



A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire

Wiltshire's Natural Environment Plan 2022-2030

*Supporting the resilience of Wiltshire's communities,
businesses and wildlife in a changing world*

Executive Summary

Introduction

This is a summary of the first Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire.

The strategy has been shaped through engagement with a wide range of internal stakeholders and external partners, starting with an initial workshop in February 2020 attended by some 50 representatives of 29 organisations. A webinar attended by many of the same stakeholders was held in May 2021 to identify priorities for the emerging strategy to focus on.

A joint public consultation on the draft Wiltshire Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Wiltshire Climate Strategy ran for 6 weeks from 1st September to the 17th October 2021. This included consultation events at local libraries and an online survey. A total of 213 responses were received from both private individuals and stakeholder organisations, the majority of which have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the green infrastructure approach.

The feedback was invaluable in helping shape the final strategy adopted by the Council on 15 February 2022.



Key messages



Our rich and varied environment underpins Wiltshire's natural capital; it makes Wiltshire an attractive place to live, work and visit, enhances our quality of life and well-being, and underpins the economy.



Wiltshire's natural environment is undergoing substantial changes driven by factors including climate change, biodiversity loss, population growth and development.



Wiltshire's multi-functional network of green and blue infrastructure assets supports a range of ecosystem services, providing multiple economic, social and environmental benefits for people, places and nature.



The Strategy sets out a long-term vision, strategic goals and principles for delivering green and blue infrastructure across Wiltshire by a range of partners and stakeholders, working together at a variety of scales.



Highlighting "what" is needed and "how" this will be achieved, it provides a high-level framework for developing delivery strategies and detailed implementation plans that reflect community needs and national priorities.



Together with the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire, the Strategy has a significant role to play in delivering nature-based solutions to support the Council's Climate Strategy and new Local Plan.

The Vision for Wiltshire's Green & Blue Infrastructure

Wiltshire's multi-functional network of high quality, biodiverse and accessible green and blue infrastructure is widely valued by our communities, businesses and visitors.

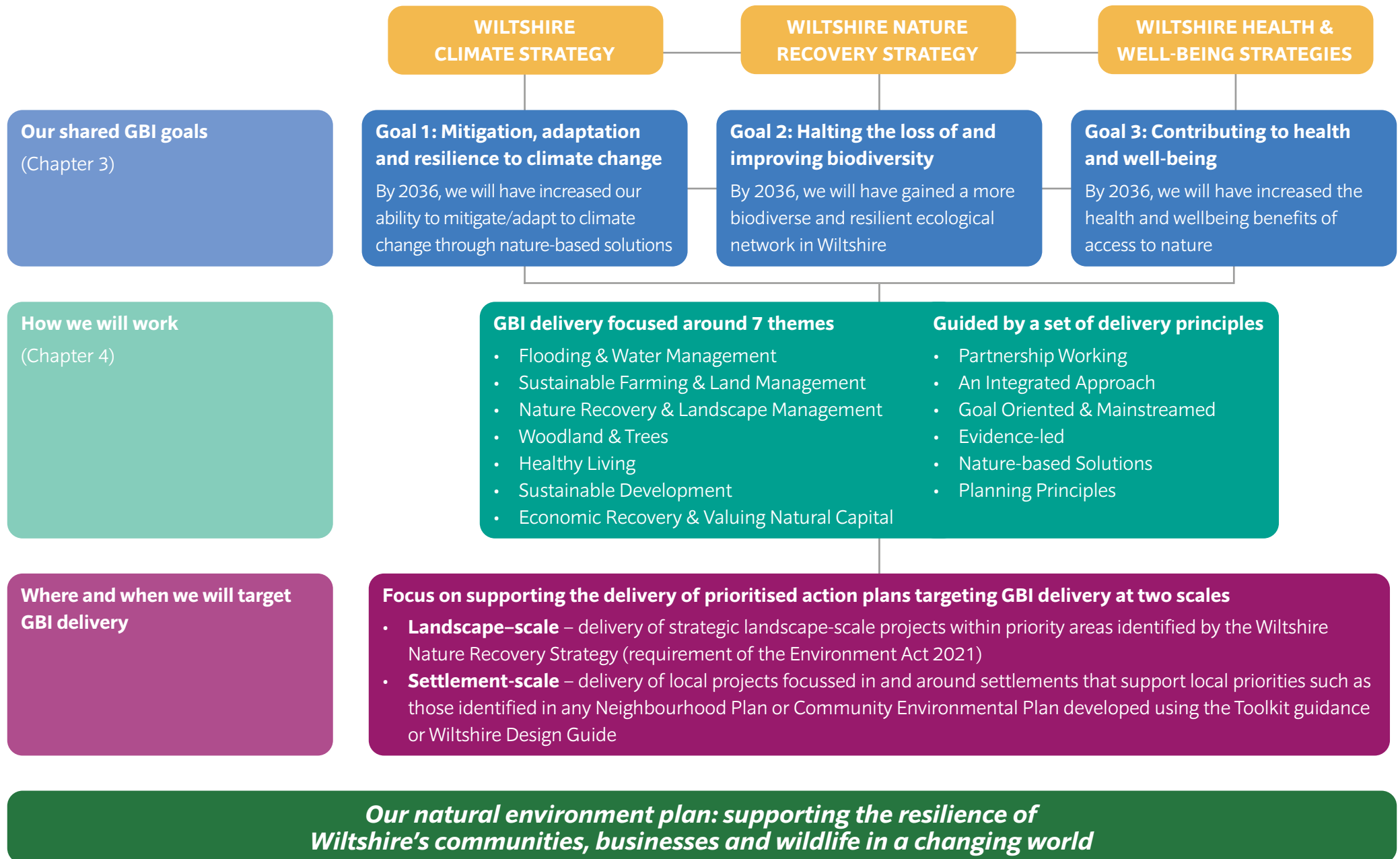
Managed sustainably through strong leadership and partnerships, the green and blue infrastructure network provides a range of well-being benefits for people, places and nature across Wiltshire.

