

Aylesbury Vale

Green Infrastructure Strategy

2011-2026

Delivering high quality multi-functional
Green Infrastructure in Aylesbury Vale



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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

The Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy sets the framework for the creation and management of Green Infrastructure (GI) in the Aylesbury Vale District. The Strategy has been developed through consultation with key stakeholders, including Councillors, the public, community groups and statutory bodies. All GI providers, designers and managers in the Vale are encouraged to have regard to the Strategy. Its implementation and delivery of the flagship projects will be monitored with reports made on a regular basis to the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium.

The Strategy is in two parts. The first part sets out the vision and key aims, and the principles for the creation and management of GI in Aylesbury Vale. These will apply throughout the life of the Strategy unless best practice determines that an update is required.

The second part is the delivery element, focusing on flagship projects which give a flavour of the range of potential GI projects and the benefits that they will offer. They will contribute to the GI required for the new housing developments and help address deficits in GI. Lead and supporting partners for each Flagship Project have been identified and these organisations will produce an action plan which details costs, timescales and milestones. New Flagship Projects may be identified during the course of the Strategy, in which case the same process of action planning will apply.

During the course of the production of this Strategy, the position regarding national and regional planning policy has changed, as has the local situation regarding the scale and location of growth within Aylesbury Vale. It is also recognised that some of the sources which have informed the production of the Strategy, such as the Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands, are still relevant even though the policy boundaries have changed. In the light of this, the document does not contain specific reference to Planning policy but the Strategy sets the principles and objectives for GI and these will apply wherever growth occurs in the Vale.



Aylesbury Vale District

Aylesbury Vale in Buckinghamshire is essentially rural in nature. However, the Buckinghamshire GI Strategy outlines that 69% of dwellings in Aylesbury Vale meet none of Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt). Aylesbury is the principal town with the smaller settlements of Buckingham, Wendover and Winslow and many villages. The Vale has a wide and varied network of GI with sites that serve the immediate locality and others which serve the district and beyond such as Wendover Woods, Thornborough Community Woodland and Vale Park.

With potential growth in the district, the strategic planning of GI has become even more key to ensuring that existing sites are protected, enhanced and managed and that new provision is of a high quality and contributes to meeting the Vision of the Sustainable Communities Strategy for a vibrant Aylesbury Vale.



What is Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a strategically planned network of high quality multi-functional greenspaces and interconnecting links and other environmental features designed, developed and managed to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of communities. It is set within and contributes to a high quality natural, historic and built environment and enhances the quality of life for both current and future residents and visitors. It is an essential element of development, underpinning the concept of sustainability.

GI includes urban and country parks, green open recreation spaces, commons and village greens, woodland, natural and semi-natural habitats for wildlife, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites, historic parks, ancient monuments and landscapes, watercourses, lakes, ponds, footpaths, cycleways, allotments and other recreational routes.

These spaces serve the community at all levels, including local, district-wide or at a regional level. Successful GI networks incorporate a strategic approach to enhancing wildlife networks in urban and rural areas by helping to address climate change. A GI Strategy puts the environment at the heart of the planning process.

World Class Places (Communities and Local Government, 2009) sets out the importance of improving quality of place. It gives four elements that are critical to achieving this, one of which is the provision of Green Infrastructure. It states that:

'Parks and green open spaces are both a highly valued and highly used feature of the built environment. Three out of four people visit a greenspace at least once a month – more than a quarter do so at least three times a week. And a nearby local park can enhance the value of a property by at least 5-7%. Safe and attractive parks, with good play and sports facilities and quiet areas, are particularly important to families with children, older people and those without gardens. Time spent in contact with nature has been shown to help mental well-being, with people reporting feeling much happier after a walk in a park, than they do after a shopping trip. Parks also help foster community life and local involvement – through friends groups, community activities and volunteering.'

High quality places are not just marked out by safe, attractive and well managed parks and green play spaces. They also have ample 'Green Infrastructure' - the 'nature' between, around and on buildings, streets and squares, including trees, waterways, ponds and lakes, paths, gardens and green roofs and terraces. The last few years have seen a growing appreciation of the value of Green Infrastructure and the need to do more to protect and increase it. It has a vital role to play in combating climate change and tackling its effects in the form of higher temperatures and increased risk of flooding. It also adds greatly to people's enjoyment of a place and the way they behave and interact with it.'



Strategic framework

The Strategy provides the framework for a GI network in Aylesbury Vale. It has been informed by best practice and policy, as set out below.

