

Northumberland County Council

South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy

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strategic leisure

URS

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Section 1 - Introduction



1. Introduction

1.1 The South East Northumberland New Growth Point comprises the whole of the former Districts of Blyth Valley and Wansbeck and extends northwards into the former Rural Coalfield and westward to include the market town of Morpeth. The need for a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the South East Northumberland (SEN) New Growth Point (NGP) was highlighted in the South East Northumberland Programme of Development (PoD) as submitted to the Communities and Local Government in October 2008.

1.2 The Vision for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point is:

‘...to create a strengthened network of sustainable communities in South East Northumberland’s Corridor of Opportunity through broadening the range and improving the quality of housing, regenerating town centres, and supporting new economic enterprise and employment.’¹

1.3 The 10 year strategy (2010-2020) is regarded by the South East Northumberland Partnership as an integral component for delivering sustainable development and growth; for improving the quality of life of residents; and improving the quality of the natural and built environment within which people will live, work and visit.

1.4 This strategy defines specific issues, challenges and opportunities for South East Northumberland (SEN) that will ensure green infrastructure is developed in this designated growth area to realise benefits for the current and future residents, workers and visitors to this area.

1.5 This strategy has been developed by Strategic Leisure, (part of the Scott Wilson Group), in parallel with development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Northumberland; the two strategies have a common definition of Green Infrastructure, and share key principles and objectives.

Definition of Green Infrastructure (GI)

1.6 The definition of GI considered to be most appropriate for Northumberland, and therefore the South East Northumberland New Growth Point, is that contained in PPS 12:

‘Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both urban and rural, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities’.

South East Northumberland New Growth Point

1.7 As a response to the changing circumstances of South East Northumberland and the high levels of deprivation being experienced by its population, the Government approved the designation of South East Northumberland as a New Growth Point in 2008. The initiative is designed to accelerate growth in housing, regeneration and economic prosperity.

1.8 A key target identified by the Programme of Development is to realise a housing uplift of over 20% over the period 2008-2017, with the total net addition expected to be over 6,300 dwellings. The uplift in housing is to be complemented by an improvement to the residential offer and the quality of place; GI has a significant role in the delivery of these aspirations.

¹ South East Northumberland New Growth Point Programme of Development

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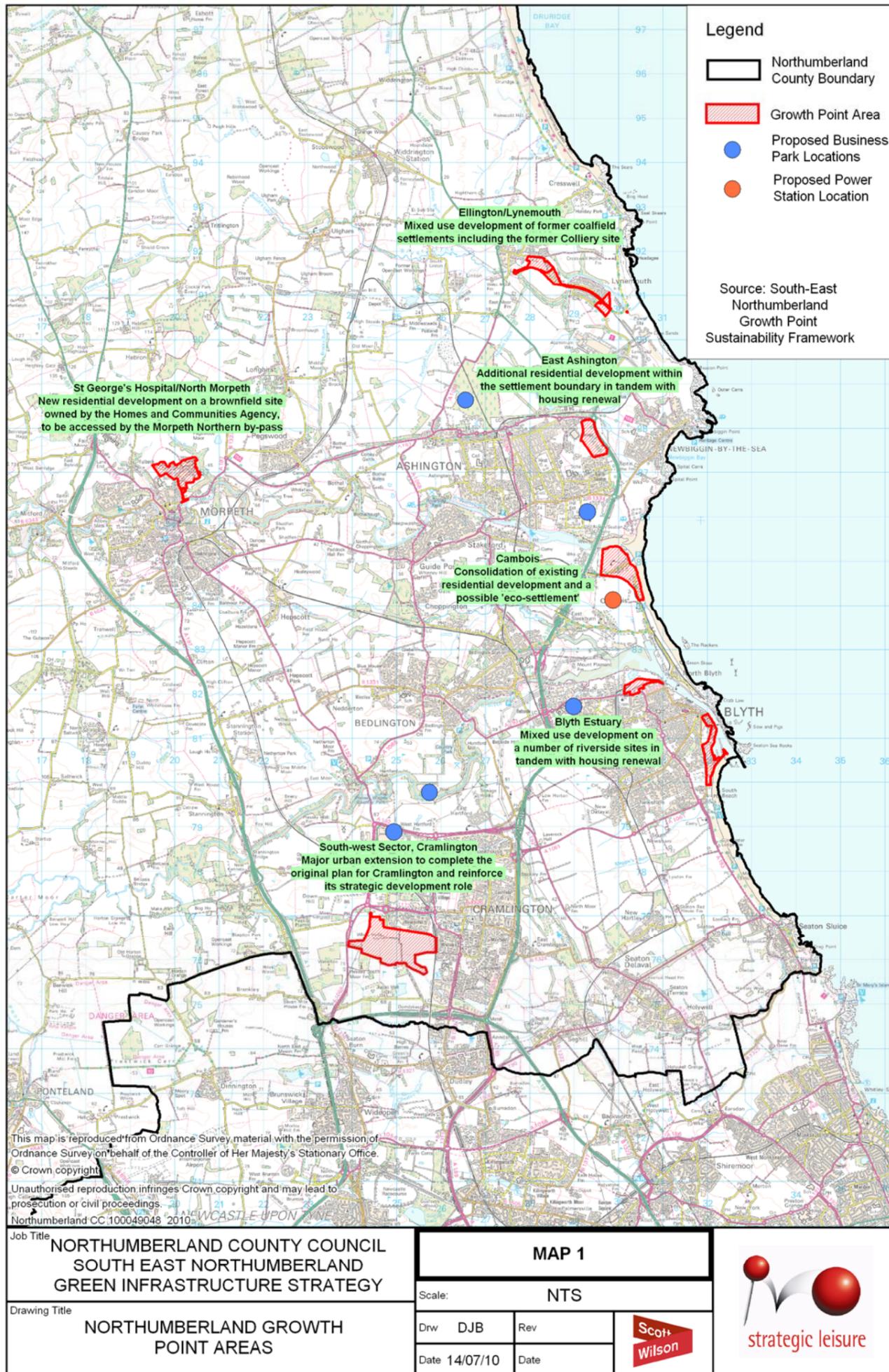
1.9 As defined by the Programme of Development, the NGP proposal is based around six strategically located “growth areas as shown overleaf”:

Table 1.1: The 6 Strategic Growth Areas

Strategic Growth Type	Location of Strategic Growth
Brownfield regeneration in main towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blyth Estuary – mixed use development that will include residential development on brownfield riverside sites within Blyth. These will complement business and commercial development opportunities linked to the New and Renewables Energy Centre (NaREC). • Cambois – to the north of Blyth Estuary, consolidation of existing residential development, and proposed creation of an “eco-settlement” • St. George’s Hospital / North Morpeth – major brownfield opportunities on the northern edge of Morpeth on a site to be redeveloped by English Partnerships; this will be accessed by the proposed Morpeth Northern By Pass which will also facilitate the opening up of employment sites in North Morpeth
Urban extensions to main towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Sector, Cramlington – this major urban extension will effectively complete the original plan for the New Town of Cramlington and complement its strategic economic development role. • East Ashington – this is a major eastwards extension to existing residential development that will be accommodated within the existing settlement boundary of the town
Brownfield regeneration in main villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellington / Lynemouth – mixed use development of these former coalfield settlements including the redevelopment of the former Ellington Colliery site

1.10 The 6 Growth Points are shown on Map 1 overleaf.

Map 1: Northumberland Growth Point Areas



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1.11 Although these growth areas are spatially separate, a key purpose of GI is to ensure that green linkages are established between them. Similarly, GI in South East Northumberland is to link with and complement the GI network and GI strategies of North Tyneside, Newcastle Gateshead and the wider Northumberland area (see below). Specific proposals include:

- A proposed power plant site in Cambois
- The relocation site of the Port of Blyth to the north side of the Blyth Estuary,
- A variety of business and industrial parks (NaREC) Technology Park, Wansbeck Business Park, Lintonville Enterprise Park, North Seaton Industrial Park, Ashwood Business Park, West Hartford Business Park, and Northumberland Business Park, Cramlington Industrial Estates;
- New residential development across the area; and
- Enhancement to Queen Elizabeth II Country Park, Ashington Riverside Park and Ashington Community Woods.

1.12 The Programme of Development references specific initiatives to which this GI strategy should give specific attention:

- Continue to build close partnership working with key landowners such as UK Coal and HJ Banks;
- Explore the opportunity to utilise Seaton Delaval Hall (recently acquired by The National Trust) and build upon the work of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes in order to foster greater collaboration with North Tyneside and Newcastle Gateshead in terms of developing strategic access networks and enhancement of wildlife corridors;
- Examine the potential impact on biodiversity and water resources of proposed development on both the north and south side of the Blyth Estuary;
- Improve linkages around Cramlington and the rail corridor, and pedestrian crossings of key road and railway;
- Create gateway areas for tourism access into the countryside at Morpeth (north of the town and around St George’s hospital);
- Link with and improve to footpaths and cycleways from urban edge to the countryside and enhancement and new provision of green space in Ellington, and Lynemouth;
- Link with and improve footpaths and cycleways from urban edge to the countryside and enhancement of green space in and around Ashington; and
- Link with and improve footpaths and cycleways from urban edge to the countryside and enhancement of green space in and around Blyth.

Transport Initiatives

1.13 There are three transport initiatives integral to South East Northumberland and therefore the future GI network:

Table 1.2: South East Northumberland Growth Point Transport Initiatives

Transport Initiative	Scheme Priorities	Key Projects
South East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving public transport services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of modern

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Transport Initiative	Scheme Priorities	Key Projects
Northumberland Public Transport Corridor	<p>and infrastructure along the inter-urban A189 “corridor of opportunity” between South East Northumberland and the Tyne & Wear City Region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities include developing a system that supports the energy sector development plans for Blyth; improves residential and commercial linkages across the area; supports the new Northumberland College site; and improves sustainable travel to work patterns of the City Region. 	<p>passenger services using the existing freight line linking Tyneside with Blyth and Ashington. The project will also establish new stations serving existing urban communities and help open up mixed-use development sites. It will also be integrated with local bus networks, the Metro and park & ride facilities.</p>
Morpeth Northern Bypass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the final section of the link between South East Northumberland and the A1, and is considered a vital project to unlocking the full benefits of the previous investment in the Ashington Northern Relief Road and Pegswood Bypass schemes which are now complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted to significantly alleviate congestion in Morpeth town centre, providing relief to the 19th century Telford Bridge and improving journey reliability, particularly for public transport. It will also help to enable development of the North Morpeth / St George's Hospital that will create housing and employment opportunities.

Scope of the South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 1.14 The purpose of this strategy is to determine the level, nature and quality of existing green infrastructure (GI); identify gaps and surpluses in provision; and examine new opportunities to extend the GI network across the South East Northumberland New Growth Point and the within defined growth areas, to address recognised challenges of the existing landscape, and in particular the poor quality of much of its urban environment. The main output of the strategy will be to establish standards for provision of GI and the identification of new opportunities for developing GI.
- 1.15 As a clearly defined and agreed series of GI parameters, the strategy will ensure that all stakeholders involved in the development of South East Northumberland New Growth Point can easily access and give early consideration to GI requirements across the different stages of development. A key premise of the South East Northumberland New Growth Point Programme of Development), which is reflected throughout this strategy, is that development should be fundamentally concerned with improving quality of life and the quality of place. Appropriately considered and designed development is to be utilised as a vehicle for delivering these aspirations, with GI presenting one of the principal building blocks.
- 1.16 To drive sustainable change and regeneration, it is important that GI becomes one of the building blocks of the planning and development process and is given equal consideration alongside other infrastructural forms. In this respect, the strategy and its recommendations should be reflected within the preparation of the new authority's LDF Core Strategy.

South East Northumberland – A Profile

Demography

- 1.17 South East Northumberland (covering the former Blyth and Wansbeck districts) is the smallest of the three service areas in Northumberland, but the most densely populated.
- 1.18 With a population of over 150,000, South East Northumberland contains around half of the population of Northumberland within little more than 5% of the County's total land area (155km²); the area is 20 times more densely populated than the North and West areas. The principal towns are Blyth (where traditional industries have declined), Ashington (a former coalmining community), Cramlington (a new town which has continued to grow steadily), each of a roughly proportionate size and with similar functions in terms of retail and services. Ashington, Blyth and Cramlington are all towns with significant regeneration projects.
- 1.19 Other smaller settlements include Ellington, Lynemouth and Linton, Newbiggin-By-The-Sea (the main coastal town), Bedlington, Seaton Sluice, Seaton Valley, New Hartley, Choppington, Stakeford, and Guide Post.
- 1.20 The South East Northumberland Growth Point area is not co-terminus with the southeast sub area boundary; Morpeth, despite being located in the North sub area, is actually part of the South East Northumberland New Growth Point. Morpeth is a more traditional market town and service centre.
- 1.21 A summary of the 10 locality profiles is shown overleaf; this highlights the similarities and significant differences between South East Northumberland's settlements:

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Table 1.3: Summary of Settlement Profiles

Settlement	Summary Profile	Key Points
Ashington		
East	<p>Population – 14,357</p> <p>Area – 8.9km²</p> <p>Age profile – relatively low numbers of old people</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 30.4% of population claim benefits 40.9% of population do not own a car/van</p> <p>Key Features – locality includes Hirst and North Seaton, and II Country Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second smallest area in Northumberland • Second highest population density in Northumberland at 1,622 per km² • Heavy reliance on public transport • 26.1% of the population have a long term limiting illness • High levels of unemployment – only 2/3 of the working age population are employed • Income deprivation affects families and children
West	<p>Population – 13,151</p> <p>Area – 14.7km²</p> <p>Age profile – falling numbers of young people, but just under a fifth of the population</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 64.1% of population are economically active</p> <p>Key Features – locality includes Hirst and North Seaton, and Queen Elizabeth II Country Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density 893 per km² • 26.5% of the working age population have a permanent illness • Relatively high levels of employment • Nearly 50% of the housing stock is terraced

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Settlement	Summary Profile	Key Points
Bedlington		
East	<p>Population – 8,767</p> <p>Area – 11.4km²</p> <p>Age profile – around a fifth of the population are older people</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 25% of population claim benefits 37.8% of population do not own a car/van</p> <p>Key Features – locality includes Cambois and North Seaton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density at 769 per km² • Only 40.8% of the population are married – lowest level in whole of Northumberland • Heavy reliance on public transport • 25.9% of the population have a long term limiting illness • High levels of unemployment – only around 2/3 of the working age population are employed • Income deprivation affects families
West	<p>Population – 10,097</p> <p>Area – 13.4 km²</p> <p>Age profile – falling numbers of young people; around a fifth of the population are older people</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 67.9% of population are economically active</p> <p>High levels of car ownership</p> <p>Key Features – locality includes Nedderton and Bedlington town centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density 752 per km² • 72.9% of houses are owner-occupied • Low levels of unemployment

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Settlement	Summary Profile	Key Points
Blyth	<p>Population - 35,155</p> <p>Area – 19.1km²</p> <p>Age profile – increasing numbers of old people and falling numbers of young people</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 24% of the population claim benefits 35.9% of population do not own a car/van</p> <p>Key features include South Beach, Blyth Harbour and Blyth town centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most densely populated area in Northumberland (1,319 per km²) • Heavy reliance on public transport • Highest levels of income deprivation for older people in Northumberland • High levels of unemployment • High levels of deprivation
Choppington, Stakeford and Guidepost	<p>Population – 9,594</p> <p>Area – 9.8km²</p> <p>Age profile – predominantly working age</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 62.1 of the population are economically active</p> <p>High levels of car ownership</p> <p>Key features - these three towns are the main locality settlements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density 983 per km² • Heavy reliance on private transport • Low levels of unemployment • 25% of children are income deprived

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Settlement	Summary Profile	Key Points
Cramlington	<p>Population – 30,119</p> <p>Area – 22.8km²</p> <p>Age profile – increasing numbers of old people, although this area has the lowest number of older people in any area of Northumberland, and falling numbers of young people</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 71% of the population are economically active, predominantly in manufacturing industries</p> <p>High levels of car ownership</p> <p>Key features include Cramlington Town Centre and several large industrial estates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density 1,319 per km² • Lowest numbers of older people in any area of Northumberland • Low levels of unemployment • Low levels of deprivation
Ellington, Lynemouth and Linton	<p>Population – 4,521</p> <p>Area – 13.8 km²</p> <p>Age profile – falling numbers of young people</p> <p>Economic Activity - around 63.5% of the population are economically active, predominantly in manufacturing industries</p> <p>High levels of car ownership</p> <p>Key features – these settlements are the most northerly in South East Northumberland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population density 329 per km² – least densely populated area in Northumberland • Heavy reliance on private transport • Relatively low levels of unemployment • Levels of deprivation most acute for children and older people, and almost a fifth of the working age population claim a benefit

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Settlement	Summary Profile	Key Points
Newbiggin – by the Sea	<p>Population – 5,719</p> <p>Area – 8.7 km²</p> <p>Age profile – falling numbers of young people, but still just under a fifth of overall population</p> <p>Economic Activity – 30.6% of the working age population claim a benefit – the highest level of all 27 localities; 41.9% of households do not have access to a car</p> <p>Key features – the locality area includes the town of Newbiggin, Woodhorn museum and Alcan smelting works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallest locality area in Northumberland • Population density 530 km² – highest number of one person households of Northumberland’s 27 localities • 10.4% of over 16s in the locality are divorced – the highest rate in the county • Heavy reliance on private transport • High levels of unemployment • High levels of both income and employment deprivation, • 14% of all hospital admissions are due to coronary disease – the highest level anywhere in Northumberland
Seaton Valley	<p>Population – 15,040</p> <p>Area – 28.4 km²</p> <p>Age profile – young people comprise just under a fifth of overall population</p> <p>Economic Activity – 64.5% of the working age population are economically active</p> <p>Key features – the locality area includes Seaton Delaval, Seghill, New Hartley, Holywell and Seaton Sluice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest of the 10 localities in South East Northumberland • Population density 661 per km² • Heavy reliance on private transport – 73.5% of the local population travel outside of Northumberland to work • Over a third of the overall housing stock is classified as non-decent, or in disrepair

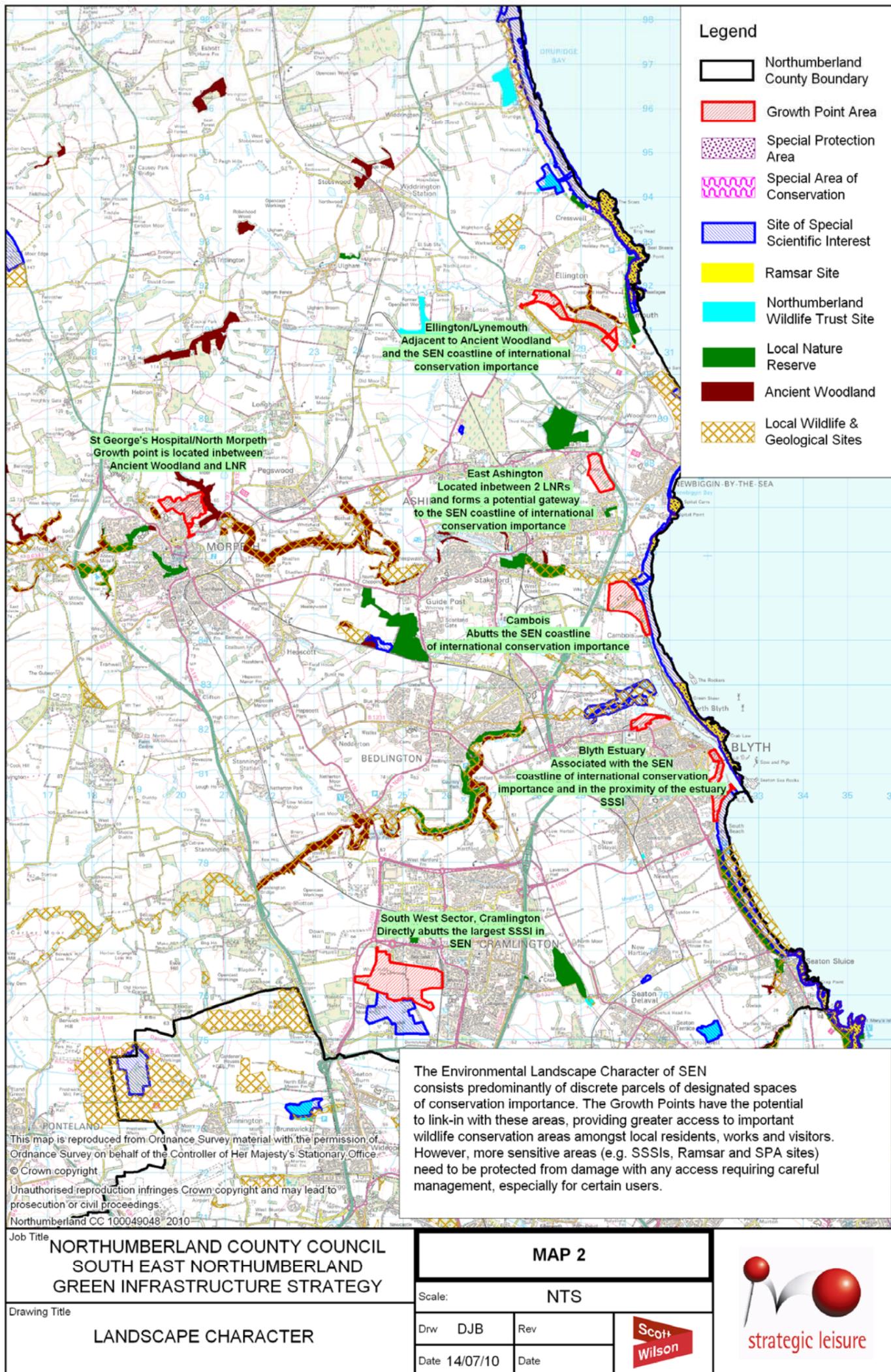
Source: Area and Locality Profiles, South East Northumberland (NCC website 2010/11)

- 1.23 South East Northumberland has a higher percentage of children (18.3%), a higher percentage of working age (61.8%) and a lower percentage of retired people (19.9%) than Northumberland as a whole.
- 1.24 South East Northumberland has the greatest concentrations of deprivation within Northumberland (Source: Northumberland Indices of Deprivation 2007). 15 of the Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the area are ranked amongst the most deprived 10% of all SOAs in England (Hirst, Croft, College, Newbiggin East, Cowpen, Newsham and New Delaval, Seaton, Cramlington West, Park, Newbiggin West, Central, Kitty Brewster, Sleekburn, Bedlington East).
- 1.25 The greatest concerns in relation to deprivation are:
- Health inequality;
 - Low educational and skills attainment;
 - Low economic and enterprise activity, and access to employment;
 - Fear of crime and disorder;
 - Lack of access to decent and affordable housing; and
 - The need for the regeneration of older housing and town centres.
- (Source: Northumberland Sustainability Strategy, NCC 2007)
- 1.26 The highest percentage of people works in manufacturing (18.6%), followed by retail with 15.8% and 13.9% in health and social care. Unemployment is high in South East Northumberland, as evidenced by the large % of working age people claiming benefits – a significantly higher percentage than across the whole of Northumberland. As a consequence South East Northumberland has high levels of employment and income deprivation than elsewhere in the county, and the lowest average household income of the three service areas.

South East Northumberland Landscape Character

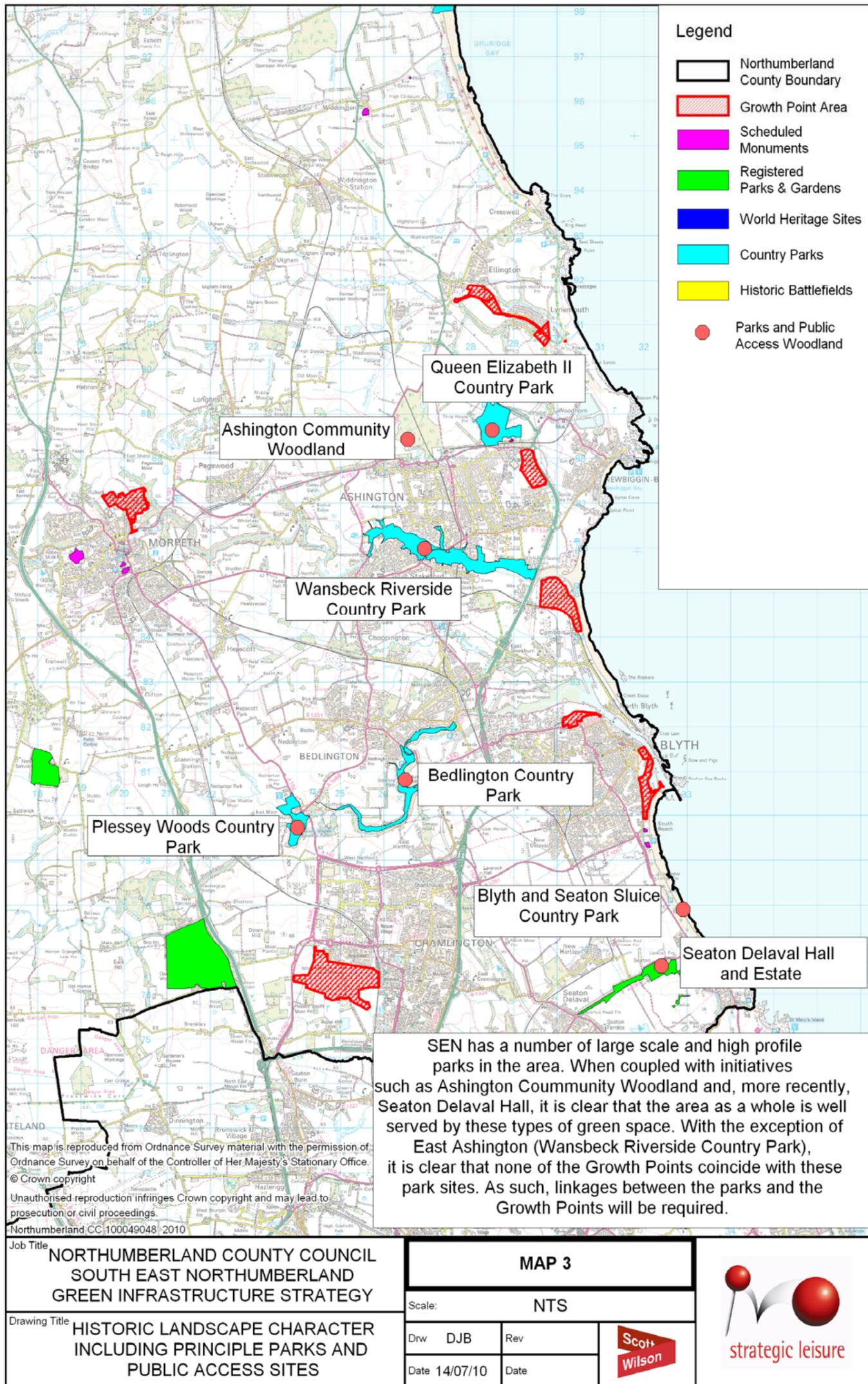
- 1.27 The landscape of South East Northumberland falls largely within the Coastal Plain, although the western edge of the area also encompasses the Mid Northumberland character area. (Source: emerging Landscape Character Assessment for Northumberland, NCC website 2010/11). Map 2 shows the landscape character of South East Northumberland and the New Growth Point.

Map 2: Landscape Character



- 1.28 The landscape has a strong urban and urban fringe landscape character, interspersed with pockets of countryside settings of farmland and historic woodland, and is dissected by the Wansbeck and Blyth rivers and their tributaries.
- 1.29 The influence of the region's industrial industry remains in evidence, with large-scale open-cast mining sites and deep mine spoil heaps features of landscape. This has had the effect of removing many of the area's historic landscape features. Some of the mining sites have been restored, including for recreational purposes e.g. country parks, lakes and open grassland. Map 3 shows the historic landscape character of South East Northumberland.

