

### Green corridors

#### Definition

- 11.1 This open space type includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. The primary purpose is to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and also provide opportunities for wildlife migration.



#### PPG17 – the role of green corridors

- 11.2 With regards to green corridors the emphasis of PPG17 is on urban areas. It uses the typology from the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce Report which is an ‘urban typology’. The Companion Guide suggests that unless a green corridor is used as a transport link between facilities i.e. home and school, town and sports facility etc, it should not be included within an audit. Our focus has therefore been on significant urban corridors.
- 11.3 Green corridors are as important for wildlife migration and biodiversity, as the transportation of people around the District..

#### Strategic context

- 11.4 The Adopted Local Plan policies with most relevance to green corridors are R17 and R18. R17 states ‘the Local Planning Authority will encourage the improvement and increased use of the public rights of way network. Proposals to close or divert existing rights of way will not be permitted unless an alternative route is available which is as attractive and is not significantly longer than the original route. Wherever possible, local extensions and improvements to rights of way will be sought as part of development proposals.
- 11.5 R18 states ‘the Local Planning Authority will, where it is considered appropriate, seek the expansion of public access to the countryside through the creation of new paths and publicly accessible areas and extensions to existing facilities’.
- 11.6 The District benefits from good access to the countryside and links with settlements and other key open spaces. The City of Salisbury is situated on the River Avon, where the surrounding rivers converge.
- 11.7 The Monarch’s Way is Britain’s second longest signed walking trail and passes through the District. This high profile and well-networked path provides a strong backbone for a network of green corridors to link key open space sites with settlements.

### **Consultation**

- 11.8 61% of respondents to the household survey indicated they use green corridors once a month or more. 45% of respondents consider the quality of green corridors to be 'average', and 43% 'good'.
- 11.9 12% of all respondents indicated that green corridors was the type of open space they use most often. Of these respondents, most would expect to walk to this type of open space and would expect it to take them between five and 10 minutes.
- 11.10 Key safety factors raised by frequent users were other users, clear route to open space, reputation and adequate lighting. Minor problems raised were litter and dog-fouling. Most frequent users were satisfied with pathways, and general maintenance and management.
- 11.11 Residents suggested at the drop-in sessions that thought there should be an increase in cycle paths that are maintained to a high standard.

### **Current position**

- 11.12 The Avon Valley is in the centre of Salisbury and is very popular with walkers and cyclists. It is a good example of how a green corridor can link a major urban settlement to the surrounding countryside.
- 11.13 The Avon Valley is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Much of the River Avon is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). English Nature is leading the River Avon and Avon Valley Initiative (RAAVI), in partnership with the Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, Wessex Water and Hampshire County Council. Wiltshire County Council is involved as a key stakeholder throughout the evolution of RAAVI. The project has received funding from European Commission LIFE-Nature Project, and is bidding for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 11.14 The project is being run under the theme of 'the Living River', with the key proposals including:
- river biodiversity initiatives at three key sites (Salisbury, Langford Lakes, and Blashford Lakes)
  - identify suitable public access locations and develop facilities (pathways, viewing points)
  - information on natural and cultural heritage of the river and valley provided on notice boards
  - development of virtual access to the River Avon and surrounds
  - development of a control programme for invasive, non-native plants.
- 11.15 There are seven recognised green corridors identified within this study:
- River Avon (Site ID 900)
  - River Bourne (Site ID 903)
  - River Nadder (Site ID 902)

- River Ebble (Site ID 905)
- River Till (Site ID 901)
- River Wylye (Site ID 906)
- Dismantled Railway (Site ID 909).

11.16 The valleys and chalk hills through which the rivers run provide a picturesque landscape and a diverse habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, flora and fauna.

**Setting provision standards**

11.17 In setting local standards for green corridors there is a need to take into account national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full indication of consultation and justifications for the recommended local standards are provided within Appendix H, I and J. The recommended local standards have been summarised below in context with the green corridor sites in Salisbury.

**Quantity standard**

11.18 The Annex A of PPG17 – Open Space Typology states:

*“the need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas. This means that **there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard**, just as there is no way of having a standard for the proportion of land in an area which it will be desirable to allocate for roads”.*

**RECOMMENDED  
LOCAL QUANTITY  
STANDARD**

**No local standard set**

11.19 It is therefore recommended that no provision standard should be set. PPG17 continues to state that:

*“Instead planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans National Cycle Network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities. In this sense green corridors are demand-led. However, planning authorities should also take opportunities to use established linear routes, such as disused railway lines, roads or canal and river banks, as green corridors, and supplement them by proposals to ‘plug-in’ access to them from as wide an area as possible”.*

**Quality standard**

11.20 The Countryside Agency has issued guidance on what a user should expect to find in terms of quality on green corridor sites. These include: a path provided by the protection and reinforcement of existing vegetation; ground not soft enough to allow a horse or cycle to sink into it and a path on unvegetated natural surfaces. There are currently no local quality standards for green corridors.

11.21 Aspirations for green corridors were derived from results from the household survey. These considered public footpaths, bridleways, rivers and disused railway lines. User aspirations are for green corridors in Salisbury to be:

- clean/litter free
- footpaths
- nature features (eg wildlife)
- flowers/trees and shrubs
- level surface/good drainage.

**RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD**

*‘Well-maintained routes with clear, level paths, which are provided by the protection and reinforcement of existing vegetation. The green corridor should provide links to and between open spaces, urban areas and community facilities. Where appropriate, sites should provide ancillary accommodation such as seating and toilets’.*

**Accessibility standard**

11.22 There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for green corridors as implementation is very much opportunity-led rather than demand-led.

**RECOMMENDED LOCAL ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD**

*No local standard set*

**Links with Health Agenda**

11.23 Green corridors represent an important chance to link open spaces within the urban area and to promote transport by cycle and walking. These opportunities for informal recreation will help towards keeping the public active and improving health within the local area. The latest government plan published by the Department for Transport entitled *“Walking and Cycling: an action plan”* states:

*“Walking and cycling are good for our health, good for getting us around, good for our public spaces and good for our society. For all these reasons we need to persuade more people to choose to walk and cycle more often”.*

11.24 It is therefore important to address any qualitative deficiencies of existing green corridors and to capitalise on any opportunities to increase and enhance the existing network.

**Applying provision standards**

12.1 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards, it is also not appropriate to state areas of deficiency or need. However, there are certain areas within Salisbury that have been identified through analysis of other typologies that could potentially benefit from the provision of green corridors, or improved quality and accessibility of green corridors to aid increased level of usage to other types.

11.25 Improved green networks from urban centres to the key open space sites would be welcomed by the local community and will aid reaching wider agenda targets such as improved healthy living.

**Summary and recommendations**

- 11.26 The rural nature of the majority of the District demands strategic green linkages. There are opportunities to develop pathways along the routes of the rivers, as well as developing existing rights of way to link with or form cycle routes.
- 11.27 The District has a wealth of footpaths and this existing network should be developed to enhance the accessibility of the countryside to residential areas. This will encourage more residents to utilise the green networks and could impact on the amount of road traffic, whilst also increasing the healthy living opportunities for residents.

<b>GC1</b>	Improve green network, with linkages to key open spaces such as from south of the river in Salisbury to key sports facilities and parks across the river.
<b>GC2</b>	Promote healthy living through opting to use footpaths and cycle routes.