Green corridors

Definition

13.1 This typology includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. Green corridors are linear routes with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel. Green corridors also facilitate wildlife migration.

13.2 In addition to providing recreational routes in their own right, green corridors play an important role in linking open spaces together, providing a green infrastructure network across the city. Green corridors are an important resource linking the urban areas with accessible countryside.

13.3 Green corridors can be particularly valuable in cities, facilitating links between open spaces and local residents. Green corridors also provide valuable linkages between the city and outlying settlements. As highlighted throughout this report, in many instances enhancing links between open spaces will be as important as the development of new sites.

Green corridor

13.4 In addition to improving sustainability and linking urban areas with nearby rural countryside, green corridors represent an important chance to promote sustainable transport by cycle and on foot. Provision and use of green corridors will be a key determinant in the achievement of targets for participation in sport and active recreation. The concept of the development of green links between housing and open space sites is particularly apparent in the regeneration areas of Hull.

13.5 The latest government plan published by the Department for Transport and entitled “Walking and Cycling: an action plan” states:

“Walking and cycling are good for our health, good for getting us around, good for our public spaces and good for our society, for all these reasons we need to persuade more people to choose to walk and cycle more often”

13.6 It is therefore important to address any deficiencies of green corridors and capitalise on opportunities to increase and enhance the network. Providing a high quality infrastructure will not only increase use of green corridors, but linkages between sites will increase usage of individual open space sites and reduce barriers to access.
Local context

13.7 The dense urban nature of the city of Hull means that there are relatively few public rights of way. However, despite this the council is committed to the protection and development of public rights of way.

13.8 Hull City Council is responsible for the maintenance of the public rights of way and bridleways within the city boundary and the updating of public rights of way and bridleway maps.

13.9 The River Corridors in the area, alongside disused railways offer significant opportunities for recreation. In particular, the rights of way along the north bank of the Humber and disused railways are considered to be particularly important routes for cyclists and pedestrians.

13.10 There are a number of public rights of way that pass through Associated British Port (ABP) owned land. ABP are responsible for the maintenance of these public rights of way.

13.11 A number of public rights of way on the Humber foreshore pass across buildings. This provides a considerable challenge for the Council and regular correspondence with ABP is essential in resolving these issues.

13.12 Hull City Council is currently developing a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The council works in partnership with East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) on a joint Local Access Forum that will be integral in the development and enhancement of this plan.

13.13 Hull City Council’s commitment to the provision of green corridors is emphasised in a number of local documents. The key themes emerging from these documents are:

- Policy M9 of the Local Plan states that the improvement of facilities for cyclists and pedestrians will be encouraged. The policy further identifies that existing strategic cycle tracks and footpaths will be protected from development and that a strategic network of cycle and pedestrian routes will be developed.

- An objective of the Local Transport Plan is to complete the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This plan will be integral to the development and enhancement of green corridors in the city.

- Objective four of the Local Transport Plan encourages cycling and walking in the city. The plan also seeks to increase sustainable access to public spaces.

- Objectives of the council’s Walking Strategy include seeking to increase walking as the main mode of transport and improving access for pedestrians.

- Objectives of the Cycling Strategy include increasing cycle use and improving health through this increase.

13.14 The key themes outlined in the documents above highlight the role that green corridors can play in increasing forms of sustainable transport, improving quality of life, improving the health and levels of physical activity of residents in the city and increasing access to public spaces. The provision of a high quality ‘green network’ will be essential in the delivery of these objectives.
Consultation

13.15 Consultation on the existing network of green corridors in Hull demonstrated that:

- 5% of respondents to the household survey state that they use green corridors more frequently than any other open space. 37% of residents use green corridors more than once a month. While this highlights regular usage by a proportion of the population, it also indicates that there remains significant potential to increase levels of usage and reduce the reliance on other modes of transport.

- The quality of green corridors is perceived to be average by respondents to the household survey (50%). 28% of residents regard green corridors to be poor quality and 22% consider them to be good quality. Similar perceptions are evident across all of the individual areas.

- The importance of green corridors was emphasised at drop in sessions with the majority of responses being positive. However, some residents highlighted that a number of the corridors, footpaths and cycleways across the city are not being fully utilised and that some stretches are suffering from a lack of maintenance.

- It was apparent that the green corridors are perceived to be important resources by local residents, but many indicated that they often feel unsafe and they can be difficult to access. Residents highlighted the need for a more complete ‘green network’ indentifying poor linkages between a number of rights of way networks. Issues with regards a lack of access for cyclists were also raised.

Current position

Quality

13.16 While it is inappropriate to measure the area of green corridors, quality is central to their use and value both as a recreational resource and also as a means of enhancing wildlife.

13.17 A quality vision based on the aspirations of the local community of Hull has therefore been set below. Full justifications for the recommended local standards are provided within Appendix G. It can be seen that cleanliness is the top priority for local residents, reinforcing the importance of careful maintenance and management.
Quality Standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – Green corridors

Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean/Litter free</td>
<td>Water features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths</td>
<td>Well kept grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature features</td>
<td>Flowers and trees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to green corridors, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of quality</th>
<th>Proportion of possible total responses received</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security and Safety</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness and maintenance</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary accommodation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantity standard

13.18 The Annex A of PPG17 – Open Space Typology states:

“the need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas. This means that there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard, just as there is no way of having a standard for the proportion of land in an area which it will be desirable to allocate for roads”.