As a result of working with natural processes to support delivery of multi-functional ecosystem services, Wiltshire is better able to adapt to a changing climate and biodiversity loss has been reversed.

Networks of green and blue spaces and corridors in the countryside and our towns support access to nature and healthy lifestyles, and provide high quality landscapes and beautiful places for people to live, work and visit.



Strategy overview



What is green & blue infrastructure?

Green infrastructure 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.

Green infrastructure 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**.

Planning Practice Guidance on the Natural Environment (paras 004/005)

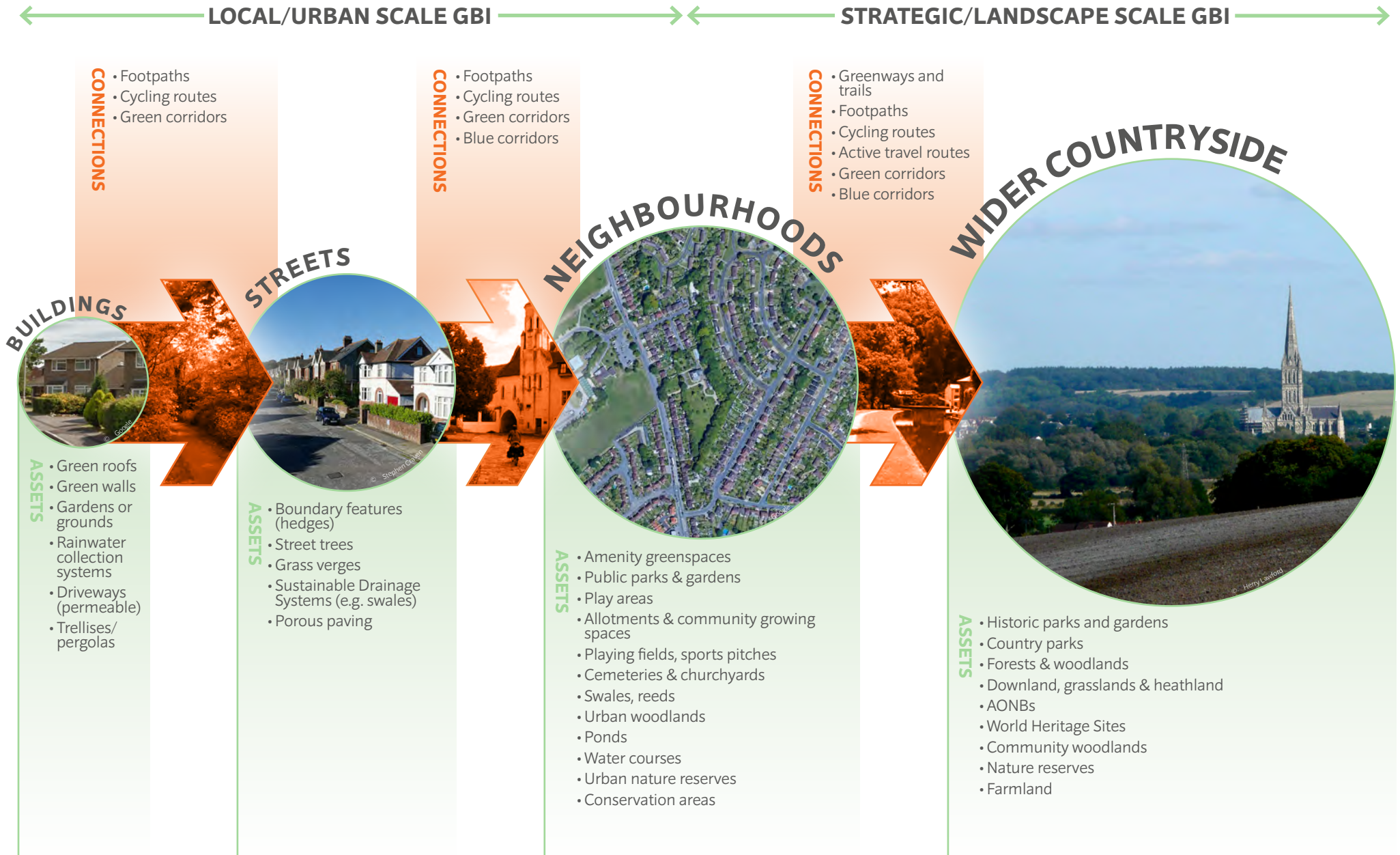
Strengthening networks of multi-functional green and blue infrastructure has an important role to play in nature recovery, building resilience to climate change and promoting healthy, resilient and safe communities.

