

Making it Happen

GI has a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits, largely delivered through the creation of new, and enhancement of existing biodiversity, landscape and recreational assets. For example a beautiful and functioning environment is more likely to attract new investment, help businesses retain a skilled and motivated workforce, stimulate regeneration and raise land and property values. The provision of secure and safe routes for cycling and walking reduces reliance on the car, and therefore pollution, which is good for health. Wellbeing is further enhanced by the provision of new and improved facilities for low cost recreation.

GI also has an important role in enhancing the image of Exeter, its rural hinterland and surrounding villages. This can increase tourism, develop local pride as well as stimulate voluntary action and community cohesion. Certain projects and initiatives may also provide new jobs, perhaps managing some of the new assets created.

Broader environmental enhancement can also help the study area adapt to the effects of climate change. Sustainable drainage schemes in new developments, delivered as part of multi-functional green spaces, can help reduce the pressure on flood defences arising from increased rainfall or tidal surges. Urban greening can also help counter the effects of increased summer temperatures, particularly in built up areas.

The delivery of GI will be a complex process. Long-term commitment will be necessary from a wide range of stakeholders and local communities. It will also be necessary to coordinate activity, source funding, manage projects and put in place long term management regimes for new and existing GI assets.

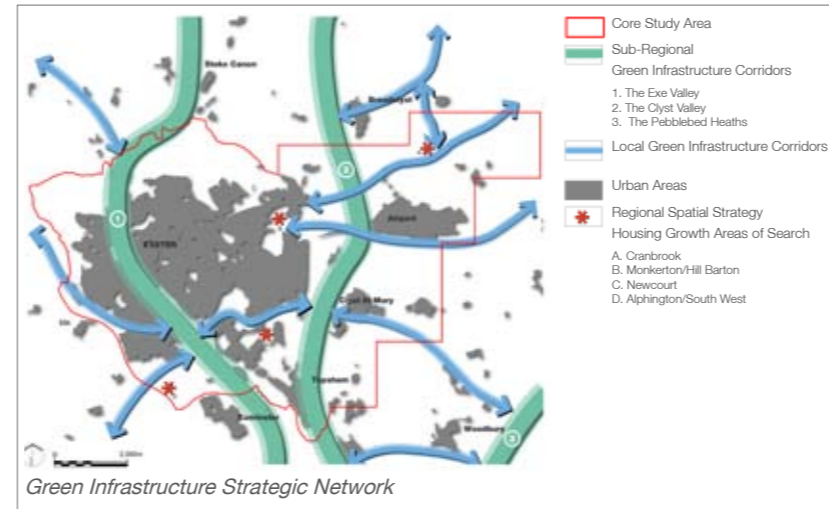
It is acknowledged that GI will be mainly delivered through the planning and development process, supported by the actions and initiative of local land owners, communities and businesses. There will be a need to develop a range of mechanisms to secure the appropriate level of impetus and guidance to coordinate and plan GI development in the future.

These mechanisms are likely to include developing new plans and policies, the recruitment of a GI Champion and a GI Consortium, with the goal of establishing a single point of contact for GI issues, and the creation of a dedicated GI website which will host all guidance documents and chart progress on GI delivery.

Next Steps...

The GI Study Project Advisory Group is currently developing the next stage of the project. This will see the development of:

- a Green Infrastructure Strategy, focussing on key areas within and surrounding Exeter where major growth is anticipated;
- several of the recommendations set out in the GI Study, including the drafting of planning policies; and
- a range of specific projects for the enhancement of GI in the Exeter area that can be progressed in the immediate future.



Further Information:

For further information please contact Neil Blackmore, Landscape Architect at Exeter and East Devon New Growth Point (nblackmore@eastdevon.gov.uk). Tel. 01392 365122.

