700	0.6	103657	1.6
Byway Open to All Traffic	276,800	0.8	9686	0.1
TOTAL	4,583,200	12.5	841511	12.7

The amount of rights of way in Winchester is comparable to other districts in the county with East Hampshire benefiting from the most comprehensive network. The provision within the county for access on foot only is 73% of the network. Winchester shows a smaller proportion of foot only network compared to the rest of Hampshire, at 66%. This table indicates that there is marginally more opportunity for residents in the Winchester district to undertake activities such as cycling, horse riding and carriage driving, in comparison to the average across the county.

² This figure is not static as the Definitive Map is continually updated.

3.2 Demand for the access network

The Mori residents surveys conducted in 1999, 2002/2003, 2004/2005 and 2006/2007 provide information on the use of footpaths and bridleways by Hampshire residents (Table 2). The figures included in Table 2 are an average taken from the four surveys over the last seven years. On average 33% of the population in Winchester use or benefit from country footpaths and bridleways which is similar to the county average.

Table 2: Use of Rights of Way per District

Local Authority Area	% use of footpaths & bridleways
Basingstoke & Deane	33.50
East Hampshire	40.00
Hart	41.75
New Forest	37.50
Test Valley	33.25
Winchester	33.25
Eastleigh	36.25
Fareham	30.75
Gosport	18.00
Havant	30.75
Rushmoor	25.00
Hampshire	33.50

Extrapolated from the Mori Residents Survey 1999, 2002/2003, 2004/2005 and 2006/2007

When the figures for 04/05 are compared to those published for 06/07 there is an indication of a decline in use of the rights of way network from residents in Winchester. This is a different picture to the rest of the districts in the county which are experiencing an increase in the use of footpaths and bridleways. At this level the sample size is so small it may not be significant, however note should be taken to identify whether this is the beginning of a trend in future surveys.

The Mori residents' survey provides data that can be analysed to give a breakdown of Winchester residents who use footpaths and bridleways by age group. Table 3 indicates the level of demand for footpaths and bridleways by each age group, based on actual numbers. It shows that the greatest demand is generated by residents in the 35-54 age group, followed by those under 16.

Table 3: Use of footpaths & bridleways for 2006 and 2026

Age Group	Figures for each age group that use a footpath & bridleway for 2006 and 2026			
	Winchester 2006	% of total 2006	Winchester 2026	% of total 2026
0-15	5423	19.9	6135	19.4
16-24	2564	9.4	2757	8.7
25-34	2856	10.5	3205	10.1
35-54	8733	32	9113	28.8
55-64	3945	14.5	4747	15
65+	3744	13.7	5720	18
Total	27265	100	31687	100

By examining use by age we are able to utilise population and demographic projection figures to predict the likely future demand for using a footpath and bridleway network in 2026 (Table 3).

Table 3 indicates that the total number of residents within the Winchester district using footpaths and bridleways in 2006 was 27,265 and is predicted to be 31,687 in 2026. The result is an increase in demand for footpaths and bridleways from Winchester residents of 16%.

In terms of actual numbers, the demand from the 35-54 age group is still likely to be the greatest in 2026. This age group currently has the highest propensity to use a footpath and bridleway and will still have the greatest numbers of users; the population changes will have little impact on the increased level of demand from 2006 to 2026.

The demand from those in the under 16 age group has declined whilst that in both the 55-64 and 65+ age groups has increased, with the most significant increase in demand from the 65+ age group. This figure is based on the assumption that the proportion of residents aged 65+ who use a footpath or bridleway will stay the same over the next twenty years. This increase in demand is as a consequence of the demographic changes in the population, however there may be a range of factors that will influence the proportion of users over the next twenty years (more details can be found in the Central Hampshire and New Forest report).

4. Assessment of the future supply and demand for Countryside Recreation Open Space

It was found that the comparison between local generic demand and that for a particular countryside site was not possible using the method developed for the Countryside Recreation Network.

4.1 Demand for visiting a countryside site including country park

The Mori residents' surveys 1999, 2002/2003, 2004/2005, and 2006/7 indicate that 33% of Hampshire residents and 29.25% of Winchester residents use or benefit from a countryside site (including country park). Table 4 shows that generally the use of countryside sites (including country parks) within Winchester is lower than the county average.

Table 4: Visits to countryside sites (including country parks)

Local Authority Area	% use of countryside sites
Basingstoke & Deane	25.25
East Hants	39.5
Hart	36
New Forest	38.5
Test Valley	28.5
Winchester	29.25
Eastleigh	43.25
Fareham	33
Gosport	23
Havant	34.5
Rushmoor	28.75
Hants	33

Extrapolated from the Mori Residents survey 1999, 2002/2003, 2004/2005 and 2006/2007

Table 5 shows the actual number for each age group in Winchester who visit countryside sites (including country parks). This indicates that the greatest level of demand is from residents who are in the 35-54 age groups followed by those under 16.

Table 5: Visits to countryside sites by age group for 2006 and 2026

Age Group	Figures for each age group that visit a countryside site(including country park) for 2006 and 2026			
	Winchester 2006	% of total 2006	Winchester 2026	% of total 2026
0-15	5944	23.9	6724	23.4
16-24	2067	8.3	2222	7.7
25-34	2571	10.3	2885	10
35-54	7877	31.7	8221	28.6
55-64	3298	13.3	3968	13.8
65+	3097	12.5	4732	16.5
Total	24854	100	28752	100

Derived from the Mori Residents Survey 2006/2007

This table illustrates that the total number of residents in Winchester that use or benefit from a countryside site (including country parks) in 2006 is 24,854 and is predicted to be 28,752 in 2026. Therefore, there is likely to be an increase in demand for visits to countryside sites (including country parks) of 15.6% over the next twenty years.