Map 3: Historic Landscape Character



- 1.30 The Coastal Plain contains sweeping sandy beaches and rocky headlands interspersed with development, urban and industrial. One of the principal features of the coastline is the Port of Blyth located on the Blyth Estuary, with its original purpose being coal exports. Despite the decline of the coal mining industry, the Port of Blyth has continued to operate with the port now being a key entry point for the importing of wind turbines. The port is the subject of plans for relocation to the north side of the estuary.
- 1.31 The main natural landscape assets of South East Northumberland are its beaches, although the quality of the vistas they offer is reduced in places by the backdrop of industrialised development, especially around Blyth. The beach area has been significantly improved in recent years, with the aim being to ensure that families can once more have an enjoyable experience of the area's coastal resources. These developments, which include the creation of new beach chalets, form part of the wider regeneration of the Blyth Quayside area which have revitalised the retail offer in this area.
- 1.32 Newbiggin-By-The-Sea, once a popular tourist village, still retains some of its seaside character, with further initiatives being introduced recently to return the beach area to its former glory. A new tidal defence and coastal improvement programme has been implemented to establish a permanent off-shore breakwater. This breakwater also includes the UK's first permanent off-shore sculpture, 'The Couple'. Both elements are designed to increase the enjoyment of the beach area.
- 1.33 The coastal zone between Blyth and Seaton Sluice is predominantly beach and dunes foreshore covering some 5kms. The south beach in Blyth is the most accessible and has recently benefited from permanent beach huts. However, there are other car parks at points along the stretch of coastline and a surfaced track crosses the length of the dunes which accommodates walkers, joggers and cyclists, and is suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.
- 1.34 The agricultural sector is limited in both the Coastal Plain and Mid Northumberland, although where it is located, activities include both arable and grazing.
- 1.35 The urban environment of South East Northumberland is relatively poor in quality, with some particularly densely populated areas, significant urban deprivation in the towns of Ashington, Blyth, and Cramlington, and very poor housing infrastructure in the Seaton Valley area.
- 1.36 South East Northumberland as a whole is subject to a variety of different pressures. In the east, much of this pressure is being derived from development and necessary changes in land-use as former mining sites undergo restoration that in turn have resulted in increased demand for recreation, and from agriculture intensification. In the west, the pressure is derived from an increasing move to arable farming, increasing demand for commuter belt properties in rural areas and the implications for villages, and increased demand for leisure resources such as golf courses.

Key Planning Implications

- 1.37 The regional planning context is established through the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East which highlights that GI be utilised to enhance the quality, diversity and local distinctiveness of the environment throughout the region and in establishing links in and around the region's towns and cities.
- 1.38 The Northumberland Consolidated Planning Policy Framework sets out the existing planning policy framework for Northumberland (i.e. existing saved policies of local plans; adopted Core Strategies, etc).
- 1.39 Other key planning documents providing the context for this GI strategy are summarised in Appendix 3. The key planning implications highlighted in these, and therefore the priorities to which this South East Northumberland GI Strategy should respond are as follows:
- 1.40 Improving the sense of place and identity of South East Northumberland as a place in which to live, work and invest, through enhancing its existing distinctive cultural and environmental assets. This revolves around the role of the towns, their townscapes and their heritage and the need to strengthen linkages between them and their Tyneside neighbours.

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- 1.41 Establishing a suitable framework that enables all types of developers to appreciate the cumulative and mutually beneficial opportunities presented by GI.
- 1.42 Bringing key partners together to ensure the integration of broader 'place making' priorities in the planning, design and development of projects.
- 1.43 The wealth of statutory and non statutory designated areas and networks of sites and habitats that serve as key ecological assets; Ramsar, Special Protection Area, SSSI, and local nature reserve designations are all included in the New Growth Point area. GI can be used as a means of engaging all of these stakeholders and forging a more consistent and holistic approach to biodiversity protection and enhancement.
- Ensure good access to green and open space by the community and that such spaces are retained, are of high quality, and attractive to users; and have the potential to contribute to sustainable principles and environmental enhancements.
 - Use GI as a mechanism to encourage initiatives in development projects that will create more sustainable structures through design, for example green roofs that help reduce energy through to encouraging the integration of green spaces and vegetative shading.
 - Protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environments including historic assets and heritage interest, the green belt, the built environment, nature conservation, biodiversity and especially the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar Site and Blyth Valley's SSSIs,
 - Ensuring a balance between agricultural, access and recreational needs
 - Contributing to the creation of sustainable communities
 - Improving the design and linkages of open space
 - Improving urban environments with more open space and woodland
 - Supporting and reflecting the aspirations of the Environmental Enhancement Strategy
 - Facilitating implementation of a signed and managed coastal route
- 1.44 The designation of various employment, residential and economic development zones:
- Blyth and the Blyth Valley are identified for considerable opportunity in low carbon and renewable technologies (via NaREC²);
 - Ashington is identified as a town which is to receive new investment in retail, but which still requires investment in leisure, culture and public realm spaces;
 - Cramlington is identified as a planned new settlement which will have a strategic role as a place of residence and industry.
 - Morpeth is identified for its tourism potential as a Market Town full of character; and
 - Seaton Delaval Hall is considered a valuable cultural, heritage and tourism resource with a significant strategic role for the visitor economy.

²NaREC - New and Renewable Energy Centre (NaREC) is a regional project which is a national centre specialising in renewable energy and low carbon generation techniques, utilising wind, wave, tidal, solar photo voltaics and thermal power

Section 2 - Vision, Aims and Benefits



2. Vision, Aims and Benefits

- 2.1 The population of Northumberland is expected to grow by 6,000 residents in the next 15-20 years. NCC and its partners are determined to ensure that the County's economic growth, investment and community life offer a vibrant quality of life, the sense of place and the quality of the natural environment for both existing and new communities is enhanced and improved.
- 2.2 This sentiment is particularly vital to the South East Northumberland New Growth Point area; this is where the majority of the population live, where key regeneration projects to improve economic prosperity will take place, and where there will be most growth in relation to urban development. Its main settlements of Ashington, Blyth, and Cramlington are each identified as residential growth points, whilst Morpeth will retain its status as the area's main market town and service centre.

Vision

- 2.3 The Vision for Green Infrastructure in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point is:

'To develop an accessible, good quality, green infrastructure network in the New Growth Point area by 2020, which:

- **Creates a distinct sense of identity and place**
- **Protects, improves and enhances the quality of the existing environment for existing and new communities, and potential development partners**
- **Contributes to the sustainability of its diverse communities**
- **Ensure the opportunities for improved accessibility and linkages, recreational enjoyment, enhanced biodiversity and the future designation of sites of natural/environmental/historical significance.'**

- 2.4 The Vision seeks to ensure that environmental quality is given high priority within the overall planning approach to the New Growth Point. Improving and enhancing existing open space through better design, maintenance and linkages is as critical, particularly in the urban areas, as is the development of new open space; both will contribute to sustainable communities, and the overall regeneration of South East Northumberland.

Aims

- 2.5 The 6 main aims of this GI strategy are to:

- **Provide the strategic context and rationale for the New Growth Point planning policy to improve existing poor quality open space, protect existing and new sites of strategic importance, and develop new multifunctional green, grey-green and open spaces, to provide suitable and sufficient green infrastructure for recreation, amenity and conservation purposes**
- **Create a greater sense of place within South East Northumberland by promoting regeneration, development and design resulting in significant environmental enhancement**

- **Ensure coherent connectivity between existing and new green corridors, gray-green links and open spaces to create a sustainable local community transport network accessible to all, which will help address identified issues of poor health, and the need to improve quality of life**
- **Continue to explore and promote the benefits of green infrastructure provision in addressing the causes and effects of climate change.**
- **Contribute to the overall regeneration and economic development aims for South East Northumberland, and the development of sustainable communities**
- **Demonstrate the benefits of green infrastructure for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point**

Benefits of Green Infrastructure in South East Northumberland

2.5 A well-planned and integrated green infrastructure network will deliver a number of significant benefits for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point:

- Improved and enhanced environments which contribute to community sustainability, and make South East Northumberland a high quality place in which to live, work, visit and invest
- Promotion of the area's distinctiveness, identity and an overall sense of place
- Maximising the accessibility of existing green and open space by improving connectivity between existing and new neighbourhoods, to create sustainable links, benefitting local people
- Contributing to increased community engagement and involvement
- A planned and balanced approach to provision of all open space and green corridors, to ensure appropriate protection, enhancement and conservation of sites of biodiversity, historic, conservation and strategic importance, whilst addressing the effects of climate change, and providing for recreational, residential, economic and agricultural needs
- Recognition of the need for good quality, well-considered and planned design for all forms of development
- Provision of improved opportunities for participation in informal recreation which will contribute to improved community and individual health
- Increased opportunities to improve/recreate existing landscapes, key to the character of the area, which have been damaged or lost through previous development
- Contribution to overall environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and climate change adaptation
- Enhancing, improving and linking South East Northumberland's natural, heritage, and tourism assets for the benefit of the local area and the sub-region

2.6 In addition, this strategy will contribute to the overall development and growth framework for South East Northumberland by raising the profile, purpose and value of green infrastructure. It will provide context for other plans and strategies, including the NCC Local Development Framework, the NCC GI Strategy, Local Biodiversity Action Plans and nature conservation plans, plus infrastructure planning for new homes, transport routes and economic investment.

2.7 The New Growth Point Programme of Development highlights the need for development to add value to and improve the coordination of green infrastructure initiatives, and specifically states that this GI strategy should cover the following:

- Draw on and develop the existing work, for example that delivered through the former Greening for Growth environment regeneration programme and the Castle, Woods and Water Project.
- Recognise the multi-functionality of green space and the desirability of creating properly linked green space.
- Support measures which improve resilience to climate change impacts and mitigate against climate change.
- Provide a focus on an implementation plan for the key communities and growth areas identified within the NGP.
- Look in depth at the existing green infrastructure, the role it performs, its current condition, and opportunities for its enhancement together with an assessment of the needs of that community.
- Build upon the opportunity for the three northern New Growth Points to work together across the Tyne and Wear City Region.

Key GI Principles

2.8 Given the diversity of the Growth Point Area, and the wide agenda (as illustrated above), which green infrastructure needs to address, it is important to establish a set of overarching planning and delivery principles to guide its future provision across South East Northumberland. These are:

- **Multi-functionality** – provision of open space and green corridors capable of providing a range of benefits, opportunities and uses, often simultaneously, at both local and sub-regional scale.
- **Connectivity** – ensuring existing and new open spaces and green corridors are part of a linked network to facilitate access, and use, as a sustainable local transport network.
- **Collaboration** – ensuring understanding of, and buy in to, the aims for green infrastructure across South East Northumberland, and specifically in the New Growth Point, facilitating delivery partnerships across public, private and the third sectors.

Section 3 - Existing South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Assets



3. Existing South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Assets

Existing Green Infrastructure Assets

3.1 This South East Northumberland New Growth Point GI strategy should be considered as a hybrid of the sub regional (i.e. the Northumberland GI Strategy), and the district scale plans, as set out in the NE Green Infrastructure Planning Guide. The scale of assets covered by this strategy therefore include:

Table 3.1: Scale of Green Infrastructure Assets covered by the South East Northumberland New Growth Point GI Strategy

Scale	Green Infrastructure Asset
Sub Regional	Significant or extensive public parks and gardens e.g. country parks, forest parks
	Local Nature Reserves
	Main river corridors and watercourses e.g. Wansbeck, Blyth
	Strategic recreational routes
	Local Wildlife and Geological Sites (SNCIs as was)
	Northumberland Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves
	Significant archaeological and historic sites
	Strategic stretches of coastline
District Level	Public parks and gardens
	Public rights of way and greenways (waggonways in South East Northumberland)
	Local cycle routes
	Playing fields
	Informal green spaces
	Accessible woodlands
	Watercourses, reservoirs, water bodies and wetlands
	Other areas of coastal access

Audit of Existing Green Infrastructure Assets

3.2 Existing green infrastructure assets in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point area are identified by broad typology below. Identification of the existing assets has been undertaken through a review of Geographical Information System (GIS) datasets; the qualitative and quantitative assessment of these assets has been informed by site visits and visual assessment.

Natural Environment

3.3 South East Northumberland forms part of the Northumbria Coal Measures natural character area³, which extends across central County Durham and much of Tyne and Wear.

3.4 Urban and industrial development have had a consequence of limiting natural and semi-natural habitats. Those that remain are relatively small-scale and spatially disparate. The legacy of mining has contributed to the creation of new landscapes and habitats for wildlife, with many, including woodland, species rich grassland and wetlands, associated with reclaimed sites. Analysis of GIS datasets identifies the following natural assets:

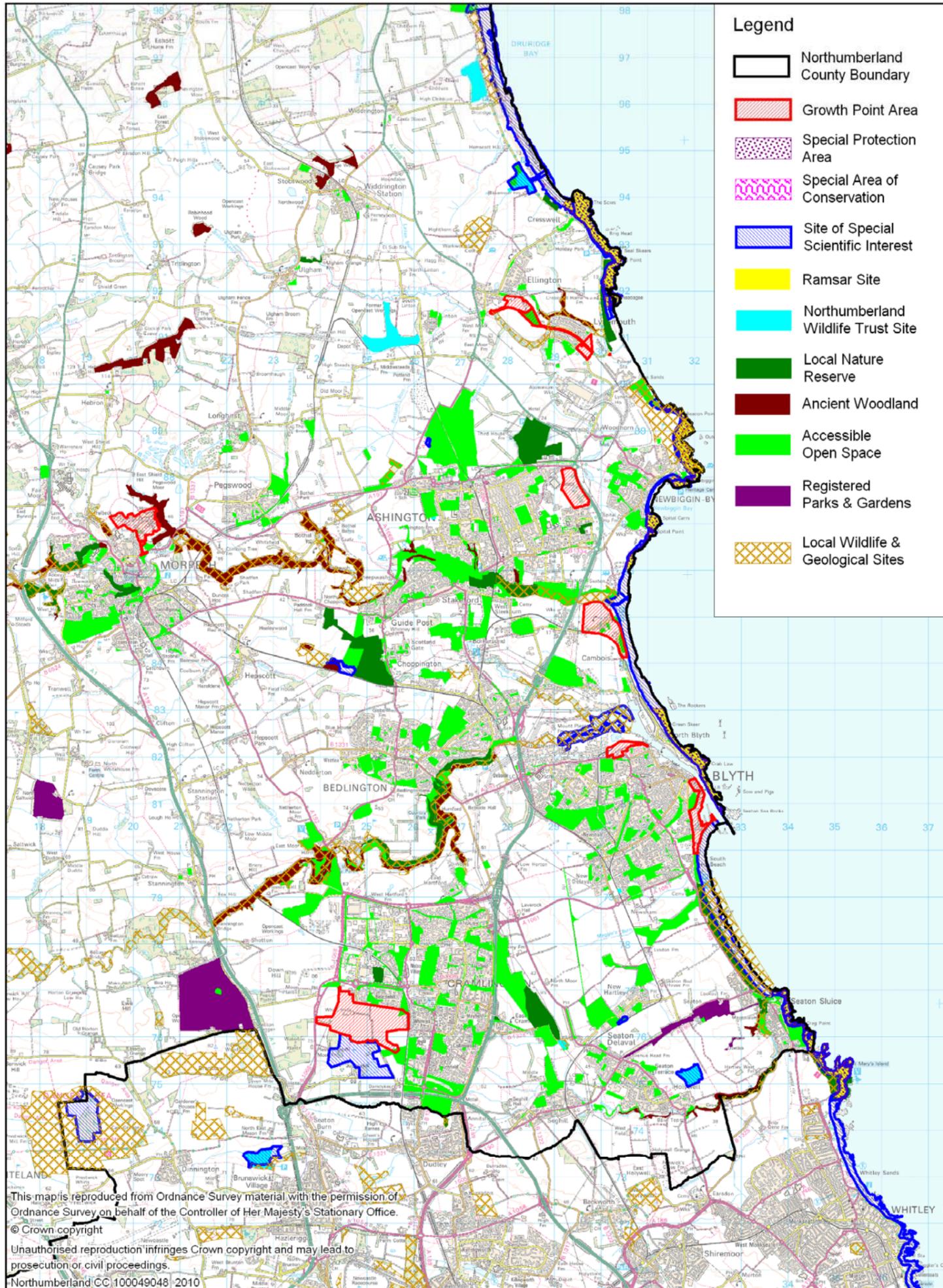
- 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- 19 Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- 40 Ancient Woodlands (all discrete sites)
- 2 main rivers and river corridors
- The coastal zone

³ Part of Natural England's strategy to define the local distinctiveness of each part of England, to identify their characteristic wildlife and natural features

- Druridge Bay
- 5 country parks
- 8 scheduled monuments, including Morpeth Castle, Morpeth Old Bridge, the coastal artillery battery on Blyth Links, Motte and Bailey Castle, Newminster Abbey and Woodhorn Colliery;
- 344 listed buildings, including four Grade I listings and 20 Grade II* listings; and
- 1 registered historic park and garden (Seaton Delaval)
- Ashington Community Woodland
- 255km of Public Rights of Way, comprising 184 km of footpath, 46km of bridleways, and 2km of byways
- A number of local ecological and geological sites

3.5 The existing green infrastructure of South East Northumberland is shown in Map 4 overleaf.

Map 4: Green Infrastructure of South East Northumberland



Job Title	NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY		MAP 4		
Drawing Title	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OF SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND		Scale: NTS		
	Drw DJB	Rev			
	Date 31/03/11	Date			

Wetlands

- 3.6 These areas are principally associated with the coastal zone, which provide shelter for a variety of bird species, including migrating species such as the purple sandpiper and turnstone at internationally important levels.
- 3.7 The areas they use are designated as the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar Site⁴. This designation includes sections of coast between Creswell and Lynemouth, to the north and south of Newbiggin-By-the-Sea, and between North Blyth and Seaton Sea Rock. Much of the coastal zone is also designated as the Northumberland Shore SSSI⁵ which is of national importance for a range of migratory and wintering waders. This SSSI extends along parts of the Blyth Estuary.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 3.8 SSSI's⁶ in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point, include Willow Barn Pasture, Hawthorne Cottage Pasture, New Hartley Ponds and Holywell Ponds. These SSSIs are much smaller in scale than the Northumberland Shore SSSI and all are spatially isolated.
- 3.9 Holywell Ponds SSSI is managed by the Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT), who promote public access. This site resulted from mining subsidence and now supports over-wintering migrant species attracted by the pond's proximity to the coast. Breeding species include little grebe, pochard, greylag goose, sedge warbler, wigeon, goldeneye and tufted duck and rare species such as greenshank and green sandpiper can also be observed there with the swamp and marsh vegetation at the pond edge providing interesting habitats. The surrounding unimproved neutral grassland is also reported to support populations of common spotted and northern marsh orchids.
- 3.10 Linton Lane, Druridge Pools, Creswell Pond and East Cramlington Pond are also managed by NWT. Creswell Pond, a lagoon surrounded by dunes and fringed with salt marsh and reed beds, is the only site that is 'natural'. All of the other sites have been established from the reclamation and restoration from mineral works (coal and clay). Although publically accessible, none of the NWT's sites in SEN have designated visitor facilities, with access generally being limited, especially in relation to parking.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

- 3.11 Other reserves in the area are all classified as being of 'local' significance. LNRs in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point, (the highest concentration of LNRs in Northumberland), include 5km of sand dune area between Blyth Beach and Seaton Sluice, Il Country Park, Choppington Community Wood, Bedlington Country Park, and Carlisle Park - areas dedicated to providing public green space.

Woodlands

- 3.12 Ancient woodland is the other main natural landscape character in the area, covering some 352 ha, much of which is located along the banks of rivers and streams. Molesden Wood, Borough Wood, Welbeck Wood and Park Wood are all located on the banks of River Wansbeck whilst Well Wood and Hatford / Bebside Wood are located on the banks of River Blyth. Discussion with The Forestry Commission has highlighted the value of ancient woodland and the need to protect the remaining parcels against inappropriate development that would directly or indirectly impact on these fragile habitats.

⁴ A Ramsar Site is an internationally recognised area of importance for wetland conservation, as determined by The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat

⁵ Site of Special Scientific Importance

⁶ This includes seven individual designations covering the Northumberland Shore SSSI area

- 3.13 Significant tracts of newly created woodland are also found in South East Northumberland, the largest of which is the publicly accessible Ashington Woodland, covering around 140 ha. Part of a series of reclamation woodlands, each of which aims to realise the creation of a unique and potentially major recreational and wildlife space, existing sites are at present spatially disparate and lack physical connectivity, without any optimisation of their thematic links.

Rivers and Estuaries

- 3.14 The Blyth and Wansbeck rivers and estuaries are significant features which also provide a 'natural' connection between key urban areas – the River Blyth between Cramlington and Blyth; and the River Wansbeck between Morpeth, Wansbeck and Ashington. They represent significant 'green infrastructure' resources within South East Northumberland's largest urban areas, with the river valley contributing to woodland provision, habitat diversity, and heritage resources in their own right. Continuous and uninterrupted access to the riversides is, however, an issue, and industrial and residential zones have reduced the intrinsic attractiveness of these assets in certain areas, particularly around the power stations.

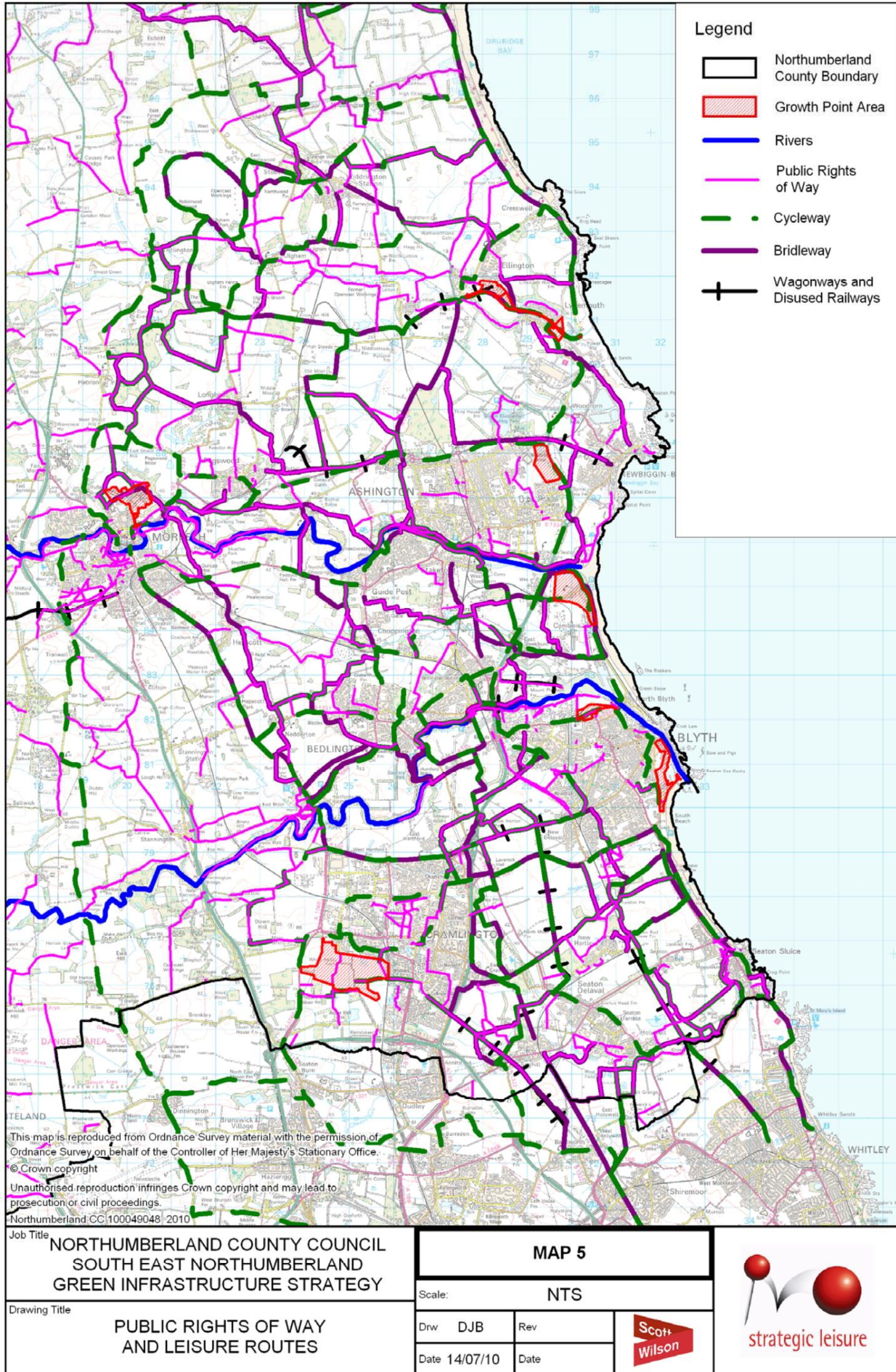
Historic Environment

- 3.15 The historic environment comprises built heritage and historic landscape features. Both elements are important as they often constitute interesting features which encourage public use of a GI network.
- 3.16 Within the South East Northumberland New Growth Point, there are:
- 8 scheduled monuments, including Morpeth Castle, Morpeth Old Bridge, the coastal artillery battery on Blyth Links, Motte and Bailey Castle, Newminster Abbey and Woodhorn Colliery;
 - 344 listed buildings, including four Grade I listings and 20 Grade II* listings; and
 - 1 registered historic park and garden (Seaton Delaval)
- 3.17 Analysis of the GIS datasets highlights that Morpeth has a significant clustering of listed historic sites, significantly more than the other towns in the area. Morpeth is an ancient market town with the surrounding landscape presenting extensive medieval ridge and furrow field systems. This represents the key historic character of this part of South East Northumberland, which also contains three of the four Grade I listed buildings and several of the scheduled ancient monuments.
- 3.18 There is also a clustering of listed sites around Seaton Delaval, given its status as a historic park and garden.
- 3.19 South East Northumberland's the historic character is dominated by the industrial and other man-made influences of the 20th Century, with coalmining and urban expansion having eroded other forms of historical character. Remnants of 18th and 19th century influences such as churches and burial grounds exist, however these are largely fragmented.

Rights of Way and Leisure Routes

- 3.20 There are 255 km of public rights of way in South East Northumberland (shown in Map 5) , a mere 5% of the county network, despite half of the Northumberland population living in the area. The network includes 184 km of footpath, 46km of bridleways, and 2km of byways (including restricted byways, but excluding wagonways or existing permissive rights secured through Natural England's environmental stewardship schemes).

Map 5: Public Rights of Way and Leisure Routes



- 3.21 In broad terms, South East Northumberland lies within the 'Urban Fringe' area of the Northumberland Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Improvement Plan. This Plan states that 70% of current users regularly use the rights of way network from home, suggesting that the existing PRoW is easily accessible to those in and around the main settlements, especially Morpeth, Cramlington and Blyth.
- 3.22 The network comprises more footpaths than bridleways; the bridle ways that exist are predominantly linear and lack circular route options. There is less bridleway provision in the north and west of South East Northumberland, than in the southeast.
- 3.23 The main strategic route for cycling is the Coast and Castles cycling route linking Tynemouth with Berwick-upon-Tweed. Although this route includes on-road sections, there are also significant lengths in the area which are off-road, including between Seaton Sluice and Blyth crossing the sand dunes.
- 3.24 As demonstrated by the Cycle North East series a series of traffic-free paths exist in South East Northumberland that are suitable for cyclists. Provision in Cramlington is good with a further link between Cramlington and Blyth, but is limited in Morpeth and Ashington. There is a linked route between Morpeth and Newbiggin-By-The-Sea, and the Coast and Castles route also provides a link from Newbiggin to Seaton Sluice.

