

**Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy
2013-2026**

APPENDIX 3

A Guide to Darlington's Green Infrastructure

Darlington Borough Council

October 2013

1. River Tees Corridor

The River Tees will continue to meander through a scenic, biodiversity rich, high value landscape. Reinforcing its status as the Borough's most significant wildlife corridor, ancient and mature semi natural woodland will be increasingly connected with extensive areas of wildflowers and native plants, including the rare Globeflower, bluebells and ransom which will fill the air with their distinctive scents and vibrant colours. Healthy natural ecosystems will be established for a greater variety of wildlife to inhabit, disperse and breed; sightings of specialist river birds like the kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and the Dipper will be more common while the increasing presence of the otter and the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker will help protect the status of the river banks as a premier habitat. With wildlife being able to move easily, the connecting River Skerne and Baydale Beck corridors will benefit from the richness in biodiversity that the Tees corridor has to offer. Residents and visitors alike will be able to easily enjoy walking along a much improved rights of way network, particularly along the Teesdale Way, the long distance footpath that runs along Darlington's southern boundary, while enjoying impressive wide, open views of the North York Moors and the upland dales. People of all ages and abilities will be able to safely and comfortably move between Blackwell and Piercebridge and along The Banks at Middleton One Row, while a series of shorter loop walks at Newbus and Sockburn will encourage people to discover the many cherished natural and heritage assets hidden alongside the river. Better signage and interpretation will encourage people to move away from the river to explore the popular Broken Scar recreation area, local green venues, and use the shops and services in the picturesque villages of High Coniscliffe, Piercebridge, Middleton One Row and Hurworth. Maintaining the openness between villages and the river will help deliver flood management, drainage and water quality benefits alongside a highly productive farming landscape.

Existing green infrastructure benefits

- A well established strategic green and wildlife corridor and a Local Wildlife Site;
- Broken Scar is a popular play area, with car parking and access to the river;
- An extensive network of Public Rights of Way and the Regional Cycle Route 52 connect the Tees to the surrounding areas;
- The Teesdale Way Long Distance Footpath passes through Darlington running from Cumbria to the Cleveland Coast;
- Numerous heritage assets exist including Sockburn Church (Scheduled Monument), Neasham and Middleton One Row (Conservation Areas), as well as many listed buildings in the villages.

Issues and opportunities

- More local paths away from the river would improve access to the River Tees and distribute use more evenly;
- Paths from Blackwell to Broken Scar would benefit from improvements for older people and people with disabilities;
- Better targeting of agri-environment schemes would improve the biodiversity of riverbanks;
- Improved land management will help farming sit comfortably with access for recreation and biodiversity;
- Links to Darlington's unique heritage should be maximised;
- Encourage local wildlife groups to get involved with wildlife surveys to inform management priorities.

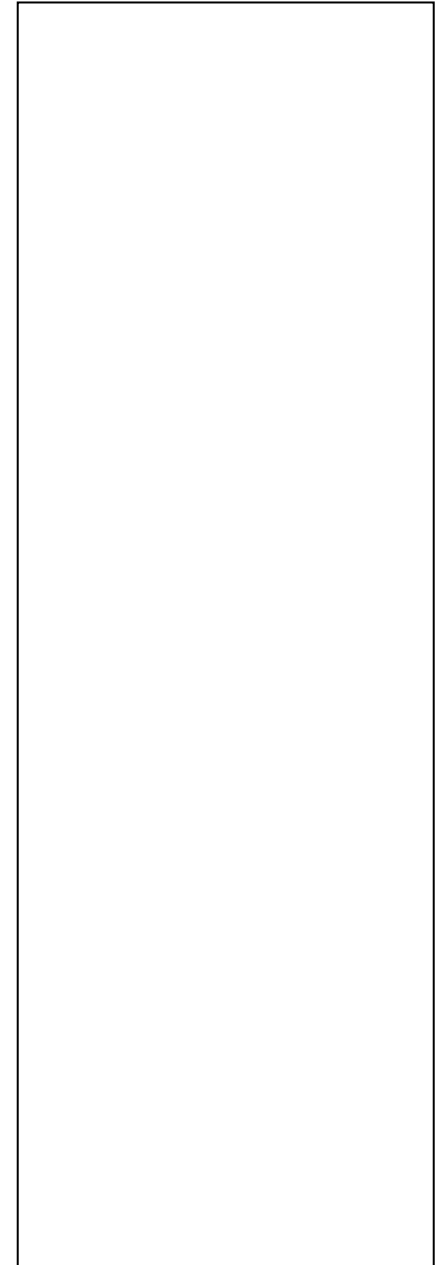
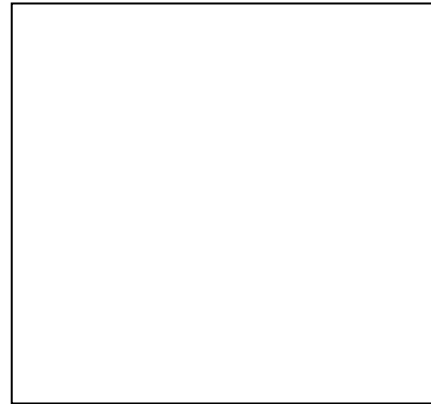
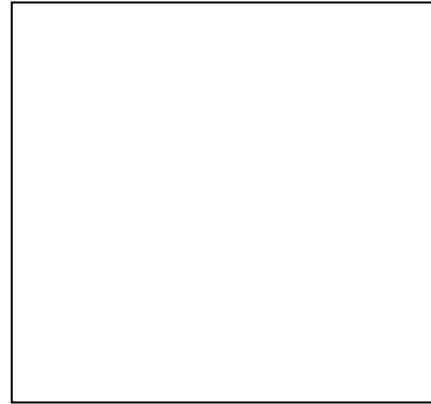
INSERT TEES MAP