In the context of the global climate emergency, biodiversity loss and the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, investment in the provision of high quality, biodiverse and accessible green and blue infrastructure has never been more vital.

Ecosystem services



Green & blue infrastructure networks



Shaping the strategy

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy has been shaped through engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including local nature, health and enterprise partnerships and neighbouring authorities, and public consultation.

The Strategy was also shaped by the Government's new approach to protection and enhancement of the natural environment.



In line with the Government's approach, the Strategy also seeks to promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

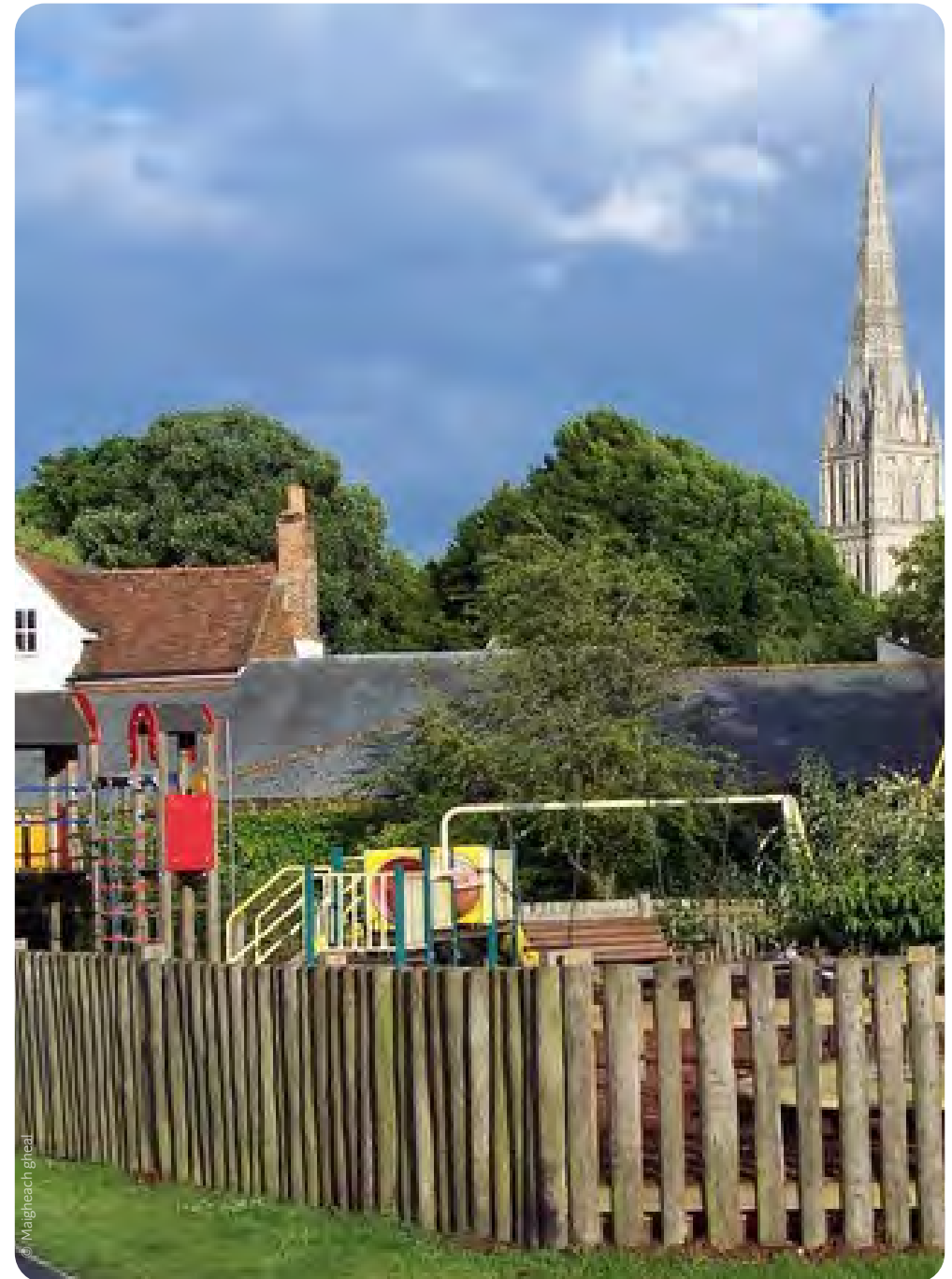


Supporting local policy delivery

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy has a key role to play in supporting delivery of the Council's Business Plan, Climate Strategy and Local Plan - in addition to a range of other partnership-based plans.



* in preparation



Strategic green & blue infrastructure

The Strategy considers Green & Blue Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities at two scales.

At the Wiltshire-wide level, three main elements form the backbone of Wiltshire's Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Network as identified and mapped in the supporting Evidence Base.

Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Sites

- Biodiversity Sites
- Priority Habitats
- Woodland
- Historic Environment Designations

Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Corridors

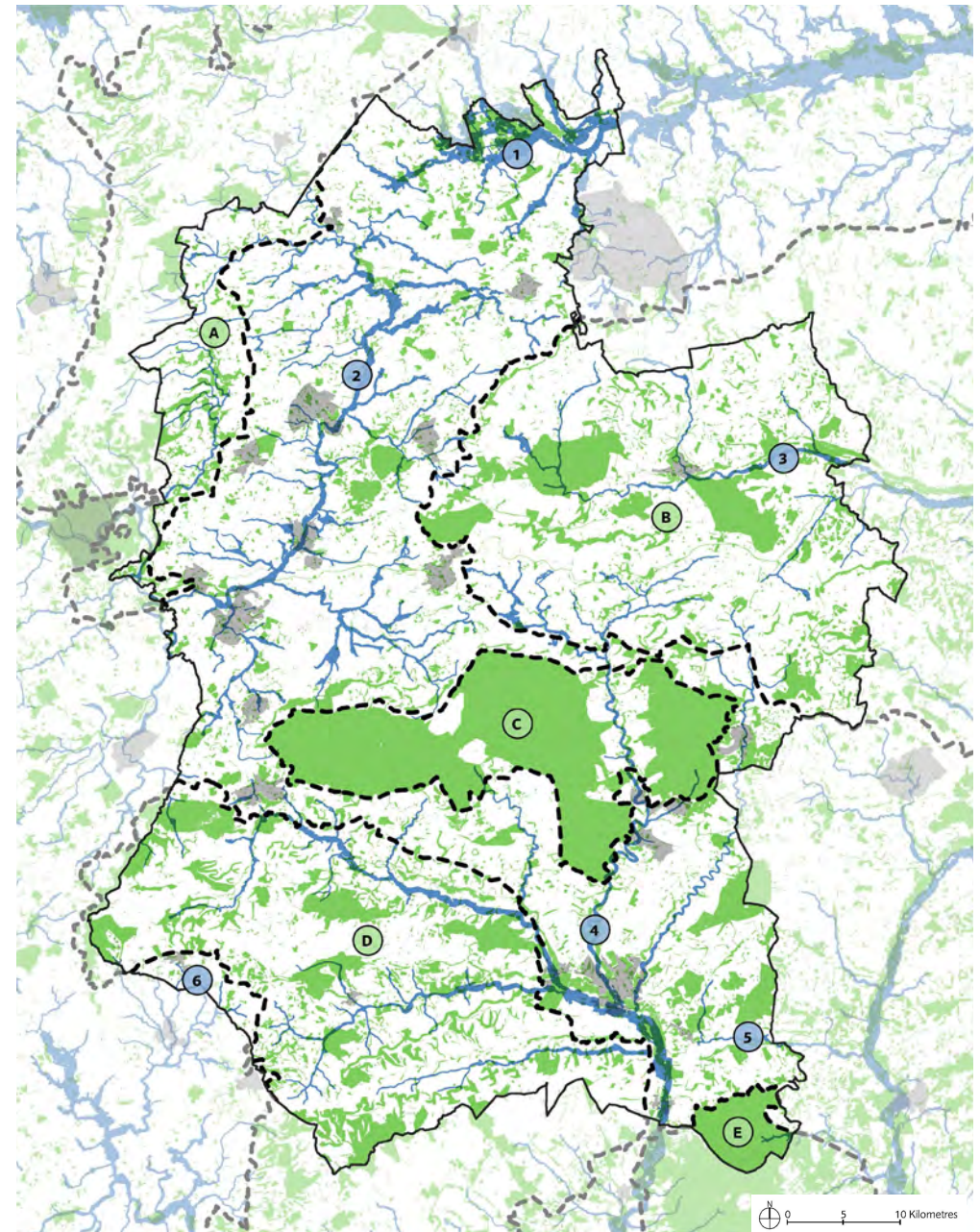
- 1 Thames Corridor
- 2 Bristol Avon Corridor
- 3 Kennet Corridor
- 4 Hampshire Avon Corridor
- 5 Test & Itchen Corridor
- 6 Stour Corridor
- 7 Wiltshire Canals - Kennet & Avon, Wilts & Berks, Cotswold (not mapped)

Sub-Regional Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure

- A Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- B North Wessex Downs AONB
- C Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area
- D Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB
- E New Forest National Park

This Network provides a framework for prioritising strategic action by partners working together at a landscape-scale across Wiltshire and beyond.