Best practice

Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (Natural England, 2003) is considered as a national benchmark and is accepted as forming part of government guidance on strategic greenspace provision and having the best fit to GI planning and assessment. The standard emphasizes the importance of communities in towns and cities having easy access to different sizes of natural and semi-natural greenspaces close to where they live and provides two measures of analysis based on scale (sizes of green space provision) and catchment (representing the zone of influence of a provision and the distance that people are prepared to travel). The ANGSt model states:

- no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size, and that there should be least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population
- there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of people's homes
- there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km of people's homes
- there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km of people's homes
- there should be 1.4ha per 1000 population as incidental open space
- there should be 2.4ha per 1000 population as major open space

The ANGSt standards provide an overview of the current levels of deficit in GI and are a guide for the future provision of GI. It is not however appropriate to apply the standards rigidly in all circumstances for what is practical will differ between developments, e.g. urban infill, small developments in rural areas, strategic development areas.

Nature Nearby, Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (Natural England, 2010): aimed at parks and greenspace practitioners and their partners, particularly decision makers, planners and managers of greenspace. It describes the amount, quality and visitor services of accessible natural green spaces that Natural England believes everyone is entitled to and provides advice on how they can be delivered.

Spaces for People (Woodland Trust, 2005): describes how the Trust analysed accessible woodland near to where people live and produced the Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard which is based on similar principles of accessibility as ANGSt:

- no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size
- there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round trip) of people's homes

Spaces for People provides an overview of the current levels of deficit in accessible and inaccessible woodland in the UK. In Buckinghamshire 19.50% of the population has access to 2ha+ of woodland within 500m of their homes and 79% of the population has access to a 20ha+ woodland within 4km.

Policy

South East Green Infrastructure Framework, from policy into practice (2009): gives the policy context and the key tools needed to develop high quality GI into the heart of new and existing communities. The key to success is to build multi-functional greenspace not only in new developments but into our existing spaces and communities too. The document sets out the various functions that GI can provide and how these can meet regional policy objectives. It provides a number of case studies which illustrate how these functions have been delivered in practice.

Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (Bucks GI Consortium, 2008): aims to give coherence to the development of the County and sub-regional GI and to ensure its future wellbeing and prosperity. More detailed information on the Bucks Strategy and how it applies to Aylesbury Vale are given in the next section.





Planning for Sustainable Communities, a Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands (MKSM Environment and Equality of Life Group, 2005): sets the principles for the provision of GI across the sub region and was endorsed by GI providers including AVDC, BCC, Environment Agency, English Nature and the Forestry Commission. These principles within the Aylesbury Vale GI Strategy are based upon this MKSM Guide. The guide states that the following should be sought through the planning process:

- protecting and enhancing existing natural, historic and recreational assets, including recreational routes and sports facilities, and countryside character
- improving 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, safe, 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 area's stock of strategic GI assets



Programme of Development for Aylesbury Vale (POD)

(Aylesbury Vale Advantage, 2008): sets out the vision for the Vale and the projects that require investment to turn the vision into reality. GI projects were identified which contribute to the delivery of the growth agenda within the POD and these have informed the selection of the Flagship Projects which form part of this Strategy.

AVDC Tree Management Strategy (AVDC, 2009): sets the principles to guide the management of trees in the Vale.

Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan (Bucks Biodiversity Partnership, 2000): considers biodiversity within GI planning and management and sets targets for habitats and species conservation. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity within all their functions.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) have been determined by South East England Biodiversity Forum, and are regional priority areas for restoration and creation of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats. The Bucks & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership coordinate the delivery of the Action Plan which brings together local authorities, statutory agencies and conservation charities across the county.

Aylesbury Vale Sustainable Communities Strategy

(AVDC, 2009) sets out five themes to help realise the Council's vision which are:

- a thriving economy
- a sustainable environment
- safe communities
- cohesive communities
- health and wellbeing

High quality GI can make a positive contribution to all these themes.

Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment

(AVDC & Bucks CC 2008): identifies 13 landscape character types in the district within which 79 landscape character areas are identified. The assessment has been carried out at the Local Authority District level to a methodology following national guidance in which biodiversity and historic environment factors are fully integrated with physiographic, natural, cultural and visual considerations.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Rural Strategy

(BCC, 2008): a countywide rural policy framework that reflects the needs and aspirations of people who live and work in rural Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes to secure a sustainable future for rural communities.

A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests

(DEFRA, 2007) and **ETWF Delivery Plan** (Forestry Commission, 2008) has particular reference to GI provided by the Public Forest Estate – Aim 4 Quality of Life, Objective QL1: Activity and inspiring places Activities 3 and 4.





Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

The Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy provides a strategic approach to the delivery of GI across Buckinghamshire. It:

- provides a vision for strategic GI
- identifies issues for existing GI posed by housing allocations and other policies set out in the South East Plan
- establishes the extent of existing GI provision and assets
- establishes measures to enhance and protect existing GI
- identifies areas that have the potential for delivering new accessible GI provision
- describes potential funding opportunities
- encourages a partnership approach to GI planning
- provides a plan for the ongoing long-term management and maintenance of GI assets
- provides a strategic multi-functional GI network map

The Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a detailed vision for GI in the County and this has informed the production of the Aylesbury Vale Strategy.



The vision is based on a multi-functional network of natural, semi-natural and man-made greenspaces and green links that provide an environmental support system for communities and wildlife.

The network should be high quality, biodiverse and accessible and be widely valued by all those who visit, live, work and play in Buckinghamshire. Opportunities to inspire local communities and businesses to adopt low carbon and healthy lifestyles based on a greater awareness of their 'environmental footprints' should be encouraged.

The GI network will further connect urban areas with the surrounding countryside via Rights of Way and access routes,

providing opportunities for communities in towns and villages to access, enjoy and appreciate a variety of greenspaces on their doorstep and in the wider countryside. The network should also connect a diverse range of wildlife habitats and provide important corridors for species dispersal and migration.

The GI approach will be regarded as a long-term framework for sustainable development, protecting the County's natural and historic environment and enhancing the qualities that give Buckinghamshire its special character.

GI will be delivered, protected and managed through the commitment and involvement of the public, private and voluntary sectors working in partnership with each other.



The Buckinghamshire GI Strategy assessed greenspace provision against ANGSt targets and 69% of households in Aylesbury Vale meet none of the ANGSt requirements. Only three settlements in Aylesbury Vale – Aston Clinton, Buckingham and Wendover – meet the minimum ANGSt requirements for the provision of larger accessible natural greenspace. Many parts of Aylesbury Vale do not meet the standard of providing at least one 20ha site within 2km or one 500ha site within 10km of people's homes. There is also a general deficiency of accessible GI over 100ha in the Vale.



In order to prioritise attention to GI delivery across the County, the Buckinghamshire Strategy establishes **Green Infrastructure Priority Areas**. These identify locations where targeting investment is most likely to deliver multiple benefits across a range of key environmental, social and economic policy areas and where current deficiencies in GI provision needs to be addressed. Three Priority Areas were identified for the County, two of which are in Aylesbury Vale: **Priority Action Area 1:** North Aylesbury Vale; **Priority Action Area 2:** Aylesbury Environs.

For each Priority Area, the Strategy identifies **Countryside Access Gateways**, **Access Links** and **Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zones**.

Countryside Access Gateways offer opportunities to provide the principal links to the wider countryside, with potential to offer connections to strategic and access links and existing or proposed accessible greenspaces along with visitor facilities and information, through a Rights of Way network.

Access Links provide strategic movement corridors between main settlements and Countryside Access Gateways.

Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zones are where there is a strategic opportunity, need or demand to create new or enhance existing GI.

The Buckinghamshire Strategy also identifies current GI initiatives of sub regional importance that compliment and provide an important means of delivering GI, providing benefits that extend beyond the County boundary. Those of significance for Aylesbury Vale include:

- **Chilterns AONB** which runs along the southern boundary of Aylesbury Vale. The Chilterns Conservation Board has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities.
- **Greensand Ridge** a cross boundary initiative focusing on the Greensand Ridge which includes Stockgrove Country Park in Aylesbury Vale.
- **Grand Union Canal environmental enhancement and restoration** a project to enhance the landscape, waterscape, nature conservation and facilities for countryside recreation.
- **Bernwood Royal Forest** recognised for its considerable potential for conservation, historic landscape and recreation with its unique historical, ecological and agricultural significance.
- **Whaddon Chase** a remnant of medieval hunting forest in the north of the Vale with opportunities for historic landscape and ecological conservation and enhancement.
- **The Ouse Valley Regional Park** a developing cross boundary initiative for co-ordinating management of the landscape, waterscape, nature conservation for countryside recreation along the Ouse Valley.
- **Wendover Woods** is Aylesbury Vale's largest and multi-functional GI productive woodland that provides significant opportunities for recreation with environmental and heritage enhancements forming part of the sustainable, climatic and economical management of the woods.



Priority Action Areas

Area 1 – North Aylesbury Vale

Deficiency in accessible GI is most prominent in this area around Winslow and Buckingham. The needs of communities on the west side of Milton Keynes, Leighton-Linslade, Buckingham and Winslow must be addressed to counter this deficiency and to help buffer the associated pressures of growth from outside the county and the major growth planned around the south west of Milton Keynes.