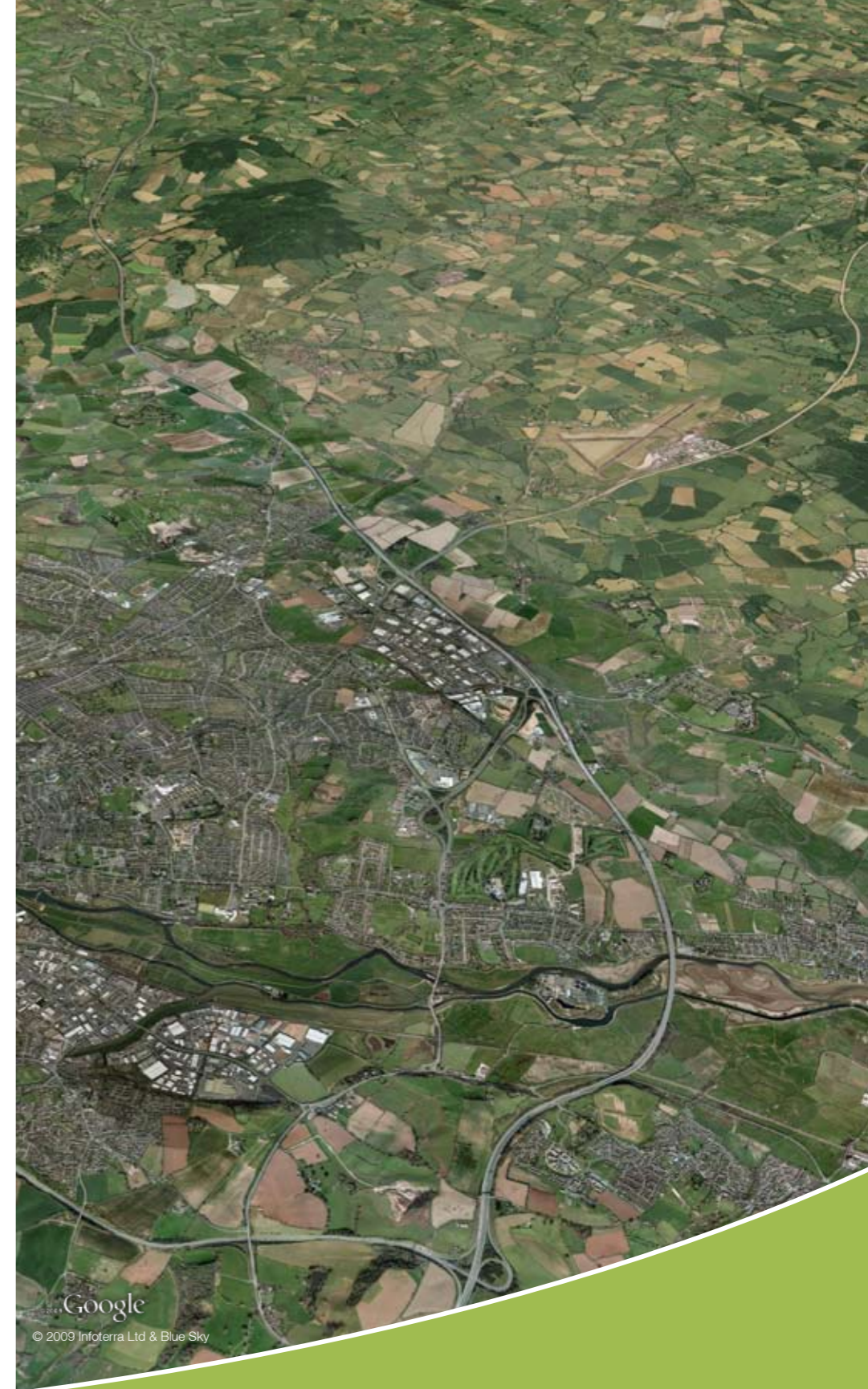
The GI Study can be downloaded from the following websites and links

www.eastdevon.gov.uk/planning-ldf_greeninfrastructure
www.exeter.gov.uk/greeninfrastructure
www.teignbridge.gov.uk

Further information about Green Infrastructure can be found on Natural England's website:

www.naturalengland.org.uk

Where practical and on request we will endeavour to make this document available in a range of formats, for example to include large print, braille, audio cassette and languages other than English.



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Green Infrastructure Study

for the Exeter Area and East Devon New Growth Point

Executive Summary

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Introduction

The Green Infrastructure Study was commissioned by East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Natural England as part of their ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of new and future communities and to general environmental protection and enhancement. The findings of the GI Study are now published (April 2009), and briefly outlined in this leaflet.