Tourism and Leisure Amenities

- 3.25 The South East Northumberland New Growth Point does not have a strong visitor profile, particularly in terms of visitor accommodation and attractions when compared to its more illustrious neighbours of Newcastle to the south, Northumberland National Park to the west and the Northumberland Coast AONB to the north. The only visitor information centre servicing this area of Northumberland is based in Morpeth, housed in the 13th Century Morpeth Chantry, overlooking the River Wansbeck.
- 3.26 However, this apparent lack of provision belies the fact that South East Northumberland has significant tourism assets such as coastline, beaches, woodlands, country parks and historic Seaton Delaval. These assets are likely to become more important as local population growth will increase the propensity for leisure and tourism day trips to be taken in the area. Other forms of recreational use, including surfing and kitesurfing, are further enhancing the importance of beaches.
- 3.27 Following the acquisition of Seaton Delaval Hall, the National Trust is now embarking upon a programme of restoration and improvement to encourage greater visitation and to establish a more sustainable operation for the site. The National Trust has indicated that improvements to Seaton Delaval, include an easy (2.5 mile – A Taste of Seaton Delaval) and more challenging (6-mile – Blyth Valley Wildspace) walk.
- 3.28 In addition to Seaton Delaval Hall, SEN has five country parks:
- Plessey Woods Country Park, a 100-acre woodland, meadow and riverside park which is home to species such as red squirrel, roe deer, kingfisher, and otters. The park has a visitor centre which includes information on the park, small shop and refreshments. Fishing is permitted on the river Blyth. Walking and cycling routes traverse the park and extend to neighbouring countryside and other country parks.
 - Bedlington Country Park, a 57-hectare area of woodland and grassland with an increasingly important wildlife function.
 - Wansbeck Riverside Park, covering approximately 112 ha of woodland, grassland, and the river, popular for walking, wildlife watching, and picnicking. Rowing and fishing can also be undertaken in the park. The park is a designated Local Nature Reserve.
 - Queen Elizabeth II Country Park includes a lake that can be enjoyed for fishing, wind surfing, and canoeing. Popular land-based activities include walking, dog walking, picnicking and jogging.

- Blyth and Seaton Sluice Links and Foreshore is, in the main, a Local Nature Reserve, however as a beach area it can be enjoyed for water sports, boating and casual recreation.
- 3.29 Ashington Community Woodland, managed by Groundwork, acts as a recreational hub for the community of Ashington and beyond, and is also a visitor resource. Formed from the Ashington Colliery site, the woodland is a good example of a restoration scheme that can create green infrastructure designed to be multifunctional at the outset. In walking distance from Ashington, the site is now an important wildlife resource that also celebrates the site’s industrial heritage, with both elements available to the public to explore through interpretation boards.
- 3.30 The 8 golf courses in South East Northumberland, and the 7 courses immediately to the south of the area, contribute to the visual character of the area and provide for both local residents and visitors. Although formal provision is not technically ‘green infrastructure’, the golf courses contribute to the overall network of green spaces at local level.

Assessment of Existing Green Infrastructure

- 3.31 South East Northumberland and the New Growth Point have been assessed using PPG17 principles to identify the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing green infrastructure provision.
- 3.32 The typology agreed for Northumberland’s accessible greenspace is summarised in Table 3.1, in line with PPG17 guidance.

Table 3.2 : Northumberland’s accessible greenspace typology

Typology	Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events, horticultural display and experiencing wildlife. The typology includes urban parks, country parks, formal public gardens and recreation grounds.
Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace	Natural and semi-natural areas providing access to wildlife, environmental education and awareness, biodiversity and nature conservation. The typology includes woodlands, scrubland, wetland and nature conservation areas.
Amenity Greenspace	Open space in residential areas, village greens and informal recreational space. Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Sites specifically intended to meet demand for formal participation in outdoor sports including pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.
Provision for Children and Young People	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, multi-use games areas and skateboard parks.

Typology	Primary Purpose
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. Allotments also offer opportunities for community gardens and biodiversity value.
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation, biodiversity and to provide a link to the past. Also includes closed burial grounds used for informal recreation.

Catchment Accessibility Thresholds

- 3.33 The main emphasis of the ANGSt model is that people have easy access to natural and semi natural greenspace close to where they live, because these sites are an important recreational, environmental, and biodiversity resource
- 3.34 The ANGSt model recommends the following accessibility standards:
- That no person should be located more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size; (5 minutes walking distance)
 - Provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population;
 - That there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home;
 - That there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km; and
 - That there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.
- 3.35 Based on strategic advice, four tiers of scale have been adopted for the Northumberland GI Strategy, two of which – Neighbourhood and Local – have relevance for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point area:
- Sub – regional - Habitats or Sites over 500ha - these are the major Green Infrastructure assets such as the Coast, woodlands moors and larger country estates. The size threshold reflects the upper limits defined by both Natural England and TCPA
 - Area – Sites or Habitats over 100ha - these are large parks and countryside sites, woodlands and designated sites such as National Nature Reserves
 - Neighbourhood- Sites and habitat over 20 ha – these are the main network of sites across the county such as the larger country parks
 - Local- Sites over 0.2ha that are provided at the local level and a short distance from where people live
- 3.36 ANGST does not consider the role and function that the extensive linear Rights of Way network plays in the provision of accessible green infrastructure.

Quantitative Assessment

3.37 Analysis identifies 450 sites (2,018.9ha) of accessible green space in South East Northumberland:

Table 3.3 : Green space in South East Northumberland by PPG17 Typology

Typology	South East Sites		
	No.	Ha	Provision per 1000
Parks and Gardens	25	380.05	2.58
Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace	71	1105.52	7.50
Amenity Greenspace	186	206.11	1.40
Outdoor Sport	61	178.89	1.21
Provision for Children and Young People Stand alone	27	4.15	0.34
Provision for Children and Young People within other typologies	47	4.15	
Allotment	59	99.63	0.68
Churchyard and Cemeteries	21	44.56	0.30
Total	450	2018.91	

3.38 Table 3.3 does not include open access land such as beaches, coastline, public rights of way or larger designated sites, as the scale and nature of these sites 'skews' the calculation of future standards and therefore needs, in terms of securing developer contributions.

3.39 Based on the recommended standards of provision (agreed for Northumberland in the 2010/11 PPG17 assessment) in Table 3.3, Table 3.4 illustrates the surplus and deficiencies of green and open space provision by type in South East Northumberland.

3.40 This assessment will help inform the nature and extent of green infrastructure provision required in the future, and specifically in the New Growth area, to achieve the aims of this strategy.

Table 3.4 : The surplus and deficiencies of provision by type and area

Area	All Population	Parks & Open Space	Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	Amenity Greenspace	Outdoor Sports Facilities (excluding Golf Courses)	Provision for Children & Young People	Allotments
		Recommended Standard (per 1,000 popn)					
		2.14	7.55	1.09	1.69	0.50	0.51
South East	147,500	64.11	-7.44	45.20	-70.98	23.71	39.77

3.41 Table 3.4 highlights that the main quantitative deficiency in South East Northumberland relates to natural and semi-natural greenspace. Increased habitat provision in parks as part of improved green infrastructure networks could help to address this deficiency.

Qualitative Assessment

3.42 A quality audit of the existing green infrastructure in South East Northumberland and the New Growth Point was undertaken to inform the qualitative assessment, and what improvements and enhancements are needed to create a quality green infrastructure network. The quality audit:

- Gauges the quality of each site at a given time, through the evaluation of the site infrastructure its condition and quality. The sites are measured in a consistent and objective way and the audit reflects the condition of sites from a visitor's perspective;
- Identifies site characteristics and features that result in some sites being low quality and provides information regarding the opportunity for improvement;
- Establishes a quality standard for the open space provision (the standard for Northumberland has informed this strategy);
- Identifies sites that the should be protected and improved

3.43 Quality relates to the range of facilities and physical infrastructure contained within individual sites; the audit considers factors such as accessibility, safety, management, maintenance and overall impression.

3.44 Quality Inspections were undertaken via a site visit and the completion of a scored proforma. The quality assessment proforma is based on a number of key criteria encompassing the quality aspects of the Green Flag Programme, ILAM Parks Management Guidance and the Tidy Britain Scheme.

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3.45 The site scores were translated into a percentage and then measured against the following quality line rating:

Quality Line

0% - 15%	16% - 30%	31% - 45%	46% - 60%	61% - 75%	76% +
Very Poor	Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent

3.46 The quality audit provides an indicative rating of quality out of 100%. It is important to note that the quality score represents a “snapshot” in time and records the quality of the site at the time of the audit visit.

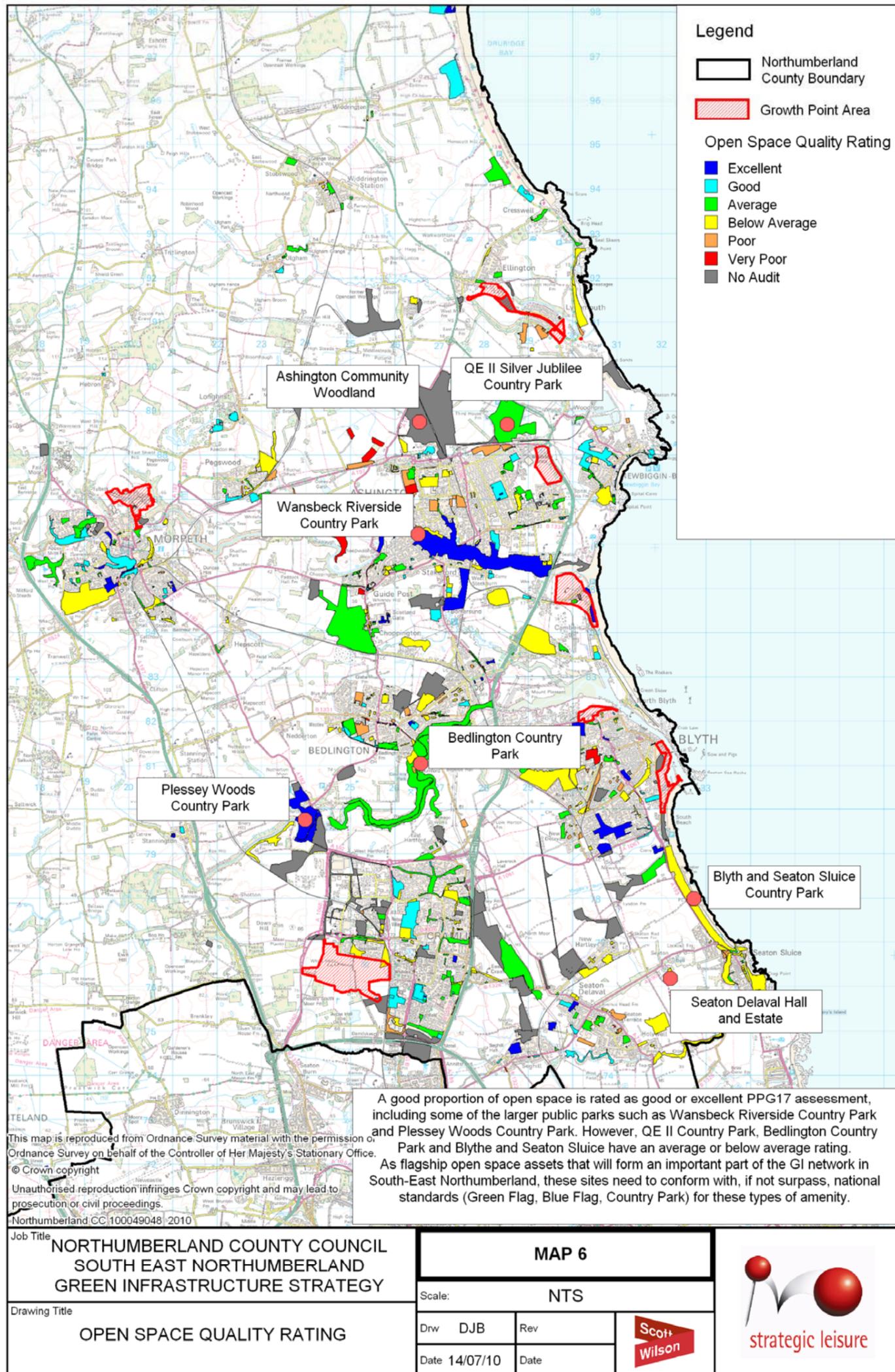
3.47 Table 3.5 illustrates the range and variance in the quality of open space provided in the South East. The overall quality is rated as Below Average. The creation of a quality network of green infrastructure will therefore require significant improvement in the quality of existing green space, as well as the development of new, well-designed provision.

Figure 3.5 : Summary of Quality Assessment of all Accessible Open Space in South East Northumberland

Typology	Quality range	Average Quality Score	Quality Variance	Quality Rating
Parks and Gardens	36% - 81%	57%	45%	Average
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	5% - 84%	40%	79%	Below Average
Amenity Greenspace	11% - 85%	46%	74%	Average
Outdoor Sports Facilities	27% - 98%	53%	71%	Average
Provision for Children and Young People	21% – 77%	40%	56%	Below Average
Allotments	8% - 70%	33%	62%	Below Average
Churchyards and Cemeteries	19% - 90%	60%	71%	Average
Total	5%-98%	35%		Below Average

3.48 The above quality assessment is shown in Map 6.

Map 6: Open Space Quality



- 3.49 The poor quality of existing green infrastructure is a result of poor maintenance and management, and/or a lack of signage, benches or litter bins. Specifically footpaths and site entrance points are in need of improvement.

Accessibility Assessment

- 3.50 Table 3.6 below applies the accessibility thresholds for green space identified from the consultation across the County and applies them to South East Northumberland.

Table 3.6 : Accessibility Thresholds

Typology	Catchment	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 1,000m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households <u>outside</u> catchment area
Parks and Gardens	1000m	69,152	55,859	81%	19%
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	1200m	69,152	66,947	97%	3%
Amenity Greenspace	600m	69,152	67,514	98%	2%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1200m	69,152	66,856	97%	3%
Provision for Children and Young People	800m	69,152	64,512	93%	7%
Allotments	800m	69,152	58,177	84%	16%

- 3.51 The table highlights that a significant number of the existing residents in South East Northumberland and the New Growth Point Area, do not have access to specific existing green infrastructure at local level within accessibility thresholds recommended for Northumberland:
- 81% of all households are within the access threshold for parks and gardens; **19% of all households, predominantly in Cramlington, Nelson Village and North Blyth, East Cramlington and Bedlington are outside that catchment area.**
 - 97% of all households are within the access threshold for natural and semi natural greenspace; **3% of all households, predominantly in part of Nedderton, East Sleekburn and North Blyth are outside that catchment area.**
 - 98% of all households are within the catchment for amenity greenspace; **2% of all households primarily in areas of Lynemouth, East Sleekburn, Nedderton, Woodhorn, Linton and Nelson Village are outside this catchment area.**

- 97% of all households are within the access threshold for outdoor sports facilities. **3% of all households primarily in areas of Newbiggin by the Sea, North Blyth, Nelson Village, Nedderton, Ellington and East Sleekburn, are outside this catchment area.**
 - 93% of all households are within the access threshold for provision for children and young people; **7% of all households, mainly in Lynemouth and Ellington are outside this catchment area.**
 - 84% of all households are within the access threshold for allotments; **16% of all households, predominantly in Ellington, Stakeford, Cowpen and Cramlington (Eastfield, Southfield) are outside this catchment area.**
- 3.52 It is also important to highlight that disability access to much of the existing green space could be improved.
- 3.53 Table 3.7 summarises the findings of the quantitative, qualitative and accessibility assessment for each of the 6 specific Growth Points within South East Northumberland. Table 3.7 further highlights the need for improvement to existing green infrastructure and the opportunities to extend connectivity between existing spaces and new communities.

Table 3.7: Summary of Assessment for Growth Points

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
East Ashington	Wansbeck General Hospital Site	East of Ashington and west of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, next to Wansbeck General Hospital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to the site are the A189 running along the east of the site and the A197 across the north of the site. The site is not currently accessible from the A189. • North of the site is within 300m of a 60 hectare park, the Queen Elizabeth II Country Park Site which is classified as a Natural/Semi Natural site (average quality site). However the majority of the site is not within 300m of natural greenspace of at least 2 ha. The entire site is within 2 km of a 20 hectare site and within 5 km of a 100 hectare site. • Just north of the site is a bridleway and public right of way which follows a disused wagon way/railway. This route creates linkages between the Growth Point Site to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and the QE2 Silver Jubilee Country Park. There are also cycle routes which run along the east edge and north edge of the Growth Point site. • Towards the north of the site between the Growth Point site and QE2 Country Park, there is a linear corridor connected to a large Natural/Semi Natural site, Ashington Woodhorn Reclamation Scheme which in total is a 140 hectare site. • There is also a Natural/Semi Natural site located south of the Growth Point site, but outside the 300m accessibility threshold. This site is the Paddock Doorstep Green which was rated as average quality. • There are sites west of the Growth Point site, which include Ashington Football Club (Formal Outdoor Sport site – good quality), Hirst Welfare Centre (Formal Outdoor Sport site – average quality), Hirst High School (average quality) and small amenity greenspaces. 	Average

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Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites to the east of the Growth Point site (and east of the A189) are Newbiggin Middle School and small amenity greenspace. 	
North Morpeth	St Georges Site	North of Morpeth, at the old St Georges Hospital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The south of the site runs along the A197 and the River Wansbeck. The east of the site runs along a green woodland corridor. There is one greenspace site within the Growth Point site which is St Georges Hospital Churchyard. Located next to the site in the south is The Mount Open Space which is a 2.7 hectare natural/semi natural greenspace site, and the 300m perimeter around this site covers half of the Growth Point site. The other site next to the Growth Point site is Morpeth Allotments, which is located south of the Growth Point (and other side of the A197) and is rated as average quality. It is very important to note that the north half of the site is not within 2km of a 20 hectare site and none of the site is within 5km of a 100 hectare site. This is the only Growth Point site to be in this position. There are no greenspace sites north of the Growth Point and no greenspace sites close on the west side of the site, given the 'barrier' of the A192. The only greenspace site to the east of the Growth Point is Swinneys Field which is a formal outdoor sport site, just over 1 hectare in site and is of 'below average' quality. 	Average and Below Average

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South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a public right of way and cycleway which cuts through the north west of the Growth Point, which is part of a circular route. The part of the route which is in the Growth Point turns into a multi-user route (footpath, cycleway and bridleway). There is also a public right of way which connects the Growth point to Morpeth town centre. • The cycle routes connect the Growth Point with Ashington, Pegswood (and Pegswood train station) and Morpeth train station. 	
Cramlington South West Sector	South West Sector Site, Cramlington	Situated south west of Cramlington.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The railway provides a barrier to the east of the site and the A1068 to the west of the site. • There are many natural/semi natural greenspace sites situated around the Growth Point site, however only two natural/semi natural greenspace sites are next to the Growth Point. The first of these sites is Wall Plantation which is just north of the site, 300m distance from the north west part of the Growth Point site. The second of the sites is the Land at Plantation Farm (Arcot Estate), located to the south of the Growth Point and the south east part of the site is within 300m. In addition, just north of the site is Bassington Farm Industrial Estate, a natural/semi natural 9 hectare corridor. • It is also important to note that Blagdon, a 181 hectare site is located to the west of the site, the other side of the A1 road. As a consequence of this site, the entire site is within 2 km of a 20 hectare site and within 5 km of a 100 hectare site. 	Below average

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other greenspace sites located within or next to the site include Beacon Hill Green, a local park (quality below average); and Westfield Park, an active amenity (quality below average). Another site in close proximity to the Growth Point is Cramlington High School, but this is situated the other side of the railway line. • There are public rights of way through the site, which link Cramlington town centre to the site and to the disused wagon way/railway to the south east of the site. There are also cycleways running down the A1068 to the west of the site, and running through the south of the site. 	
Blyth				
	Cowpen Quay (Blyth) Site	Located to the north of Blyth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a natural barrier to the site to the north of the site, with the River Blyth. • No part of the site is within 300m of a 2 hectare natural/semi natural greenspace site, although the entire site is within 2 km of a 20 hectare site and within 5 km of a 100 hectare site. • There are no natural/semi natural greenspace sites in close proximity to the Growth Point site. However, there are other greenspace sites including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cowpen Cemetery (south of the site, separated from the site by the A193, rated excellent); 	Excellent, average and below average

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cowpen Road Amenity Greenspace (south of site, separated from the site by the A193, rated average); and ➤ Chestnut Avenue Amenity Greenspace (south of site, rated below average). • There is a cycleway along the A193 road which cuts through the Growth Point site. This links the site to Blyth Harbour and the coast. It also links the site to Ashington. There is also a public right of way from the riverside which travels along the west edge and then through the Growth Point site. 	
	South Harbour (Blyth) Site	Situated along the coast, with Blyth town to the west.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The barrier to the east is the coast and the B1329 creates a barrier to the west. The entire site is within 2 km of a 20 hectare site and within 5 km of a 100 hectare site. • Part of the site is situated within 300m from Grimsby Street natural/semi natural greenspace site, which is a 5 hectare site. • The coastline is located 300m to the north of the site, the other side of the river and therefore is inaccessible from the site. • Other greenspaces in the vicinity of the Growth Point site are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ridley Park (Park, north west of the Growth Point site) ➤ Dent Street Amenity Greenspace (west of the site) ➤ Links Road Allotments (west of the site, good quality) 	Good quality

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Blyth Links and Beach Gardens (south of the site). • It should also be noted that to the south of the site is a natural/semi natural 44 hectare greenspace site, Northumberland Shore, which stretches down to Seaton Sluice. • There is a cycleway which runs along the west of the site and a short public right of way through the south half of the site. 	
Ellington/Lynemouth	Former Ellington/Lynemouth Colliery Site	Situated south of the village of Ellington and includes a corridor through to another site west of Lynemouth village. The corridor follows the Lynemouth Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site currently consists of a natural/semi natural greenspace, 'Lynemouth/Ellington Reclamation', which means that the whole site is within the 300m accessibility threshold of a natural greenspace of 2 or more ha. This position would change however, if the land use altered. There is also another small part of this 'Lynemouth/Ellington Reclamation' site located just north of the main site. • The entire site is within 2 km of a 20 hectare site and within 5 km of a 100 hectare site. • There are other types of greenspace to the north of the site including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Albion Terrace amenity space (below average quality); ➤ Lynemouth 3rd Row amenity space (average quality); ➤ Lynemouth Road amenity space (average quality); and ➤ Lynemouth St Aiden Cemetery (Poor quality). 	Below Average and Poor

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the east of the site is the coast, with large natural/semi natural greenspace sites such as Cresswell Dunes (12 ha and below average quality) and Lynemouth Bay (50 ha) within 300m of the east part of the site. • Located just south of the site are Lynemouth Allotments (poor quality) and Lynemouth Recreation Ground, a formal outdoor sports site (poor quality). There is also a small natural/semi natural greenspace site located just west of the site 'Land Adjacent to Ellington Bypass' which is in close proximity to the Growth Point. • The site currently has a bridleway and cycleway running through the site, linking the site to Ashington and Blyth in the south and runs up the coast in the north. There is also a disused wagon way/railway cutting through the west of the site. 	
Cambois	Cambois Site	Situating to the south of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, located by the coast, south of where the River Wansbeck meets the sea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site has many barriers, including the A189 road to the west. • Currently inside the Growth Point site is Cambois Foreshore, a natural/semi natural greenspace site which is 6.18 ha in size and means the south of the Growth Point is within 300m of this natural/semi natural greenspace. In addition, there are other types of greenspace within the Growth Point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cambois Welfare, a formal outdoor sport site of average quality; and ➤ Wembley Terrace Allotments. 	Below Average

Strategic Growth Point	Site Name	Location	Description Of Site Locality	Quality Of Existing Green Infrastructure
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The east and north of the site are bordered by the coastline which means that the north of the Growth Point is also within 300m of a natural/semi natural greenspace site. However, the west part of the site is not currently within 300m of a natural/semi natural greenspace site. The entire site is within 2 km of a 20 hectare site and within 5 km of a 100 hectare site. • Other notable sites around the Growth Point include East Seekburn/Cambois Reclamation, a 35 hectare natural/semi natural greenspace site, although the quality rating is below average. This is located towards the South West of the site. • There is a cycleway which follows the main road through the site, with a bridleway alongside the north and east of the site. The bridleway links the Growth Point to Ashington, and the cycleway links the Growth Point with Blyth, Ashington and Bedlington. 	

Summary

- 3.54 Assessment of the existing green infrastructure of South East Northumberland identifies that there is a current deficiency (based on applying the agreed standards of provision per 1000 people for Northumberland) of natural and semi-natural and outdoor sport space.
- 3.55 In terms of quality there is a significant amount of existing green infrastructure, and particularly amenity space (that which is closest to where people live), that is of poor quality. In addition, much of the existing green space is not multi-functional, precisely because it is of poor quality and lacks connectivity.
- 3.56 There are a number of issues to address in terms of accessibility; many of the existing green and open spaces are isolated, and do not 'connect' to provide a network
- 3.57 The 6 Growth Points have some connected green infrastructure, but there is potential to better link existing and new communities, and create an accessible green network (including provision for disability), through the improvement, enhancement and development of green infrastructure.

Section 4 - Analysis of Need/Demand for Green Infrastructure



4. Analysis of Need / Demand for Green Infrastructure

Introduction

- 4.1 Building on the assessment (quantitative, qualitative, and accessibility), and the summary (Section 3) of existing green infrastructure in South East Northumberland, and specifically the 6 Growth Points, analysis highlights the following strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities which need to be considered in developing a GI Strategy to deliver the Vision for green infrastructure in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point.
- 4.2 The analysis is set out in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Gaps and Opportunities in and for Green Infrastructure in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point

	EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE			
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	GAPS	OPPORTUNITIES
SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of green places and open spaces within and around the growth point zone that have the potential to form important multi-functional GI assets Restoration of colliery sites and the creation of new multi-functional green spaces for the local community and for wildlife, combining wildlife conservation, public access and heritage interpretation The existing PROW network, part of the National Cycle Network (the Coast and Castles Cycle Route). The existing formal green corridors that include ancient forest and important sites for wildlife conservation. The coastline and beaches of the area The existing SSSIs, LNRs The availability of the coast and rivers mean that virtually all of the SEN falls within the catchment of the recommended ANGSt standards for 100+ha greenspace sites. Likewise, the availability of the Country Parks, Ashington Community Woodland and Seaton Delaval mean that provision in the area also satisfies the 20+ha ANGSt standard Several of the flagship greenspaces (Wansbeck Riverside and Plessey Woods Country Parks) and many of the smaller sites in the principal towns are considered of good or excellent quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of greenspace sites across SEN that are considered average or below average for their type eg flagship sites such as Blyth and Seaton Sluice Country Park as a principal coastal zone. Fragmentation of some sites eg historic burial grounds and churches No continuous uninterrupted access to riversides Erosion of natural features through urban and industrial development Impact of the power stations on their immediate environs and green space Current levels of public use of green space The nature of the current use of green space – tends to be one dimensional The accessibility and promotion of the existing spaces of importance for wildlife conservation is limited. The leisure routes along the river corridor are incomplete and the Northumberland Coast Path does not extend further south than Creswell, although it is noted that the Coast and Castles Cycle Route can also be used by walkers. Only East Ashington Growth Point (Wansbeck Riverside Country Park) is within close proximity to one of the Country Parks in South East Northumberland, with the other Growth Points some distance away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of bridleways, particularly in the north and west Lack of circular route bridleways Lack of links between reclaimed woodlands Visitor facilities at sites across the area which would facilitate use Specific disability access points Deficiency of natural and semi natural green space (excluding beaches, coastline, PROW,) Despite the coast being designated an SPA and Ramsar, there are no National Nature Reserves in South East Northumberland and there is no formal visitor centre to help educate local residents or visitors of the importance of the coastal zone for rare and endangered species, especially birds. There is no formal mechanism for generating revenue from visitors to sites of historic or wildlife importance, either directly through onsite entrance fees and car parking, or through encouraging new members. There are no linear PROW or recreational routes linking the main urban areas of South East Northumberland to one another. Significant gaps in terms of the 2+ha standard, particularly in the New Growth Points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The renovation of, and new routes around, Seaton Delaval Hall The Coast and Castles Cycle Route, part of the National Cycle Network, which acts as a formal recreational route link between the South East Northumberland New Growth Point and the Tyne and Wear sub-region. Creating more bridleways and links between bridleways and green corridors to create circular routes Extending cycling routes to link the main settlements with the coast Creating better connectivity between existing and new communities, and green spaces Linking reclaimed woodlands Creating access to woodland on river banks Prioritise disabled path access at appropriate locations Maximise paths for walking, mountain biking/cycling and horse riding Maximise links between green spaces for these forms of non-motorised recreation in order to network our communities and their open spaces of all kinds To improve multi-functionality of green space Improving the local natural and historical environment Maximising potential for specific assets to have greater value within a GI context, for example Seaton Delaval Hall could act as a southern hub for the GI network; the rivers and estuary areas should be utilised as linear corridors; the country parks should be thematically and physically linked; initiatives such as Ashington Community Woodland could be further expanded; and the coastal zone could be identified more formally as a place for leisure and conservation.

	EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE			
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	GAPS	OPPORTUNITIES
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the historic environment of the area has largely been removed, effort needs to be made to tell the story of the areas past to provide a more valued sense of place. Using innovative interpretation techniques, including the arts, to tell the story of the area's past as part of the green infrastructure network Using former mineral lines to create leisure and recreation provision, as part of developing connectivity between green spaces Using art e.g. Northumberlandia, green gyms, leisure routes and green corridors to encourage use of green infrastructure for commuting, informal travel, and recreation Linking the Growth Points with nearby sites of importance for nature conservation
NEW GROWTH POINTS				
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proximity of Queen Elizabeth II Country Park Existing green infrastructure around the site eg linkages to Newbiggin by the Sea, Ashington Woodhorn Reclamation Scheme, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing quality (average) of Queen Elizabeth II Country Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of the site is not within a 300m of natural greenspace of at least 2 ha Link to the Paddock Green Doorstep Green Links to the formal sports sites west of the Growth Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proximity of Queen Elizabeth II Country Park Existing green infrastructure around the site eg linkages to Newbiggin by the Sea, Ashington Woodhorn Reclamation Scheme, Creating a green link for safe and sustainable travel to Newbiggin Middle School (east of New Growth Point) Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality
North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing green infrastructure around the site eg green woodland corridor, PROW part of circular route, multi-user route, cycle routes connecting to Ashington, Pegswood and Morpeth train stations One greenspace site in the Growth Point – St George's Hospital Churchyard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of existing green infrastructure in the New Growth Point Barrier of the A192 Poor quality of existing green space to east and south (Morpeth Allotments) of the Growth Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to the surrounding green spaces The only Growth Point not to be within 2km of a natural/semi-natural 20ha site and 5km of a 100 ha site No green spaces north of the Growth Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing green infrastructure around the site eg green woodland corridor, PROW part of circular route, multi-user route, cycle routes connecting to Ashington, Pegswood and Proximity of half the site (within 300m) to a natural green space site (the Mount Open Space) Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality

	EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE			
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	GAPS	OPPORTUNITIES
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing green infrastructure around the site eg Wall Plantation, Land at Plantation Fram, Bassington Farm Industrial Estate (natural/semi-natural 9 ha corridor), Blagdon (located to west of Growth Point) Existing PROW through the Growth Point, linking Cramlington Town Centre to the Growth Point and to the disused wagonway/railway to the south east of the site Entire Growth Point site is within 2km of a natural/semi-natural 20ha site and 5km of a natural/semi-natural 100 ha site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality of existing green infrastructure eg local park Beacon Hill Green, and amenity space Westfield Park The railway line which runs to the east of the site and separates some green space eg Cramlington High School from the Growth Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links between some of the existing green spaces Links to the surrounding green spaces Linkages to the existing cycleways/bridleways connecting through to Blyth and the coast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycleways running through the south of the site and to the west of the site, along the A1068 The proximity of large green infrastructure spaces Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality
Blyth				
	<p>Cowpen Quay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire Cowpen Quay Growth Point site is within 2km of a 20ha natural/semi-natural site and 5km of a natural/semi-natural 100 ha site. Proximity of other green spaces to the Growth Point – Cowpen Cemetery, Cowpen Road Amenity Greenspace, Chestnut Avenue Amenity Greenspace Excellent quality of Cowpen Cemetery Cycleway alongside A103 which cuts through the Growth Point, linking to Blyth Harbour and the coast; PROW from the riverside which travels through the Growth Point site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No part of the Cowpen Quay Growth Point in within 300m of a 2ha natural/semi-natural greenspace Poor quality of the majority of the surrounding green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to accessible natural/semi-natural green space Lack of connectivity between existing greenspace sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity of other green spaces to the Growth Point – Cowpen Cemetery, Cowpen Road Amenity Greenspace, Chestnut Avenue Amenity Greenspace Cycleway alongside A103 which cuts through the Growth Point, linking to Blyth Harbour and the coast; PROW from the riverside which travels through the Growth Point site Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality
	<p>South Harbour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire South Harbour Growth Point site is within 2km of a 20ha natural/semi-natural site and 5km of a natural/semi-natural 100 ha site Proximity of natural/semi-natural green space sites (Grimsby Street, 5 ha, below average; Northumberland Shore (below average quality), which stretches to Seaton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality of majority existing green space except Links Road Allotments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of connectivity to the coastline Lack of connectivity between existing greenspace sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing PROW and cycleway through the site Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites Existing green space in Growth Point vicinity Ridley Park (Park, north west of the Growth Point site); Dent Street Amenity Greenspace (west of the site); Links Road Allotments (west of the site, good quality) Proximity of the river and coast

	EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE			
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	GAPS	OPPORTUNITIES
	<p>Sluice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing PROW and cycleway through the site Existing green space in Growth Point vicinity Ridley Park (Park, north west of the Growth Point site); Dent Street Amenity Greenspace (west of the site); Links Road Allotments (west of the site, good quality) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth Point is a natural/semi-natural green space Entire Growth Point site is within 2km of a 20ha natural/semi-natural site and 5km of a natural/semi-natural 100 ha site Proximity of other significant natural/semi-natural green space - Cresswell Dunes (below average quality), Lynemouth Bay Proximity and range of other green space to Growth Point site - north of the site: Albion Terrace amenity space (below average quality); Lynemouth 3rd Row amenity space (average quality); Lynemouth Road amenity space (average quality); and Lynemouth St Aiden Cemetery (Poor quality); south of the site -Lynemouth Allotments (poor quality) and Lynemouth Recreation Ground, a formal outdoor sports site (poor quality); natural/semi natural greenspace site west of the site 'Land Adjacent to Ellington Bypass' Existing link corridor to another site west of Lynemouth Village Existing cycleway and bridleway running through the site, linking the Growth Point to Ashington and Blyth and the coast to the north 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality of the existing green infrastructure, except Lynemouth Bay 300m accessibility to natural/semi-natural green space would change if land use in the Growth Point altered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of connectivity between existing greenspace sites Lack of good quality greenspace Lack of connectivity to surrounding green spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity of other significant natural/semi-natural green space - Cresswell Dunes (below average quality), Lynemouth Bay Proximity and range of other green space to Growth Point site Existing cycleway and bridleway running through the site, linking the Growth Point to Ashington and Blyth and the coast to the north Disused wagonway/railway cutting through the west of the site Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entire Growth Point site is within 2km of a 20ha natural/semi-natural site and 5km of a natural/semi-natural 100 ha site South, west and north of the Growth Point site is within 300m of natural/semi-natural green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average - poor quality of existing green space Number of barriers to this site including the coast and the A189 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of linkages between existing green spaces Lack of good quality green space Lack of links to coastline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing cycleway which follows the main road through the site, linking the Growth Point with Ashington, Blyth and Bedlington, and the bridleway along the north and east of the site linking the Growth Point to Ashington. Improving and enhancing quality of existing sites

	EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE			
	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	GAPS	OPPORTUNITIES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing natural/semi natural green space – Cambois Foreshore in the Growth Point Proximity of other green spaces to the Growth Point - Cambois Welfare (formal outdoor sport, average quality);m Wembley Terrace Allotments; East Seekburn/Cambois Reclamation (below average quakity); Existing cycleway which follows the main road through the site, linking the Growth Point with Ashington, Blyth and Bedlington, and the bridleway along the north and east of the site linking the Growth Point to Ashington. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing better connectivity between existing sites Creating multi-functionality

Challenges

- 4.3 There are also a number of challenges to be addressed in developing a green infrastructure network in South East Northumberland New Growth Point, which include:
- Encouraging the private sector developers and investors to 'buy-in' to the overall GI approach to New Growth Point development
 - Managing the potential for conflicts between different user groups eg different conservation practices and visitor use if conservation is not appropriately promoted and managed.
 - Overcoming the land access and ownership rights and encouraging new permissive pathway provision to ensure development of a safe and appropriate green infrastructure network for different types of user (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with mobility problems).
 - Although green infrastructure generally promotes wildlife habitat growth and expansion, a specific issue to address is in the context of the wider Northumberland GI concerns the conservation efforts of the red squirrel. It will be important to ensure an appropriate approach to biodiversity in terms of habitat creation, the extension of woodland coverage, and green corridors to ensure that they do not adversely impact on the buffer zones.
 - The more sensitive sites of environmental importance (e.g. the SSSI's that abut the South West Sector Growth Point and Cambois) will need to be carefully considered in the context of accessibility.
 - Managing the multi-functionality balance between use of the green corridors for wildlife conservation and promoting people movement (e.g. rivers, estuaries and coastal zone)
 - Encouraging local communities to access and use new linkages between the Growth Points and the larger GI assets of the area, eg the Country Parks, to encourage sustainable access.

Functionality

- 4.4 In the main, the functionality of existing green infrastructure in South East Northumberland and the New Growth Points is limited. The majority of green space appears to fulfil one function. This is a result of a number of factors including:
- Poor quality design and infrastructure ie amenity space is poor quality and not served by a bench or bin, which means it is not always well looked after.
 - Poor maintenance which means usage of any type of the green space is limited
 - Lack of community awareness of the site purpose eg cycleways could also be used for walking
 - A general lack of signage and interpretation information to promote the green space available
- 4.5 The main exception to the above is in relation to use of local green space. Given the lack of good quality, easily accessible amenity space, for some communities their most local green space is a Country Park, or the coastline. These types of green space also provide for more than local use, so do have some multi-functionality. However this is not necessarily planned for, but rather a consequence of other factors ie poor quality of, and lack of accessibility to, existing amenity space, which is designed for local use.
- 4.6 A clear lack of current multi-functionality relates to the identified deficiency of natural and semi-natural green space. Existing parks could be enhanced to incorporate some semi-natural provision which would assist in addressing the identified deficiency in this type of green space.

Consultation Feedback

- 4.7 Consultation was undertaken across Northumberland, with communities and stakeholders to inform this strategy and the other three (Northumberland GI Strategy 2011, Northumberland PPG17 Assessment 2011 and Northumberland Playing Pitch Strategy 2011) commissioned at the same time by NCC. Community consultation was undertaken through online and hard copy questionnaires, plus a FREEPHONE line. The consultation period lasted five months, from February – June 2010.
- 4.8 The survey was designed to assess views of residents, their attitudes and aspirations concerning open space, sport and recreation facilities across the County. In particular the survey set out to identify and establish the following:
- The level and nature of usage of open space, sport and recreational facilities by residents
 - The value local people attach to open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - The attitude of local residents towards open space, sport and recreation facilities
 - Attitudes to the level of existing provision and facilities
 - The frequency of use by local residents to differing types of provision
 - Main mode of transport local resident use to access open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - The views of residents on the accessibility of open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - The barriers that prevent or reduce local use of open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - Local needs and expectations
- 4.9 Full details of the community and stakeholder consultation are included in the Northumberland PPG17 Assessment 2011; the key messages about greenspace applicable to provision in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point are summarised below:
- Need for improved accessibility (although people think there is generally sufficient open space)
 - Better connectivity,
 - Need for improved quality of greenspace
 - Need to address issues such as dog fouling, site information and management information to ensure provision is maintained and improved in the future, for the benefit of local communities
 - Better access to river corridors
- 4.10 In addition to asking for views on the quality and use of green space, consultation on how people access existing green space was undertaken.
- 4.11 PPG17 advocates that local standards for green space provision should be based on consultation with the public as a means of identifying how people travel to the sites they use, how long it takes them to access their chosen site, and most importantly whether this travel time is acceptable. As part of the development of the PPG 17 study, the following means of travel were identified by local people across Northumberland.

Table 4.2: Means of travel to Greenspace

Typology	Walk	Drive	Public Transport	Cycle
Public Parks and Gardens	55%	43%	1%	1%
Provision for Children and Young People	70%	28%	0%	2%
Amenity Greenspace	84%	14%	0%	2%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	40%	57%	1%	2%
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	35%	61%	1%	3%

- 4.12 Local residents were also asked to identify how long it took for them to travel to facilities in the County. The results below indicate that most respondents rarely travel for more than 20 minutes to their nearest facility or open space.

Table 4.3 : Time of Travel

Typology	Less Than 5 Mins	6-10 Mins	11-20 Mins	21-30 Mins	31-60 Mins	More Than 60 Mins
Parks and Gardens	26%	30%	22%	16%	5%	1%
Provision for Children and Young People	30%	34%	25%	7%	3%	1%
Amenity Greenspace	56%	22%	13%	7%	3%	0%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	17%	28%	32%	14%	8%	1%
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	17%	24%	27%	19%	9%	3%

- 4.13 This countywide feedback on modes and times of travel to green space has informed the analysis of existing green spaces and helped to highlight the existing gaps and opportunities to address them, to deliver a sustainable green infrastructure network in the New Growth Point.

Application of ANGSt Standards

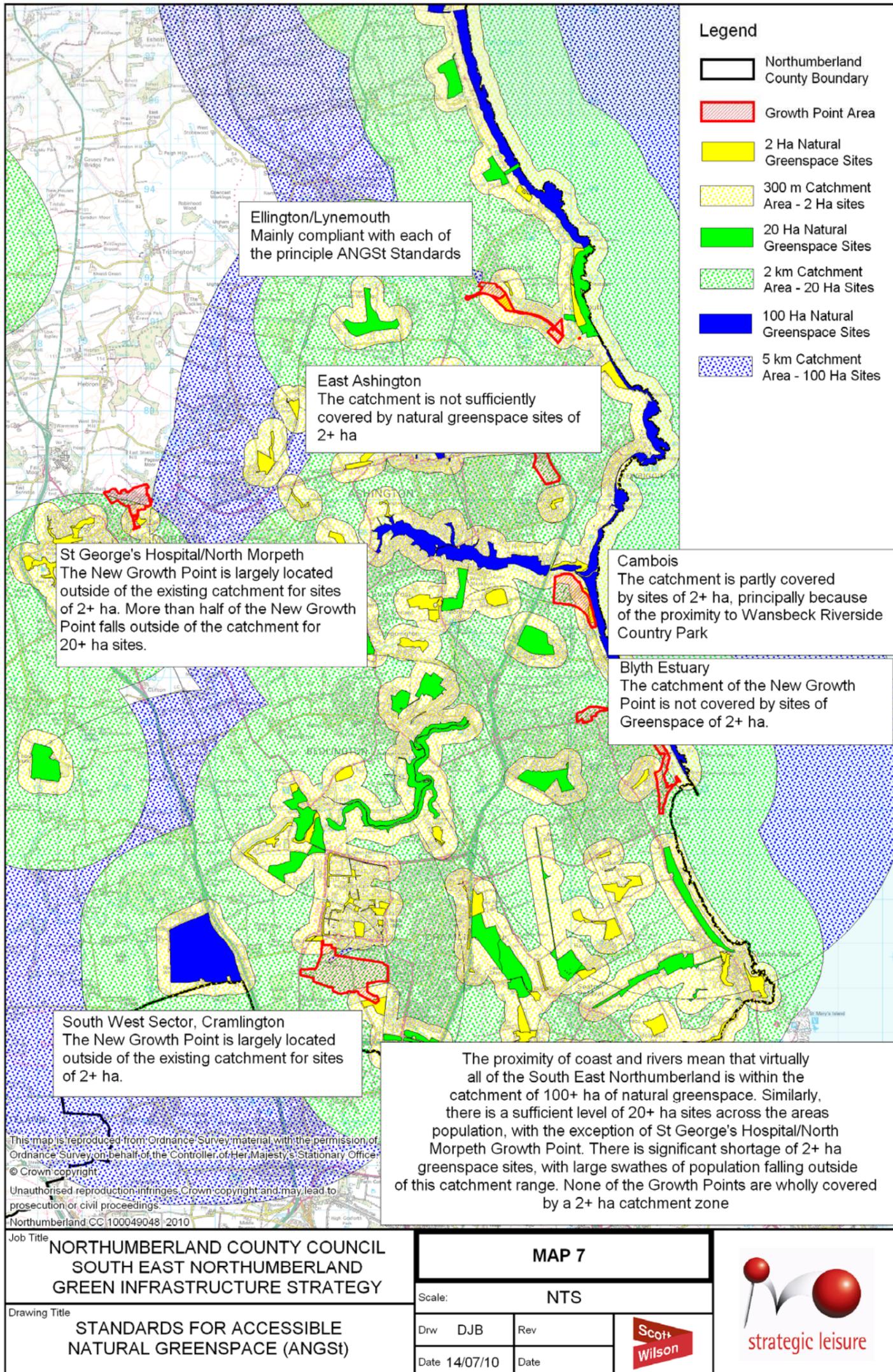
- 4.14 Table 4.4 summarises the impact of applying the ANGST standards (based on identified distances to natural greenspace provision to the types of open space assessed in South East Northumberland).

Table 4.4 : Assessment against Accessible Natural Greenspace

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within catchment	% of households <u>within</u> catchment area	% of households <u>outside</u> catchment area
South East	69,152	69,140	100%	0%

4.15 Application of the above access thresholds is shown in Map 7. Map 7 shows the settlements in South East Northumberland which are outside the 300m accessibility threshold of a 2 ha site (catchment area shown in pale yellow). Map 7 also illustrates that virtually the whole of South East Northumberland and therefore all its existing settlements except one in the extreme north (Ulgham) are within 2km of a 20 ha site (catchment shown in pale green dotted shading), and all South East Northumberland settlements are within the 5km catchment area of 100 ha sites (catchment area shown in dotted blue shading).

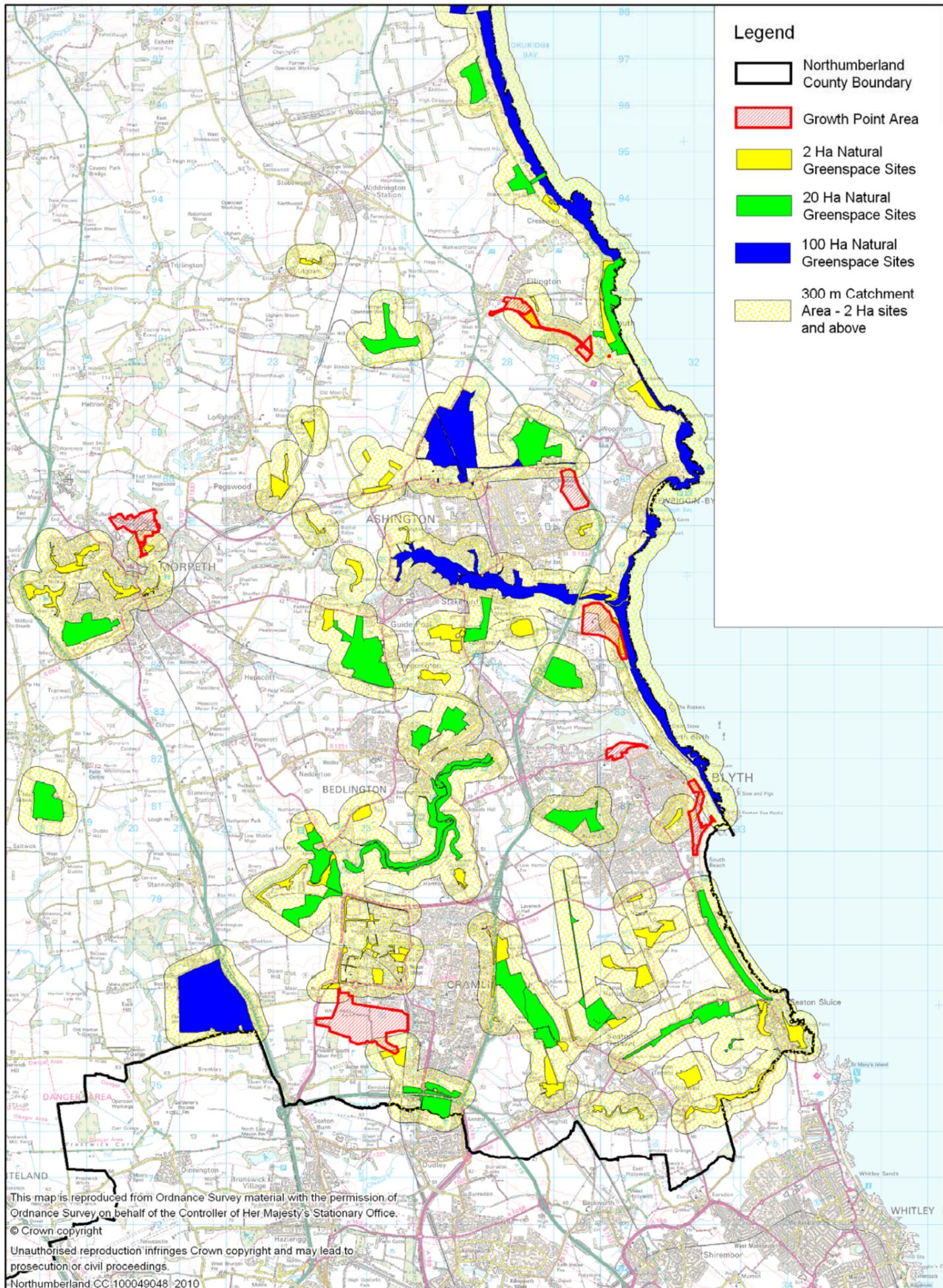
Map 7: Standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace



4.16 However, applying the principle of a 300m accessibility threshold in Map 8 illustrates the settlements that are within 300m of all sites of 2ha, 20ha, and 100 ha. This highlights that:

- Existing settlements currently have access to a number of different green spaces within 300m; the issue is that these spaces vary in function, scale and role, and yet for communities they are local greenspace. An example is part of the community in Ashington for whom their nearest accessible greenspace is Queen Elizabeth II Country Park
- There are specific settlements, particularly in the more urban areas, where there is no access to any green space within 300m; this is the case for:
 - Areas of Cramlington to the east and north of the New Growth Point
 - Areas of Blyth to the south, west and north of the two New Growth Points
 - Areas of East Ashington to the west and south of the New Growth Point
 - Areas of Ellington and Lynemouth to the north, south and west of the New Growth Point
 - Areas of Morpeth to the west, south and east of the New Growth Point

Map 8: Standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace



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Job Title NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY	MAP 8			
	Scale: NTS			
Drawing Title STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE (ANGSt)	Drw DJB	Rev		
	Date 14/07/10	Date		

Application of Northumberland Accessibility Thresholds

- 4.17 There are also specific existing communities which do not have access to a range of green infrastructure types within recommended Northumberland accessibility thresholds as shown below. Table 4.5 summarises the data in paragraph 3.51.

Table 4.5 : Summary of Settlements outside Accessibility Thresholds

Settlement Name	Green Infrastructure Types where Northumberland Accessibility Thresholds are not currently Met					
	Parks and Gardens	Natural and Semi Natural	Amenity Greenspace	Outdoor Sports	Children and Young People	Allotments
Newbiggin by the Sea	-	-	-	X	-	-
Ellington	-	-	-	X	X	X
Stakeford	-	-	-	-	-	X
Cowpen	-	-	-	-	-	X
Linton	-	-	X	-	-	-
Cramlington	X	-	X	X	-	X
Nelson Village	X	-	-	-	-	-
North Blyth	X	X	-	X	-	-
East Cramlington	X	-	-	-	-	-
Bedlington	X	-	-	-	-	-
Nedderton	-	X	X	X	-	-
East Sleekburn	-	X	X	X	-	-
Lynemouth	-	-	X	-	X	-
Woodhorn	-	-	X	-	-	-

- 4.18 Table 4.5 shows there is a need for more green space to address this accessibility issue, not just natural and semi-natural and outdoor sports as the quantitative assessment implies, and that there is potential for this to be provided as part of creating a green infrastructure network.
- 4.19 Issues highlighted by the Northumberland PRoW Improvement Plan for the Urban Fringe area includes the following:
- There are a number of horse riders, livery and riding stables in the area but a poor network of bridleways.

- The provision of improved and extended access along the River Wansbeck would address known public demand.
 - The restoration of opencast coal sites offer opportunities to improve the rights of way network.
 - There are problems with illegal use of motor vehicles (especially trail bikes), fly tipping and vandalism on certain parts of the network which inhibits legitimate use.
 - North Ashington Woods is a potentially important recreational resource but at present does not have a network of rights of way.
 - Redundant railway and wagon ways within the area could complement public rights of way and aid the promotion of sustainable transport.
 - Lack of crossings over major roads and railways are obstacles to walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
 - The participation rates in outdoor recreation are lower than in other parts of the County and levels of poor health are higher.
- 4.20 Of fundamental concern in relation to this strategy is to develop a network that connects the principal settlements around the area to suit each of the main user groups (walkers, cyclists, and horse riders) and that is accessible to all (i.e. delivering on the Statement of Intent of Access for All in the Improvement Plan). Whilst the network appears extensive, there are significant gaps in provision that act as a constraint to realising this aim in the short term.
- 4.21 The value of PROW in terms of promoting healthier lifestyles of the local population is also reiterated given the poor health of the population in the South East Northumberland area.
- 4.22 This issue, and those relating to encouraging leisure trips (walking, cycling and horse riding), and developing a sustainable network for utilitarian journeys, are addressed in the generic Improvement Plan policies UN1 through to UN12. It is important that these policies are supported and further enhanced by this strategy. There are also additional benefits of integrating green infrastructure with PROW, and the historic and natural landscape of the area, as a means of raising the profile, and increasing enjoyment, of routes, which in itself will encourage use and therefore improved health.

Conclusions

- 4.23 Assessment and analysis of the existing green infrastructure within South East Northumberland and the New Growth Points highlights a number of issues.
- 4.24 Overall, the quality of existing green space is poor (there are a very few exceptions where quality is good or even excellent). The diversity of South East's existing communities, and in particular their differences and similarities in relation to deprivation, family make-up, car ownership, and housing type mean that greenspace is needed, and used, in a variety of ways. Poor quality green space will not be used, as it will not be valued, or seen as safe or desirable, factors that can often mean it is used improperly.
- 4.25 New communities will have expectations of greenspace, and in particular its quality, given that their immediate environment and housing will be newly developed, and could be in sharp contrast to some of the existing built infrastructure of South East Northumberland.
- 4.26 Clear priorities in terms of a green infrastructure network for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point are therefore improvement and enhancement of existing, alongside the development of good quality new greenspace.
- 4.27 Based on the quantitative standards adopted for Northumberland (recommended in the Northumberland PPG 17 Assessment, 2011), there is currently sufficient quantity of green space, of all types, except

outdoor sports provision and natural/semi-natural sites. Given that the majority of the Northumberland population live in the South East, it is clear that current provision is sufficient overall, although there are two specific types of green space which need to be increased. This position is re-enforced by the consultation feedback which demonstrates that the majority of respondents think there is enough green space in their area.

- 4.28 However, given that the community consultation also raises issues of accessibility, there is clearly some mismatch between quantity of provision and its location, particularly at a very local level. The only way to address this may be to provide additional green infrastructure. This would also enable the development of purpose designed green spaces, particularly at local level, to benefit local communities. Good quality local green spaces are more likely to be used by local people, and therefore have a significant potential to contribute to improved community and individual health, quality of life, regeneration and social cohesion.
- 4.29 The New Growth Points and the development of new residential areas further suggests the need for new green space (particularly local amenity space within 300m of residential areas, and play areas for children and young people), firstly as part of new sustainable communities, and secondly as a means of linking existing and new settlements. This latter point provides a real opportunity to address existing issues of inaccessibility and lack of connectivity, and specific deficiencies in types of provision.
- 4.30 Adopting this approach could also help to deliver a critical element of green infrastructure – multi-functionality. For example, if a new amenity space is created, with some fixed play equipment, this would provide for an immediate residential area. If this amenity space ‘connects’ a New Growth Point to an existing bridleway/PROW/natural/semi-natural green space/outdoor sports site, it becomes part of a wider green infrastructure network and potentially a sustainable transport route, connecting people with employment, town centres, and recreational provision.
- 4.31 The assessment and analysis of existing green infrastructure in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point clearly highlights that quality, and accessibility are key priorities to address moving forwards. Quantity will be addressed because new greenspace will be created as part of the New Growth Point; the issue is how new provision can be optimised to benefit new and existing communities, and in so doing, create connectivity and multi-functionality.
- 4.32 Given the identification of ‘gaps’ in existing green infrastructure, and corresponding opportunities, the New Growth Point GI strategy needs to be geographically focussed and responsive to the needs of people rather than quantitative standards.
- 4.33 Improvement and enhancement of existing green space, and development of new green space that connects and is multi-functional will deliver the Vision for green infrastructure in the South East Northumberland Growth Point.