Opportunities to create new and enhance existing greenspaces and to provide access links between these sites have been identified for the Action Area such as Whaddon Chase, Stockgrove Country Park, Ouse Valley, Stowe Landscape Gardens and Bernwood Forest. There are a number of strategic issues for this area to be addressed:

- There is a notable lack of larger areas of accessible greenspace in the arc around the south and west of Milton Keynes; this deficit will be exacerbated as Milton Keynes expands.
- Winslow has no accessible greenspace over 20ha within 10km, which is below the minimum ANGSt level.
- Buckingham meets the minimum ANGSt level for the provision of larger areas of accessible greenspace.

- Detailed Landscape Character Assessments highlight the priority to strengthen the character and distinctiveness of the ridge landscapes through active land management actions. To conserve and reinforce historic elements along the Great Ouse River and the currently disused Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal by encouraging recreational access along the valley and interpretation of historic features.
- Landscape Character Assessments also highlight the opportunities for enhancing the character and distinctiveness of the extensive Vale landscape types through positive landscape intervention measures.

Area 2 – Aylesbury Vale Environs

Aylesbury and its surrounds are covered in this Action Area. The need to provide high quality and multifunctional GI for existing and future communities is of particular importance because of the potential of significant housing growth.

Strategic opportunities to create new and enhance existing greenspace and to provide access links between sites have been identified for the Action Area including Quarrendon/North Aylesbury, Tring Reservoirs, College Lake Wildlife Centre and Wendover Woods.

There are a number of strategic issues for this area:

- There are a limited number of accessible greenspace sites within the clay vale relative to the Chilterns escarpment. The escarpment includes a number of important and popular sites, in particular Wendover Woods and also sites such as Bacombe and Coombe Hills which are well-used but more sensitive due to their nature conservation status.
- In accordance with ANGSt assessments Aylesbury does not meet the minimum standard of provision for accessible greenspace. The lack of larger areas of accessible greenspace around Aylesbury as a whole is particularly notable and the town has a relatively limited number of urban greenspaces.
- Aylesbury has a relative lack of medium to large accessible greenspaces in proximity to the town and the main residential areas. There are no sites over the 20ha size threshold within 2km. Within 5km of the southern edge of Aylesbury there are a number of sites up to the 100ha size threshold along the Chilterns escarpment, however being more than 5km away from other parts of the town, they do not offer sustainable access. There are no sites over 500ha in size within 10km of Aylesbury but similarly sites such as the Ashridge Estate to the east of the Vale do provide public access.
- The under provision will be exacerbated by urban growth unless new accessible GI is provided, links to existing sites are improved and current suitable sites receive investment to enable them to withstand increased use where appropriate.
- Despite a dense network of paths and bridleways, there is a lack of multipurpose access links for walking, cycling and horse riding.





Vision and strategic aims

Vision for Aylesbury Vale's Green Infrastructure is:

Delivering high quality multi-functional Green Infrastructure in Aylesbury Vale

Strategic aims for Aylesbury Vale

- 1 **To achieve a shared vision for GI across Aylesbury Vale.** It builds upon the opportunities and constraints identified in the Buckinghamshire GI Strategy and the principles established in the Green Infrastructure Guide for MKSM (EQOL, 2005). It seeks to encourage the public, private and voluntary sectors to work in partnership to direct improvements to existing GI and in the design of new GI, including sites that are adjacent to and cross the boundaries of the District.
- 2 **To address the GI deficit in Aylesbury Vale** through underlining the need for standards for provision in new and existing communities, providing quality of life benefits to residents and visitors and underpinning the concept of sustainability.
- 3 **To set out principles** which are applied to all new GI and to existing sites, to deliver high quality design and management.
- 4 **To guide the provision of GI** to achieve high quality multi-functional sites and maximising the implementation of the seven key functions.
- 5 **To ensure that GI is properly considered in the strategic and detailed planning of growth** through setting in place principles for its provision.
- 6 **To secure community engagement and inspire a sense of place**, ensuring that the needs and wishes of local people are taken into account in the design, enhancement and management of sites.
- 7 **To provide a framework for investment in GI** and to guide priority setting for the provision of new GI and the enhancement of existing sites.
- 8 **To raise the profile of GI and highlight its value** to developers, Councillors, community organisations, statutory bodies, the farming community, residents and visitors.
- 9 **To encourage GI providers to measure public satisfaction and determine future need** by quality audits and application of District-wide standards to their provision.