Wiltshire's Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Network



Local green & blue infrastructure

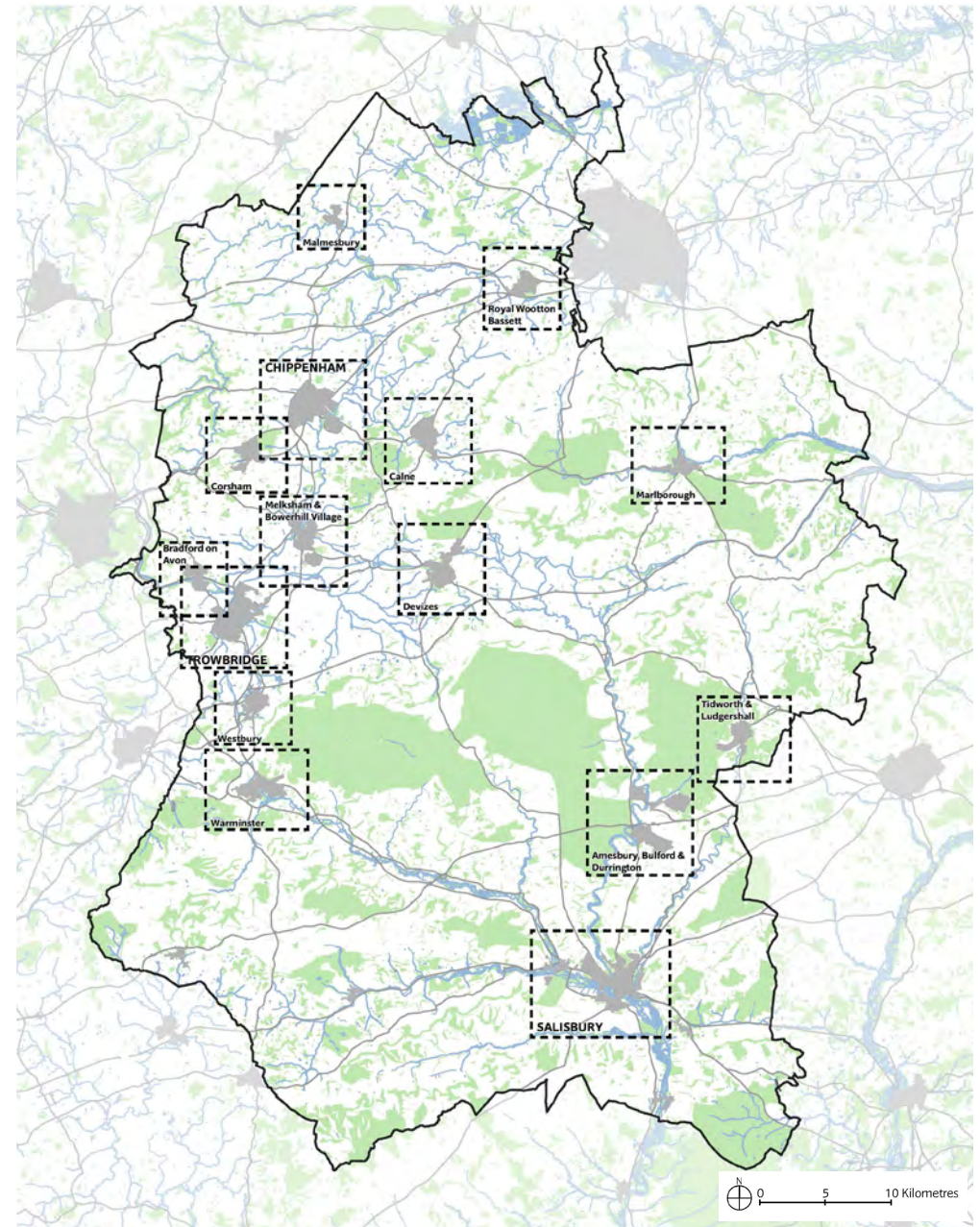
In addition to looking at strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure needs, we will also need to focus in on local areas where future growth is expected.

Settlement Frameworks will be developed to highlight key priorities and opportunities for improving Green & Blue Infrastructure in and around the Principal Settlements and Market Towns where identified for growth in the new Local Plan over the period to 2036.

Developed through engagement with town and parish councils, and other local stakeholders as appropriate, the Settlement Frameworks will support delivery of local projects identified in neighbourhood plans and/or community environmental plans.



Potential Settlement Frameworks



Our shared vision and goals

The Green & Blue Infrastructure vision in a nutshell

- **More** – creating new Green & Blue Infrastructure assets to protect, enhance and expand what we already have.
- **Higher quality** – improved and well-managed, resilient and multifunctional Green & Blue Infrastructure Networks
- **Better connected** – green corridors and active travel networks linking people and wildlife throughout our towns and countryside.



Goal 1 Mitigation, adaptation and resilience to climate change

By 2030, we will have increased our ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change through adoption of nature-based solutions...

Working in partnership, we will do this by:

- Contributing to national targets and Wiltshire Council Climate Strategy objectives for cutting greenhouse gas emissions (including from urban and rural land use change, opportunities for active travel, and the agriculture and waste sectors)
- Considering the best nature-based pathways to help support 'Net Zero' for the county
- Supporting the delivery of climate change adaptation strategies and management plans for Wiltshire to improve its resilience to impacts of climate change associated with a 2°C temperature rise
- Reducing risks of harm from natural hazards through adoption of natural flood and water management approaches alongside traditional grey infrastructure at the local and catchment level
- Contributing to national targets for reducing over-abstraction of water, and meeting water quality objectives for biodiversity and drinking water
- Promoting nature-based carbon removal from the atmosphere through better soil management, the protection of existing natural carbon sinks and the promotion of tree and woodland establishment



Goal 2 Halting loss of & improving biodiversity

By 2030, we will have gained a more biodiverse and resilient ecological network in Wiltshire...

Working in partnership, we will do this by:

- Supporting the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to help build resilience to climate change and provide opportunities for species and ecosystem recovery.
- Helping to restore our terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.
- Creating or restoring wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network, focusing on priority habitats as part of a wider set of land management changes providing extensive benefits.
- Taking action to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species of animals, plants and fungi, and where possible to prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species.
- Increasing carbon storage capacity of woodlands in England in line with the Government's 25-year Environment Plan aspiration of 12% woodland cover by 2060 in England involving planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042.





