

COLWICH PARISH COUNCIL



PD036 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

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Green Infrastructure Plan

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Revision History

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** It is incumbent on Colwich Parish Council to develop a Green Infrastructure Plan (GIP) to complement the Neighbourhood Plan 2015-31. To understand the necessity of developing this strategy an agreed definition exists. Natural England's definition of green infrastructure: 'Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It is to be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management must also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area regarding habitats and landscape types. Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and will thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently, it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside.'
- 1.2** Local targets can link green infrastructure delivery to a variety of national indicators such as those related to health, flood risk management and improved local biodiversity.
- 1.3** The Colwich GIP, therefore, aims to develop a strategically planned, appropriately resourced and managed network of accessible, high quality, sustainable and linked open spaces, which provide a wide range of environmental and recreational benefits for both the existing and future communities of the parish of Colwich. It will inform the first review of the Colwich Neighbourhood Plan
- 1.4** The GIP will build on the existing network of open spaces and access opportunities that have already been created in the parish of Colwich. It links with the plans and strategies of adjoining Borough, District and Parish Councils to exploit and support those opportunities and to create a network of multifunctional greenspace that works across administrative boundaries (Colwich Neighbourhood Plan 8.5.32)
- 1.5** In preparing its GIP the Parish considered local biodiversity studies completed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (Colwich Parish Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Report January 2016) on behalf of the Parish Council and documents supporting national organisations active in the area, a list is at [appendix 1](#).
- 1.6** The Plan will also consider the sustainability of environments important in the area and how to safeguard and improve biodiversity by avoiding the fragmentation of habitats and by maintaining, restoring and creating wildlife corridors. It is also important to propose measures to continue to enhance biodiversity and green the built environment with new planting designed to enhance local distinctiveness.

2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1** The Council supports development that manages habitats in a stable and sustainable way. Supporting maintenance of valuable and unchanged areas will be as important as creating new environments that support and increase native and appropriate species alongside modern rural living.
- 2.2** The Council will identify priorities and formulate a work plan that allocates appropriate resources to projects to enhance the biodiversity and sustainability of environments in the Parish.
- 2.3** The Council will provide information and guidance regarding its Green Infrastructure Plan and communicate this with stakeholders and residents.

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- 2.4** The Council will use The Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Report - Staffordshire Wildlife Trust January 2016 to identify priorities in the Parish. The GIP will identify and prioritise the allocation of resources and create an effective work plan. Four broad zones; Cannock Chase heaths and wood zones, Farmland zone, Shugborough Parkland and wood-pasture zone and urban zone, are identified and will be considered in more detail.
- 2.5** Four smaller ‘focus areas’ where additional specific actions could be targeted are also identified; Primary River and Floodplain Focus Area, Brooks and Tributaries Focus Area, Grassland Focus Area, Woodland Focus Area.
- 2.6** The Council will use the information to provide opportunities to work alongside national organisations whilst effectively using Parish resources to target local issues.

3 COLWICH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN BIODIVERSITY OBJECTIVE

- 3.1** Safeguard and improve biodiversity by avoiding the fragmentation of habitats and by maintaining, restoring and creating wildlife corridors.
- 3.2** Colwich Neighbourhood Policy CE6 states; Biodiversity. Development proposals will contribute to biodiversity enhancement by:
- 3.2.1** Ensuring no net loss of biodiversity and providing a net gain wherever possible, whether on site or within the local ecological network by retaining and enhancing features of high nature conservation or landscape value, including mature trees, rivers, streams, ponds, existing areas of woodland and important species-rich hedgerows.
 - 3.2.2** Providing habitat links, restoration and creation, and long-term positive management for existing important habitats, in line with the emerging Colwich Green Infrastructure Plan.
 - 3.2.3** Maintaining and, if possible, increasing priority species populations in line with the emerging Colwich GIP.
 - 3.2.4** Replanting boundaries with species-rich hedgerows.
 - 3.2.5** Using original (within Borough) tree, plants and seed materials when creating new semi-natural habitats.
 - 3.2.6** Ensuring that any ecological data gathered as part of the application process is shared with Staffordshire Ecological Record.

