

Stockton Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy

Briefing paper for Safer Stockton Partnership Board, 4 November 2008

SUMMARY

Green infrastructure is the network of open spaces, countryside, rivers, lakes and street trees within and between our towns and villages. It includes both public and private assets.

A number of key regional strategies highlight the multiple benefits provided by green infrastructure and the important role it can play in the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the North East and its city-regions.

The recently published Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a vision for the future development and management of green infrastructure within the sub-region. The Strategy identifies a network of 17 strategic green infrastructure corridors stretching across the Tees valley, 9 of which cover parts of Stockton Borough.

Stockton Borough Council is committed to working with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Borough by spring 2009. The report sets out the scope and purpose of such a strategy and outlines the anticipated timescales and processes involved in its preparation.

In summary, the Stockton Borough Green Infrastructure strategy will be based in part on the network of green infrastructure corridors identified at the Tees Valley scale, but will also identify a Borough-wide green infrastructure network and recognise the environmental, social and economic value of all local green spaces. The Strategy will set priorities for the future development and management of this network of green infrastructure and greenspaces, highlighting how this will contribute towards the core objectives identified in the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy.

BACKGROUND

What is Green Infrastructure?

1. It comprises all open spaces and water bodies within and between our towns and villages, including parks, green corridors, wildlife sites, rivers, streams, gardens, allotments and countryside. Green infrastructure also includes individual features such as street trees, and consists of both public and private assets,
2. A well-developed green infrastructure network provides multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. A strategic approach to green infrastructure planning seeks to maximise these benefits through careful planning, achieving a high-quality network of connected spaces which meets local and sub-regional needs.

What are the functions and benefits of Green Infrastructure?

3. Green infrastructure should be planned to perform multiple functions and these, in turn, will deliver a wide range of benefits. For example, green infrastructure can:

- Provide a high quality environment which encourages businesses to remain in the area and helps to generate inward investment.
- Enhance landscape and townscape, and provide an attractive setting for new development.
- Improve environmental sustainability, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. For example, greenspaces can provide water storage capacity and 'natural' flood defences; tree cover contributes to cooler urban microclimates and improved air quality.
- Promote health and well-being, for example, by providing opportunities for passive and active recreation, sport and children's play.
- Provide safe spaces for people to socialise and a focus for community-based projects and events, helping to create a sense of local pride and promoting community cohesion.
- Contribute to the area's tourism 'offer', providing new and improved visitor destinations and enhanced connectivity.
- Promote sustainable transport through the provision of cycle and footpath networks and linkages to public transport.
- Enhance biodiversity and conserve local heritage.
- Provide opportunities for education and learning.
- Contribute to local food production and provide opportunities for the production of renewable energy.

Policy and strategic context for Green Infrastructure planning

4. **Figure 1** summarises the strategic framework for green infrastructure planning. A number of national and regional strategy and policy documents support a green infrastructure planning approach, for example:
 - a) The Northern Way Growth Strategy supports the role of green infrastructure planning in enhancing the quality of our city region environments, improving economic performance and creating sustainable communities: *“Our research shows that a more strategic approach would add real value, by providing a properly planned network of green infrastructure. City region partnerships and local authorities are ideally placed to strategically plan green infrastructure, integrating this with their plans to raise quality of place.* (Shaping the North's Cities for Growth: An Agenda for the Next Decade - Northern Way / One NorthEast, 2007)
 - b) The Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016 further emphasises the importance of green infrastructure as *“a key component of sustainable communities”* and driver for economic regeneration.
 - c) The Regional Spatial Strategy includes a number of policies to support green infrastructure planning. For example, under Policy 12 (Sustainable Economic Development) it states and states that *“High quality development in high quality settings, aided by the provision of ‘green infrastructure’ should be sought”*.
5. At the Borough scale it is vitally important that green infrastructure planning is fully integrated with other local plans and strategies. Most importantly the Strategy must be fully integrated with the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework (see paragraphs 17 and 18).