Goal 3 Contributing to health & well-being

By 2030, we will have increased the health and well-being benefits of access to nature, and improved the sustainable use and health of our natural resources...

Working in partnership, we will do this by:

- Safeguarding and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty and character of our landscapes to enhance a sense of place and support the local economy.
- Help make sure that there are high quality, accessible green spaces close to where people live and work, particularly to help adapt to climate change in urban areas.
- Encouraging more people to be active outdoors, participate in active travel opportunities and get involved with community food growing by encouraging better access to our Green & Blue Infrastructure networks.
- Empowering communities to get more involved in the management and protection of local Green & Blue Infrastructure, taking ownership of local assets and managing them for the benefit of the whole community where necessary.
- Improving our approach to sustainable soil, food and forestry management.
- Enhancing biosecurity measures to protect our wildlife and livestock, boost the resilience of plants and trees to pests and diseases and tackle invasive non-native species.
- Promoting nature-based solutions to improve air quality for people in locations that fail to meet national standards.





Our key priorities for action

The Strategy will need to be flexible in light of changing needs and opportunities. However, the Strategy identifies some immediate priorities.

- 1. Creating more and better green spaces in our towns** to help prevent flooding and attract people to live, work and invest in the area
- 2. Planting the right trees in the right places** to support natural flood management, contribute to carbon net zero targets and strengthen ecological connectivity, provide shade and improve air quality
- 3. Supporting access to nature** via a viable walking and cycling network
- 4. Encouraging environmentally sensitive farming** in ways that enhance soil quality, sequester carbon, encourage wildlife, produce food and provide employment
- 5. Supporting a green economic recovery** from the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic
- 6. Embedding Green & Blue Infrastructure into development and place-making** to include nature-based solutions such as implementing sustainable drainage systems, green roofs and living walls



Delivering the vision & way forward

The Strategy is the start of a new way of partnership working to achieve the shared vision and goals for Green & Blue Infrastructure.

Delivery themes

It is envisaged that action will be focussed around 6 delivery themes as set out in the Strategy.

-  Flooding & Water Management
-  Sustainable Farming & Land Management
-  Nature Recovery & Landscape Management
-  Woodland & Trees
-  Healthy Living
-  Economic Recovery & Valuing Natural Capital

Delivery principles

The Strategy also provides a set of principles to help guide the planning and delivery of Green & Blue Infrastructure throughout Wiltshire.

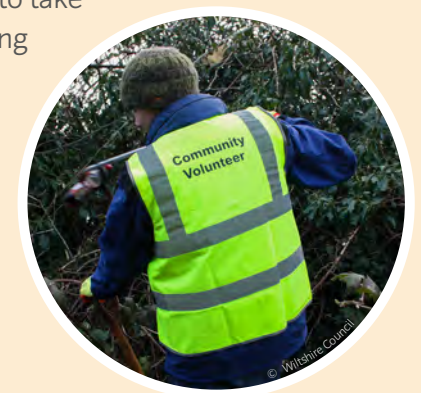
-  Partnership Working
-  An Integrated Approach
-  Goal Oriented and Mainstreamed
-  Evidence-led
-  Nature-based Solutions
-  Planning Principles

Through the Strategy, we will:

- Work collaboratively in partnership with land managers, owners and service providers, and Community Area Boards, towards the shared vision for Green & Blue Infrastructure
- Commit to following the common set of principles, priorities and opportunities for strengthening the resilience and connectivity of Wiltshire's Green & Blue Infrastructure network
- Pool resources to support a planned approach to Green & Blue Infrastructure project delivery and investment
- Identify opportunities to manage our Green & Blue Infrastructure assets more sustainably for the long-term

Governance, funding and monitoring delivery

- Wiltshire Council will play a key leadership role in delivery of the Strategy
- A new Wiltshire Climate and Environment Forum will be established to co-ordinate delivery of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy alongside the Climate Strategy
- The Council will empower communities to take ownership and responsibility for managing local Green & Blue Infrastructure assets
- The Council will explore opportunities to secure funding from a wide range of sources to support delivery
- The Council will monitor delivery of the Strategy, and update it as necessary in response to changing priorities and opportunities as necessary



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Working towards a vision for more, higher quality and better connected multi-functional green and blue infrastructure in Wiltshire...

Wiltshire Council

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