Aylesbury Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy: Strategic Aims

The aims of this Strategy are to ensure that high quality GI is delivered which is accessible, attractive for residents and visitors to the Vale which conserves and enhances the Vale's special natural and historic environment, its wildlife and its landscape. GI offers the opportunity to engage with the community to build a strong sense of place and to achieve cohesion between new and existing settlements. GI has an important role in providing a wide range of formal and informal health and recreational benefits at little or no cost to its users by delivering economically sustainable GI. The nine strategic aims are shown overleaf.



Strategic principles

Strategic principles for Aylesbury Vale

Principle 1	GI should contribute to the management, conservation and improvement of the landscape.
Principle 2	GI should contribute to the protection, conservation and management of historic landscapes, archaeological and built heritage assets.
Principle 3	GI should maintain and enhance biodiversity and ensure that development and its implementation results in a net gain of biodiversity as identified in Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species plans.
Principle 4	GI should deliver the enhancement of existing woodlands and create new woodlands and tree features.
Principle 5	GI should create new recreational facilities, particularly those that present opportunities to link urban and countryside areas.
Principle 6	GI should take account of and integrate with natural processes and systems.
Principle 7	GI should be managed to provide cost effective and multi-functional delivery and funded in urban areas to accommodate nature, wildlife, historic and cultural assets, economic benefits and provide for sport and recreation activities.
Principle 8	GI should be designed to high standards of sustainability to deliver social and economic, as well as environmental benefits.
Principle 9	GI should provide focus for social inclusion, community cohesion and development and lifelong learning.

The setting of the strategic principles has been informed principally by two documents. The **Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and the South Midlands** sets out nine principles for GI and states that 'they 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 will work together to maximise their positive impact on the delivery of growth and regeneration'. The **South East Green Infrastructure Framework** includes key functions which GI should seek to deliver.

Seven key functions of GI

- Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the need to mitigate the potential impacts of new development
- Creating a sense of place and opportunities for greater appreciation of valuable landscapes and cultural heritage
- Increasing recreational opportunities, including access to and enjoyment of the countryside and support healthy living
- Improved water resource and flood management and sustainable design
- Making a positive contribution to combating climate change through adaption and mitigation of impacts
- Sustainable transport, education and crime reduction
- Production of food, natural materials (fibre) and fuel



Principle 1

GI should contribute to the management, conservation, and improvement of the landscape.

Principles

- P1.1** Landscape Character Assessments (LCA) should be used to recognise and define the local landscape character, historic environment and cultural heritage.
- P1.2** LCA should inform the development of strategic environmental policy involving land use change.
- P1.3** LCA should guide the process of planning, designing, implementing and managing open space provision.
- P1.4** LCA should inform the provision and management of the GI network as an integral part of the form and design of new built development.
- P1.5** LCA should identify potential constraints and opportunities across the district.
- P1.6** LCA should be used to input into master planning to guide and shape development at a more localised level.
- P1.7** Disused and derelict sites that are not suitable for development or have nature conservation or historic interest should be conserved and properly managed.
- P1.8** New GI will be planned to maximise linkages within developments and to greenspaces beyond the development boundary. This will include flood plains, buffer zones around linear features such as watercourses, hedgerows and canals, green bridges across barriers such as railways and roads. The design will have regard to the creation of appropriate wildlife habitats to conserve and support target species and consider long-term management of GI for nature conservation purposes. GI designs will allow where suitable cycle/pedestrian routes in order to allow functionality and connectivity. Ecological buffers and corridors (e.g. disused canals and railway lines) which form part of a multifunctional GI network are important habitats in their own right by enabling permeability for wildlife. They should be of a suitable width for their designated purpose and managed for wildlife.
- P1.9** The design of new developments should avoid the creation of small, isolated areas of green space of less than 1ha as they have limited value in terms of recreation, amenity or biodiversity. Smaller areas may be considered if they serve an important function within the network of green or civic space, e.g. to conserve for example a veteran or rare tree. Developments should instead plan for larger connected networks of green and civic space.
- P1.10** The design of GI will reflect local character and distinctiveness by respecting and enhancing historic landscape patterns and route ways e.g. the selection of native plant species which are appropriate to the Vale's habitats and relationship between built form and GI.
- P1.11** The provision of infrastructure in each site will be a consistent standard throughout the site and appropriate to the setting.



Principle 2

GI should contribute to the protection, conservation and management of historic landscapes, archaeological and built heritage assets.