13.19 It is therefore recommended that no provision standard should be set. PPG17 goes onto to state that:

“Instead planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans national cycle network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities. In this sense green corridors are demand-led. However, planning authorities should also take opportunities to use established linear routes, such as disused railway lines, roads or canal and river banks, as green corridors, and supplement them by proposals to ‘plug in’ access to them from as wide an area as possible”.
Accessibility standard

13.20 There is no requirement to set catchments for green corridors as they cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation.

Applying provision standards

13.21 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards, it is also not appropriate to state areas of deficiency or need based on standards.

13.22 As suggested by PPG17, planning policy should aim to facilitate the delivery of an integrated network of high quality green corridors linking open spaces together and opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport. Consideration should also be given to the provision of effective wildlife corridors, enabling the migration of species across the city.

In consideration of the key role green corridors can play in achieving wider council objectives and the popularity of this typology with residents, planning policy should seek to promote the development of green linkages. This includes encouraging the provision of green links in new housing developments and areas of regeneration as well as proactive action to enhance and develop pathways along the rivers and disused railway lines. The LDF should facilitate the protection of existing corridors as well as the development of new sites.

The Local Transport Plan encourages cycling and walking in the city and seeks to increase sustainable access to public spaces. Green corridors can play a key role in achieving this vision. Any programme to improve green corridors should take into account the needs of a variety of users including those on foot, bike and on horseback. This priority is also reflected in the Hull Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, which advocates the need to improve cycling and walking infrastructure.

The council should work in tandem with key partners such as ERYC and ABP to help maximise the use of green corridors and public rights of way in the city. This will provide opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport, using all types of open spaces.

In addition to delivering an overall joined up network, improvements to the quality of existing corridors will be essential if current usage is to be maintained and increased. This may include improved signage, improved safety and enhanced maintenance of paths. The maintenance of green corridors and the importance of cleanliness were key issues raised during local consultation.

The role of green corridors in the promotion of biodiversity and nature conservation is also evident from the evaluation of sites from an ecological perspective. As well as offering recreational opportunities, green corridors act as wildlife corridors enabling the migration of species and are important habitats. They are a key component of the green infrastructure. Qualitative improvements should therefore consider environmental issues as well as recreational needs.
13.26 Several green corridors were identified as open mosaic habitats in an early successional stage, meaning that they are among the first of a series of habitat changes that lead to a stable or climax community such as woodland. Conservation of these communities depends on halting succession through active management. Some sites where this issue arose included the dismantled railway junction East of Calvert Lane, Dismantled Junction West of Calvert Lane, Land South of Former Withernsea Railway Line and Former Withernsea Railway Line.

13.27 As referenced within section five, natural and semi natural open spaces, many green corridors were considered to be of high or very high importance in terms of nature conservation and biodiversity when assessed as part of the Phase 1 site assessments. Corridors of particular importance included Priory Cycle Track. Public footpath to the West of National Avenue, Foredyke Stream Cycle track, River Hull, Foredyke Stream, dismantled railway west of Dansom Lane, dismantled railway between Sutton Road and Chamberlain Road and Former Withernsea Railway line.

GC3 Drive a programme of qualitative improvements across the city including enhanced maintenance of footpaths and increased signage. Management of green corridors should also give rise to consideration of their role as wildlife corridors and habitats.

13.28 As highlighted in the Local Transport Plan, improving the quality of life of residents through the provision of a high quality sustainable transport network is a key objective. The appropriate provision of green corridors and promotion of the opportunities available will have a positive influence on the drive to reduce health inequalities. Enhancing access to green corridors will therefore emphasise the role that outdoor recreation can play in delivering a number of economic and sustainable health objectives.

GC4 Promote the opportunities available to increase usage of green corridors. As well as increasing awareness, partnership working with the PCT and other key organisations to deliver organised opportunities should be considered. Green corridors should link neighbourhoods with community facilities and different open spaces.

GC5 Investigate the feasibility of a green infrastructure study to help maximise the linkages of open spaces with green corridors and help create a network of multi-functional greenspace in Hull. This should serve as an extension to this PPG17 Study and should link with adjoining authorities.

Summary

13.29 Green corridors provide opportunities close to peoples' homes for informal recreation, particularly walking and cycling, as part of every day activities, for example, travelling to work or the shops. Therefore the development of a linked green corridor network will help to improve the health and well being of the local community and encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport. In this way, green corridors can be integral to the achievement of targets for increased active recreation and improved quality of life.
13.30 As an urban area, the quantity of footpaths and Public Rights of Way is limited. Despite this, consultation indicates that they are well-used. Planning policies should facilitate the protection of existing green corridors and facilitate the delivery of new sites, particularly maximising the use of natural resources such as river banks. Revisions to the green corridor network should consider the needs and aspirations of all users.

13.31 A network of multi-functional greenspace will contribute to the high quality natural and built environment required for existing and new sustainable communities in the future. An integrated network of high quality green corridors will link open spaces, helping to alleviate other open space deficiencies and provide opportunities for sustainable means of transport.

13.32 The key priorities for the future delivery of green corridors should therefore include:

- Complete and implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Work in tandem with key partners such as ERYC and ABP to help maximise the use of green corridors and public rights of way in the city and to deliver the objectives of the Local Transport Plan
- Facilitate the protection and development of the network through the inclusion of appropriate policies in the LDF
- Drive a programme of qualitative improvements across the city. This should give consideration to both the recreational and conservation values of green corridors
- Promote the opportunities available to increase usage of green corridors, particularly working with ABP to increase access along the Humber foreshore
- Undertaking a green infrastructure assessment in conjunction with adjoining local authorities, considering the balance between biodiversity and recreation.