4 SPECIFIED AREAS – ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.1** Work carried out for the Council by the Wildlife Trust identifies work that organisations will prioritise in maintaining the diverse local environments.
- 4.2** The primary objectives for the Heathland, Woodland & Wood Pasture Zone are good management, restoration and expansion of Lowland Heathland and acid grassland mosaics, in line with plans, policies, recreation pressures and requirements for sustainable forestry and agriculture. Increasing the connection of areas of Lowland Heathland is also a key objective, particularly small, isolated blocks of habitat. Within these objectives are key deliverables and whilst the Parish Council will not lead on this work the local environment can be enhanced to assist in the larger project aspect.
- 4.3** The primary objective for the farm zone are good management, restoration and expansion of existing semi-natural habitats, and improved habitat connectivity in order to reduce habitat fragmentation and improve their function and robustness. This would be through the management of existing sites, the creation of new corridors and areas of priority habitats where possible, whilst supporting sustainable agriculture. Whilst the Parish Council will not

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lead on this work significant farmland lies within the Parish boundary and can be used to provide corridors for the urban areas and vice versa.

- 4.4 The primary habitat objectives within the Shugborough Parkland and Wood-Pasture Zone area are good management, restoration and expansion of Wood-Pasture, Parkland and species-rich grassland within the parkland habitats, in line with the Conservation Plan and Higher-Level Stewardship Scheme for the site. The Parish Council will maintain links with Shugborough management team to ensure developments in the environment reflect local objectives and enhance the local flora and fauna. Creating corridors and mosaics to increase native wildlife.
- 4.5 The primary objective for the Urban zone is the provision of semi-natural habitat within the urban environment, and to maintain, expand and link existing habitats, in order to create a network of semi-natural habitats and corridors. This objective provides the priority for the Parish Council as it can lead enhancement of this environment to achieve objectives and contribute to the objectives above.
- 4.6 Delivery of objectives identified in 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 are the responsibility of national bodies managing local sites the Council needs to work with and be aware of the objectives but can directly work on the urban objectives. The next section will outline in more detail issues and opportunities identified within the review Wildlife Trust document and prioritise work for the Council

5 THE URBAN ZONE ISSUES

- 5.1 The Staffordshire Wildlife document identifies the following issues that affect the Urban Zone in Colwich Parish: Habitat loss or degradation through urban expansion, Potential run off from roads and urban areas impacting on watercourses and Public green spaces are currently not of high biodiversity value but could become useful 'steppingstones' for wildlife if their value were enhanced.
- 5.2 It states therefore that 'the primary objective for this zone is the provision of semi-natural habitat within the urban environment, and to maintain, expand and link existing habitats, in order to create a network of semi-natural habitats and corridors. The Parish Council can initiate this work using 'green spaces' within the boundary. Additional urban development must be completed to ensure the above.
- 5.3 The Council's Planning Committee's work must ensure that developers are aware of the need to contribute to GIP objectives for sustainable development and how critical it is that levels of biodiversity within the urban zone are maintained and where possible enhanced. It is important that new developments are sustainable benefitting biodiversity through the provision of permeable corridors for wildlife with targeted habitat creation or restoration. These corridors could also be accessible for recreational purposes where appropriate.
- 5.4 The local community provides the biggest resource for enhancing the urban environment. The Council will promote the importance of the natural environment and habitat networks with the local community and to provide educational opportunities. It will encourage the local community to enhance their own environments such as gardens and workplaces.
- 5.5 Specific areas of maintenance and development will include; promotion of wildlife friendly gardens, and the importance of retaining trees and hedgerows. Maintain and restore existing hedgerows and plant new, indigenous species hedges where opportunities allow. There will be encouragement to include new bat and bird roosting and nesting features in both existing environments and new developments.
- 5.6 Ensure any new allotment sites selected as part of the neighbourhood's requirements will not damage ecology interest and are designed to benefit wildlife.

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- 5.7 Include and increase street trees where possible in new developments and existing areas. Conserve any existing traditional orchards in urban areas or gardens and support the creation of new orchards where practicable.
- 5.8 Enrich amenity grasslands with wildflower seed and bulbs in suitable areas and manage the areas to encourage birds and insects.
- 5.9 Take opportunities to include new, or retrofit, sustainable drainage systems such as ponds, swales and wetlands, permeable surfaces and water butts.