The Planning of Green Infrastructure (GI) is important for protecting and enhancing the environment and creating new assets for the benefit of wildlife and existing and new communities. However, as with other infrastructure such as transport and utilities, forward planning is needed to ensure that needs are met and opportunities are realised.

The GI Study provides a framework for green infrastructure to be taken into account in planning for the significant amount of new growth in the area, which may include building about 28,500 new homes over the next 20 years. The physical constraints of Exeter are such that a large proportion of this new development will need to occur outside the limits of the city, notably to the east in East Devon (about 11,500 homes), and to the south-west of the city in Teignbridge (about 2,000 homes).

To accommodate this development it is necessary to give full regard to the natural, cultural and environmental assets of the area. This helps to ensure that accessible recreation facilities and open and green spaces are provided, and that highly valued assets such as the Pebblebed Heaths, Exe Estuary and landscape character more generally, are not adversely affected by the increase in population.

To plan and deliver GI, an implementation strategy is being developed. This will help shape the form and growth of Exeter and ensure that new environmental assets are created and existing assets protected and enhanced. The next stage will be to take the findings of the GI Study and develop a more detailed strategy for GI delivery, concentrating on areas of change, and looking at issues of funding and governance of existing and newly created assets.

Progress to Date

Work to date has concentrated upon developing the GI Study. This presents:

- a Vision for GI in the study area;
- a Spatial Plan that defines the natural limits of the city and the future identity of sustainable new communities planned for its hinterland;
- a series of conceptual strategic plans that seek to reconnect communities with the landscape and enhance semi-natural habitats and habitat networks; and
- potential Major Projects and Supportive Projects that will provide general environmental enhancement as well as engender a greater sense of pride and local identity.

The GI Study has a series of key outputs. These are described below:

A Vision for Green Infrastructure

GI means many things to many people and various definitions are used throughout the country. In order to establish what GI needs to achieve for Exeter and the East Devon New Growth Point, A Vision for GI was agreed along with eleven strategic Aims and Objectives. The Vision states that:

“GI will help to create high quality, attractive and functional places that will provide a setting for day-to-day living, enhance the character and diversity of the landscape and protect heritage assets that contribute to the area’s unique sense of place and cultural identity. It will enrich the area’s wildlife value by addressing the negative impact of habitat loss and fragmentation by promoting habitat enhancement and linkage. GI will also help to connect people to places by linking residents and visitors to leisure and work destinations along a network of safe and clearly defined routes.”

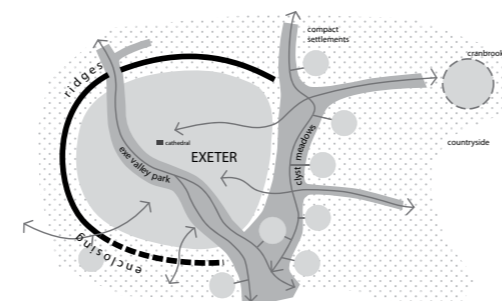
Baseline Review, Analysis and Interpretation

Existing GI assets and opportunities were identified by mapping and analysing the distribution of the most important natural and cultural features within and surrounding the study area. A consultation workshop with key stakeholders highlighted further issues and opportunities for GI, and how valued natural and cultural assets can be enhanced.

Green Infrastructure Spatial Framework

Exeter is fortunate in that it has a strong relationship with its setting; the arc of wooded hills defining the western and northern limits of the built up area, and the Exe, which cuts through the centre of the city, both forming a strong image and identity for the city.

By contrast, the eastern fringes of Exeter are less well defined. The shallower and less distinct topography, coupled with major highways, infrastructure and urban fringe development disrupt the physical relationship of Exeter and its rural hinterland. Proposed developments such as the Cranbrook New Community, intermodal freight terminal and Science Park have the potential to further alter the balance between urban and rural and blur the edge of the city.