Principles

- P2.1** GI should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the historic dimension of the present landscape, including particular historic assets and their settings.
- P2.2** Ensure that all new development avoids damage to the existing designated sites and their settings and to enhance them where possible.
- P2.3** Historic environment management plans should be produced for historic assets identified within GI networks, including options for conservation, enhancement and recreational and leisure use.
- P2.4** New opportunities for access to historic sites should be sought, especially where they secure conservation or, where appropriate the restoration of 'at risk' assets.
- P2.5** Opportunities should be taken to take Scheduled Ancient Monuments or other vulnerable heritage assets out of arable cultivation, in order to reduce damage to significant archaeological sites or ecological sites by ploughing.
- P2.6** Opportunities for the recognition or restoration of significant historic landscape features should be identified, especially where they would contribute to wider GI functions.



- P2.7** 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 including disused canals and railway routes.
- P2.8** Locally distinctive materials and techniques should be used where appropriate.
- P2.9** The development of urban greenspace networks should take account of historic urban character.



- P2.10** Opportunities for educational and awareness raising activities should be identified to increase public understanding of the protection and management of these sites.
- P2.11** The needs of different forms of heritage asset such as archaeological remains, historic structures, conservation areas and landscape features will be taken into account in the master planning and detailing stages of new development.

Principle 3

GI should maintain and enhance biodiversity and ensure that its development and implementation results in a net gain of biodiversity as identified in Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species plans.

Principles

- P3.1** Ensure that all new development avoids damage to existing designated features e.g. BAP habitats, local designated sites and SSSIs and where possible, to conserve and enhance them or to provide appropriate mitigation.
- P3.2** Seek to halt and reverse habitat fragmentation and species isolation of existing biodiversity assets by buffering existing sites and creating new wildlife sites and corridors between them. Connectivity and permeability of functioning habitats should be a fundamental purpose of GI. Wildlife corridors should be of an appropriate width to ensure ecological functionality.
- P3.3** Identify areas for habitat restoration and re-establish them at a landscape scale based on the identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas where appropriate.
- P3.4** Integrate and link existing habitats into new development, ensuring sufficient green buffers are created to reduce potential adverse impacts of development on habitats, species and designated features.
- P3.5** Implement the appropriate long-term management of wildlife corridors that are important for the migration and dispersal of wildlife and for the linking of habitats.

- P3.6** Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be designed to maximise their ecological value and should seek to include a variety of habitats such as permanent standing water, ephemeral ponds, scrapes, reedbeds & wet grassland and green roofs.
- P3.7** Conservation management should be introduced to sites to increase biodiversity.



- P3.8** Planting schemes should favour the use of trees and wildflowers that are native, appropriate to the Vale and locally sourced, as well as native European species which have a wider range of survival in wetter or drier conditions from two degrees further south because of climate change predictions.
- P3.9** Formal settings such as herbaceous borders and annual bedding should seek to use varieties of species which benefit wildlife.
- P3.10** Development should be informed by appropriate ecological assessments and must provide mitigation if this is required.
- P3.11** The creation of wildlife habitats should be based upon the National Vegetation Classification to determine the appropriate species mix for all habitat types e.g. woodland and grassland.
- P3.12** Create new and, where appropriate, accessible areas of wildlife habitat, which has the potential to alleviate pressures on existing areas of habitat and help to achieve the ANGSt standards for Aylesbury Vale.



Principle 4

GI should deliver the enhancement of existing woodlands and create new woodlands and tree features.

Principles

- P4.1** Woodlands, scrub and hedgerows should form a core component of GI frameworks.
- P4.2** GI benefits should be delivered through the enhancement of existing woodlands and the creation of new woodlands.
- P4.3** New woodland areas should be planned and created in line with Regional Forestry Frameworks.
- P4.4** Woodland creation and management of native species should favour the use of trees and wildflowers of local origin to maximise ecological and landscape benefits as well as native European species which have a wider range of survival in wetter or drier conditions from two degrees further south because of climate change predictions. Assessments of individual sites for the creation of new woodlands will consider long-term challenges of changing climate on ecological habitats and species. Planting patterns should be naturalistic in design, avoiding the straight line planting typical of forestry plantations.
- P4.5** Woodland management and creation should encompass opportunities to produce sustainable wood supplies e.g. woodfuel or local renewable energy programmes.

- P4.6** GI frameworks should capitalise on the ability of woodlands for providing opportunities for recreational pursuits which contribute to better mental health and a sense of wellbeing. Woodlands contribute to a sense of place and have a unique capacity to absorb large numbers of recreational users and encourage social cohesion. They help to reduce the visual impact of development and are a very cost effective asset in a GI framework.