Section 5 - Green Infrastructure Strategy



5. Green Infrastructure Strategy

Articulating the Vision

5.1 The Vision for green infrastructure in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point is identified as:

'To develop an accessible, good quality, green infrastructure network in the New Growth Point area by 2020, which:

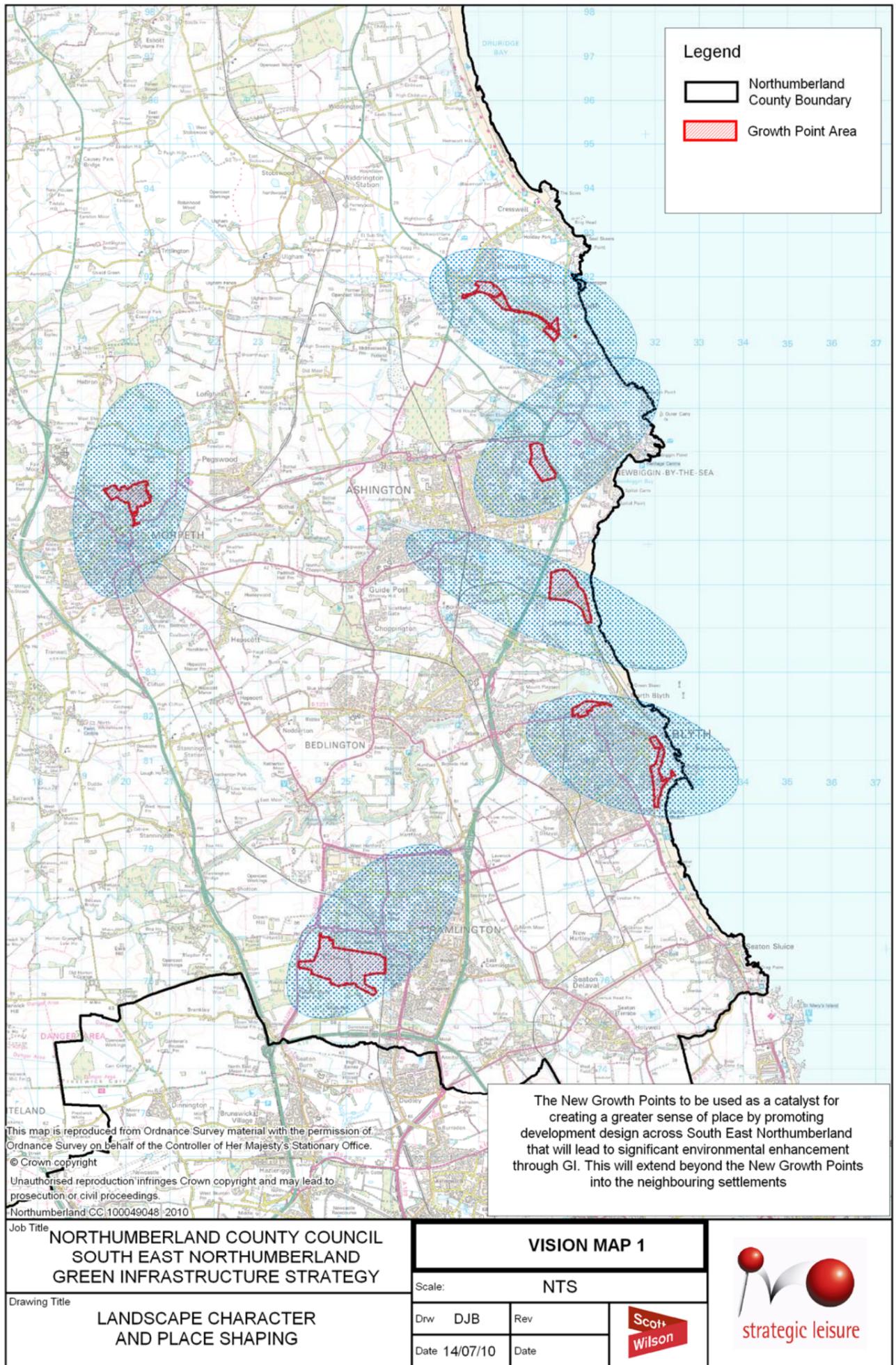
- **Creates a distinct sense of identity and place**
- **Protects, improves and enhances the quality of the existing environment for existing and new communities, and potential development partners**
- **Contributes to the sustainability of its diverse communities**
- **Ensure the opportunities for improved accessibility and linkages, recreational enjoyment, enhanced biodiversity and the future designation of sites of natural/environmental/historical significance.'**

5.2 The strategy aims are to:

- Provide the strategic context and rationale for the New Growth Point planning policy to improve existing poor quality open space, protect existing and new sites of strategic importance, and develop new multifunctional green, grey-green and open spaces, to provide suitable and sufficient green infrastructure for recreation, amenity and conservation purposes
- Create a greater sense of place within South East Northumberland by promoting regeneration, development and design resulting in significant environmental enhancement
- Ensure coherent connectivity between existing and new green corridors, grey-green links and open spaces to create a sustainable local community transport network accessible to all, which will help address identified issues of poor health, and the need to improve quality of life
- Continue to explore and promote the benefits of green infrastructure provision in addressing the causes and effects of climate change
- Contribute to the overall regeneration and economic development aims for South East Northumberland, and the development of sustainable communities
- Demonstrate the benefits of green infrastructure for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point

5.3 Delivering the Vision is about planning and implementing a transformation in, and to, the existing environment, alongside the development of the New Growth Points.

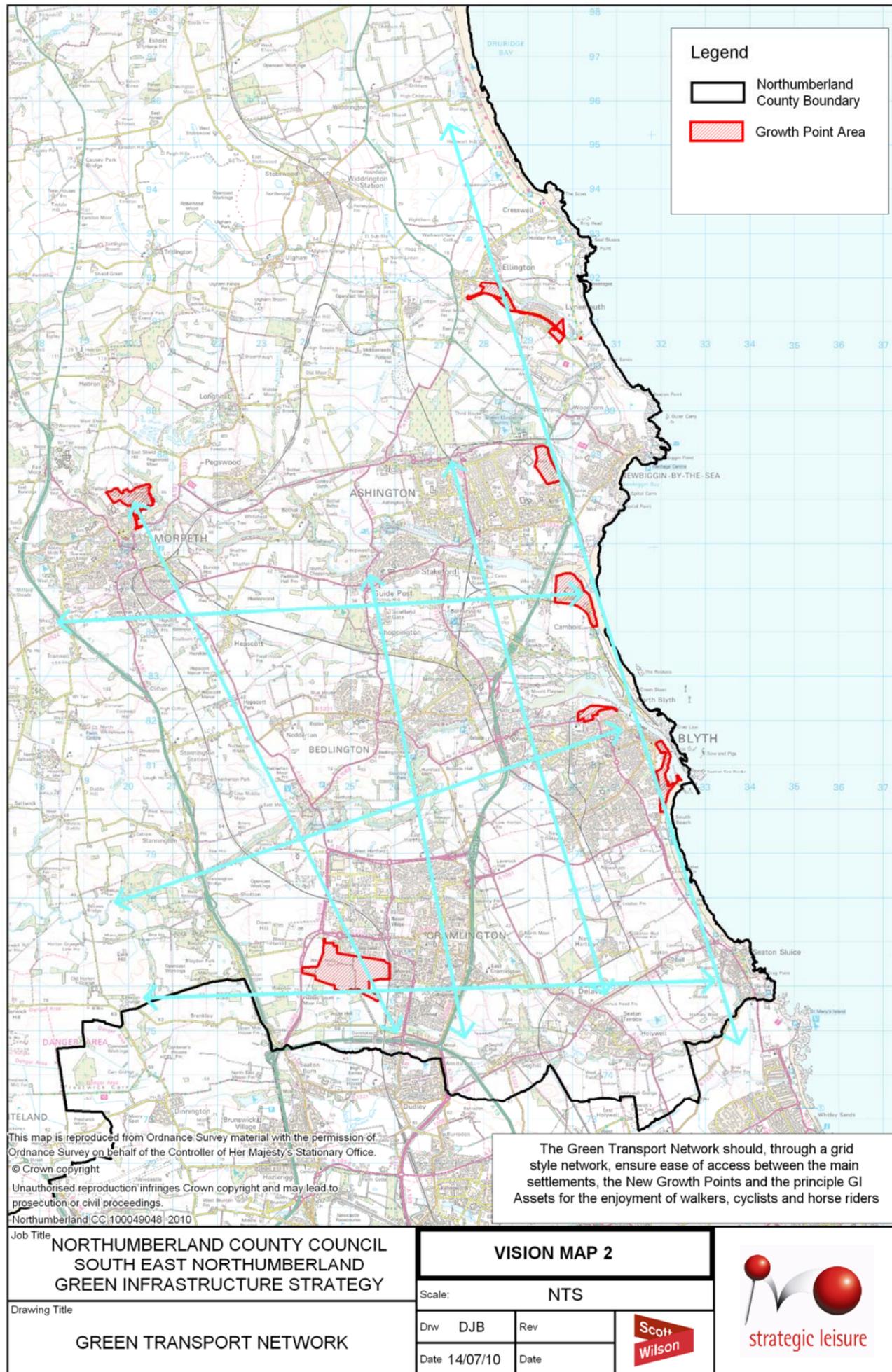
Vision Map 1: Landscape Character and Place Shaping



5.4 This transformation will mean the green infrastructure network is recognisable as an integral part of South East Northumberland. The environment of South East Northumberland will permeate 'greenness'. The landscape that was once visually dominated by large-scale industrial sites and mineral workings will comprise quality, pleasant, local parks (Greenflag accredited where possible), and amenity spaces, natural spaces, and green corridors immersed in the new residential zones in Blyth, Cramlington, Ashington and Morpeth providing spaces in which to play, relax, and recreate.

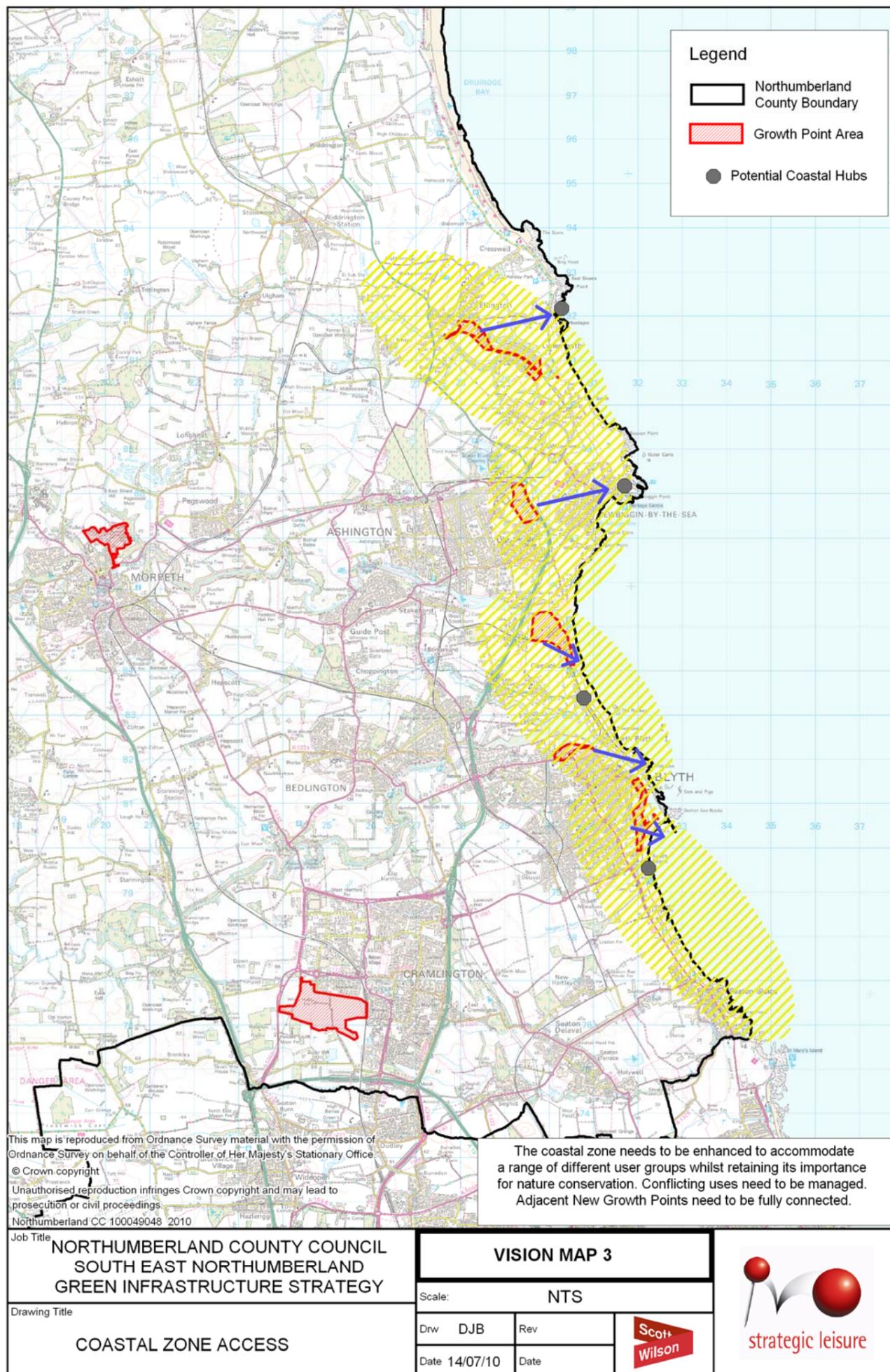
5.5 Green transport routes will be evident, with existing rights of way, riversides, woodlands, disused railway and wagonway lines, and permissive routes combining to create a complete network of footpaths, cyclepaths, and other leisure routes. These routes will promote sustainable movement, 'green' exercise, and importantly allow all users to get to know the historical and natural characteristics of their surroundings, whilst improving their own health.

Vision Map 2: Green Transport Network



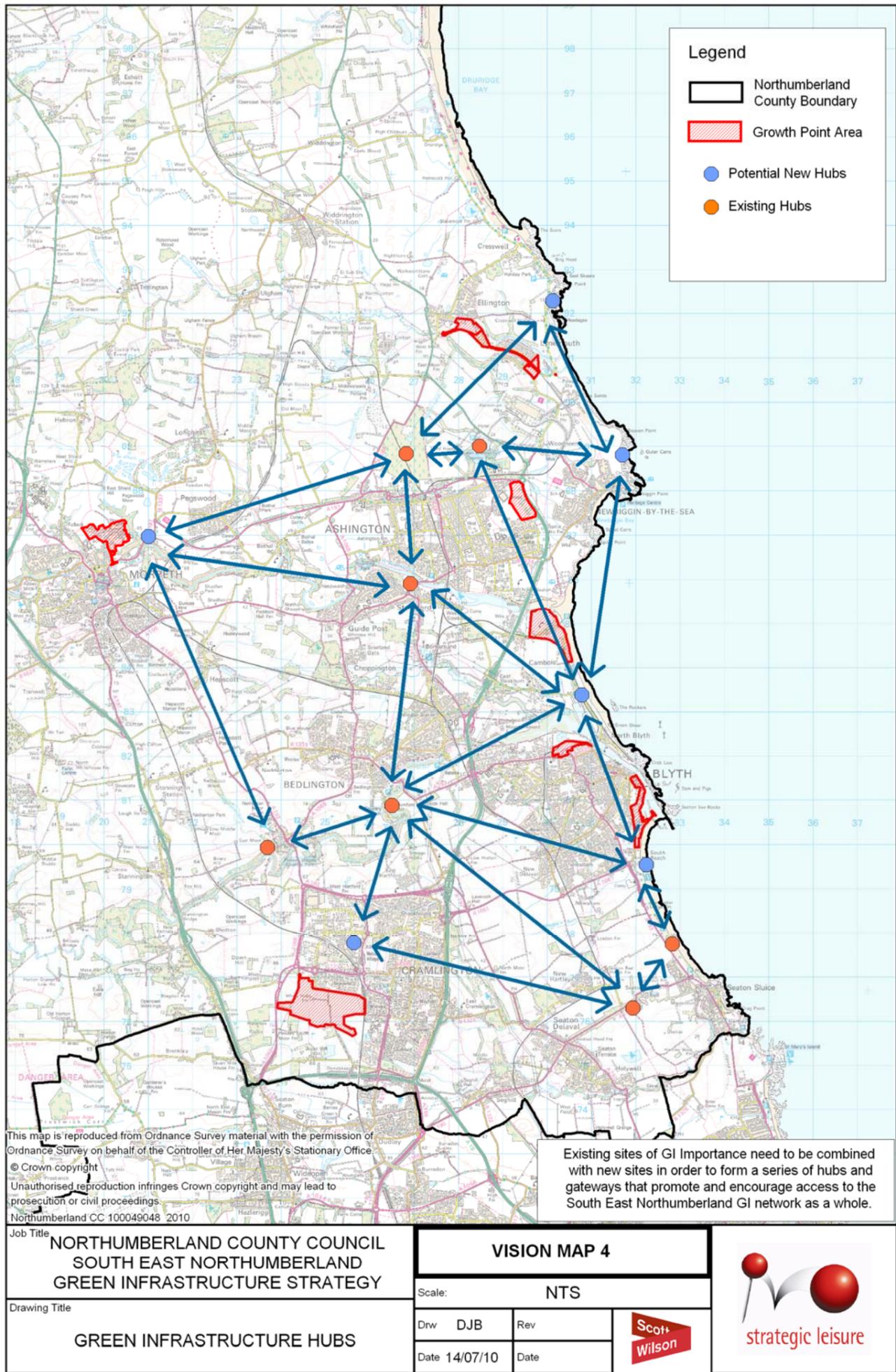
5.6 The green transport routes will also be used to promote habitat creation and wildlife movement, raising the levels of biodiversity in the area and allowing important species to prosper. The natural environment, particularly the coastal zone, the woodlands and the rivers and estuaries of Blyth and Wansbeck will form a collective asset that facilitates greater enjoyment, learning, and healthier lifestyles through a continuum of accessible green and open spaces.

Vision Map 3: Costal Zone Access



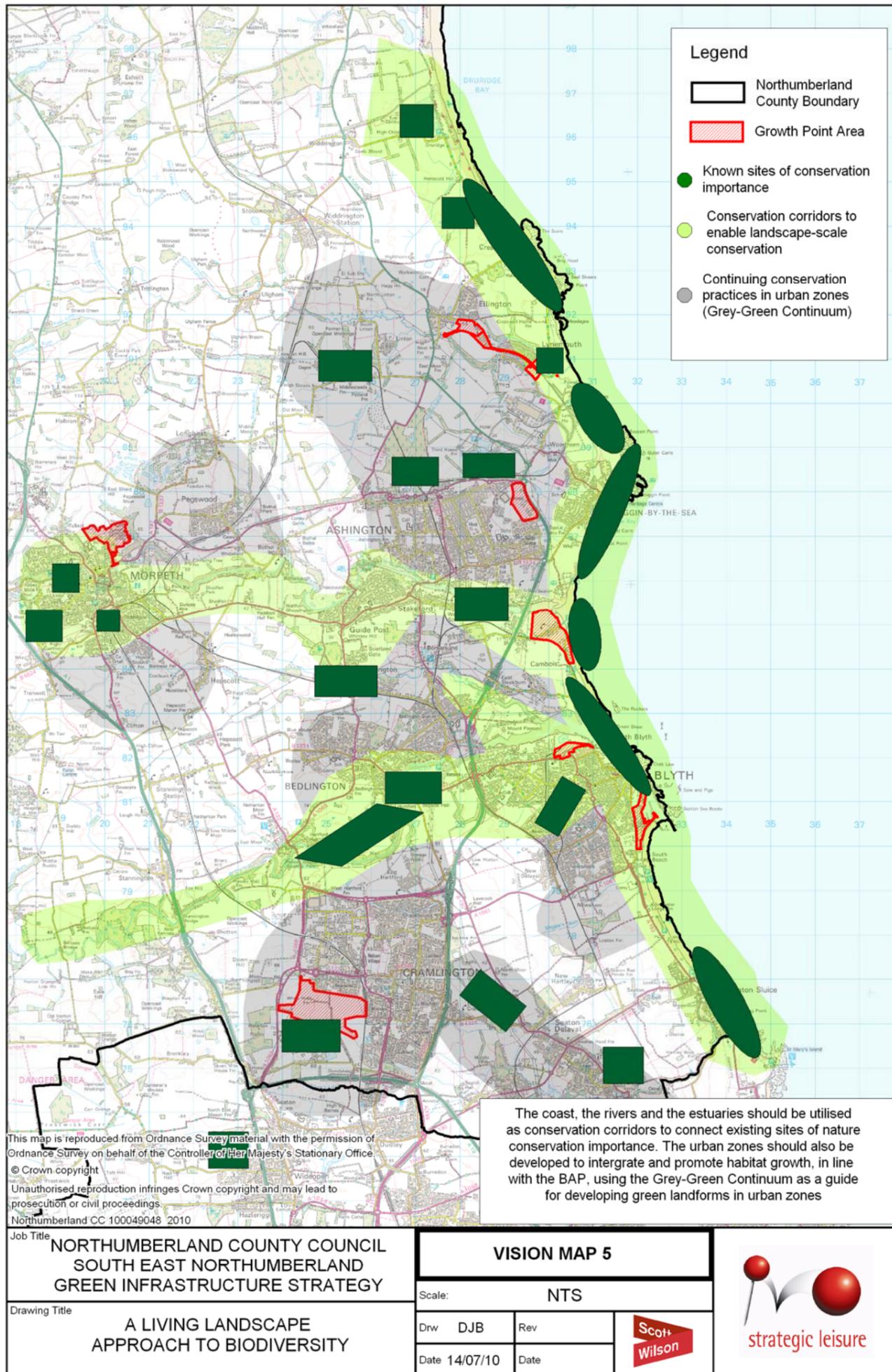
- 5.7 The development of the green infrastructure network will also lead to a more diversified economy. Increased use of the parks, the coastal zone, and the leisure network will generate opportunities for retail, catering, cycle hire, guided horse riding hacks, and other niche interests. Promotion of the South East Northumberland New Growth Point green infrastructure will also support a range of conservation organisations and encourage volunteering initiatives, initially to improve the character of the sites and subsequently to assist in their maintenance, and aid in learning programmes.
- 5.8 Plessey Woods, Bedlington, Wansbeck and Queen Elizabeth II Country Parks, ever-growing woodlands areas and a dramatically improved coastal zone will attract visitors from near and far, for family fun, adventure activities and to observe and learn about some of the UK's rare and colourful wildlife. The commercial centres and corridors in the Growth Points will be lined with green canopies that intersperse, screen and soften the character of retail centres, business parks or traditional transport routes.

Vision Map 4: Green Infrastructure Hubs

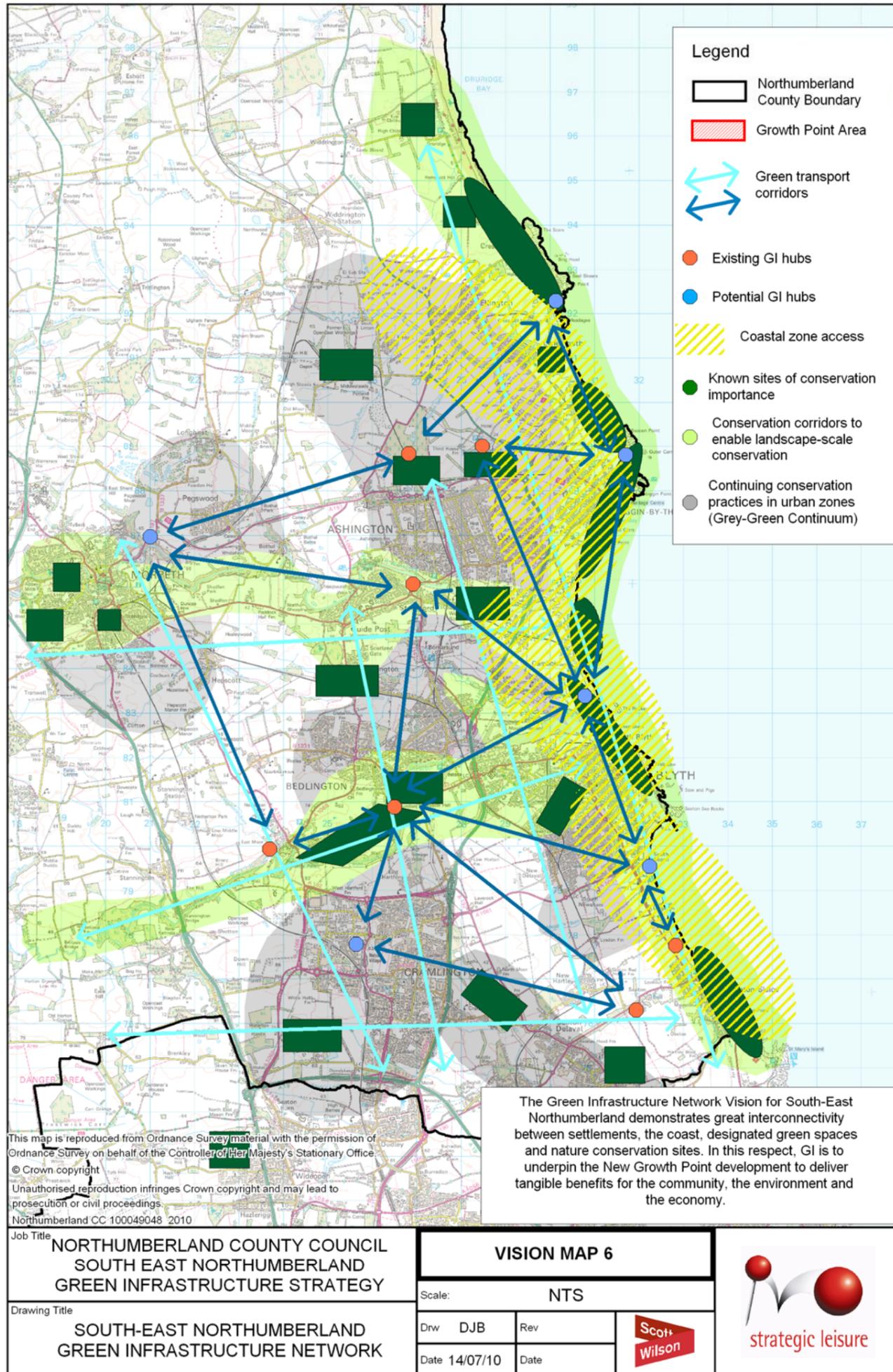


5.9 In order to deliver the scale of the transformation envisaged, significant investment – people, finance, time – will be required. In addition, there will need to be collective understanding of, and 'buy-in' to the cumulative benefits of green infrastructure in terms of promoting South East Northumberland as a quality place to live, to work and to visit.

Vision Map 5: Approach to Biodiversity within the Landscape



Vision Map 6: Southeast Northumberland Green Infrastructure Network



- 5.10 Proactive planning policies will need to be adopted that encourage new development emphasising ‘greenness’ in design, and emphasising the fact that ‘green’ landform underpins the premise of creating attractive and sustainable environments, regardless of the project type – residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, or public open spaces.
- 5.11 These planning policies will underpin the framework for development of the green infrastructure network in South East Northumberland. The framework will set out how individual sites are thematically and spatially interconnected, and the ‘multifunctional’ potential of each site.
- 5.12 In order to realise and deliver the reality of the Vision, and achieve these aims, by 2020, the South East Northumberland New Growth Point GI Strategy needs to focus on three main priorities:
- Improvement and Enhancement of existing green space, and its distinctive character (to include development of multi-functionality where possible/appropriate)
 - Development of quality, well-designed, new green space (predominantly related to the New Growth Points), with a clear sense of place
 - Optimising the development of new green space to address identified gaps in terms of accessibility, connectivity and multi-functionality
- 5.13 Focussing on these three priority action areas, and using these as the guiding framework for all provision of green space in the South East Northumberland New Growth Point by integrating green infrastructure thinking into the overall planning and development process, will, over time, realise a good quality, green infrastructure network. In turn this will create increased pride, wellbeing, vitality, a sense of identity and prosperity within the community.

