

Green corridors

Introduction and definition

- 13.1 Green corridors are linear features of mostly open character, including canal towpaths, riverside paths, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways, which act as wildlife corridors and attractive, safe off-road links between residential areas, open spaces, urban centres, leisure facilities and employment areas. They also give residents access to natural green space and the open countryside and provide opportunities for recreation. Green corridors increase in value if they are linked to form a network that extends within and beyond the borough boundary.
- 13.2 Local networks of high quality and well-managed and maintained open spaces, sport and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Therefore the connectivity of all spaces through the provision of “green corridors” in Broxbourne is an important strategic consideration.
- 13.3 PPG17 states that 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. Instead, planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans national cycle network, town 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 the canal and riverside towpaths, roads, and river banks, as green corridors, and supplement them with proposals to 'plug in' access to them from as wide an area as possible.

Context

- 13.4 Green corridors are a key component of the green infrastructure of Broxbourne and provide important links to the neighbouring local authorities for residents. 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.
- 13.5 PPG17 suggests that all corridors, including those in remote rural settlements, should be considered. However, the Companion Guide suggests that unless a green corridor is used as a transport link between facilities (ie home and school, town and sports facility etc), it should not be included within an audit.
- 13.6 The strategic context of green corridors is detailed below:
- 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”*
 - therefore it is important to address any qualitative deficiencies of green corridors and capitalise on any 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 use of individual open space sites and remove barriers to access

- many residents of the Borough visit the Lee Valley Regional Park and walk or cycle alongside the various rivers and streams
- in addition, the New River is a significant main green corridor in the Borough, and has considerable ecological interest as well as providing a rich source of industrial archaeology
- the Local Plan outlines that the Council will seek to ensure that the essentially open character, amenity and wildlife value of all waterside 'green chains' throughout the borough are protected. This supported by policy HD19:
 - (I) Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals which would have a materially detrimental effect upon the open character of waterside green chains whether located within the urban area or the countryside
 - (II) The Council will permit, in conjunction with Thames Water PLC and riparian land owners, development proposals that make a positive contribution to enhancing the biodiversity, wildlife, and amenity value of waterside green chains throughout the borough and will seek to ensure that appropriate remedial measures are incorporated into any development proposals proximate to these chains.

13.7 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues regarding green corridors:

- 50% of respondents to the household survey use green corridors once a month or more
- 46% of respondents to the household survey believe that the quality of green corridors is good, whilst 44% believe the quality is average
- consultees commented on the important role that green corridors play within the community, primarily in terms of their role as a link to different amenities.

Quantity of existing provision

13.8 There are currently no local standards relating to the provision of green corridors. The linear nature of green corridors means it is inappropriate to measure the area and assess these spaces. Nevertheless their importance within the borough should not be undermined as they provide an essential linkage between open spaces and increase the accessibility of other sites.

Setting provision standards – quantity

13.9 In light of the nature of green corridors it is inappropriate to set quantity and accessibility standards. Annex A of PPG17 supports this, stating that there is no sensible way of setting an appropriate provision standard as detailed below.

Quantity standard (see Appendix J)

13.10 Annex A of PPG17 states that:

*“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”.*

13.11 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”.

Setting provision standards – quality

13.12 Only a quality vision has been set for green corridors. Site assessment scores have not been included in this analysis, as it is not feasible to assess the length of all footpaths/corridors. However, the quality standard should be used as an aspiration for the introduction of new linkages.

Quality standard (see Appendix K)

Recommended standard	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:	
Essential features:	Desirable features:
Clean and well maintained	Cycle tracks
Improve biodiversity	Footpaths
Justification	
<p>Consultation with residents, key stakeholders and council officers resulted in the recommendation of the above standards. It is important that any new provision meets this local quality standard that incorporates all Council visions and public aspirations. Ultimately sites need to be safe and well maintained to encourage usage. Cycle tracks and footpaths should be provided where appropriate.</p> <p>While green corridors have a key recreational role, it is important to ensure that there is a balance between recreational and wildlife/biodiversity to maximise the role these assets play.</p>	

Setting provision standards – accessibility

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

Accessibility standard (see Appendix L)

Recommended standard
There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such an open space typology as they cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation and are very much opportunity-led rather than demand-led.

Applying provision standards

- 13.14 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.
- 13.15 The aim is to provide 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 borough.

Summary and recommendations

- 13.16 Green corridors provide opportunities close to people’s homes for informal recreation, particularly walking and cycling, as part of every day routines, for example, travel to work or shops. The development of a linked green corridor network will help to provide opportunities for informal recreation and improve the health and well-being of the local community. In this way, green corridors can be integral to the achievement of targets for increased active participation.
- 13.17 There are already a number of footpaths and green corridor networks within the borough and consultation indicates that they are well used and valued. Future development needs to encompass linkages between large areas of open space, create opportunities to develop the green corridor network and utilise potential development sites. Development should consider both the needs of wildlife and humans.
- 13.18 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 informal recreation and alternative means of transport.

GC 1	Existing green corridors should be linked to open spaces in the Borough, including the Lee Valley Regional Park and Broxbourne Woods. This will provide opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport, using all types of open spaces.
GC 2	Those responsible for the green corridors in Broxbourne should aspire to the essential and desirable quality features. The Council should also work in tandem with all delivery partners, such as Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, in order to maximise the use of green corridors.