- P4.7** Woodlands as well as urban trees and their rooting environments should be conserved and improved, especially in town centres.
- P4.8** The planting of new trees and woodlands must take account of the historic landscape and should benefit landscape character. Planting should not be located in areas where it would be to the detriment of historic landscape character or to wildlife habitat/species or amenity interests and Local Character Assessments. Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) for new woodlands over 0.2 hectares ensures they meet forestry guidelines and safeguard heritage, landscaping, water and biodiversity.
- P4.9** GI and tree planting should be designed to reduce the urban heat island effect and provide cool, shaded areas, making attractive places to live and work, enhancing landscape and biodiversity, sequestering carbon and creating microclimates.

Principle 5

GI should create new recreational facilities, particularly those that present opportunities to link urban and countryside areas.

Principles

- P5.1** Existing formal and informal sport and recreation facilities, including allotments, should be safeguarded from built development. The most valuable ecological areas within the development footprint should be identified, protected from inappropriate use and enhanced as wildlife corridors with sufficient buffers to allow ecological functionality.
- P5.2** Opportunities must be taken to create new recreational facilities, particularly those that will link urban and countryside areas.
- P5.3** Rights of Way Improvement Plans must take account of new development and opportunities presented by GI.
- P5.4** The importance of linked up space and green routes for providing recreational opportunities that can enhance health and wellbeing should be recognised.
- P5.5** Audits should be carried out on a Sub-Regional scale to assess strategic GI sites, cross border GI provision and linkages.
- P5.6** Audits and assessments of quality and quantity of GI should be carried out in line with relevant national guidance. The assessment should consider fully the issue of future needs in areas where growth is expected and assess deficits and opportunities for enhancement.



- P5.7** An audit should be carried out to assess the ecological value and potential of GI sites and wildlife corridors.
- P5.8** Appropriately sited access for all will be created, especially the needs of young people, older people, cyclists, pedestrians and people with disabilities and cultural needs.
- P5.9** GI should be provided at every spatial scale across the District and linked to the Sub-Region, in terms of location (from urban neighbourhoods to the open countryside), function, size and levels of use. It should 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.



Principle 6

GI should take account of and integrate with natural processes and systems.

Principles

- P6.1** 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.
- P6.2** All developments should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems into the design both within and outside of flood risk areas and these should be designed to maximise their ecological value.
- P6.3** Opportunities should be explored to provide beneficial flood storage capacity as part of the enhancement of watercourse features with GI for recreation and biodiversity e.g. wetlands.
- P6.4** Natural methods of protecting water quality should be used where appropriate e.g. buffer strips alongside watercourses, around ponds and lakes which also act as wildlife habitat. Habitat creation consistent with this purpose and with the Bucks Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats e.g. reed beds, is particularly encouraged.
- P6.5** Opportunities should be taken to improve local environments and contribute to sustainable development through providing GI and to reduce the impact of development on global climate change e.g. create new woodlands and mosaic habitats to improve air quality, reduce noise and light pollution, and to act as long-term carbon sinks to offset carbon emissions and reduce the impact of development on global climate change.
- P6.6** GI can reduce the impact of climate change on biodiversity by offering 'green corridors' through which plants and animals can migrate and help reduce the urban heat island effect.





Principle 7

GI should be managed to provide cost effective and multi-functional delivery and funded in urban areas to accommodate nature, wildlife, historic and cultural assets, economic benefits and provide for sport and recreation activities.

Principles

- P7.1** The sympathetic and active management of GI is essential to ensure it delivers the seven key functions identified.
- P7.2** The significance of greenspaces such as ecological or archaeological sensitivities should be understood and promoted, including their contribution to local character, as a necessary first step in protection and management.
- P7.3** Adequate provision should be made for formal and informal recreational activities, including those that rely on the use of natural features or resources.
- P7.4** Urban parks and greenspaces should be planned, managed and, where appropriate restored, with the active involvement of local communities and suitably qualified professional designers.
- P7.5** Opportunities should be taken to secure contributions through planning obligations towards new provision and qualitative improvements to existing assets. Partnership working opportunities should be sought to maximise value for money and opportunities for inward investment.
- P7.6** Wildlife supporting features should be incorporated into new development wherever possible, for example the inclusion of integrated bat roosting tubes and swift nesting features, in buildings which border GI.
- P7.7** The greening of buildings will be encouraged through the use of green / brown roofs and walls.



Principle 8

GI should be designed to high standards of sustainability to deliver social and economic, as well as environmental benefits.

