



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 11 JANUARY 2023
Subject	THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	CLlr Juliet Layton - Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services Email: juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability Email: Democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Lesley Davies, Planning Policy Officer Email: lesley.davies@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	<p>The purpose of the report is to update the 2017 version of the Green Infrastructure, Open Space and Play Space Strategy. The strategy is an evidence paper that supports the Local Plan and its update being Green to the Core.</p> <p>It provides guidelines on the above for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developers and their agents,• Statutory decision makers and consultees,• Town and parish councils,• land owners/managers,• The general public/community groups.
Annexes	Annex A – The Green Infrastructure Strategy
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to; I. Approve the Green Infrastructure Strategy for adoption.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond to the climate crisis• Make our local plan green to the core• Support health and wellbeing
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	In the Spring of 2021 the Draft GI Strategy was sent to a number of ‘critical friends’, to review the content. Contributors included the



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Cotswold National Landscape, Cotswold Water Park, The Woodland Trust and colleagues from within Cotswold District Council. This stage provided an opportunity to fact check, and fine-tune the strategy and gain support for it before it went out for public consultation in June 2021. The strategy was sent to all stakeholders, organisations and individuals that had signed up to the Local Plan consultation database

An eight-week consultation took place for the draft GI Strategy, from Monday 14 June to Monday 16 August (8 weeks).

All together 350 responses were received to the online survey from members of the public. 40 email responses. 33 organisations. Outreach opportunities/events took place online and in person presentations, as well as two focus groups. Two Press releases, twitter, facebook, LinkedIn, website updates, Members Portal and Survey Monkey were all used.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Green Infrastructure Strategy has been prepared to direct the design and delivery of Green Infrastructure in Cotswold District to maximise its environmental, community and economic benefits.
- 1.2** It is a guide for delivering high quality Green Infrastructure through new developments, community partnership and land management. It identifies a number of Green Infrastructure issues at a District and at a local scale. A range of evidence was used to inform the strategy, including legislation and guidance. The strategy forms part of the evidence base for the update of the Local Plan and other new plans and strategies, as well as providing further detail to reinforce the current Local Plan 2011-2031, and any further updates. Please note that the Cotswold District Built Facility Strategy 2021, the Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan and Strategic Assessment Report 2023 cover the strategic approach to sport in the District.
- 1.3 The Strategy is for:**
- Developers and their agents,
 - Statutory decision makers and consultees,
 - Town and parish councils,
 - land owners/managers,
 - The general public/community groups.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Green Infrastructure is defined by The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 defines green infrastructure as:

“A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.”

- 2.2** The Green Infrastructure Strategy (Annex A) replaces the extant Green Infrastructure Strategy published in 2017. The updated version responds to several significant changes that have occurred nationally and locally since 2017. For example:

- Green Infrastructure has become more widely recognised for its cross cutting benefits for enhancing the environment and improving people’s wellbeing;



- It reflects recent government advice and policy and advancements made at a national and county level; and
- It responds to the council's corporate strategy priorities, specifically making the local plan green to the core and addressing the Climate and Ecology emergency declarations.

2.3 The 2017 strategy makes reference to the Building with Nature Benchmark and was given candidate status, being one of the first in the country to achieve this status. The updated version reflects new policy and guidance, including, but not limited to Building with Nature guidance.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 The purpose of the strategy is to assist in the creation of sustainable places to live, work and play which are resilient to climate change and the challenges it brings.

3.2 The Covid 19 pandemic highlighted the importance of nature and access to local green spaces for peoples' health and wellbeing. The lockdown demonstrated the fragile balance between increased demand to access the countryside, and what was available on the doorstep. A number of studies, conducted by national bodies including Natural England and the National Trust have confirmed this.

3.3 The GI Strategy finds that the existing amount of accessible open spaces in the District is less than adequate, despite the fact that the Cotswold District is one of the largest rural Districts in England. The strategy provides guidance, actions and priorities to address this imbalance.

3.4 The strategy will aid the delivery of high quality green infrastructure in the district. It will inform the design, enhancement and creation of it through new developments, community partnership and land management. As a result, it will also help maximise and realise the environmental, community and economic benefits of GI. The strategy identifies a number of priorities at a district and neighbourhood scale. From the ambition to create more parks and expand the safe network of places to walk and cycle to encouraging smaller, quickly resolved actions. For example, the planting of bee friendly plants or putting in a new bench in a shady space.



- 3.5** The strategy forms part of the evidence base for the update of the Local Plan and other council strategies. It will also assist the Council to deliver the actions that are necessary as part of the Environment Act.
- 3.6** The maps that accompany the GI Strategy provide a visual guide to the Wellbeing, Water and Wildlife assets in the District, all key components of the Building with Nature benchmark. The maps focus on the District's 17 principal settlements (as defined by the policy DSI of the Local Plan). Altogether there are approximately 60 maps, which make a strictly paper version difficult to navigate and reproduce. An interactive electronic version of the strategy has been prepared. [Cotswold District Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) The style borrows heavily from other interactive planning documents such as the Local Plan and brings the document alive and more user friendly and easier to update.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** The Council could consider not to progress with adopting the strategy, but this would limit the Council's ability to achieve three of its five Corporate Strategy priorities:
- Making the Local Plan Green to the Core
 - Responding to Climate Change
 - Support Health and Wellbeing
 - In addition, the Council will not be able to achieve elements of the Climate Change Strategy and the Ecological Emergency. This section must be completed and include details of why identified alternative options are not preferred.)

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The GI Strategy provides evidence that there is a shortfall in the provision of Accessible Natural Greenspace at all levels across the district. The analysis work and mapping of the 17 principal settlements provides the evidence for the need of new accessible green spaces, where they should be located and the size of them.
- 5.2** An important element of the strategy has been involvement of Town and Parish Councils in shaping their response to GI issues in their towns and villages, all of which are important to each area and the bigger GI picture.
- 5.3** The strategy provides good practice guidance as well as the legislative background required for creating new GI for partners, community groups, Town and Parish Councils, landowners and the development industry.
- 5.4** To realise the full potential of GI and to deliver maximum benefits across the District will require the input and efforts of a broad range of partners and stakeholders at the national, county, district and local level. The research findings in this strategy form the basis of



critical information about the District. These findings provide real GI possibilities and solutions, in doing so they have the ability to deliver on more than one element of GI for the District.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** This report and its corresponding strategy do not raise financial implications for the Council or its partners. The strategy is part of the Local Plan evidence base and will be subject to periodic updates, which will be delivered as part of extant Forward Planning and Development Management existing resources.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** This report and its corresponding strategy do not raise any legal implications. It forms part of the Council's Local Plan evidence base and together with other evidence will help to ensure revised policies accord with the National Planning Policy Framework's tests of soundness.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The absence of an updated Green Infrastructure Strategy will limit the Council's ability to deliver a Local Plan, which is Green to the Core, its Climate Change Strategy, the Ecological Emergency action plan and Corporate Plan.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** The strategy will have a positive impact on Equalities in the Cotswold District. Within the strategy are a number of recommendations that contribute, positively, to Health and Wellbeing in the district as well as access to open/green spaces.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** This Strategy will aid the delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy, seeking to reduce carbon in the Cotswold District. This will be achieved through planning guidance for new buildings (i.e. Building with Nature), carbon sequestration through the installation of new green infrastructure; including, but not limited to, planting new trees, and increasing active travel by scooter, foot and bicycle.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1** None

(END)