TEES VALLEY GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY (APRIL 2008)

What is the Vision for the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy?

6. “To develop by 2021 a network of green corridors and green spaces that:
- Enhances the quality of place for existing and future communities and potential investors.
 - Provides an enhanced environmental context for new development, regeneration projects and housing market renewal, and produces high quality design and developments.
 - Creates and extends opportunities for access, regeneration, and enhancement of biodiversity.
 - Provides a buffer against the effects of climate change.”

Tees Valley Strategic Green Infrastructure Network

7. The Strategy outlines a network of 17 Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors across the Tees Valley (**Figure 2**), linking existing environmental resources with strategic priorities such as major redevelopment schemes, housing market renewal areas, and areas of new housing and business development. The strategic green infrastructure network for Stockton includes:

Corridors 1a & 1b	River Tees
Corridor 5	Darlington / Middleton St George / A66 & A67 to Stockton
Corridor 6	Preston-on-Tees / Hartburn / Fairfield / Bishopsgarth / Wynyard
Corridor 7	Hartburn / Lustrum Beck to the River Tees
Corridor 8	Stainsby Beck Valley
Corridor 9	Billingham Beck Valley
Corridor 10	Saltholme / Cowpen Bewley / Wynyard to Hartlepool
Corridor 11	Saltholme to Hartlepool Coast
Corridor 17	River Leven

Implementation of the Strategy

8. Key priorities for each corridor should be reflected in Local Development Frameworks and other local strategic plans and regeneration schemes. An Implementation Plan for the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy is also being developed with input from all major partners.
9. One NorthEast are currently funding the preparation of a business case which aims to demonstrate how investment in green infrastructure can contribute towards the regeneration of the Tees Valley. Subject to the outcome of this process it is anticipated that One NorthEast will commit £5 million funding through the Single Programme to support delivery over the next 5 years.
10. The Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy should also form a key component of the sub-region’s Growth Point bid.

PROPOSED STOCKTON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

11. A report was approved by Stockton Borough Council’s Cabinet on 24 April 2008 setting out the Council’s aspiration to work with in partnership with others to develop a Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy (at the same time Cabinet formally

endorsed the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy). A parallel report was presented to the Stockton Renaissance Partnership Board on 6 May 2008.

Stockton Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy Vision and Objectives

12. The proposed Strategy will focus on the development and sustainable management of green infrastructure. It will include a spatial planning element identifying key assets and opportunities. The long-term aim would be to develop networks of 'multifunctional' and connected green and 'blue' space across the Borough.
13. The suggested vision is as follows:

"To develop and maintain a network of high quality green spaces and corridors which meets the needs of residents and visitors, provides a wide range of environmental benefits and contributes to the economic and social regeneration of the Borough".

14. Broad objectives are likely to include:
 - Developing networks of accessible countryside and greenspace.
 - Creating attractive places to live and work, contributing to the regeneration of the Borough and its tourism 'offer'.
 - Encouraging active sport, recreation and healthy lifestyles.
 - Promoting learning and understanding.
 - Contributing towards sustainable resource management.
 - Enhancing the Borough's landscapes and townscapes, creating a strong 'sense of place'.
 - Encouraging community participation in the management and development of greenspaces, promoting community cohesion.
 - Enhancing biodiversity and conserving local heritage.

Links to other Borough-wide Strategies

15. As referred to above, **Figure 1** highlights the linkages to other key strategies. Specific reference is made here to the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework, but Green Infrastructure also relates to other key Borough-wide strategies and plans such as the Regeneration Strategy for Stockton Borough and the Climate Change Action Plan.

Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 - 2021

16. Well planned and managed Green Infrastructure can make a significant contribution to all core and supporting themes within the Sustainable Community Strategy, for example:
 - Economic Regeneration and Transport – e.g. encouraging better use of the River Tees and creating sustainable transport networks.
 - Environment and Housing – e.g. helping to tackle climate change and creating better open spaces.
 - Community Safety – e.g. reducing crime and the fear of crime through well-designed and well-used greenspaces.
 - Children and Young People – e.g. providing opportunities for outdoor play and learning.

