

Green corridors

Definition

- 7.1 This open space type includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines with the primary purpose to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel and opportunities for wildlife migration.
- 7.2 Picture 7.1 below illustrates a green corridor (Jubilee Walk) within Harborough District.

Picture 7.1 – Jubilee Walk



PPG17 – the role of green corridors

- 7.3 With regards to green corridors the emphasis of PPG17 appears to be on urban areas. It uses the typology from the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce Report that is an ‘urban typology’.
- 7.4 Furthermore, elements of PPG17 are contradictory with the companion guide on this issue, where despite PPG17 suggesting that all corridors, including those in remote rural settlements should be included, the Companion Guide insinuates that unless a green corridor is used as a transport link between facilities i.e. home and school, town and sports facility etc, it should not be included within an audit.
- 7.5 This quality and accessibility analysis considers all types of green corridors identified by parish clerks, including public rights of way, disused railway lines, footpaths, towpaths and other specially designated areas. Although the role that all green

corridors play in the provision of open space and recreation within the district is recognised, the focus is however on important urban corridors and public rights of way.

Local context

- 7.6 The Harborough District Local Plan recognises the potential which the canal network offers for tourism and recreation within the district and encourages British Waterways to maintain this network. The importance of maintaining a balance between the recreational facility and the need to protect the amenity and ecology of the canal environment from development. It states that :

“the district council will grant planning permission for canal based recreation proposals where the following criteria are met:

- *the proposal does not adversely affect the character, appearance and nature conservation interest of the canal environment*
- *the proposal does not adversely affect the amenities of residents in the vicinity*
- *new mooring facilities and proposals involving new buildings are located close to existing settlements or wharves*
- *adequate parking provision is made.”*

Consultation

- 7.7 Consultation as part of the issues papers for the new local plan (*in future to be a Local Development Framework*) revealed that:

- *residents feel that dismantled railways are in need of protection*
- *rights of way are highly valued – the need for them to be protected and incorporated into new development is recognised*
- *safe pedestrian and cycle routes are also encouraged*
- *linear recreation routes within urban areas such as the canal and the Millennium Mile are highly valued*
- *routes for walking and cycling should be maintained to a high standard*

- 7.8 Consultation undertaken for this study highlighted the perceived value of green corridors, and a number of good practice examples were quoted. The Millennium Mile in Market Harborough was seen to be an excellent development and many residents would like to see this extended further to link up with other green corridors.

- 7.9 Sustrans have recently developed Cycle Route 6, running through Welland Park, from Derby to Oxford, which is part of the developing National Cycle route network.

- 7.10 In addition, a number of examples were highlighted by the Parish Councils as being examples of good practice within the more rural area. These include:

- Jubilee Walk, Leire
- Medbourne Towpath

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- Medbourne Dog Walk
 - Green Lane, Claybrooke Parva.
- 7.11 A number of green corridors act as visitor and tourist attractions for the local area. The more popular green corridors include:
- Brampton Valley Way
 - Grand Union Canal
- 7.12 In addition, there are a number of rural countryside walks which link a number of rural villages together.

The Audit

- 7.13 Public Rights of Way and the main green corridors within the urban area have been focused upon within the assessment. All comments from consultation regarding all types of green corridors have also been incorporated, and they are able to feed into the local analysis of this typology within Harborough.

Quantity

- 7.14 There is a vast network of green corridors within Harborough District, covering both the more urban and rural areas. In addition to some corridors which link urban areas together, there is a dispersed rural network which supports the needs of the rural population.
- 7.15 There was a significant majority of consultees that indicated the provision of green corridors within the district was about right, while only seven felt there to be a demand for additional sites.
- 7.16 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. “*
- 7.17 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”*
- 7.18 Provision of green corridors in Harborough is clearly well valued, therefore opportunities for further development of green corridors where there is demand should be taken. It is likely that a large proportion of future provision will need to be opportunity led.

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- 7.19 Green corridors represent an important chance to link urban and rural areas, and to promote transport by cycle and walking.

Quality

- 7.20 The overall quality of green corridors within the district appears to be good, and over 60% of green corridors were considered to be good or very good. Only four corridors were considered to be poor, and one very poor – the disused railway line in Shawell.
- 7.21 This indicates that Harborough is well served in terms of the quality of green corridors.

Accessibility

- 7.22 Again, the accessibility of green corridors in the district is good, and 69% are considered to have good accessibility. Only five corridors have poor accessibility, highlighting that the majority of the population of Harborough have good access to the various provisions within this typology.

Catchment

- 7.23 Consultation indicated that overall, people expect to be able to have easy walking access to a green corridor. Although the maximum suggested walking time to a green corridor was 30 minutes, both the mode and median response was 15. This suggests a demand for relatively local access to such types of open space. A full summary of the parish consultation is illustrated in table 7.1.

Table 7.1 – Time Prepared to Travel

		Overall - Harborough District - Parish Councils (All figures in minutes)					
		Median	Mean	Mode	Min	Max	75%
Walk		15	13	15	3	30	20 minutes
Cycle		8	7	5	2	15	
Bus		8	8	5	5	15	
Car		5	7	5	1	30	5 minutes

- 7.24 75% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to travel up to 20 minutes in order to reach a green corridor on foot. It is therefore suggested that this is the most appropriate accessibility standard for this type of open space. This is equivalent to approximately 1.6km.

Table 7.2 – Recommended Accessibility Standard

Local Standard – Green Corridors	
Recommended Travel Time	Estimated equivalent distance
20 minute walk	1.6km

Assessment of value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

- 7.25 Consultation has indicated that green corridors are highly valued by the residents of Harborough – there are few sites across the district where usage is considered to be low or insignificant including the disused railways in Shawell, Husbands Bosworth, Loddington and Drayton.
- 7.26 There are a number of green corridors which have very high quality and accessibility ratings and also are very well-used. These sites are therefore good examples and are very important to residents. They highly valued and should therefore be protected where possible. These sites include:
- Grand Union Canal - Great Bowden PC
 - Towpath - Medbourne
 - Dog Walk -Medbourne
 - Froleswoth Irrigation Lake Walk
 - Canal Tow Path – Wistow
 - Millennium Mile & canal towpath in Market Harborough
- 7.27 As expected the majority of green corridors where usage is high also tend to be of good quality. In addition, there are no green corridor sites where there is no usage, but high accessibility and high quality.
- 7.28 The only site which currently has no use, and is of poor quality and accessibility is the disused railway line in Shawell. In the first instance, investigations should be undertaken to consider improving the quality and accessibility of the site to encourage an increase in usage.
- 7.29 As expected there are few green corridors where use is high despite poor quality and poor accessibility. The footpath in Dag Lane, Husbands Bosworth is frequently used and has high accessibility, but is of poor quality, suggesting the user experience of the site would be enhanced if quality was improved.

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- 7.30 The disused railway line in Medbourne is frequently used, despite both poor quality and accessibility. In order to increase usage, further improvements to the quality and accessibility should be considered.

Summary

- 7.31 Consultation indicates that green corridors are highly valued within the district of Harborough, particularly the Millennium Mile in Market Harborough. Usage of almost all green corridors is high.
- 7.32 The quality and accessibility of green corridors is also good, with over 60% of corridors with good quality and accessibility.
- 7.33 PPG17 highlights that it is inappropriate to set quantitative provision standards for green corridors. Instead it states:
- “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.”*
- 7.34 Consultation highlights that the provision of green corridors is sufficient, however further corridors should be developed on a demand led basis when the opportunity arises.