

## **Green Environment**

### **Introduction**

A sustainable growth strategy relies on protecting and improving the quality of the environment. Future development must be located to maximise the efficient use of land, be well integrated with existing development, and well related to public transport and other existing and planned green infrastructure, so promoting sustainable development.

The term green infrastructure refers to a strategic network of green and blue spaces, such as woodlands, parks, amenity landscaping, ponds, canals and rivers, and the links between them. In the Coventry context, enhancing and increasing green infrastructure is particularly important. The 2011 Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Study produced a set of Green Infrastructure Standards for sustainable development.

High quality and well-connected green infrastructure have the potential to make Coventry a much more attractive and prosperous city, and a healthier place to live, work and enjoy, with multiple benefits for the economy, the environment and people. Local networks of high quality and well managed open spaces help to create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe, and can play a major part in improving people's sense of wellbeing. In order to underpin the overall quality of life in all areas and support wider social and economic objectives, the development and maintenance, to a high standard, of a well-connected and multi-functional green infrastructure network, is essential. Part of the challenge will be to identify and s

improvements made to the city's green infrastructure have a lasting impact and generate optimum value for public and private money. High quality green infrastructure is crucial in encouraging people to continue to live in the city and to attract others to want to move to, visit and invest in the city.

Green infrastructure will also have an important role to play in helping the city adapt to climate change. This will include moderating urban temperatures, storing excess rainfall, increasing surface porosity to ease drainage, providing shade via tree canopies, and providing green oases in urban areas. Essentially, the city's green infrastructure is a visual expression of how we see ourselves as a society and the environment in which we choose to live.

### **Policy GE1: Green Infrastructure**

1. The Council will protect green infrastructure based on an analysis of existing assets, informed by the Green Infrastructure Study and Green Space Strategy by incorporating the Council's Green Space Standards, and characterisation assessments.
2. New development proposals should make provision for green infrastructure to ensure that such development is integrated into the landscape and contributes to

improvements in connectivity and public access, biodiversity, landscape conservation, design, archaeology and recreation.

3. Coventry's existing and planned network of green infrastructure should be used as a way of adapting to climate change through the management and enhancement of existing habitats. This must be demonstrated through the creation of new habitats wherever possible to assist with species movement, to provide a source of locally grown food through allotments and community gardens, to provide sustainable and active travel routes for people, to provide shade and counteract the urban heat island effect, and to assist in improving public health and wellbeing.
4. New development will be expected to maintain the quantity, quality and functionality of existing green infrastructure. Where quantity is not retained, enhancement to quality is expected. Where the opportunity arises, and in line with the city's most up-to-date Green Space Strategy, the Council will also expect new developments to enhance green infrastructure and create and improve linkages between individual areas. Any development which is likely to adversely affect the integrity of a green corridor will be required to be expressly justified and where appropriate, mitigation measures put in place.
5. A key element of Coventry's approach to green infrastructure will be the continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, paths and cycle ways, with priority given to those parts of the city where there is an identified deficiency of green space. Where a development proposal lies adjacent to a river corridor or tributary, a natural sinuous river channel should be retained or, where possible, re-instated. Culverts should be removed unless it can be demonstrated that it is impractical to do so.
6. Development must respect the importance of conservation, improvement and management of green infrastructure in order to complement and balance the built environment. A strategic network of green infrastructure already exists in the city, connecting natural heritage, environmental assets, together with links to adjacent districts in Warwickshire and Solihull. This strategic network will be safeguarded and enhanced by:
  - a. Not permitting development that compromises its integrity and that green space, biodiversity, historic landscapes or other of the overall green infrastructure framework (including the Coventry/Oxford Canal);
  - b. Using developer contributions to facilitate improvements to its quality, connectivity, multi-functionality and robustness;
  - c. Investing in enhancement and restoration where opportunities exist, and the creation of new resources where possible, such as linking green infrastructure to other forms of infrastructure;
  - d. Improving its functionality, quality, connectivity and accessibility;
  - e. Ensuring that a key aim of green infrastructure is the maintenance and improvement and expansion of biodiversity;

- f. Integrating proposals to improve green infrastructure in the delivery of new developments, particularly through area-based regeneration initiatives and major proposals and schemes;
- g. Flood risk management and improving surface water quality.

The long-term vision for green infrastructure in Coventry, outlined in the Green Infrastructure Study, is the provision of a city-wide network of high quality, well managed and well connected, multi-functional green space, delivering a wide range of benefits to those living, working and visiting the city, and improving the attractiveness of the city as a whole. The suite of green infrastructure assets can be classified under 3 overarching categories of 'formal', 'informal' and 'functional', as follows:

Formal:

- urban parks
- country and regional parks
- formal and private gardens
- institutional grounds (for example schools and hospitals)
- outdoor sports facilities
- civic squares and spaces

Informal:

- recreation spaces and playing fields
- play areas
- village greens
- urban commons
- incidental green space
- natural and semi-natural spaces including woodlands, hedgerows, scrub, meadows, wetlands, open and running water, and bare rock habitats
- rivers and canals including their banks
- road and rail corridors and verges
- cycling routes and rights of way
- national and local nature reserves and locally designated sites for nature conservation
- historic landscapes, archaeological and historic sites

Functional:

- allotments
- community gardens
- city farms
- orchards
- roof gardens
- urban edge farmland
- cemeteries and churchyards
- sustainable urban drainage schemes and flood storage areas.

Green infrastructure is considered equal to all other forms of infrastructure and will be viewed as a critical element in the determination of planning applications. All outline and detailed planning applications will need to demonstrate consideration of the site's potential impact on the existing green infrastructure network. The design of developments will need to respect their relationship to the city's green infrastructure network and opportunities sought wherever possible to improve the network, including the installation of features such as urban trees and green roofs. Where open space is created within developments, it will be of a high and lasting design quality which seeks to minimise on-going maintenance pressures. Its efficiency will be maximised through the designing of multiple functions, including biodiversity, sustainable drainage, natural shading, informal recreation, adventure play, art appreciation and organised sports. The layout of this open space will also support the existing green infrastructure network.

The green infrastructure network will be accessible, useable and useful for both people and wildlife. It will be a key contributor to Coventry's aim to be a more sustainable city and its actions against climate change and help the city to project a positive and attractive image. During this plan period, the Council, in partnership with the local community, will help to plan, deliver and manage Green Infrastructure to maintain and develop a high-quality environment, which makes Coventry attractive, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable. Priorities for investment will be in those areas where net gains in the range of functions can be most effective and in particular, where it improves public accessibility and local deficiencies in multi-functional green space provision, quality, biodiversity and connectivity.

Green infrastructure should be considered in the same manner as any other form of infrastructure servicing new development and should be an essential component of all fully serviced development plot. New green infrastructure associated with development should connect into site level networks which should in turn connect into the city-wide network. All developments should include, wherever possible, green infrastructure elements, including SuDs, urban trees and green roofs, which deliver multiple sustainable benefits to the urban environment through their natural processes.