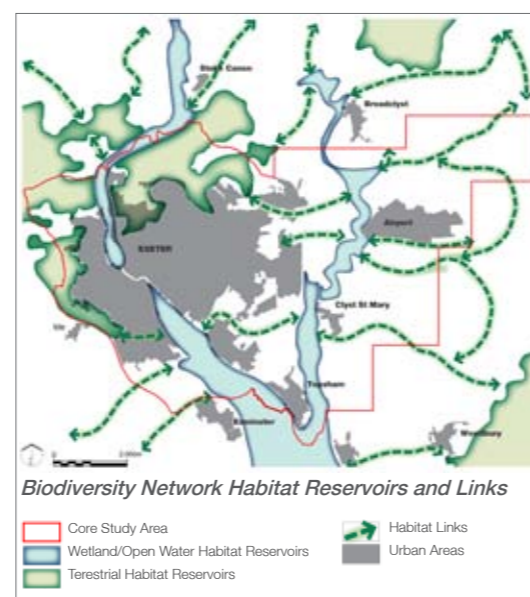
Spatial Framework (Indicative)

The GI Spatial Framework identifies the structural landscape elements that will have an important role in shaping the image and identity of Exeter and its hinterland. It conceives of Exeter as a compact city with a clear distinction between the urban area and its countryside setting. It is a city supported by linked, self contained and well defined communities which are both historic and new.

The Biodiversity Network



Artists' impression of enhanced habitats as part of the Biodiversity Network



Biodiversity Network Habitat Reservoirs and Links

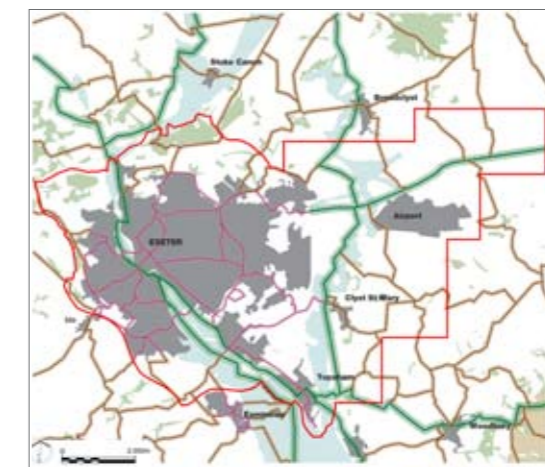
Creating, maintaining and improving habitat networks will be vital if Exeter and its hinterland are to achieve its vision for a vibrant and robust biodiversity resource. Enhancing the quality of existing habitats, extending key habitats and improving connectivity will enable wildlife populations to be more robust and better able to withstand change. This will allow the natural environment to become an integral part of peoples' lives within communities and work settings. The creation of any new habitat resource must also be more than capable of adapting to future changes in climate and the ongoing pressures of land use change.

The Biodiversity Network illustrates the distribution of Habitat Reservoirs and Habitat Links. Habitat Reservoirs will be the focus of enhancement and creation, perhaps through planting or regeneration. Habitat Links will be developed in order to establish a network of natural/wildlife corridors between Habitat Reservoirs that allow the successful movement of wildlife.

The Sustainable Movement Network



Artists' impression of enhanced habitats as part of the Biodiversity Network



Sustainable Movement Network

Connectivity is a key objective of GI Planning, and in particular connecting people within urban and rural areas to their local landscape and townscape resources. To meet this objective, the Sustainable Movement Network has been developed with the purpose of setting out a clearly defined hierarchy of routes that will give people the confidence and incentive to undertake journeys on foot or by bicycle.

The indicative Sustainable Movement Network is described as operating from 'Doorstep to Countryside' and seeks to identify routes between places of residence, work, open space assets and local features of interest. It has been identified by plotting existing rights of way and cycle routes. Where gaps exist, new routes or route sections have been identified in order to create a continuous and coherent network.

Potential GI Projects



Artists' impression of the Landmark Bridge across the M5



Artists' impression of Viewpoint overlooking Exeter's landscape setting

A number of GI Projects have been identified that seek to deliver multi-functional benefits across a wide range of agendas, including habitat enhancement, community action and education.

A distinction is made between Major Projects that will require significant capital funding and coordination, and Supportive Projects that can be delivered through a coordinated programme of community or land owner engagement and action.

Major Projects include a Landmark Bridge across the M5 to link Exeter to the Cranbrook New Community and Science Park, the enhancement of Exeter's Valley parks which are the city's foremost green space asset, and the Clyst Meadows Project which seeks to strengthen landscape character and habitat potential of the river.

Supportive Projects include the creation of several new viewpoint locations within and surrounding the city and the historic woodland planting scheme which will see the creation of deciduous woodland on the site of former woodlands.