6 MEETING OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The people of the local community can provide the biggest resource for the meeting of GI objectives. The Council will engage with parishioners using various media to promote the GI message and provide guidance for the achievement of changing, or maintaining, environments within the parish such as gardens and spaces attached to businesses. Defra produce excellent information sheets on maintaining or making environments to encourage wildlife into areas <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/bees-needs/information-sheets>
- 6.2 A 'River of Flowers' concept has been achieved in other rural communities and is an excellent way to promote the GI agenda whilst engaging the community 'hearts and minds'. Colwich has a great advantage in that it works closely with local environment groups such as the Colwich Parish in Bloom and Help Nature Thrive.
- 6.3 The Council will use the 'workforce' to maintain and restore existing hedgerows and plant new, indigenous species hedges where opportunities allow. A programme of identifying existing nesting sites for wildlife will be undertaken and this will form the basis of providing further sites for species that need to be provided with appropriate sites and attracting new species that will benefit the environment.
- 6.4 The allotment site in Little Haywood works to GI principles. They have two wildlife areas that are managed by volunteers within the allotment community. One, based in the lower part of the site, is based on 'wetland' management. Whilst the second is in the top part of the site and is managed as a 'meadowland area'. Hedge and environment management are always completed with wildlife needs in mind. Nesting boxes have also been provided around the site. The Council must ensure any new allotment sites selected as part of the neighbourhood's requirements will not damage ecology interest and are designed to benefit wildlife as the existing site does.
- 6.5 'Street trees' to be identified within the Parish so that we have an understanding of types and quantity we have initially. The increase of trees benefits residents as they process harmful chemicals from the environment and wildlife benefit by having habitat that assists their lifecycle. It will be important to include and increase trees, particularly indigenous species, where possible in new developments and existing areas. A planting plan can be formulated when sites and gaps are identified.
- 6.6 During the Neighbourhood Plan consultation residents felt that a community orchard would enhance the environment. Research to be carried out to support the planting of an orchard that maintains heritage British species, many of which are threatened. A site could then be identified to support the planting of an orchard.
- 6.7 Funding for both of the above to be sought from organisations who promote indigenous planting and maintenance of threatened species.
- 6.8 Within the parish there are many 'green' areas that could be used to enrich the environment available to wildlife and residents. Amenity grasslands planted with wildflower seeds will provide flowers for pollinating insects and visual enhancement for residents. Similarly, bulbs planted in suitable areas will provide flowers, often at otherwise dormant times of year, to enhance the environment for residents and wildlife. This will further encourage bird populations if insects are supported and thriving.
- 6.9 Within the urban environment healthy water and wet areas will ensure that a diverse wildlife population is supported. Management of these areas to be prioritised so that no areas are overwhelmed

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or become unhealthy. Opportunities to include new or retrofitted sustainable drainage systems such as ponds, swales and wetlands, permeable surfaces and water butts to be sought.

7 LONG-TERM

- 7.1 The above provides direction for the Council. Factors that develop will need to be considered in detail and require separate documentation to identify particular management and maintenance of the Parish urban environment.
- 7.2 A work plan will be used to provide the necessary flexibility for management of dynamic priorities that occur when dealing with GI issues.

8 POLICY MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The GI infrastructure will be monitored by the Environment committee supported by Help Nature Thrive. It will have a 'working' document that outlines priorities as stated above and the work timeline will support the review of objectives and deliverables.
- 8.2 Further management documents will be available on the Parish website and on request.
- 8.3 The policy will be reviewed yearly.