One of the greatest demands for visits to countryside sites and country parks will continue to be from the 35-54 age group. The largest percentage increase in demand will be from the 65+ age group. These calculations are based on proportions of each age group that currently visit countryside sites and parks combined with the projected population figures. As mentioned earlier there could be a number of factors that will influence that proportion thus changing overall demand.

4.2 How current demand is being met through existing provision

We know that 29.25% of the population in Winchester currently visit a countryside site including country park and that this is lower than the average for the county.

To determine how this demand is being met, in other words which countryside sites or parks this 29.25% are visiting, requires information from the relevant sites and parks in the area. Visitor origin data is only available from Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Manor Farm Country Park and Titchfield Haven. From this information the number of visitors from the Winchester district can be determined (Table 6).

Table 6: Visit to country parks from within Winchester

Country Park	Total visits	% visits from Winchester	Number of visits from Winchester	No. of visitors
Queen Elizabeth Country Park	230,907	11.5%	26670	1313
Titchfield Haven Country Park	42,673	9.6%	4096	201
Manor Farm Country Park	155,811	11.59%	18058	889
Total			48824	2403

Visitor surveys inc. postcode analysis: Manor Farm Country Park 2006, Queen Elizabeth Country Park 2005, Staunton Country Park 2004/05, Titchfield Haven 2006

These three parks account for only 2,403 visitors which is approximately 7% of all visitors to countryside sites including country parks. Further data is required to fully understand how demand from Winchester residents for countryside sites and parks is being met by the current provision.

Whilst the total visits made to sites such as Farley Mount Country Park, Lepe Country Park and Itchen Valley are known it is difficult to determine exactly how many of these visits are made by people residing in the Winchester district. The data provided by the New Forest National Park visitor survey does not provide sufficient detail to determine the number of visitors originating from the Winchester district. There may be some assumptions, regarding visitors to sites, considered reasonable to make. For example it could be assumed that, due its location and type of facility, that nearly all the visitors (81,615 per annum) to Farley Mount Country Park originate from the district. Unfortunately there is no evidence at all to support this assumption therefore it has not been included here.

5. Other Evidence

The Countryside Access Plans, together with associated research, provide a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the current supply and the current demand for countryside recreation. There are three draft plans which affect the Winchester area namely; Forest of Bere, South Downs and Test & Itchen Countryside Access Plans. From these plans the following issues have been identified:

5.1 Sustainable access to the countryside (reducing the reliance on cars)

The Plans recognise that there is a high reliance on the use of private cars to get out into the countryside for recreation across the county.

The factors influencing this high reliance on cars are mainly issues of supply:

- i. A lack of provision of good quality countryside close to where people live.
- ii. A shortage of safe off road routes that link settlements to the countryside.
- iii. Motorways and major roads fragment the access network and create barriers to access.

However there is also an issue of demand:

- iv. High levels of car ownership and preference for travel by car creating pressure for better parking and associated facilities.

5.2 Pressure on the existing network

Reference is made to the current pressure on the existing network in all the Plans but this is given a higher prominence in the Forest of Bere and Test and Itchen CAP. The Forest of Bere CAP is concerned with the network itself and refers to the poor condition of the multi use routes in comparison with elsewhere in the county. This condition is explained in the Plan as a consequence of a limited resource (number of routes) concentrating users onto a small number of paths, together with the prevailing heavy soil conditions in the area.

5.3 Demand for new multi functional off road routes

It has been recognised that in the Forest of Bere area there is a deficit in the number of bridleways and restricted byways allowing for cycling, horse riding and carriage driving. From this report we have established that this is not the case in the Winchester district, however there may still be an issue of demand outstripping supply. There is evidence to show that equestrian activities are popular in the district and the number of new equestrian facilities indicates an increase in diversification into equine business which may result in additional demand for access to the countryside.

6. Summary of findings

a. **The rights of way network in Winchester is slightly more extensive than the county average**

The residents of Winchester benefit from the provision of a rights of way network that is very slightly above the county average. A higher than the county average percentage of this network is available for cycling, horse riding and carriage driving. It has been recognised that in the Forest of Bere area there is a high demand for equestrian access to the countryside and a lack of appropriate rights of way. Whilst only a proportion of the district is within the Forest of Bere there is some evidence to show that there is an increase in equestrian facilities within the district.

b. **There is likely to be an increased in demand for countryside recreation activities from residents of Winchester**

The population in Winchester is predicted to increased by 17% from 2006 to 2026 (based on the recommendations in the draft South East Plan). The demand for access to the countryside via the footpath and bridleway network is likely to increase by 16%, whilst visits to countryside sites (including country parks) will increase by 15.6%.

c. **There is a lower than average propensity for people living in the Winchester area to visit a countryside site (including country parks)**

Currently 29.25% of the population in Winchester District visit a countryside site or park, which is slightly lower than the county average. The survey has shown a decline in both visits to countryside sites and use of footpaths and bridleways from Winchester residents between the 2004/2005 survey and the 2006/2007 survey. This information should be treated with caution, as the sample sizes are small and there is no explanation for this drop, but it is worth noting in case this indicates the start of a trend.

d. **The greatest demand for countryside recreation activities is likely to be from people aged 35+**

Winchester District is likely to experience a significant increase in the population aged 65 and over. This is expected to have an impact on the demand for both visits to countryside sites and parks and the use of footpaths and bridleways, however the predominant users, in terms of numbers, are still predicted to be from the 35-54 age groups.