Key Recommendations for Policy and Implementation

- 5.14 The key recommendations for achieving the identified aims and delivering the South East Northumberland New Growth Point GI Strategy are set out below. They focus around the three priority action areas in terms of transforming green infrastructure, and provide the basis for the subsequent Action Plan, by addressing the Strategy’s 6 aims.

Improvement and Enhancement of existing green space, and its distinctive character (to include development of multi-functionality where possible/appropriate)

- 5.15 The improvement and enhancement of existing open space is a priority, both for individual sites and for the benefits such enhancement will bring to a wider green infrastructure network. The identified priorities at service area and New Growth Point level are summarised in Table 5.2 below and overleaf:

Table 5.1: Improvement and Enhancement Priorities

Area	Improvement and Enhancement Priorities
South East Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement to the quality of Blyth Country Park, Seaton Sluice Country Park • Development of circular route bridleways • Creation of links between reclaimed woodlands

Area	Improvement and Enhancement Priorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific disability access points • The renovation of, routes around, Seaton Delaval Hall • Creating links between bridleways and green corridors to create circular routes • Extending cycling routes to link the main settlements with the coast • Creating better connectivity between existing and new communities, and green spaces • Improving the local natural and historical environment • Linking the Growth Points with nearby sites of importance for nature conservation • Start programme of working towards Green flag for key green infrastructure sites • Commence programme of 'green canopies' in existing urban community centres, and along existing access/transport corridors
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of Queen Elizabeth II Country Park
North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of Beacon Hill Green, Westfield Park
Blyth	
Cowpen Quay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point
South Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces

Area	Improvement and Enhancement Priorities
	around the Growth Point eg Cresswell Dunes
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point

Development of quality, well-designed, new green space (predominantly related to the New Growth Points), with a clear sense of place

5.16 Development of new, well-designed green space, with a clear sense of place is also a priority, both for individual sites and for the benefits such enhancement will bring to a wider green infrastructure network. The identified priorities at service area and New Growth Point level are summarised in Table 5.2 below and overleaf:

Table 5.2: Improvement and Enhancement Priorities

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
South East Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New bridleways in the north and west • Specific disability access points to new and existing green infrastructure, particularly leisure and transport routes • Opening up access to new natural/semi-natural green spaces eg woodland on river banks • Development of linear routes linking the urban areas of South East Northumberland together • Development of 2ha natural/semi-natural sites in the New Growth Points • New routes around Seaton Delaval Hall
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 2ha natural/semi-natural sites in the New Growth Point • Areas of East Ashington to the west and south of the New Growth Point

North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Morpeth to the west, south and east
---------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
	<p>of the New Growth Point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific development of green spaces to the north of the Growth Point • Development of new green space within the New Growth Point itself
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Cramlington to the east and north of the New Growth Point • Create new green space linking to the cycleways and bridleways connecting to Blyth and the coast • Seek to develop circular bridleways if possible Create a new green link from Cramlington High School to the Growth Point
Blyth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Blyth to the south, west and north of the two New Growth Points
Cowpen Quay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new 2ha natural/semi-natural green spaces
South Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new green link to the coast
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Ellington and Lynemouth to the north, south and west of the New Growth Point • Develop the disused wagonway/railway cutting as a new green infrastructure, linking into and out of the Growth Point • Develop linking green space to connect with /out to Cresswell Dunes and Lynemouth Bay
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new green infrastructure to link existing green spaces, and link into the wider green network

Optimising the development of new green space to address identified gaps in terms of accessibility, connectivity and multi-functionality

5.17 In addition to creating new green space, the New Growth Point provide an opportunity to link new and existing green spaces, communities and settlements. The key opportunities to achieve this, and also maximise the potential of disused transport/green corridors, are summarised in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3 : Optimising new Green Space to create connectivity and multi-functionality

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
South East Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a new National Nature Reserve • Development of a new Visitor Centre to support the reserve, and manage visitors • Potential development of a Visitor Centre at Druridge Bay • Development of visitor amenities to improve management and access, plus generate revenue
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New green infrastructure linking to Paddock Green Doorstep Green • Green infrastructure to link to the existing formal sports sites west of the Growth Point, plus Newbiggin Middle School, Newbiggin by the Sea, and Ashington Woodhorn Reclamation Scheme
North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of links to 20ha and 100ha natural/semi-natural sites outside the New Growth Points • Improve connectivity between existing green woodland corridor, PROW circular route (part of), and cycle routes to Ashington and Pegswood • Improve links to the Mount Open Space so that whole site has access to this green space
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve links between existing green spaces and new ones • Optimise the existing cycleways running through the Growth Point to link to other green infrastructure

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
Blyth	
Cowpen Quay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the opportunity of developing new green space to create links to existing green spaces, in, and close to, the New Growth Point • Aim for new residential areas to connect to the cycleway linking to Blyth Harbour and the coast, and to the PROW from the riverside
South Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link new residential area with PROW and cycleway running through the site, to connect to wider green infrastructure network
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use development of green space as an opportunity to connect to existing green spaces, and the wider network
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new green space specifically to link from the existing cycleway and bridleway to the Growth Point to connect the new settlement to Blyth, Ashington and Bedlington

Landscape Character and Place Shaping

Create a greater sense of place within South East Northumberland by promoting regeneration, development and design resulting in significant environmental enhancement

- 5.18 New Growth Points provide the opportunity to shape an improved and enhanced landscape character for South East Northumberland; one that is more visually appealing with plenty of green spaces to explore and use, which will be utilised and appreciated by future generations.
- 5.19 The population of South East Northumberland will grow by 6,000 residents in the future – with Blyth, Cramlington, and Ashington being the main centres for residential, industrial and economic growth, while the more traditional sectors, principally mining, continues to become less prevalent. The development of in housing, office and industrial space, and the restoration and reclamation of previously industrialised areas is an opportunity that should be capitalised to create new, greener landscapes that offer opportunities for recreation in green spaces close to people’s home and work places.
- 5.20 Planned residential, retail and commercial sector projects in Cramlington, Blyth Estuary, Cambois, East Ashington, North Morpeth, and Ellington/Lynemouth, which are well designed and follow appropriate landscape guidance, provide an opportunity to change the landscape character for the better; this in turn will allow the people that live and work in, or visit, the area to interplay with the green and historic places and spaces available to them, i.e. those areas where they will formulate their ‘sense of place’ of South East Northumberland.

5.21 GI should be at the forefront of this approach (see Vision Map 1):

- **The development of a quality and accessible green infrastructure network should be used as a means of ensuring that new development, where appropriate, supports the wider objectives for developing clean, green and safe places for people to enjoy. Development needs to be underpinned by a strong ‘green’ context which identifies the specific contribution development will make to improving the attractiveness of existing urban forms as well as those being newly created. Landscape design guidance for the different development areas would be a useful tool for both planners and developers in this regard.**
- **Where possible, development needs to give consideration to retaining or creating vistas of the area’s green spaces such as agricultural land, rivers, estuaries and coast to establish strong visual linkages, edges and gateways. The green spaces alongside the rivers and estuaries of Blyth and Wansbeck need to be upgraded to promote public access amongst pedestrians, and where appropriate, cyclists and riders.**
- **North Ashington Woodland should be enhanced to create a visitor destination, maximising the potential offered by this green infrastructure asset.**
- **Important green spaces within, or close to, settlements need to be protected and conserved, and potentially to include some ‘green’ buffering that will preclude any development that would damage or deter usage of GI directly adjacent to settlements.**
- **Stronger boundary definitions around the settlement areas should be created for the green belts to restrict the impact of urban development on the character of the surrounding countryside.**
- **Further accessible woodland, lakes and other natural spaces to be created through reclaimed mineral workings.**
- **The ANGSt standards highlight that new green and open spaces accessible to the public will be required, particularly in terms of 2+ha sites associated with the existing settlements and the new growth points. The planning process, development design, and developer contributions should be utilised to fill these gaps in provision.**
- **The role of the coast, especially between Seaton Sluice and Blyth and around Newbiggin-By-The-Sea through to Lynemouth and Ellington, needs to be conserved and protected for the benefit of public access, with GI utilised as a means of deriving these areas as multifunctional spaces.**
- **The ‘Grey-Green Continuum’ model should be utilised as a tool for encouraging ‘greenness’ within different spaces and places across urban zones of South East Northumberland**

5.22 Recommendations for Landscape and Place Shaping through green infrastructure:

- **Use the planning process and the opportunity for change provided by the New Growth Point status as the driver for improving the quality of the character of the environment within South East Northumberland.**
- **Establish design guide principles to ensure that New Growth Point development and projects present real improvements to the landscape character of South East Northumberland.**
- **Use the Grey-Green Continuum approach to integrate shades of ‘greenness’ into other forms of urban development (e.g. transportation; industrial)**

- Address the gaps in existing green infrastructure provision identified through the ANGSt assessment, through encouraging initiatives from the public, private and voluntary sector.

Green Transport Network

Ensure coherent connectivity between existing and new green corridors, grey-green links and open spaces to create a sustainable local community transport network accessible to all, which will help address identified issues of poor health, and the need to improve quality of life

- 5.23 Building upon the provision that already exists (e.g. existing PRoW, off-road cycle paths, bridleways, cycleways, and the National Cycle Network Route 1) an integrated leisure and recreation network is a fundamental requirement for green infrastructure in South East Northumberland. At local level, this network will enable access to neighbourhood-based assets such as local parks, allotments, waterways, natural spaces and other green spaces for people to relax and enjoy.
- 5.24 At sub-regional level, the network should link settlements with the principal green infrastructure assets and hubs, particularly those on the fringes of, and between, the settlements, the coast and the countryside in the form of a north-south, east-west grid-style network across SEN. The majority of this network should ideally be off-road using existing and upgraded PRoW, byways, and wagonways and designated 'quiet lanes', avoiding busy roads wherever possible. The routes should incorporate natural features and countryside settings such as rivers, streams, lakes, woodland and open green spaces, as well as historic features in the landscape which offer suitable interpretation. Map 4 (see section 5) demonstrates the existing provision, whilst Vision Maps 2 and 4 demonstrate how this could be developed to provide a network linking key settlements and green infrastructure hubs (see below). Key aspects of the network can be summarised as follows:
- **Local parks and green spaces in urban centres are to be linked via a series of safe footpaths and designated cycle lanes lined with greenery, with greater people permeability enabled through measures to overcome traffic obstacles (e.g. road/rail crossings).**
 - **The rivers and estuaries of the Blyth and Wansbeck should become synonymous with providing safe linear green corridors in the urban zones of Blyth, and Cramlington and Morpeth, Wansbeck and Ashington respectively, representing key landscape and leisure reference points for the whole of South East Northumberland.**
 - **Urban-to-country circular and linear routes should be used to link key assets on the urban fringe to settlements, using the grey-green continuum to delineate the different shades of 'greenness' to be incorporated into the different corridors identified.**
 - **Assets will also be linked with public transport to allow people to have a multi-modal journey to the countryside.**
 - **Natural and historic sites of importance already identified in South East Northumberland should (where appropriate, based on the individual circumstances of the site) be incorporated into the leisure route network. These should be designed to incorporate interpretation centres/boards at key locations, resting areas, shelters and viewing points.**
 - **Consideration should be given to connecting new amenities to the leisure network as they are developed, with Northumberlandia providing a useful example of an existing project that should be linked to the green infrastructure network. The inclusion of other initiatives from the arts should be considered to create additional interest, with innovative techniques such as water features, topiary, lighting and sound to enhance the experience.**

- **Horse riding routes should include separated bridle paths and dedicated ‘gallop’ areas where possible, using woodland areas where appropriate, and other open space sites. The development of more circular bridleways should be a priority. Access to privately owned land should be encouraged through stewardship schemes and through TROT⁷ for example.**
 - **The walking and cycling network should coincide with public transport routes, visitor parking areas, and be connected to commercial provision within South East Northumberland, especially refreshment centres, toilets, secure cycle lock-ups, supply and hire facilities. Circuits should also link with retail outlets and accommodation to encourage longer stays with resulting economic benefits.**
 - **Equally, opportunities for linking routes within South East Northumberland to the wider sub regional network should be considered. The most southerly point of the Northumberland Coastal Path, the principal designated coastal footpath in Northumberland, is Cresswell, to the north of the South East New Growth Point. From here, it travels 64 miles northward to Berwick-upon-Tweed, crossing the Northumberland AONB.**
 - **The Coast and Castles Cycle Routes acts as a formal route that continues southward into South East Northumberland and beyond that could be used for walking, however the fact that some sections are ‘on-road’ will act as a barrier in terms of use by walkers. Having a designated walking route that extends beyond Cresswell into South East Northumberland and links to the Tynemouth area would present a significant linear route for the sub-region. This initiative would also form part of the aspiration to create a continuous walking route around the coast of England as part of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.**
- 5.25 The overall network requires careful and sensitive planning, good clear information systems and signposting, and good management and maintenance.
- 5.26 Opportunities to integrate green infrastructure into the road network should also be explored by existing (i.e. South East Northumberland Public Transport Corridor, Blyth Central Link Road, and Morpeth Northern Bypass) and future transportation projects in the NGP, with a key objective being to ‘green’ these routes wherever practical using the grey-green continuum concept as a guide. This could be achieved through providing grass verges.
- 5.27 Walking, cycling and horse riding routes should be regarded as individual networks with their own pathway requirements, in accordance with the principles of developing ‘Greenways’. Where routes are multi-use, the design should be conducive to ensuring safe and enjoyable use by all, and the overall route includes ‘single use’ sections to allow each user group to maximise the enjoyment of their experience. The network should also include provision of trails and routes that can accommodate runners, other health and fitness users, and for assisted mobility users.
- 5.28 Delivering the transport network outlined above will be challenging, particularly in relation to obtaining rights of access. The planning and development process should be used as a means of securing new pathways and cycleways that connect with and expand the existing network.
- 5.29 Environmental stewardship schemes, permissive rights and other schemes such as TROT can be used to encourage landowners to allow access routes to be created through their property. Discussion should also be encouraged in terms of using some of the existing disused wagonway routes within the leisure network, with Sustrans well placed to act as a partner organisation in terms of initiating discussions, design and management of this type of project.

⁷ Toll Rides Off-Road Trust (TROT) – a scheme that promotes and encourages access to farmland through a payment scheme to the landowners. TROT is a registered charity that is expanding its interests across the UK. There is no representation of TROT in the North East at present.

5.30 Recommendations for Creating a Green Transport Network:

- **Ensure local/neighbourhood level green assets identified through PPG17 are accessible to local communities without significant barriers**
- **Establish coherent green infrastructure masterplans and action plans for the rivers and estuaries of Blyth and Wansbeck, addressing barriers to continual use as leisure routes between urban zones, the countryside and the coast.**
- **With the rivers providing an axis, establish a north-south, east-west grid framework that connects the different settlements to each other, the countryside, the coast and beyond into the wider Northumberland and Tyneside.**
- **Using the New Growth Point development, develop linear and circular routes to connect new settlements with green assets on the urban fringe, linked into the public transport network**
- **Ensure that all current, planned and future development (residential, commercial, industrial, and green) and transport infrastructure projects give clear consideration to providing new pathways and cycleways that connect with the wider green infrastructure leisure route network.**
- **Encourage the use of Environmental Stewardship, Permissive Rights and other initiatives (e.g. TROT) to enable development of the green transport network, and draw upon the experience of other stakeholders in terms of delivery and future management.**

The Coastal Zone

Enhance the coastal zone to accommodate a range of different (and potentially conflicting) user groups, whilst retaining its importance for nature conservation.

- 5.31 The coastal zone is one of the most valuable green infrastructure assets for South East Northumberland in terms of recreation and biodiversity, with the open stretches of beach area vital to the prosperity of both.
- 5.32 Blyth, Seaton Sluice and Newbiggin-By-The-Sea, popular for traditional beach and bathing activities need to be retained and enhanced. The Blyth links improvement scheme, has realised a range of environmental and amenity improvements to the coastal area of Blyth, whilst the introduction of the 'Couple' to form part of the sea defence structure at Newbiggin has helped to raise this seaside town's profile. Similar schemes that will help retain or improve accessibility should be explored, particularly to influence use of the more attractive coastal areas.
- 5.33 Adrenalin and adventure activities that utilise coastal areas, such as surfing and kite surfing, are emerging in South East Northumberland as popular pursuits. Such activities can be a source of conflict with traditional bathers and families if not properly managed.
- 5.34 Similarly, traditional use of the beach can have implications for wildlife habitats eg dogs being let off leads in areas of ground nesting birds. Much of the coastal zone has a Ramsar, SPA or LNR designation and is a linear corridor of considerable biodiversity value.

- 5.35 None of the beaches in SEN, or Northumberland overall, has been awarded Blue Flag status⁸, and only one has reached the Quality Coast Award⁹ - Cresswell Dunes and Foreshore. Although this does not mean that the beaches are not maintained well enough for public use, they are not currently recognised as being among Britain's best beaches.
- 5.36 Equally, there are no British Surf Academy registered surf schools in Northumberland, and similarly none of the beaches in Northumberland currently feature in the British Kite Surf Association recommendations of 'where to go'. Yet, the beaches could have greater potential in relation to these activities with a key attraction, as with elsewhere along the Northumberland coastline, being because of the low levels of use for general bathing and recreation.
- 5.37 Securing access to, and use of, the coastal zone, whilst retaining and improving its biodiversity importance will therefore be a difficult balance to achieve. Initiatives that could be introduced to achieve this balance include (see Vision Map 3):
- **Installing clear information and signage boards to explain the biodiversity value of the coast and therefore the need to respect and support this through keeping dogs on leads, avoiding the most sensitive sites etc**
 - **Establishing a dedicated visitor centre/café to promote and even cross-subsidise conservation with other forms of beach use (e.g. Using a 'visitor payback' philosophy associated with retail, catering and hire spend to contribute to local conservation schemes and practices);**
 - **Using zoning techniques to manage different users and reduce incidents of conflict; and**
- 5.38 Achieving this balance would allow the South East Northumberland coastal zone to flourish as a well utilised and highly value natural resource, for both local people and visitors to the area.
- 5.39 All settlements, and especially the new growth points, need to be connected to the coastal zone to encourage greater access and enjoyment of this resource by both local communities and visitors.
- 5.40 Recommendations for Ensuring the Coastal Zone Develops its Green Infrastructure Potential:
- **Ensure the value of the coastal zone as a principal green infrastructure resource is recognised through the planning system, with its environmental character enhanced through new development and vistas and immediate surroundings protected from any development that will lessen its 'green' value.**
 - **Explore opportunities to encourage greater use of the coastal zone by family markets, adrenalin sports, broader water sports and wildlife watchers.**
 - **Explore the use of activity zoning to assist in encouraging and managing the diverse needs and demands of users.**
 - **Opportunities for commercial functions should be explored, with the design and positioning of associated structures to be considered through the planning process.**

⁸ Blue Flag is an international accreditation to denote the quality of the beach and water established by the Foundation for Environmental Education. In the UK, the scheme is administered by Keep Britain Tidy.

⁹ The Quality Coast Award is an alternative to Blue Flag which focuses on the quality of the beach only. This scheme is also administered by Keep Britain Tidy.

Green Infrastructure Hubs

Create a series of multifunctional green 'hubs' designed to accommodate a variety of different activities to act as a beacon for green spaces across SEN.

- 5.41 The South East Northumberland green infrastructure network should include a series of hubs to act as beacons for encouraging access of green spaces. The hubs, or gateways, need to be readily identifiable features or facilities that have clearly defined public access functions in their own right. However, the purpose of these hubs will be to promote access to, and use of, the wider green infrastructure network.
- 5.42 As identified in Map 5 South East Northumberland already has a number of assets that could be considered as hubs, principally the Country Parks, Ashington Community Woodland and Seaton Delaval Hall. In addition, there is also capacity to bring other hubs online in the future (see Vision Map 4). This includes:
- **Several sites along the coastal zone, where people access can be suitably managed without compromising conservation efforts;**
 - **The full stretch of rivers and estuaries of the Blyth and Wansbeck as key landscape features that traverse SEN; and**
 - **Reclaimed mineral works for greenspace, leisure and wildlife interests (e.g. Northumberlandia and Ashington Community Woodland).**
- 5.43 Ideally, each of these hubs should be multifunctional in that they can be used as places of conservation, leisure access, and education. In the case of Seaton Delaval, this is likely to be put in place through the developments currently in progress. Similarly, the country parks already have multifunctional provision, however their quality needs to be significantly improved for this to be fully realised.
- 5.44 Each of these sites will also need to promote access to the wider network. In this respect, the sites need to disperse their visitors to other parts of the GI network using the green transport network.
- 5.45 Recommendations for Creating Green Infrastructure Hubs:
- **Identify a series of green infrastructure hubs and gateways; examine their current status as beacons of multifunctional green spaces by providing places of conservation, leisure access, and education, and improve/enhance where necessary**
 - **Ensure that each hub surpasses the minimum quality standards identified for open spaces using Green Flag, Blue Flag, Country Park Accreditation and others.**
 - **Integrate the hubs and gateways into the green transport network to encourage sustainable movement between the sites, with each site being clearly signposted and waymarked throughout the green transport network.**

An Approach to Biodiversity within the Landscape

Through careful consultation and management, enact an approach to biodiversity within the landscape in terms of nature conservation through SEN that will integrate conservation practices into living, working and leisure spaces.

- 5.46 Biodiversity is the generic term used to describe all types of species and organisms within a defined area. The biodiversity objectives of South East Northumberland will need to cater for a variety of different species, including bird species, insects (e.g. dragonflies, butterflies, bees), various aquatic mammals (e.g. otters and water voles), and fresh water fish.
- 5.47 A holistic, landscape-scale approach to biodiversity is a process that aims to create a series of seamless corridors encouraging the movement of important habitats and species throughout an area, irrespective of other land uses. Ultimately, this will require the integration of natural environment forms within the built landscape, be it residential, heavy industrial, office development, retail, or agricultural to ensure that these conservation corridors become clearly defined.
- 5.48 Careful consideration will need to be given as to how, and where, these corridors are created and how they link to other protected green spaces across Northumberland, because the county is one of the few areas in the England where the population of the red squirrel, a species protected across Europe, is still relatively healthy. Without careful consideration in planning and developing the conservation corridors, there is a danger that the further creation of interlinked green space, especially woodland, would encourage the migration of grey squirrels into existing red squirrel territory and thus endanger their survival. Ensuring that the native red squirrel can prosper needs to be the overriding concern.
- 5.49 Although South East Northumberland has a series of sites of both international and local importance in terms of nature conservation, LNRs and SSSIs, they are all spatially separate (as identified in Map 2). Their value in terms of nature conservation is easily overlooked by the general public on the basis that the sites are not well publicised and lack public amenities.
- 5.50 If an approach to biodiversity within the landscape is to be achieved, it is recommended that one or more of these sites be developed to champion the benefits of wildlife conservation locally, regionally and nationally. Where possible, these hubs should be linked to the corridors of the rivers Blyth and Wansbeck in order to facilitate wider habitat growth and movement. These clearly defined corridors need to be protected and enhanced for biodiversity, including the establishment of buffer zones to help protect the most sensitive areas from damage from other forms of activity, including humans (see Vision Map 5).
- 5.51 Conservation needs to be integrated into hard landscapes in urban and urban fringe locations. Biodiversity need not be a constraint to other development aspirations, but by incorporating biodiversity such as woodlands, water bodies, and appropriate planting regimes, into development design at an early stage it can be used to raise the profile of the project and provide a more attractive proposition for future businesses and residents settling in the area.
- 5.52 As an example, the Great North Park development in Newcastle-Gateshead has heavily involved the Forestry Commission to a point whereby the organisation has entered into land management and funding arrangements for the creation of woodland/open spaces in zones identified for residential and business development. The arrangement is seeking to deliver benefits to welfare of both residents and the workforce, but is also now being seen as a pro-active response to climate change achieved through development because it is leading to the 'greening' of the built environment.
- 5.53 Assuming that agriculture will be retained as a land use in South East Northumberland, the role of farming will be vital in achieving a landscape approach to biodiversity. The resulting benefits can often be mutual, for instance animal grazing is a natural means of managing landscapes, whilst inclusion of certain species can act as a natural control of pests that damage crops. Other managers of large

open space should be encouraged to develop management policies that include detailed consideration for biodiversity.

- 5.54 Appropriately designed development in biodiversity can also actively support other green infrastructure activities, especially leisure and tourism. Wildlife watching is a popular leisure pursuit in its own right, for example, which is proven to act as a motivator behind tourism visits. Integrating local wildlife discovery as a theme for leisure routes can be a useful means of encouraging people to walk, cycle, or horse ride around an area. Furthermore, tourism and leisure businesses are increasingly keen to be associated with 'green' practices. In this regard, use of one of the recognised green tourism schemes (e.g. Green Tourism Business Scheme, David Bellamy Awards, Green Globe) would create clearly define ties between business and improving the environment, including measures for biodiversity.
- 5.55 Recommendations for an Approach to Biodiversity within the Landscape in terms of Nature Conservation
- **Ensure clear consideration is given to conserving existing biodiversity in all development (e.g. residential, industrial, leisure) and delivering enhanced and new environments for biodiversity as determined through the Biodiversity Action Plan.**
 - **Identify, develop and promote a series of wildlife conservation sites specifically adapted to accommodate visitors (potentially including a visitor centre) that can educate people on the importance of nature conservation.**
 - **Encourage existing enterprises within South East Northumberland to adopt 'green' practices that are specifically designed to promote biodiversity, especially those with a direct relationship to green infrastructure (e.g. agriculture, woodland management, leisure, tourism).**
 - **Develop appropriate approaches to manage potential conflicts with other users of wildlife conservation zones and corridors (e.g. dog walkers, leisure users, sports enthusiasts) to avoid inadvertent damage to habitat growth.**

Green Infrastructure and Economic Development

Contribute to the overall regeneration and economic development aims for South East Northumberland, and the development of sustainable communities

- 5.56 It is important to recognise that the development of good quality and accessible green infrastructure network has an economic and regenerative value for South East Northumberland. Green infrastructure presents an opportunity to facilitate growth in existing activities and the promotion of new ventures.
- 5.57 A clear local example of this is Seaton Delaval Hall which, under the stewardship of The National Trust, will have a clear revenue generating function for the purposes of supporting the organisation's conservation activities. This in turn will create directly and indirectly supported employment. Similarly, the other country parks of SEN have enterprises that rely on economic exchange, be it cafes or boat hire for example.
- 5.58 Clear commercial opportunities exist throughout the coastal zone in relation to adrenalin activities such as surfing, kite sports and other water sports and through biodiversity. Opportunities to exploit this interest for commercial gain should be explored with associated enterprise opportunities include equipment hire, training/schooling, accommodation, and events, not to mention ancillary services such as retail and catering.
- 5.59 Another area for economic activity for consideration is in relation to wildlife watching, which would also have clear economic markets and benefits. The value of wildlife watching as an activity is well

recognised, with membership revenues and additional visitor spend used by organisations such as the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts to support their conservation activities. Additional value is often extracted by dedicated visitor centres that offer catering, retail, and meeting space in addition to interpretation and educational services.

