

COLWICH PARISH COUNCIL



Green Infrastructure Plan

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Green Infrastructure Plan

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Green Infrastructure Plan

Revision history

This document was originally written by:

Name	Position	Date
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This document version was reviewed by:

Environment and Leisure Committee

This document version was approved by:

Full Council

Document Review Schedule:

Next Mandatory Review by:

Revision History

Version	Issue Date	Document ID	Reason for Change	Section(s) Changed
1	March 2017	GIP2017	First draft	
2	June 2017	GIPv22017	Second draft	

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1 Introduction

- 1.1** It is incumbent on Colwich Parish to develop their Green Infrastructure Plan to compliment the Neighbourhood Plan 2015-31. To understand the necessity of developing this strategy an agreed definition assists. 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 should 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 should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types. Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should 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, climate change, flood risk management and improved local biodiversity.
- 1.3** The Colwich Green Infrastructure Plan 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 Colwich Parish. It will inform the first review of the Colwich Neighbourhood Plan
- 1.4** The Green Infrastructure Plan will build on the existing network of open spaces and access opportunities that have already been created in Colwich Parish. 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 Green Infrastructure Plan the Parish considered local biodiversity study 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.

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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.
- 2.4 The Council will use The Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Report - Staffordshire Wildlife Trust January 2016 to identify priorities in the Parish. The Green Infrastructure Plan 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 should contribute to biodiversity enhancement by:
 - a. 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;
 - b. providing habitat links, restoration and creation, and long term positive management for existing important habitats, in line with the emerging Colwich Green Infrastructure Plan;
 - c. maintaining and, if possible, increasing priority species populations in line with the emerging Colwich Green Infrastructure Plan;
 - d. replanting boundaries with species-rich hedgerows;
 - e. using original (within Borough) tree, plants and seed materials when creating new semi-natural habitats and,
 - f. ensuring that any ecological data gathered as part of the application process is shared with Staffordshire Ecological Record.

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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 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 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 'stepping stones' for wildlife if their value were enhanced.

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- 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** Parish Council Planning committee work must ensure that developers are aware of the need to contribute to GI 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 provide the biggest resource for enhancing urban the environment. The Parish 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. Work on by the community on community sites identified within the Parish boundaries will be coordinated by the Parish Council.
- 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.
- 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 create a new orchard where practicable.
- 5.8** Enrich amenity grasslands with wildflower seed and bulbs in suitable areas, and consider management to encourage birds and insects.
- 5.9** Take opportunities to include new or retro-fitted 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 Parish 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** Engaging with businesses to map the understanding of the importance of wildlife within the community and confirm their support for the agenda will be one of the first actions necessary to get residential and business environments supporting one another.
- 6.3** 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 Parish has a great advantage in that there are a large number of volunteers already engaged in caring for, and promoting, the local environment via the Best Kept

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Village initiative. This valuable resource should be approached to ascertain their views of the concept and areas for development. There are areas that have been identified suitable and this information could be shared to initiate the concept.

- 6.4** The Parish 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.
- 6.5** 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 should 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.
- 6.6** ‘Street trees’ should 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.
- 6.7** During the Neighbourhood plan consultation residents felt that a community orchard would enhance the environment. Research should 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.
- 6.8** Funding for both of the above should be sought from organisations who promote indigenous planting and maintenance of threatened species.
- 6.9** 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.
- 6.10** Within the urban environment healthy water and wet areas will ensure that a diverse wildlife population is supported. Management of these areas should be prioritised so that no areas are overwhelmed or become unhealthy. Opportunities to include new or retro-fitted sustainable drainage systems such as ponds, swales and wetlands, permeable surfaces and water butts should be sought.

7 Long-Term

- 7.1** The above provides direction for the Council. Factors that develop such as HS2 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.

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8 Policy management

- 8.1** The GI infrastructure will be monitored by the Environment and Leisure committee. It will have a 'working' document that outlines priorities as stated above and the work timeline will support the review of objectives and deliverables. The 2017 version is added as an appendix.
- 8.2** Further management documents will be available on the Parish website and on request.
- 8.3** The policy will be reviewed yearly.

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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/TTTTV>

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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Appendix 2

Plan