Principles

- P8.1** GI organisations should support the creation of GI to a high design quality standard to act as exemplar for others.
- P8.2** The design of new GI should create a distinctive sense of place or enhance an existing sense of place.
- P8.3** Good quality design should incorporate the objectives of sustainable development that will deliver social and economic as well as environmental benefits.
- P8.4** The design of GI must be fundamental to the planning of town form, helping to integrate any new urban extensions within existing settlements and the surrounding landscape. It should also conserve and enhance the character of distinct settlements and prevent or enhance urban coalescence as appropriate. Landscape and urban characterisation should inform the design process.
- P8.5** Design must seek creative and low carbon green solutions to the infrastructure demands of increasing population pressure.
- P8.6** All new developments must be built to the highest environmental standards and contribute to improved environmental sustainability including water efficiency measures e.g. SUDS, flood alleviation schemes, grey water recycling, rainwater harvesting, green / brown roofs, rainwater butts, drought tolerant plant species, design for drier summers, surface water management plans.
- P8.7** The design and management of GI must take into account climate change and seek to mitigate this. This may include providing cooling effects through tree planting, reducing and attenuating surface water runoff and providing areas for flood retention and biodiversity.
- P8.8** Design should seek to manage flood risk at a spatial and local level through GI. Where appropriate locally, sustainable solutions such as SUDS are a key measure to reduce flood risk and can have a whole range of biodiversity, water quality, water resources and recreational benefits.
- P8.9** GI should contribute to crime reduction and discourage anti-social behaviour through well-designed public space, taking into account use at night and during the day.
- P8.10** 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, including walking, cycling and horse riding.
- P8.11** Recognition of high quality design and management should be sought through quality accreditation schemes such as the Green Flag Award, the Green Pennant Award, the Biodiversity Benchmark Scheme (the Wildlife Trusts) and through Local Nature Reserve designation and Forest Standard Council accreditation UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) that ensures woodlands have sustainable forest management.
- P8.12** Levels of provision should adhere to National and Local best practice/policy.
- P8.13** Design and management should allow a minimum use of chemicals, recycling of green materials, minimal use of peat, low water demand, recycling of wood chips/wood waste and use of alternative energy sources.
- P8.14** Where sustainable transport routes are planned within wildlife corridors the design must take into account ecological constraints and the primary purpose of the wildlife corridor must not be adversely affected by these routes.
- P8.15** The design and management of GI can include areas for low carbon energy sources, such as wood biomass, woodfuel and energy crops.

Principle 9

GI should provide focus for social inclusion, community cohesion and development and lifelong learning.

Principles

- P9.1** Community involvement should be sought from the outset in design, implementation and management of GI.
- P9.2** Encourage the involvement of special interest groups as they can have a fundamental role in building strong local commitment to the changing landscape.
- P9.3** GI should be designed and managed to encourage the integration of new and existing communities, through the selection of its location and design.
- P9.4** Promotion of the benefits of GI and of individual sites should be carried out to raise awareness of the District-wide GI resource both within and beyond Aylesbury Vale. Such promotion should take into account the needs of people with disabilities and the needs of the Vale's culturally diverse community and could include public art and other interpretative materials.





Implementation



Consideration of how the Strategy and its aims are delivered is an essential component of its success. An action plan for the Strategy will be produced and coordinated by AVDC and an annual progress report will be made to the Buckinghamshire GI Consortium.

GI is provided through a variety of organisations including local authorities, charities such as the National Trust, RSPB and Wildlife Trust, and community groups and such GI providers, designers and managers in the Vale are encouraged to have regard to the Strategy. Embedded within GI policy is the need to engage stakeholders and communities in identifying values which will help shape how and where GI is provided. Working with representatives of the community these plans aim to better identify key natural, historic, cultural and landscape assets, accessible green spaces and Rights of Way networks that relate to and are valued locally. The process is also used to help identify priorities and is useful in helping to propose and plan for new opportunities for GI that will enhance environments and facilities that provide benefits for both present and future generations. Community-based GI Plans are designed to meet a range of objectives.

They help to:

- engage and promote community involvement
- identify GI priorities, opportunities and threats
- help protect, and where possible, enhance the landscape, biodiversity and the historic environment
- improve access and links for people and wildlife
- provide a multi-functional GI network
- identify projects and produce an action plan
- provide a source of information and guidance for planners, landowners and developers in formulating land use plans

Long term revenue and capital funding is essential and could be through a variety of mechanisms such as developer contributions, grant aid, local authority funding and community fundraising.

The Strategy has an important role in determining how the GI associated with new housing developments will be designed and implemented. This will be led by AVDC, supported by partner organisations as appropriate.