- 5.60 As highlighted in Section 4, despite having a coastal zone internationally recognised as being highly valuable to wildlife conservation, the RSPB has only one site in Northumberland in total and whilst the Northumberland Wildlife Trust has a greater number of sites, few along the coastal zone have dedicated visitor facilities. This may change in the future due to the recent purchase of Cresswell Foreshore, part of the Druridge Bay area, with the Druridge Bay initiative seeking to develop this theme further.
- 5.61 Other GI activities within the South East Northumberland New Growth Points present economic opportunities in other forms and sectors. For instance:
- **Cycling and horse riding have a strong association with hire provision, whilst at the extreme end of the market, new mountain bike and BMX centres are being created from former mining sites (e.g. Lee Quarry, Rossendale; Magheramorne Quarry, Northern Ireland);**
 - **Equestrian leisure and tourism is a growth sector in the UK, with new businesses emerging from initiatives such as the National Bridleway Network;**
 - **Green infrastructure assets have strong resonance with voluntary employment to either support visitor functions or deliver localised conservation projects, which in turn can lead to volun-tourism for example; and**
 - **The management and maintenance of green infrastructure will also indirectly involve traditional skills, the arts, and agriculture for example.**

Supporting Economic Investment

- 5.62 Commercial and residential developments are critical to the delivery of the New Growth Points, but the Programme of Development recognises that development is to be balanced with creating an attractive place in which communities will live and work.
- 5.63 Creation of a green infrastructure network in South East Northumberland reflects a commitment to delivering environmental change and improvement, aspects which business leaders in the sectors requiring creative thinking, low noise levels, or those involved in environmental technologies are increasingly interested. The latter sector is set to be increasingly important with the growth of the NaREC for renewable and wind powered energy industries.
- 5.64 Recommendations for Deriving Economic Benefits from Green Infrastructure:
- **Reflect the potential of green infrastructure as a source of economic opportunity, supporting leisure, tourism and conservation enterprises in particular.**
 - **Use GI to raise the profile of South East Northumberland as a place for businesses to invest in and relocate to on the basis the South East Northumberland will offer a great working and living environment; and one that is in keeping with the growing importance of South East Northumberland in terms of delivering 'greener' living Explore opportunities for investment in activities that have clearly defined market potential (e.g. walking, wildlife watching, horse riding, cycling, water sports, adrenalin activities, golf), especially utilising the coastal zone.**
 - **Encourage greater integration of enterprises that have an indirect association with GI by delivering enhanced local supply chains, especially associated with local producers.**

- **Promote the cost saving that investment in GI can generate across for health and in combating the effects of climate change in South East Northumberland (see below).**

Green Infrastructure and Climate Change

Continue to explore and promote the benefits of green infrastructure provision in addressing the causes and effects of climate change.

- 5.65 Combating the causes and effects of climate change are critical to the delivery of sustainable solutions.
- 5.66 Increased pollution emissions, especially CO₂, in the atmosphere are causing more severe weather occurrences such as flooding and prolonged periods of draught, whilst the overall warming of the atmosphere is raising the level of the sea. These are just some of the issues that are being faced at a local level.
- 5.67 GI can help alleviate both the causes and the effects of climate change through mitigation and adaptation, both of which will be evidenced in South East Northumberland:
- **Mitigation – green infrastructure will help to reduce polluting emissions in South East Northumberland by:**
 - Reducing car dependency for travel to and from every day places such as the workplace, retail areas, schools and friends and family;
 - Encouraging the use of local assets and facilities for leisure and recreation, removing the need to travel to other areas to access attractive, quality green and open spaces;
 - Encouraging local business to adopt more sustainable operational practices– using resource efficient technologies, sourcing goods locally, improving site biodiversity (where relevant);
 - Promoting the use and value of local goods; and
 - Promoting greater use of renewable energy sources, including wood from managed and cultivated woodland that also have a biodiversity and leisure function.
 - **Adaptation – green infrastructure will help to adapt the local environment to:**
 - Create more CO₂ absorbing materials, especially in terms of woodland creation;
 - Reduce the need for energy and water consumption through appropriate design of the landscape, for example by creating more water bodies, grassland and woodland areas that cool the air around residential and business districts;
 - Retain and improve the inherent properties of natural landscape in terms of providing defences against flooding and droughts, whilst also providing other day-to-day functions such as leisure and biodiversity; and
 - Introduce more sustainably designed buildings for tourism and leisure services that require less power to run, create less waste, and are more harmonious in style with the natural surroundings.
- 5.68 Recommendations for Securing Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Measures through Green Infrastructure
- **Continue to examine and promote the benefits of Green Infrastructure in addressing the causes and effects of climate change.**

- **Ensure all planning documents draw attention to the need to the climate change mitigation and adaptation measures that can be realised through green infrastructure.**
- **Identify and enhance the roles of existing green infrastructure assets in the mitigation and adaptation of land in relation to climate change causes and effects.**
- **Ensure that any new green infrastructure development includes climate change mitigation and/or adaptation measures into its overall design.**

Community Prosperity

Use green infrastructure to create a greater community spirit, pride, wellbeing, vitality and prosperity.

- 5.69 Communities remain central to the premise of GI, whether it is improving the environment in which communities live; providing access to sites of importance nature and heritage conservation by local residents; or providing sustainable movement from places of residency to work, to school, to commercial centres, or to other open spaces for leisure.
- 5.70 However, these initiatives need to be supported by measures that will encourage the enjoyment of green infrastructure and the greater integration of communities across South East Northumberland. This includes:
- **Green infrastructure provision should facilitate and encourage greater connectivity of communities and settlements.**
 - **Core settlements, especially the main towns, need to be recognised as part of the green infrastructure network, accommodating strategic services and amenities, and encouraging economic exchange for the benefit of the wider South East Northumberland area.**
 - **Local residents should be encouraged to enjoy and access green infrastructure from their homes, with both existing and future landscapes adjacent to settlements designed to contain formal and informal green spaces such as woodland, lakes and open parkland for leisure, recreation and biodiversity.**
 - **The leisure and recreation network, transport infrastructure and service provision should visually connect the settlements and the countryside of South East Northumberland**
 - **Special outdoor events should be used as a means of bringing communities together, with the nature of the events to be focussed on outdoor recreation, sports, conservation and education.**
- 5.71 Recommendations for Promoting the Use of Green Infrastructure by Local Communities:
- **Promote access to the green transport network, demonstrating the leisure assets and natural habitats that can be accessed through the network.**
 - **Encourage special outdoor events within GI assets that engage communities across South East Northumberland, particularly more vulnerable groups.**

Section 6 - Action Plan



6. Action Plan

Introduction

- 6.1 In terms of implementing the green infrastructure strategy for the South East Northumberland New Growth Point, it is clear that the overall Vision cannot be achieved overnight. Rather, implementation of the strategy will be an integral part of the planning, development and realisation of the New Growth Points and the changes they bring about in South East Northumberland, through the provision of new residential, offices, retail and industrial areas.
- 6.2 The new areas of development will need to be integrated into the existing landscape; the development of a quality, accessible green infrastructure network will act as the means of linking new and existing settlements, greening the urban landscapes and maximising the potential of the existing diverse and various green spaces which will underpin the future sustainability of the South East’s communities.
- 6.3 The Action Plan to implement the green infrastructure needs to be developed in partnership with those who will be delivering the New Growth Points, to ensure common commitment to the principles of green infrastructure in South East Northumberland, and buy in to the strategy aims.
- 6.4 Given that the strategy focuses on three main priority areas however, there are some short term actions which can be progressed. These are set out below:

Short Term Actions

Improvement and Enhancement of existing green space, and its distinctive character (to include development of multi-functionality where possible/appropriate)

Table 6.1: Improvement and Enhancement Priorities

Area	Improvement and Enhancement Priorities
South East Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement to the quality of Blyth Country Park, Seaton Sluice Country Park • Development of circular route bridleways, joining up existing linear routes where possible • Creation of links between reclaimed woodlands • Specific disability access points • The renovation of, routes around, Seaton Delaval Hall • Creating links between bridleways and green corridors to create circular routes • Extending cycling routes to link the main settlements with the coast

Area	Improvement and Enhancement Priorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating better connectivity between existing and new communities, and green spaces • Improving the local natural and historical environment • Linking the Growth Points with nearby sites of importance for nature conservation • Start programme of working towards Green flag for key green infrastructure sites • Commence programme of ‘green canopies’ in existing urban community centres, and along existing access/transport corridors
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of Queen Elizabeth II Country Park
North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of Beacon Hill Green, Westfield Park
Blyth	
Cowpen Quay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point
South Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point eg Cresswell Dunes
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing green spaces around the Growth Point

6.5 Recommendations for longer term actions are set out below:

Medium to Long Term Actions

Development of quality, well-designed, new green space (predominantly related to the New Growth Points), with a clear sense of place

Table 6.2: Improvement and Enhancement Priorities

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
South East Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New bridleways in the north and west • Specific disability access points to new and existing green infrastructure, particularly leisure and transport routes • Opening up access to new natural/semi-natural green spaces eg woodland on river banks • Development of linear routes linking the urban areas of South East Northumberland together • Development of 2ha natural/semi-natural sites in the New Growth Points • New routes around Seaton Delaval Hall
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of 2ha natural/semi-natural sites in the New Growth Point • Areas of East Ashington to the west and south of the New Growth Point
North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Morpeth to the west, south and east of the New Growth Point • Specific development of green spaces to the north of the Growth Point • Development of new green space within the New Growth Point itself
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Cramlington to the east and north of the New Growth Point • Create new green space linking to the cycleways and bridleways connecting to Blyth and the coast

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to develop circular bridleways if possible • Create a new green link from Cramlington High School to the Growth Point
Blyth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Blyth to the south, west and north of the two New Growth Points
Cowpen Quay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new 2ha natural/semi-natural green spaces
South Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new green link to the coast
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Ellington and Lynemouth to the north, south and west of the New Growth Point • Develop the disused wagonway/railway cutting as a new green infrastructure, linking into and out of the Growth Point • Develop linking green space to connect with /out to Cresswell Dunes and Lynemouth Bay
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new green infrastructure to link existing green spaces, and link into the wider green network

6.6 In addition to creating new green space, the New Growth Point provide an opportunity to link new and existing green spaces, communities and settlements. The key opportunities to achieve this, and also maximise the potential of disused transport/green corridors, are summarised in Table 6.3 below:

Optimising the development of new green space to address identified gaps in terms of accessibility, connectivity and multi-functionality

Table 6.3: Optimising new Green Space to create connectivity and multi-functionality

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
South East Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a new National Nature Reserve • Development of a new Visitor Centre to support the reserve, and manage visitors

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential development of a Visitor Centre at Druridge Bay • Development of visitor amenities to improve management and access, plus generate revenue
East Ashington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New green infrastructure linking to Paddock Green Doorstep Green • Green infrastructure to link to the existing formal sports sites west of the Growth Point, plus Newbiggin Middle School, Newbiggin by the Sea, and Ashington Woodhorn Reclamation Scheme
North Morpeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of links to 20ha and 100ha natural/semi-natural sites outside the New Growth Points • Improve connectivity between existing green woodland corridor, PROW circular route (part of), and cycle routes to Ashington and Pegswood • Improve links to the Mount Open Space so that whole site has access to this green space
Cramlington South West Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve links between existing green spaces and new ones • Optimise the existing cycleways running through the Growth Point to link to other green infrastructure
Blyth	
Cowpen Quay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the opportunity of developing new green space to create links to existing green spaces, in, and close to, the New Growth Point • Aim for new residential areas to connect to the cycleway linking to Blyth Harbour and the coast, and to the PROW from the riverside

Area	Priorities for new Green Space Provision
South Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link new residential area with PROW and cycleway running through the site, to connect to wider green infrastructure network
Ellington/Lynemouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use development of green space as an opportunity to connect to existing green spaces, and the wider network
Cambois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new green space specifically to link from the existing cycleway and bridleway to the Growth Point to connect the new settlement to Blyth, Ashington and Bedlington

6.7 Other recommendations for longer term actions are set out below; these recommendations reflect the need for both specific actions, but also the wider need for the role and provision of green infrastructure to influence and guide the planning for the New Growth Points.

Recommendations for Landscape and Place Shaping (LPS) through green infrastructure

<i>Create a greater sense of place within South East Northumberland by promoting regeneration, development and design resulting in significant environmental enhancement</i>	
LPS 1.	Use the planning process and the opportunity for change provided by the New Growth Point status as the driver for improving the quality of the character of the environment within South East Northumberland.
LPS 2.	Establish design guide principles to ensure that New Growth Point development and projects present real improvements to the landscape character of South East Northumberland.
LPS 3.	Use the Grey-Green Continuum approach to integrate shades of ‘greenness’ into other forms of urban development (e.g. transportation; industrial)
LPS 4.	Address the gaps in existing green infrastructure provision identified through the ANGSt assessment, through encouraging initiatives from the public, private and voluntary sector.

Recommendations for Creating a Green Transport (GT) Network

<i>Ensure coherent connectivity between existing and new green corridors, grey-green links and open spaces to create a sustainable local community transport network accessible to all, which will help address identified issues of poor health, and the need to improve quality of life</i>	
GT 1.	Ensure local/neighbourhood level green assets identified through PPG17 are accessible to local communities without significant barriers
GT 2.	Establish coherent green infrastructure masterplans and action plans for the rivers and estuaries of Blyth and Wansbeck, addressing barriers to continual use as leisure routes between urban zones, the countryside and the coast.
GT 3.	With the rivers providing an axis, establish a north-south, east-west grid framework that connects the different settlements to each other, the countryside, the coast and beyond into the wider Northumberland and Tyneside.
GT 4.	Using the New Growth Point development, develop linear and circular routes to connect new settlements with green assets on the urban fringe, linked into the public transport network
GT 5.	Ensure that all current, planned and future development (residential, commercial, industrial, and green) and transport infrastructure projects give clear consideration to providing new pathways and cycleways that connect with the wider green infrastructure leisure route network.
GT 6.	Encourage the use of Environmental Stewardship, Permissive Rights and other initiatives (e.g. TROT) to enable development of the green transport network, and draw upon the experience of other stakeholders in terms of delivery and future management.

Recommendations for Ensuring the Coastal Zone (CZ) Develops its Green Infrastructure Potential:

CZ 1.	Ensure the value of the coastal zone as a principal green infrastructure resource is recognised through the planning system, with its environmental character enhanced through new development and vistas and immediate surroundings protected from any development that will lessen its 'green' value.
CZ 2.	Explore opportunities to encourage greater use of the coastal zone by family markets, adrenalin sports, broader water sports and wildlife watchers.
CZ 3.	Explore the use of activity zoning to assist in encouraging and managing the diverse needs and demands of users.
CZ 4.	Opportunities for commercial functions should be explored, with the design and positioning of associated structures to be considered through the planning process.

Green Infrastructure Hubs

Recommendations for Creating Green Infrastructure (GIH) Hubs

<i>Create a series of multifunctional green 'hubs' designed to accommodate a variety of different activities to act as a beacon for green spaces across SEN.</i>	
GIH 1.	Identify a series of green infrastructure hubs and gateways; examine their current status as beacons of multifunctional green spaces by providing places of conservation, leisure access, and education, and improve/enhance where necessary
GIH 2.	Ensure that each hub surpasses the minimum quality standards identified for open spaces using Green Flag, Blue Flag, Country Park Accreditation and others.
GIH 3.	Integrate the hubs and gateways into the green transport network to encourage sustainable movement between the sites, with each site being clearly signposted and waymarked throughout the green transport network.

Recommendations for an Approach to Biodiversity within the Landscape (BWL) to Nature Conservation

<i>Through careful consultation and management, enact an approach to biodiversity within the landscape in terms of nature conservation through SEN that will integrate conservation practices into living, working and leisure spaces.</i>	
BWL 1	Ensure clear consideration is given to conserving existing biodiversity in all development (e.g. residential, industrial, leisure) and delivering enhanced and new environments for biodiversity as determined through the Biodiversity Action Plan.
BWL 2	Identify, develop and promote a series of wildlife conservation sites specifically adapted to accommodate visitors (potentially including a visitor centre) that can educate people on the importance of nature conservation.
BWL 3	Encourage existing enterprises within South East Northumberland to adopt ‘green’ practices that are specifically designed to promote biodiversity, especially those with a direct relationship to green infrastructure (e.g. agriculture, woodland management, leisure, tourism).
BWL 4	Develop appropriate approaches to manage potential conflicts with other users of wildlife conservation zones and corridors (e.g. dog walkers, leisure users, sports enthusiasts) to avoid inadvertent damage to habitat growth.

Recommendations for Green Infrastructure and Economic Development (ED)

<i>Contribute to the overall regeneration and economic development aims for South East Northumberland, and the development of sustainable communities</i>	
ED 1.	Reflect the potential of green infrastructure as a source of economic opportunity, supporting leisure, tourism and conservation enterprises in particular.
ED 2.	Use GI to raise the profile of SEN as a place for businesses to invest in and relocate to on the basis the SEN will offer a great working and living environment; and one that is in keeping with the growing importance of SEN in terms of delivering ‘greener’ living Explore opportunities for investment in activities that have clearly defined market potential (e.g. walking, wildlife watching, horse riding, cycling, water sports, adrenalin activities, golf), especially utilising the coastal zone.
ED 3.	Encourage greater integration of enterprises that have an indirect association with GI by delivering enhanced local supply chains, especially associated with local producers.
ED 4.	Promote the cost saving that investment in GI can generate across for health and in combating the effects of climate change in SEN (see below).

Recommendations for Green Infrastructure and Climate Change (CC)

<i>Continue to explore and promote the benefits of green infrastructure provision in addressing the causes and effects of climate change.</i>	
CC 1.	Continue to examine and promote the benefits of Green Infrastructure in addressing the causes and effects of climate change.
CC 2.	Ensure all planning documents draw attention to the need to the climate change mitigation and adaptation measures that can be realised through green infrastructure.
CC 3.	Identify and enhance the roles of existing green infrastructure assets in the mitigation and adaptation of land in relation to climate change causes and effects.
CC 4.	Ensure that any new green infrastructure development includes climate change mitigation and/or adaptation measures into its overall design.

Recommendations for promoting the use of Green Infrastructure and by Communities (C)

<i>Use green infrastructure to create a greater community spirit, pride, wellbeing, vitality and prosperity.</i>	
C 1.	Promote access to the green transport network, demonstrating the leisure assets and natural habitats that can be accessed through the network.
C 2.	Encourage special outdoor events within GI assets that engage communities across South East Northumberland, particularly more vulnerable groups.

Appendix 1 - South East Northumberland
New Growth Point GI Strategy Approach
and Methodology



Appendix 1: South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy Approach and Methodology

1.1 This strategy has been developed to focus on SEN as an area that will realise considerable change in the forthcoming years; given that it has been developed in parallel with the Northumberland GI Strategy it utilises the data captured in this process, including:

- Existing sites classified for their natural (e.g. Ancient woodlands, coastal zones), biodiversity (local, national and international), heritage value (e.g. Ancient monuments, listed building), and leisure value (e.g. Public access parks, public rights of way);
- An audit of the quality and accessibility of defined open and green spaces;
- A review of the current activities and future aspirations of key organisations that operate, manage and invest in facilities and amenities that constitute part of the GI asset base; and
- Extensive consultation with stakeholders, governing bodies and the private sector.

1.2 The strategic direction has been determined through a combination of data analysis using a dedicated Geographical Information System (GIS), desk based research, and consultation with an array of key stakeholders that have a vested interest in GI from the public, private and third sector. Key consultees included:

- NCC officers
- The Forestry Commission
- The National Trust
- Natural England
- Northumberland Wildlife Trust
- Northumbrian Water
- Groundwork Trust
- English Heritage

Appendix 2 - Definition and Benefits of Green Infrastructure



Appendix 2: Definition and Benefits of Green Infrastructure

- 2.1 It is recognised that, individually, each asset that constitutes GI has a role or function to play and many serve a multifunctional purpose such as a park with defined outdoor recreation provision, woodland and water bodies features. However, collectively they form a comprehensive network of spaces, places, and features that need to be considered in one overarching and holistic framework. By developing a 'network' approach, it is possible to define the inter-relationships between natural, semi-natural and designated green spaces; and to establish a more comprehensive and coherent plan of action to ensure that the contribution of all GI assets to shaping the quality of place and space is fully appreciated and understood.

General Benefits of Green Infrastructure

- 2.2 In essence, GI refers to the green spaces, environmental and geographical features that are between the buildings, roads and railways. These assets can link together to provide an informal network between villages, towns and cities that, at its best, can deliver a wide range of social, economic, environmental and climate change benefits. These include the following:

Social

- An improved sense of place for the benefit of those who live in, work in and visit the area by strengthening the character of the area and delivering places and spaces that can become 'important' components of the local natural, historical and social fabric of an area.
- Improvements in public health and wellbeing for those who live work in and visit the area by increasing opportunities for recreation in safe, accessible and welcoming places that endorse social inclusion.
- A network of discovery of the area's most valuable natural and built heritage that can enhance their understanding, leading to opportunities for both formal and inform forms of education, learning and understanding.
- Links between the area's settlements and into rural environments through a network of leisure routes in order to promote sustainable movement of people, contributing to greater community cohesion and reducing social deprivation.

Economic

- Greater ability to retain and attract investment, businesses and a skilled workforce by providing attractive work environments and desirable neighbourhoods.
- Direct opportunities for new business, entrepreneurial endeavour, economic exchange, employment and volunteering by encouraging tourism, outdoor leisure and conservation activities.
- Associated benefits for new renewable energy projects, farm diversification, other major landowners by delivering multi-functional uses for which direct, indirect or funding income may be available.
- Encouraging the integration of 'green' practices into the management of local businesses and households.

Environmental

- Improvements to conservation activities of an area by securing projects that strengthen and diversify habitats and the natural environment, and secure new land either directly or indirectly (e.g. buffer zones) used to promote nature conservation.
- Improvements to the quality of the natural and historic environment by ensuring the retention of key landscape features and a more strategic approach to developing the landscape character of an area through high quality design.
- The creation of wildlife corridors as part of an approach to biodiversity within the landscape in terms of wildlife conservation.
- ‘Greening’ of the urban environment and the softening of hard landscapes that have aesthetic as well as biodiversity benefits.

Climate Change

- Improving carbon storage through increased tree and woodland planting.
- Greening of the urban environments to moderate the effects of local climate, clean polluted urban air, disperse strong winds, especially through the greater planting of trees within future development, regeneration and infrastructure projects.
- Greater recognition of the role of green and open spaces in reducing flood risk.

2.3 These benefits are all palpable locally, as demonstrated by the Economic Value of Green Infrastructure conducted for the North West¹⁰. This study highlights that these benefits can manifest as increasing property values; reducing sickness and absence and increasing productivity; supporting a wealth of employment (tourism, agriculture, conservation); and reducing pressures on drainage and improving natural flood defences.

The Multi-functionality of Green Infrastructure

2.4 The multi-functional nature of green and open space is central to the GI approach to land use planning, with land that performs a range of functions affording far greater social, environmental and economic benefits¹¹.

2.5 The functions of a defined green and open space, be it heritage or natural resource, can be varied in itself. As a means of promoting the multi-functionality of GI, Natural England¹² has established a series of overarching functions and benefits of GI, namely:

- A bridge to the country and a gateway to the town – i.e. providing the link between urban areas and the countryside, and sustainable routes between different places and spaces within urban zones.
- A health centre – providing both physical (as places to undertake gentle/moderate/hard exercise) and mental benefits (as places where one can be immersed in attractive surroundings), with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers’ Green Gym concept providing a more formalised mechanism for exploiting both types of health benefits simultaneously.
- A classroom – both formal and informal, through various methods of interpretation (visitor centres, maps and guides, interpretation boards, and increasingly through mobile technologies).

¹⁰ Natural Economy Northwest

¹¹ Green Infrastructure: connected and multifunctional landscapes, Landscape Institute

¹² Green Infrastructure Planning Guide – reference to Multi-functionality – Natural England, North East Community Forests, Forestry Commission, Groundwork

- A productive landscape – through enterprises such as tourism, agriculture, conservation, and environmental technologies.
 - A place to live sustainably – by integrating green and open space into the very essence of future planning and design policy.
 - An engine for regeneration – by adopting and adapting GI not simply as an add-on but as a fundamental component on which to deliver multiple social, economic and environmental benefits.
- 2.6 The premise of multi-functional green space is that it, whilst the space will generally have a primary function, the space can also be utilised to provide one of the other broad functions identified. The nature of the other functions will need to be decided on a case by case basis. In some instances it may not be appropriate to encourage functions that would lead to damage of the primary function of the green space, such as encouraging walking, cycling, horse riding and dog walking in recognised site of high habitat sensitivity. Nevertheless, it may still be possible to include other functions using the site, such as using the site as a productive landscape or for climate change mitigation and adaptation for example.
- 2.7 Moreover, structured and well-managed activity should actually lead to an accumulation of benefits for the site and its owners. For instance, designated nature reserves are primarily spaces for nature conservation and enrichment, but they can also:
- Represent an important tourism and leisure resource;
 - Be used as a means of mitigating against flooding, with wetland reserves in particular able to increase the natural capacity of the countryside to absorb and hold excess water;
 - Add to the sense of place and character of the area; and
 - Deliver considerable economic returns.
- 2.8 Similarly, sites of heritage conservation often require visitors and visitor spend to enable specific conservation projects; parks can often be a means of education and healthy spaces for local people to utilise; river and canal corridors, through pathways and towpaths, provide a means of linking spaces and places that people can use sustainably; and the vegetation of rivers and canals can be utilised as a means of promoting habitat growth and the spread of wildlife, particularly into urban zones.

Green Infrastructure and Climate Change

- 2.9 As highlighted above, GI is regarded as a key mechanism for combating climate change at a local level that will deliver global benefits.
- 2.10 The pursuit of sustainable development is leading to a greater emphasis on adapting local resources and perusing mitigation measures to take account of issues of climate change. In generic terms, adaptation involves developing systems, partnership initiatives and planning practices to better manage, adsorb and reduce the effects of major climatic events such as flooding, extended periods of heat waves or severe wind, snowfall or frosts. Mitigation, on the other hand, is concerned with reducing the carbon footprint of individuals and businesses to reduce human influences on climate change.
- 2.11 GI is integral to both.

Green Infrastructure and Climate Change Mitigation

- 2.12 GI provides a mechanism for reducing carbon footprints by providing a network of corridors linking settlements and workplaces, and thus reducing reliance on motorised vehicles for moving between key

areas of activity. It also provides a direct and palpable means of educating the community at large as to the importance of protecting the environment for future generations.

- 2.13 Initiatives are also being introduced which are designed to encourage the 'greening' of businesses and homes. The Carbon Trust acts with the commercial and the public sectors to accelerate the move to a low carbon economy, with the Carbon Trust Accreditation scheme being a systematic approach that rewards businesses as they reach specific targets.

Green Infrastructure and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.14 Adaptation also has connotations for GI, especially in relation to planning and development.
- 2.15 The North East Adaptation Study, for example, states that legislation should be used to discourage development in inappropriate locations, for example areas at risk of flooding or coastal erosion. However, these sites could be adapted to have uses for recreation, tourism, and general open spaces such as leisure routes, wildlife sites, and general recreation sites – all of which fall within the remit of GI.
- 2.16 Long-term planning can also be used to relocate assets located in 'at-risk' areas. For example, in East Riding, a 'roll-back' scheme has been initiated to encourage caravan sites located directly adjacent to its rapidly eroding coastline can be relocated to less vulnerable areas. This scheme has been designed to have a dual 'adaptation' function. On the one hand, relocation will allow other adaptation measures to be introduced to alleviate other problems; and on the other, the new caravan sites are to be designed more sustainably to reduce carbon footprint.

Development and Green Infrastructure

Overview

- 2.17 The delivery of development growth and the provision of green spaces can often appear as opposing requirements, yet development can actually enhance green spaces and deliver greater functionality to green spaces without compromising the integrity and deliverability of growth. Equally, GI can be utilised to add value to the overall development.

Green Infrastructure Planning Guide

- 2.18 The Green Infrastructure Planning Guide provides the general context for developing GI Plans, the approach to be adopted, and how the plan can be utilised by planners to aid the delivery of improvements to GI. The guide does not provide a prescriptive methodology but rather a flexible technique to be moulded to fit 'real world' requirements.

The Grey-Green Continuum

- 2.19 One of the key recommendations of the Green Infrastructure Planning Guide is to view GI assets as having different shades of 'green' – known as the grey-green continuum.
- 2.20 The grey-green continuum provides the mechanism establishing the 'greenness' of GI. For example, nature reserves and rivers have a more direct function as primary green spaces and therefore their relationship to GI is highly apparent. In contrast, service centres, industrial parks, and residential areas, which tend to have a greater correlation with 'grey' infrastructure, can still have a connection with and an impact upon GI. The grey-green continuum therefore denotes that rather than thinking of developments as specifically grey or green, they can move through a range of shades, with cycleways, as movement corridors and green corridors for instance, generally found in the middle.