- Healthier Communities and Adults – e.g. promoting healthy lifestyles, including walking, cycling and active recreation.
- Stronger Communities – e.g. greater community involvement in the management and development of greenspaces, increasing pride in the local area.
- Older Adults – e.g. providing appropriate leisure and recreational opportunities.
- Arts, Leisure and Culture – e.g. providing a setting for cultural events and sport, and conserving/celebrating local heritage.

Local Development Framework

17. The Green Infrastructure Strategy must be fully integrated with the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), not least of all because the LDF will provide the spatial planning policy framework to support its delivery. For example:
- The *Environment Development Plan Document* will identify key sites and features in the built and natural environment and set out policies to protect and enhance these. Detailed policy relating to Green Infrastructure will be contained in this document.
 - *The Open Space, Recreation and Landscaping Supplementary Planning Document* will set standards for urban open space and recreation facilities with the aim of improving the Council's position when negotiating Planning Obligations from developers, and increasing certainty and transparency for developers who aim to build in the Borough. The standards will relate to quantity, quality and accessibility, with the aim of securing appropriate open space provision in new developments.

How will the Strategy be structured?

18. The Strategy will:
- Summarise the functions and benefits that can be delivered through green infrastructure;
 - Set out the policy context for green infrastructure planning in Stockton Borough, highlighting linkages to other key strategies and plans.
 - Summarise the environmental and socio-economic context for green infrastructure planning, identifying key trends and issues which can be addressed through the Strategy.
 - Map the Borough's existing green infrastructure and greenspace networks including:
 - a) primary green infrastructure corridors (based on the strategic network already identified at the Tees Valley scale)
 - b) secondary green infrastructure corridors identified as being significant at the Borough scale
 - c) all open spaces as identified within the Borough's existing Open Space Audit
 - Identify key issues and priorities in the above corridors and priorities for future development of the green infrastructure network, based on:
 - a) the analysis of local environmental and socio-economic data outlined above;

- b) a programme of community consultation to be carried out over the winter of 2008/09.
 - c) consultation with key partners
- Set out standards and guidelines for the future development and management of green infrastructure
 - Identify potential sources of funding and delivery mechanisms
 - Include an Action Plan, identifying delivery partners and outlining an appropriate monitoring framework (linked to National Indicators where appropriate).

Towards a Stockton Green Infrastructure Strategy

19. A Project Team has been established to develop the Strategy, with representatives from Stockton Borough Council, Natural England, Environment Agency, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and Groundwork South Tees. Clive Davies Associates and two members of the CABESpace¹ enabling panel are also supporting this work.
20. A wide range of partners and stakeholders will be consulted at different stages in the development of the Strategy.
21. It is important that the Strategy is underpinned by a robust evidence base. Existing information and planned new research includes:
 - A Borough-wide Sport, Recreation and Leisure Survey, completed in March 2008.
 - Viewpoint Surveys and the Stockton-on-Tees Residents Survey.
 - A review of the existing Open Space Audit data and other existing spatial data held by the Council and its partners. This will be supplemented by additional green infrastructure mapping as required.
 - A review of the Borough's Local Wildlife Sites
 - A proposed Landscape Character Assessment
22. The anticipated timescales are as follows:

June to Dec 2008:	Mapping and data analysis
Nov 2008 to Feb 2009:	Community consultation on green infrastructure mapping and identification of local issues and opportunities
March to April 2009:	Consultation on draft Strategy
May 2009:	Publish final version of Strategy and Action Plan

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¹ CABESpace is a division within CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the built Environment).

