

Green corridors

Definition

- 9.1 Green corridors include 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.
- 9.2 For the purposes of the green space assessment, Village Public Rights of Way have been audited. These are located within the settlement boundary of a village and lead away from the village. They include river and canal banks, designated rights of way, and accessible disused railways. They offer environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling or horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel.

PPG17 – the role of green corridors

- 9.3 PPG17 suggests that all corridors, including those in remote rural settlements should be included and highlights that the need for green corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling with the urban areas.
- 9.4 The role that all green corridors play in the provision of open space and recreation within local authority areas is recognised. This section focuses on the role of village rights of way.

Strategic context and consultation

Strategic context

- 9.5 In addition to improving sustainability and linking settlements with each other and with nearby rural countryside, green corridors represent an important chance to promote sustainable transport by cycle and on foot. Provision, use and maintenance of green corridors will be a key determinant in the achievement of increased targets surrounding increased physical activity and participation.
- 9.6 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”*
- 9.7 Therefore it is important to address any qualitative deficiencies of existing green corridors and capitalise on any opportunities to increase and enhance the existing 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.
- 9.8 The rural nature of Ryedale lends itself to the provision of linear open spaces helping to link routes and open spaces together. Public Rights of Way are of particular value to the local residents, particularly in facilitating access to areas of nearby countryside.
- 9.9 The Local Plan acknowledges that informal countryside recreation includes a range of activities such as nature trails, walks, cycling, horse riding, sight-seeing and

picnicking which may require the provision of facilities such as lay-bys, small car parks and picnic areas to assist enjoyment of the countryside. It states that footpaths and bridleways are an important informal recreational resource.

9.10 The plan states that the Council will seek to ensure improvements in the safety, convenience and attractiveness of facilities for pedestrians and in the Public Rights of Way network by:

- requiring new development to link to the Rights of Way network
- investigate the possibility of improving existing and creating new facilities for pedestrians, including combined walking, cycling and horse riding routes
- ensuring that existing public footpaths and bridleways will not be adversely affected by new development particularly where the Right of Way forms part of a designated National Trail
- ensuring that wherever possible, adequate provision is made for people with disabilities.

9.11 It is stated that existing public rights of way will normally be protected from development and these should be clearly signed to prevent conflict. It is the intention that Rights of Way would provide safe networks useful not only for recreational but also as a means of reaching work and shopping facilities for those within and close to market towns.

9.12 North Yorkshire County Council is preparing a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which will:

- provide an assessment of the extent that local rights of way meet current and likely future public need;
- assess opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and enjoyment;
- assess the accessibility of local rights of way to the blind, partially sighted and mobility restricted;
- contribute to the four shared transport priorities of the Local Transport Plan.

Consultation

9.13 Consultation on the provision of green corridors across Ryedale indicated that:

- throughout consultation it was apparent that green corridors were very well used and amongst the most popular open spaces in the district – many residents attending drop in sessions indicated that they would like to see more green corridors
- this level of use was reflected through the household surveys, where 65% of residents indicated that they use green corridors at least once per month indicating that rights of way are one of the most frequented resources in the district
- the household survey indicated rights of way to be the most frequently used of all open space typologies in the district for 18% of respondents. Of these

“regular users”, the most frequent recurring “ideal features” identified were clean and litter free, nature features and footpaths, all of which were important to over half of the sample. Highest rated safety factors included clean routes to open spaces, reputation, clear boundaries and other users on site. Of those that had experienced significant problems when using a right of way, 42% of these accounted it to dog fouling. The other most common problems were litter and poor maintenance. More generally, 50% of all respondents felt that the quality of sites was good, as opposed to 8% who felt that the quality was poor. This viewpoint echoed those expressed during more subjective consultations.

- many parish councils highlighted the importance of green corridors in providing links between settlements and reinforced the value of grants to improve the local green corridor network.

Current position

- 9.14 The linear nature of green corridors means it is inappropriate to audit and assess these spaces. Nevertheless their importance within the District should not be undermined as they provide an essential linkage between open spaces, settlements and the nearby countryside and promote sustainable transport.

Setting provision standards

- 9.15 In setting local standards for green corridors, it is only appropriate to set a quality vision and take into account any national or local standards. Full indication of consultation and justifications for the recommended local standards are provided within Appendix F. The recommended local standard has been summarised below

Quality Standard (see appendix F)

Recommended standard
<i>“A clean, well-maintained, safe and secure corridor with accessible pathways, linking major open spaces together, enhancing natural features and wildlife corridors that is suitable for a variety of activities. Corridors should provide ancillary facilities such as bins and picnic areas, seating and lighting in appropriate places and signage.”</i>
Justification
Green corridors play an important role in linking communities and provide an opportunity for exercise for local residents. It is therefore important that any new provision meets this local quality standard that incorporates the Council’s visions and public aspirations. Ultimately sites need to be safe with clear pathways and well maintained to encourage usage. Major routes also need to be well lit and secure.

Quantity Standard

- 9.16 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”.*

- 9.17 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”.

- 9.18 There are no national cycle routes currently running through Ryedale.

Accessibility Standard

- 9.19 There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for green corridors as they cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation and are very much opportunity-led rather than demand-led.

Applying provision standards

- 9.20 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.
- 9.21 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 District.

Summary

- 9.22 Green corridors provide opportunities close to homes for informal recreation, particularly walking and cycling, as part of every day routines, for example, travel to work or shops. Green corridors are also important to link local residents with nearby market towns. The development of a linked green corridor network will help to provide opportunities for informal recreation, promote sustainable transport and improve the health and well-being of the local community. Green corridors are key to the achievement of increased participation targets.
- 9.23 There are already a large number of footpaths and green corridor networks within the district and consultation indicates that they are amongst the most frequently used open space and are highly valued by local residents.
- 9.24 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 such as dismantled railway lines and cross country nature trails that already exist. Development should consider both the needs of wildlife and humans.
- 9.25 A network of multi-functional greenspace will contribute to the high quality natural and built environment required for existing and new sustainable communities. An integrated network of high quality green corridors will link open spaces together and develop links between local settlements and facilitate access to the local countryside. Green corridors also provide key opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport.

SECTION 9 – GREEN CORRIDORS

GC1	Ryedale District Council should work in tandem with North Yorkshire County Council and the PCT to help maximise the use of green corridors in the District and support the implementation of the Public Rights of Way Improvement plan.
GC2	Facilitate community involvement in the development and maintenance of green corridors across the district and provide support to Parish Councils for the enhancement of existing corridors.
GC3	Developing links between green corridors and other open spaces in the District should be a key priority for the Council to provide opportunities for informal recreation and sustainable methods of transport, particularly linking outlying villages with Market Towns.
GC4	Consider the implementation of green infrastructure study to help maximise the linkages of open spaces with green corridors, link rural settlements to the countryside and create a network of multi-functional greenspace across Ryedale. This should serve as an extension to this PPG17 Study.
GC5	Providers of green corridors in Ryedale should aspire to the quality vision