NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING WORKSHEET
GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

What is Green Infrastructure?

The National Planning Policy Framework 2026 defines green infrastructure (GI) as:

> *'A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.'*

A GI network can embrace a range of spaces and assets that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies. Linear GI can further include roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, and access routes.

Why do we need Green Infrastructure?

Planning Practice Guidance sets out that GI is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services. There are five key goals which GI can help to achieve:

- ***Building a strong, competitive economy***
  GI can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.
- ***Achieving well-designed places***
  The built environment can be enhanced by features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces. More broadly, GI exists within a wider landscape context and can reinforce and enhance local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.
- ***Promoting healthy and safe communities***
  GI can improve the wellbeing of a neighbourhood with opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring for nature, community food-growing and gardening, all of which can bring mental and physical health benefits. GI can help to reduce health inequalities in areas of socio-economic deprivation and meet the needs of families and an ageing population. It can also help to reduce air pollution and noise.
- ***Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change***
  GI can contribute to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of water quality and other natural resources. It can also be an integral part of multifunctional sustainable drainage and natural flood risk management.
- ***Conserving and enhancing the natural environment***
  High-quality networks of multifunctional green infrastructure contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.

What can a neighbourhood plan include on GI?

A neighbourhood plan can seek to protect and enhance the existing individual elements of GI such as parks and greenspaces. It can also describe and suggest locations for new GI. Crucially a Neighbourhood Plan can map out the important GI assets within the area and identify the GI connections, or corridors, within and between built development, including housing and roads.

Policy can then be developed which will support development which actively seeks to protect and improve the connectivity of green and blue infrastructure and enhance biodiversity by linking into, extending and protecting the integrity of a designated Green and Blue Infrastructure Network.

Outside of the neighbourhood plan policies, mapping GI can also help the Parish or community to understand where the best opportunities are of planting more trees or wildflower areas, improving footpaths, or managing public open spaces to offer environmental gains or wellbeing benefits.

Mapping the GI of your neighbourhood area

What to include in your evidence?

There are a number of 'building blocks' of GI which you may consider gathering data on and mapping, these include but are not restricted to the following:

- designated areas including SSSI's, ancient woodland and priority habitat,
- sustainable drainage systems, including swales, rain gardens, green and blue roofs,
- features for species i.e. nesting/ roosting boxes, bug hotels,
- trees in hard landscapes,
- traffic-free routes including footpath, cycle paths and bridleways,
- allotments,
- orchards,
- green spaces (including parks and burial grounds),
- woodlands
- more natural spaces (including scrub, wildflower planting, verges and hedgerows) which might form linear connections throughout the neighbourhood area,
- heritage features and the historic environment,
- blue spaces (including watercourses, rivers, ponds and wetlands).

What sources of evidence are already available?

As a starting point, you can use nationally available data and information found through the following sources:

- Natural England's GI information and maps.
- Magic Maps
- Natural England National Character Area profiles which can help identify important features of the environment in your locality.
- Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory.

Local level documents/ information such as the following may also contain relevant evidence:

- Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Wiltshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- Wiltshire Council Design Guide.

- Public Rights of Way mapping.
- Local Biological Records Centres.

Most importantly, you will need to use your community's knowledge at the neighbourhood scale to add local detail to what is available from the above starting points, to do this you may:

- Use existing evidence from relevant organisations/local groups/ residents.
- Walk the neighbourhood area and record locations of GI assets.

How can the data be used?

Once the data on the GI building blocks has been mapped, you should be able to spatially define the important GI corridors that link the local sites and deliver connectivity between key assets and different parts of the neighbourhood area.

Each GI corridor should relate back to at least one of the 5 benefits of GI and a short summary could be written on why the GI corridor is important for: natural beauty, wildlife and habitats; encouraging an active lifestyle; creating a high-quality environment; supporting water management; and supporting the areas resilience and adaptation to climate change.

These GI corridors and any key assets will form your designated Green and Blue Infrastructure Network.

An example of how these GI corridors can be spatially defined, can be found within the Steeple Ashton Neighbourhood Plan - https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-neighbourhood-latest-news#S