Figure 1: Green Infrastructure Planning – Strategic Framework

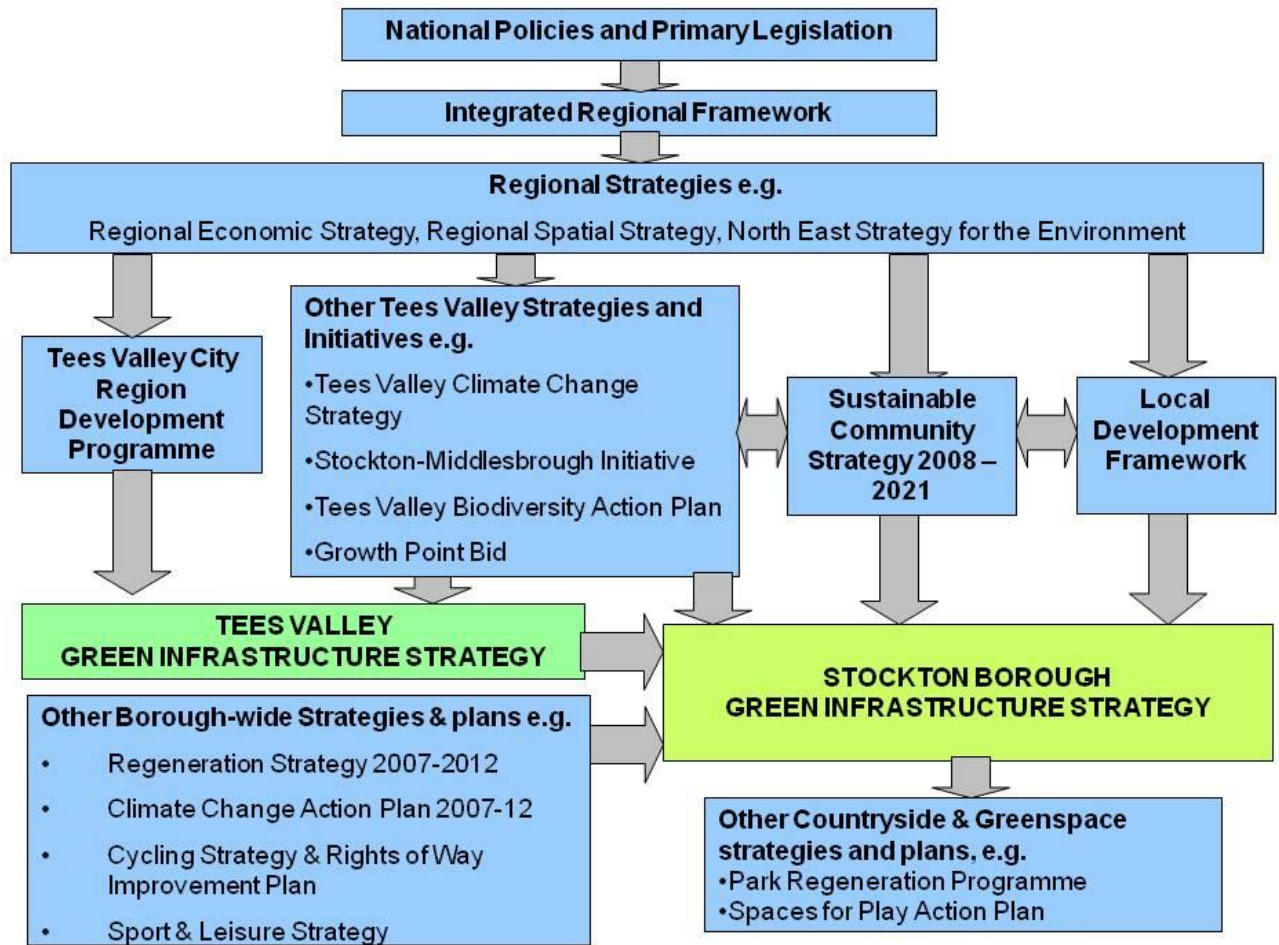


Figure 2: Tees Valley Strategic Green Infrastructure Network