SIGNED	
COUNCILLOR WENDY PLANT PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN	

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9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appendix 1

Shugborough Estate: “Shugborough project updates”. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/shugborough-estate/projects/shugborough-project-updates>

Canals and Waterways Trust: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/the-publication-scheme/our-publication-scheme>

Includes: Our policies and procedures, What are our priorities and how are we doing?, What we spend and how we spend it, Who we are and what we do

The Parish local canal (The Trent and Mersey) information: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network/trent-and-mersey-canal>

Policies for Manchester and Pennine Local area: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions/manchester-and-pennine-waterways>

Severn Trent stated plans and strategy: <https://www.stwater.co.uk/about-us/overview/>

Transforming the Trent Valley project <http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/TTTV>

Forestry strategies for Cannock Chase: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/BEEH-9XUCYX>

Natural England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-cities-green-infrastructure-and-health>

Stafford Borough Council <http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/green-infrastructure>

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Timeline for supporting and increasing biodiversity in the parish of Colwich				
Item	2024 Proposals	Achieved	2025 Proposals	Achieved
General	Work to gather baseline data on flora and fauna within the parish through a dedicated project within i-Naturalist to inform the design of interventions along the nature corridors defined, for example target species.	This project now has 5,214 observations across 733 species via 229 observers. Autumn sowing of seeds on a number of sites. Local seed has also been gathered and will be sown to create plug plants.		
Stakeholders	<p>To stay in contact with a wide range of stakeholders. These may be undertaking work locally or might have resources (advice, funding etc) which could help delivery of the GiP.</p> <p>To engage with landowners to make them aware of the FiPL.</p> <p>Funding offered by the Cannock Chase AONB to develop a nature recovery project.</p> <p>To assess box-type options and identify other potential sites in order to bring forward costed proposals to the 12 December Committee.</p> <p>To liaise with to see if volunteers can be found to take part in the sowing of a new meadow and their Woodland Pasture project.</p>	<p>Worked with Landowner adjacent to the Back Lane Nature Corridor. Three local landowners/ tenants have been assisted to access time-limited funding stream to enhance biodiversity through hedge planting renovation, tree planting, introduction of wildflowers, etc.</p> <p>The River Trent floodplain project has been completed which included 1,500 mixed hedging whips, 3 oaks, 15 crab apples and a hazel copse.</p> <p>Cannock Chase AONB made two training places available to SinCH members on how to identify and map Ancient, Veteran and Notable trees.</p> <p>Both SinCH and Bloomers volunteers have helped Shugborough in the sowing of a the new wildflower meadow and with their bulb planting schemes (Shugborough have planted over 100,000 new bulbs this year).</p>	To continue to engage with landowners / tenants regarding FiPL. By April 2025 to have had 5 or 6 FiPL projects delivered within the Parish.	

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		<p>Shugborough were the keynote speakers at the SinCH AGM and delivered an excellent talk on the work they are doing on biodiversity. They have kindly donated some hop plants which will be introduced into appropriate hedge planting schemes.</p>		
<p>Projects</p>	<p>A number of project areas to be defined by the Group.</p> <p>The trees planted on Ashtree Close, by SBC, to replace those taken down have all taken, apart from one which has now been replaced.</p>	<p>Coley Lane Nature Corridor (including associated alleyways): wildflower planting and seed sowing. Back Lane Nature Corridor: wildflower planting and seed sowing. The landowner of the adjacent fields has now had her FiPL project confirmed so this will lead to additional hedgerows and associated improvements in biodiversity. St Michael's Churchyard (Wildflower meadow): A management plan has now been agreed with the Parochial Council and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust assisted autumn management through the provision of an auto scythe. Seeds have been sown and plug plants added as part of a medium-term incremental approach.</p>	<p>A new project area has been defined for spring 2025 in Ashtree Close. The Borough Council have given permission for a small wildflower meadow on the site of the trees cut down in 2024.</p>	

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		Initial thinking on the green space parallel to A51.		
Co-ordination and support	Discussions to be held with the parish Lengthsmen and the In Bloom Group to ensure that all are aware of activity being undertaken and that opportunities for mutual support are identified.	The Help Nature Thrive group will provide advice to the Lengthsmen in the management and development of the wildflower area at the Jubilee Playing Fields.		
Supply of plants, seeds and signage		Parish Council provided a range of seed mixes. The Allotment Association has provided a plot to establish a small tree nursery and to start raising wildflower plugs. Parish Council has installed signage across the parish including in the newly planted/ maintained sites to prevent indiscriminate strimming.	Additional seeds to be sourced. Help Nature Thrive signage to be provided by the Parish Council in the following sites: Bottom of Manor Farm Road. Coley Lane/Coley Grove Alleyway. Back Lane.	