Reference Standards

- 2.21 There is no current set standard for GI planning, though there are several guidelines that can be referred to. This includes the Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt) established by Natural England, adopted in the 'Nature Nearby' Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance 5. The ANGSt standards are as follows:
- No person should live more than 300 m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least two (2) ha in size.
 - There is provision of at least two (2) ha of natural green space per 1,000 population.
 - That there should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within two (2) km from home
 - That there should be one accessible 100 ha site within five (5) km.
 - That there should be one accessible 500 ha site within (10) km.
 - That adjacent green spaces are interconnected; the priority and extent being determined by local decision making informed by stakeholder involvement.
- 2.22 Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG17 advocates the ANGSt model as an appropriate and generally accepted professional measure. However, it should be noted that the model is very much a quantitative not qualitative measure that does not consider factors such as site quality, capacity or site fragility. Nor does it consider the role and function that the extensive linear Rights of Way network plays in the provision of accessible green infrastructure.
- 2.23 The use of the ANGSt Model at county-wide level would not be sufficient enough to provide any meaningful analysis in relation to greenspace and as such has to be used with other relevant analysis measures that are linked directly to local need and local provision assessment. As a result the Green Infrastructure Strategy adopts the methodologies advocated in PPG17 as a suitable means to assessing greenspace and green infrastructure at the local level.

Questions for Planners

- 2.24 The GI Planning Guide poses a series of questions that planners should ask in terms of future GI improvement projects and in relation to any development projects that could have implications for GI. These questions are summarised as:
- What green infrastructure elements must be protected? – i.e. assessing the assets considered to be Critical Green Infrastructure in terms of context, quality and interaction with other GI elements.
 - What elements should be changed in character or enhanced? – i.e. is the primary purpose of the asset fit for purpose, of sufficient quality, or in need of improvement? This could include for example adapting existing green spaces to accommodate new or different functions.
 - Where is there a need to create new elements and what should they be? – defining gaps in provision and connectivity of provision by type, location and by population need.
 - Where should the development of grey infrastructure be integrated with GI? – i.e. should development be integrated into existing GI or should development be utilized to promote new GI?
 - What elements should be linked together?
 - What elements are tradable to achieve net environmental gains in both an infrastructure and qualitative sense? – i.e. accepting that GI assets are still land parcels that could be subject to

development at some point and determining whether, if the asset is changed or altered to incorporate other (grey) functions, whether there could still be a net gain to GI.

- 2.25 The Guide states that GI planning is not proposed as an approach to block other forms of development, but rather should guide the allocation, siting and design of developments to ensure that GI is not weakened; and rather wherever possible is strengthened.

Summary

- 2.26 GI is increasingly becoming recognised as a tool used in the planning and development of areas as a means of embracing the qualities and characteristics of the environment that will provide a greater sense of place; a richer and more rewarding experience for users; and a place where wildlife can flourish. Furthermore, rather than just being viewed on a site-by-site basis, GI takes a more holistic approach that will ensure greater co-ordination and cohesion between development areas that raises the profile of unique assets and blends them into a seamless network that can be managed for biodiversity and explored by local residents and visitors.
- 2.27 Whilst the above analysis helps to provide the background to GI, the assets that should be included, and the broader considerations, it is important that all GI strategies are formulated to reflect the local area of need.

Appendix 3 - Strategic and Planning Context for Green Infrastructure in South East Northumberland



Appendix 3: Strategic and Planning Context for Green Infrastructure in South East Northumberland

National, Regional and Sub-regional Context

- 3.1 The national and regional context for GI has been reviewed in the Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy, the overriding strategy for the county. It is recommended that Northumberland GI strategy be referenced in conjunction with this strategy to provide the national, regional, and sub-regional context. To summarise:
- The overall context for green infrastructure cascades from national planning policy such as PPG 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation; PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development; PPS 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation; PPS 3: Housing; PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks; and Circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations. Overriding recommendations include:
 - Ensure good access to green and open space by the community and that such spaces are retained, are of high quality, and attractive to users; and
 - Those elements that comprise GI have the potential to contribute to sustainable principles and environmental enhancements.
 - The current consultation document, Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment, provides a consolidated Planning Policy Statement for ensuring that, where possible, development enhances the natural environment, conserves the countryside and provides an appropriate quantity and range of types of open and green spaces to meet the needs of communities.
 - Other national guidance that should be considered includes Sport England's Planning for Open Space, CABE Space, Greenspace Strategies – A Good Practice Guide, and The Green Flag Award.
 - These documents generally review the provision for, and different functions of, green and open spaces, the value that green spaces and facilities have in terms of quality of life; and guidance on establishing appropriate strategies.
 - The regional context for GI is established through the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East which highlights that GI be utilised to enhance the quality, diversity and local distinctiveness of the environment throughout the region and in establishing links in and around the region's towns and cities.
 - The Northumberland Consolidated Planning Policy Framework sets out the existing planning policy framework for Northumberland (i.e. existing saved policies of local plans; adopted Core Strategies, etc).

Northumberland Context

Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strategy to 2021

- 3.2 The Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) sets the strategic framework for delivering more sustainable and integrated communities. The main premise of the strategy is to 'release the strength' of Northumberland's communities for the benefit of the lives of all residents. The overriding vision is to ensure that, by 2021, all Northumberland residents will:
- Enjoy a good standard of living - More Northumberland residents and employers will prosper and thrive economically. Many will have embraced lifelong learning as the foundation for building their self-esteem and confidence. They will be increasingly aspirational and have a more positive enterprising and "can do" attitude to realising their personal goals. They will have fewer barriers to work and have local access to a wider range of good, long-lasting job or business opportunities.
 - Live safely and in comfort - Most Northumberland residents will live in a decent home that is secure and warm. They will have greater housing choice at prices they can afford. Their homes will be set in surroundings that are increasingly welcoming and pleasant – safer to walk around in, freer from litter and graffiti, and interspersed with well-designed, attractive buildings and green spaces.
 - Lead healthier lifestyles - More Northumberland residents will live independently, longer and be less likely to die from heart disease, cancer, suicide or accidents. They will have greater scope to make healthier choices – by eating balanced diets, regularly playing sport or taking exercise, stopping smoking and drug-taking, drinking alcohol in moderation, and handling the day-to-day stresses of modern living.
 - Readily access the things they need - More Northumberland residents will feel included and informed. They will be better connected to jobs, learning opportunities and essential services through enhanced points of entry that are convenient, affordable and welcoming to all. They will know where to turn for advice and be confident that their enquiry will be handled promptly and effectively.
 - Take part in cultural activity - More Northumberland residents will have broader opportunities to enjoy their leisure time. They will be regularly gathering to enjoy acclaimed events or quality venues and be equally passionate about actively cherishing their heritage and trying new things. They will be welcoming and open to sharing the considerable cultural delights on offer with visitors.
 - Care about our environment - More Northumberland residents will recognise the increasing vulnerability of the natural assets they rely upon and most will be taking action to combat climate change. They will be striving to protect and enhance their unique habitats, landscapes and countryside, to minimising pollution and waste, using energy prudently, and buying more produce locally.
 - Get involved and bring about change - Northumberland residents will be more prepared to volunteer and constructively find ways to help themselves in realising an opportunity or tackling issues of concern. They will be capable of forming and articulating a collective view on things that matter to them and be prepared to challenge the "powers that be" with those views.
- 3.3 The strategy recognises that delivering the vision will require a multi-agency approach and the support of the members of the public, the private sector, and the voluntary sector. As such, aligning policies and activities, sharing and pooling intelligence, and strengthening dialogue with the community and other stakeholders are considered key 'divers' to successful delivery.

Northumberland Economic Strategy (Draft 2010-2015)

3.4 Considerable change in the composition of Northumberland's economy is set to continue in the future.

3.5 According to the Northumberland Economic Strategy (NES), the last vestiges of a once substantial deep coal-mining industry have all but disappeared and the county's agricultural workforce has continued to downsize.

3.6 The result has been that Northumberland now has a broader-based economy than in the past with Knowledge Intensive Businesses (KIB's), tourism, leisure and retail off-setting the decline of the county's more traditional activities. This change continues to bring both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand new activities providing opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavour. On the other, these new businesses have had a tendency to be low key (81% of businesses have less than 10 staff) and fragmented. This contrasts starkly with coalmining which, traditionally, was a significant employer and had clearly defined locations for operation.

3.7 The fact that there is no predominant town or city within the county also means a strong relationship with Tyneside, especially in South East Northumberland which borders Tyne and Wear. The NES highlights that 28% of the county's workforce commute to Tyne and Wear on a daily basis, but in return the green spaces of Northumberland provide attractive leisure spaces for those living in Tyneside and homes for some of the more affluent elements of the Tyneside workforce.

3.8 The purpose of the NES is to set the economic development priorities for the council and its partners. The overall aim of the strategy is:

'To maintain and improve the economic growth and performance whilst ensuring that all residents can share in high living standards'¹³

3.9 Within this, the NES identifies four strategic themes of a low carbon economy, people, business and place, with key thematic priorities being to create a vibrant, skilled, inclusive, competitive, resilient, enterprising and connected economy.

NES and South East Northumberland

3.10 South East Northumberland and the New Growth Point designation are identified as an important component of the NES in terms of delivery. South East Northumberland contains key employment, residential and economic development zones. For instance:

- Blyth and the Blyth Valley are identified for considerable opportunity in low carbon and renewable technologies (via NaREC¹⁴);
- Ashington is identified as a town which is to receive new investment in retail, but which still requires investment in leisure, culture and public realm spaces;
- Cramlington is identified as a planned new settlement which will have a strategic role as a place of residence and industry.
- Morpeth is identified for its tourism potential as a characterful Market Town; and
- Seaton Delaval Hall is considered a valuable cultural, heritage and tourism resource with a significant strategic role for the visitor economy.

¹³ Northumberland Economic Strategy Draft 2010-2015

¹⁴ NaREC - New and Renewable Energy Centre (NaREC) is a regional project which is a national centre specialising in renewable energy and low carbon generation techniques, utilising wind, wave, tidal, solar photo voltaics and thermal power

- 3.11 Moreover, given the concentration of population in South East Northumberland, the social deprivation issues that are currently observed and the future housing/economic potential as identified, many of the key thematic priorities are highly pertinent to the overall context for the development in the New Growth Point. In particular, improving the sense of place and identity of South East Northumberland as a place to live, work and invest in is considered crucial if the overall New Growth Point objectives are to be realised.

NES and Green Infrastructure

- 3.12 The NES recognises the role of GI as a means of improving the sense of place of South East Northumberland, especially in relation to maintaining and improving the county's GI asset base and those that make Northumberland culturally and environmentally distinctive. In terms of South East Northumberland, this revolves around the role of the towns, their townscapes and their heritage and the need to strengthen linkages between them.
- 3.13 It is also recognised through the NES that GI can be utilised as a means of strengthening economic connections between the towns and with the wider Tyneside area.

Northumberland Local Investment Plan

- 3.14 The Northumberland Local Investment Plan sets out a high level, strategic vision around which the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will invest resources in partnership with NCC. The vision for the Investment Plan is simply to '....release the strength of our communities' by making the most of the unique offer of Northumberland as a place to live, work and visit. The overarching objectives of the plan are as follows:
- Diversification across economic sectors maximising opportunities for regeneration and growth particularly relating to the Energy and the Environment including low carbon and renewable energy developments.
 - Developing tourism and the creative and cultural sectors further utilising our natural assets and heritage.
 - Develop the strength of enterprising communities, businesses and people.
 - Promoting economic prosperity and raising employment and skills levels.
 - In the commuter belt and more rural areas tackle housing affordability issues for local communities through taking forward relevant recommendations in the Matthew Taylor report on the Living, Working Countryside.
 - To promote Northumberland's high quality of life and distinctive environment that provides the ideal location to attract and retain high skilled workers in the region.
 - Considering the future for the Council's own stock and improving private sector accommodation, particularly in North Northumberland.
 - Addressing the needs of an ageing population through support to them in their own homes as well as new provision including extra care, private and social accommodation and working with the HCA to consider the findings of the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation report.
 - Understanding and responding to the needs of our vulnerable people including those experiencing or at risk of being homeless, people with learning disabilities and/or mental health issues, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
 - Reducing Carbon Emissions and reducing Fuel Poverty.

- 3.15 The plan determines that South East Northumberland, as one of the principal character areas of Northumberland, presents some of the greatest challenges and opportunities in Northumberland. Its challenges are caused by the fact that it is the most populated area of the county, and also because its key centres of Ashington and Blyth in particular have suffered major industrial decline that have led to high levels of deprivation. However, the opportunities afforded by its New Growth Point status means that the regeneration of places such as Blyth, Cramlington and Ashington will realise considerable investment in housing, business and other forms of commercial property.
- 3.16 The importance of this plan from a GI perspective is in terms of deliverability and that it identifies the resource input requirements from the private, local and government agencies to include cash investments, land assets, and infrastructure development.
- 3.17 The plan recognises that the ability to secure developments in infrastructure and community-need projects will be more difficult to achieve through private sector investment in housing and commercial development in lower value locations such as Blyth, Ashington and Cramlington where requirements for affordable housing are likely to be higher.
- 3.18 Therefore, development vehicles such as housing alliances and cross subsidy schemes are seen as being important as they bring all key partners together and can ensure the integration of broader 'place making' priorities in the planning, design and development of projects.

Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan

- 3.19 The Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 'Working with Wildlife' has been developed through the Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership, which engaged a wide variety of stakeholders and has already helped to forge consistent and holistic approaches to biodiversity protection.. The partnership includes a variety of landowners, policy makers and stakeholders such as the former Borough Councils, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, County Landowners and Business Association, Northumberland Water, RSPB, Environment Agency, Forest Enterprise, Northumberland National Park, and Natural England.
- 3.20 The Northumberland BAP has identified and prioritised the species and habitats most in need of protection and enhancement and that are integral to the uniqueness or local character of Northumberland. These are identified in the table below:

Table 3.1: Species and habitats most in need of protection

Habitats	Blanket Bog	Lowland Heathland	Rivers and Streams
	Brownfield Land	Lowland Meadows & Pastures	Rocky Shore, Reefs & Islands
	Calaminarian Grassland	Maritime Cliff and Slope	Saline Lagoons
	Coastal Heathland	Native Woodland	Saltmarsh and Mudflat
	Fen, Marsh and Swamp	Ponds, Lakes and Reservoirs	Sand Dunes
	Gardens and Allotments	Recreational & Amenity Space	Upland Hay Meadow
	Heather Moorland	Reedbed	Whin Grassland

Species	Barn Owl	Freshwater Fish	Red Squirrel
	Bats	Freshwater Pearl Mussel	River Jelly Lichen
	Coastal Birds	Garden Birds	Upland Waders
	Common Seal	Great Crested Newt	Violet Crystalwort
	Dingy Skipper	Grey Seal	Water Rock-bristle
	Dormouse	Hedgehog	Water Vole
	Farmland Birds	Otter	White-Clawed Crayfish

- 3.21 The diversity of habitat and landscape across Northumberland helps shape the sense of place and character of the County as a whole. The County boasts a wealth of statutory and non statutory designated areas and networks of sites and habitats that serve as key ecological assets, with South East Northumberland for example consisting of Ramsar, Special Protection Area, SSSI, and local nature reserve designations.
- 3.22 The sphere of influence over the natural environment in Northumberland is wide and diverse with numerous agencies, governing bodies, private enterprise and the voluntary sector all having an input. As such the level and extent of management, availability of resources including investment, staffing and maintenance are also diverse and varied.
- 3.23 This has a direct impact on the quality and consistency of the natural resource and would appear to lead to fragmentation, isolation and an inconsistent approach. GI can be used as a means of engaging all of these stakeholders and forging a more consistent and holistic approach to biodiversity protection and enhancement across Northumberland, and especially South East northumberland.

Northumberland Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 2007

- 3.24 The Northumberland Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets the framework from which the County Council is to seek improvement to the existing network of public rights of way and the standards that are to be reached. Although GI is much broader in scope, the Rights of Way (RoW) network is integral in term of being a delivery mechanism for encouraging sustainable access to the green and open spaces, providing the green linkages between them, and between settlements.
- 3.25 The Improvement Plan includes four key objectives in respect of the four types of right of way, footpaths; bridleways; restricted byways (a right of passage for all non motorists); and byways open to all traffic. These objectives are:
- Ensure that the network of public rights of way meet current and future needs, is accurately recorded, and is in a condition which enables legal use.
 - Identify and implement improvements which will enhance the provision of recreational, health and transport requirements of residents and visitors using the Northumberland rights of way.

- Enhance the range, type and accessibility of information available about Northumberland rights of way.
 - Work in partnership with interest groups to manage, enhance and promote the rights of way network.
- 3.26 A key priority for NCC is to improve the quality of the RoW network, especially in relation to bridleways; to develop access to the network for all, with greater emphasis on promoted walks and rides; and developing further regionally and nationally important trails.

Local Development Framework

- 3.27 The South East Northumberland New Growth Point covers the former authority areas of Blyth, Castel Morpeth, and Wansbeck. Prior to becoming part of the Northumberland Unitary Authority, each local authority either had a deposited Local Plan or was in the process of preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF). Although these documents will be superseded by the new Northumberland Core Strategy, adopted and saved policies are still referred to in order to make decisions on planning applications.
- 3.28 A review of these documents highlights the following key considerations for the GI strategy.

Blyth Borough Council Core Strategy

- 3.29 Creating sustainable communities is at the heart of the Core Strategy for Blyth Borough. A key priority within this is to ensure that there are safe and valued hubs of activity in the Borough, each with their own distinctive character and identity providing, among other things, opportunities for leisure and recreation throughout the day and evening.
- 3.30 In this respect, having quality and accessible open spaces is a key thrust of policy. Attention is also given to the Borough's protection and extension of green belts, and the network of green corridors (including river corridors) which are to be regarded as strategic facilities to which all new development will be expected to contribute in terms of their enhancement and development. Similarly, existing community spaces are to be enhanced to improve their biodiversity through appropriate planting and enhancements.
- 3.31 Drawing upon the range of natural and historic features offering leisure and recreation opportunities for visitors and residents is identified as a key mechanism for helping with the regeneration of the area. The coastline, dunes and wartime structures are regarded as the area's key assets that create a sense of local distinctiveness. As a result, tourism, visitor and cultural proposals are to be promoted and supported where they contribute to regeneration aims, clearly demonstrate benefit to the local community, and where development is of a use, form and scale that will not prejudice the quality of the natural, historic and built environment.
- 3.32 Protecting the natural environment and the built and historic environment are considered integral to the Core Strategy, especially the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar Site and Blyth Valley's SSSIs. Capitalising on Blyth's natural assets is also encouraged in the strategy, as is incorporating the value of biodiversity into any future development.

Castle Morpeth Borough Local Plan

- 3.33 Castle Morpeth Borough Council's strategy is focussed on protecting and enhancing the qualities of the environment, the open countryside, the many historic villages and larger settlements. In this respect, the strategy highlights that the Borough has a wide variety of landscapes ranging from pastoral country, open moor, wooded valleys, attractive villages and coastline to the altered and less attractive areas that, in the past, have been subject to opencast and deep coal mining.

- 3.34 The designated North Tyneside Green Belt accounts for around a quarter of the Borough's land area, whilst the plan also identified that 125 individual sites are subject to special Nature Conservation designations. As such, environmental protection and enhancement feature prominently in the priorities for the plan, with key objectives including:
- Achieving a balance between the interests of agriculture and nature conservation, the economic and social interest of rural areas, the conservation of the countryside and built environment and the promotion of their enjoyment by the public;
 - Identifying and protecting areas of high landscape value including the special quality of the Druridge Bay area;
 - Protecting and enhancing the built environment through the designation of conservation areas and other initiatives where appropriate;
 - Maintaining and extending the green belt designation; and
 - Enhancing and promoting landscape, nature conservation and townscape improvements within the towns and villages of the borough.
- 3.35 There is a strong emphasis in the plan on only permitting development, including formal and informal recreation, where the resulting activities would not be detrimental to the quality of the open countryside, the built environment and the general amenity of residents. Use of the rights of way network is to be encouraged with the council looking to improve, repair and signpost existing routes to greater effect. Ensuring such routes are available is also encouraged should new attraction developments be considered.

Wansbeck District Local Plan, 2007

- 3.36 Protecting and transforming the local environment and delivering economic prosperity for all are two of the seven themes that have been identified by the Wansbeck District Local Plan to deliver the Council's overall aspiration of securing the highest quality of life for everyone residing within the District.
- 3.37 Improving the quality of the environment, diversity of wildlife, open space, and recreational assets also forms part of the objectives of the local plan, with access to these assets of critical importance to encouraging use. Structured improvement to the network of recreational footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways is to be sought and existing routes are to be protected.
- 3.38 The area's tourism and cultural assets, especially recreational assets such as the country parks and coast are also to be subject to investment for improvement in landscaping, play areas, street furniture, public art, and signage. This is to encourage greater tourism activity, which is regarded as an economic sector that has potential for delivering greater prosperity in the future.

Northumberland Coalfields Environmental Enhancement Strategy, 2001

- 3.39 The Environment Improvement Strategy for the Northumberland Coalfields area covers all of the South East Northumberland New Growth Point. Although the strategy is somewhat dated, the principal areas of environmental characteristics and issues that the strategy sought to address still remain:
- The predominance of industrial buildings and plant in open countryside and within the principal settlements, which have led to a poor character of both the natural environment and settlements.
 - Incidence of immature reclaimed landscapes and some incidence of poor restoration strategies and practices of mining operations.
 - Poor design and linkages of open spaces in order to create a recreational network.

- 3.40 The strategy identifies that environmental enhancement should be a key component of sustainable regeneration encompassing the following themes:
- Protecting the area's assets in terms of landscape, nature conservation and heritage interest.
 - Creating a new image and sense of identity.
 - Promoting sustainable communities and reinforcing sustainable patterns of development.
 - Strengthening linkages within and between town and country.
 - Improving visitor attractions.
 - Supporting the physical regeneration policies of existing local agencies.
- 3.41 In the area defined as the 'Urban Coalfield Zone' (largely consisting of the South East Northumberland New Growth Point), improvements are to consist of the creation of new landscapes with much higher incidence of woodland and green spaces in the area of Blyth, Cramlington, Bedlington, Ashington and Newbiggin. The aim of the strategy in this respect was to keep urban sprawl in check and dramatically increase the attractiveness of the urban environment. The area's main natural assets, the river's and estuaries of Blyth and Wansbeck, were to be given a much greater focus as important green spaces. In the case of the river corridors, the focus was on removing barriers and obstacles to public access. For the estuaries, it was to ensure that the built environment and large industrial quarters are 'greened' to soften the edges and reduce 'hardness' of the large industrial developments that line the Blyth estuary in particular.
- 3.42 These principals are very much pertinent today and furthermore have a direct association with the aspirations of GI. As such, the overall strategy should incorporate and reflect the aspirations of the Environmental Enhancement Strategy.

Other Strategic Considerations

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

- 3.43 The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 has direct implications for South East Northumberland and the GI strategy. The Act will enable the creation of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast plus areas of spreading room, for example beaches, dunes and cliffs, where it is appropriate.
- 3.44 In developing the Act, Natural England (NE) was asked to advise on the current status and access rights for coastal areas. The study concluded that beaches provide a popular source of recreational space; walking remains one of the most regularly undertaken forms of activity; and yet there are no general rights for people to use the coast in this way, with 30% of the UK's coast having no public rights of access. The Act is therefore seeking to redress access inequalities to coastal zones and to improve continuity and consistency in good quality access along the coast.
- 3.45 The NE study recognises that there is a concentration of wildlife sensitivities in certain areas and that there are, in some instances, conflicts of use. To resolve these issues, NE advocates the need for more effective management on the ground to facilitate, guide and accommodate people's access whilst still meeting the needs of nature conservation. Overall, the study suggests that achieving greater access to the coast will have a significant and positive impact on the coastal economy, and on the health and well being of the population. The Act, which was passed in 2009, now provides a statutory mechanism from which improved access to and along the coast in either direction will be achieved.
- 3.46 It is interesting to note that the NE study denotes that over a third (34%) of the coast in the North East has no known access rights.

Druridge Bay – A Strategy for Management to 2025

- 3.47 Druridge Bay lies to the north of South East Northumberland although it does include Ellington and parts of Lynemouth which form part of the New Growth Area.
- 3.48 The Bay has been the subject of considerable transformation through the extraction of coal and the development of associated industries. The purpose of the strategy is to present a co-ordinated approach to protecting and enhancing the special qualities of Druridge Bay for the benefit of the environment, its community and its visitors.
- 3.49 The Strategy identifies the overall ambition for Druridge Bay to 2025 with many of the core objectives having a direct synergy with GI. This includes:
- Landscape – to officially recognise and improve the natural character of the area, with a key aspiration being that the larger part of the area should achieve AONB and Heritage Coast status.
 - Historic Environment – to conserve and make more accessible the sites and features of historical importance, whilst the traditional character of settlements is to be maintained and will be used to inform the design of future development.
 - Natural Environment – to conserve, enhance and, where appropriate, make more accessible sites and features of importance for nature conservation, ensuring the area has a rich diversity of wildlife and habitats.
 - Environmental Quality – to establish Druridge Bay as an area where bathing water quality meets or exceeds national standards and where public access and green spaces are clean and safe for use.
 - Thriving and diverse communities – to improve the quality of life of the residents of the area through high landscape and environmental quality, with the economy of the area principally based on the resources of the Bay.
 - Enjoying Druridge Bay – to establish the Bay as a renowned destination for coastal recreation, with recreational pressure being managed to ensure that the natural resources are protected and enhanced.
- 3.50 Much of the sentiment expressed in the Druridge Bay strategy is equally relevant to the GI strategy for South East Northumberland and vice versa, with neither local residents nor visitors likely to be aware of either strategy's boundary. Therefore, it is important that the two strategies are, in the main, complementary.
- 3.51 However, it also possible that the areas may ultimately be competing for the same resources, particularly in terms of certain themes such as improving the natural and historic environment, improving recreational access to the coast, and encouraging certain recreational uses of resources for economic benefits (e.g. water sports and wildlife watching). As both strategies include some of the principal stakeholders and potential partners to assist with delivery, it is important that there is co-operation and co-ordination in terms of the implementation programmes.

North Tyneside GI Strategy

Newcastle–Gateshead GI Strategy A Strategy for Management to 2025

- 3.52 The studies are currently on hold and the Council is considering the options to move the studies forward. It is important that these studies reflect the vision and aims of this strategy to ensure a consistent approach to the future planning for green infrastructure across the region

Summary

- 3.53 The protection and enhancement of assets and features that comprise GI is supported in both a strategic context and through the current planning system. As outlined, the supporting plans and strategies generally include reference to the need to improve and enhance the quality of the environment as a priority. This is directly linked as a means of improving the quality of life of residents and for encouraging visitors. In addition, this need is also often connected back to delivering improved economic prosperity, especially through tourism.
- 3.54 However, the review has identified a series of limitations within the planning process in terms of delivering GI, namely the interrelationships between spaces, places and assets that form GI are not explored to any significant degree. For instance, reference is often given to protecting and using designated rights of way for leisure and recreational purposes and to ensure that green corridors are maintained to promote biodiversity. Yet, the fact that these spaces can be one and the same (e.g. rivers, canals, country parks), can create their own economic exchange, and can interact with other forms of economic activity (e.g. agriculture, retail, catering) are rarely explored in depth by these plans.
- 3.55 In addition, the plans, by their nature, focus on green space and recreation within defined geographical boundary and do not explicitly consider implications for provision in neighbouring authorities (although it is understood that informal working relationships were formed to cover planning projects with cross-boarder implications).
- 3.56 The initiation of the South East Northumberland New Growth Point and the recognised need for a clearly defined GI strategy for the area provides a means of rectifying this position. Not only will the strategy for GI give rise to new opportunities through development, it will also define the different types and functions of GI that should be sought. Given the overall development context for the South East Northumberland area, this strategy also has considerable implications for all different types of stakeholders to have constructive input into the outcomes of development proposals in relation to the economy, the community and the environment.
- 3.57 In addition, the relationship between GI and transport is clear, with GI to provide routes that can accommodate non-vehicular traffic to act as an alternative for moving people (and potentially goods) between different places more sustainably. As identified, vehicular access is regarded as a key issue for the New Growth Point to address with the South East Northumberland Public Transport Corridor, Blyth Central Link Road, and Morpeth Northern Bypass representing the main initiatives to be delivered. However, these developments and future initiatives should also include considerations for GI, particularly in providing safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists with routes connected to the wider network.

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