1A Teesdale Way

- Convert stiles to kissing gates and re-surface paths at popular locations between Low-High Coniscliffe to improve use by people of all abilities including families with children, older people and those with disabilities;
- Promote greater use of the wider network by creating a radial route between Blackwell and Hurworth Place using new paths, trails and tracks to minimise landscape disruption;
- Allow for more cycling and equestrian use through the upgrade of part of the public rights of way network to bridleway standard;
- In partnership with landowners and farmers create designated areas for fishing and waymarked access on the river banks to reduce potential conflicts between farming, fishing and access;
- In partnership with landowners and farmers improve grazing regimes and land management along sparsely vegetated stretches to create a more productive, biodiverse environment;
- Manage invasive species e.g. the Giant Hogweed, to improve the health of trees and wildflowers. Risk of injury to the public will be removed and riverbanks stabilised;
- Increase the extent and mix of protected and priority habitats and species. Away from popular recreational areas, use of artificial habitats like Otter Holts and bird boxes will be promoted, particularly in narrow areas, areas under pressure or experiencing increased disturbance;
- Provide more resting places, signs and interpretation particularly between Blackwell and Hurworth, as well as along the Newbus and Sockburn Loops to aid movement and understanding of the surrounding landscape;
- Plant more riverside trees to create shaded sections of river, for wildlife and for under storey plants to grow.

1B Broken Scar

- Convert stiles to kissing gates and re-surface paths at Broken Scar to improve use by people of all abilities, including families with children, older people and those with disabilities;
- Provide more signs and resting places between Broken Scar and Blackwell to aid movement and promote greater use;
- Extend the mix of rights of way and permissive routes available between Broken Scar and Blackwell and to the urban area, to encourage active use by different user groups.

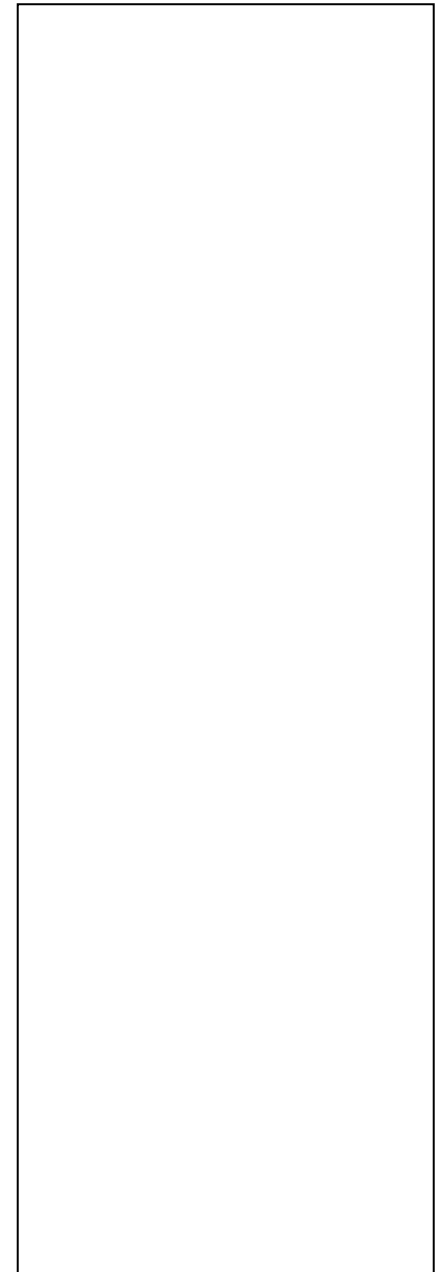
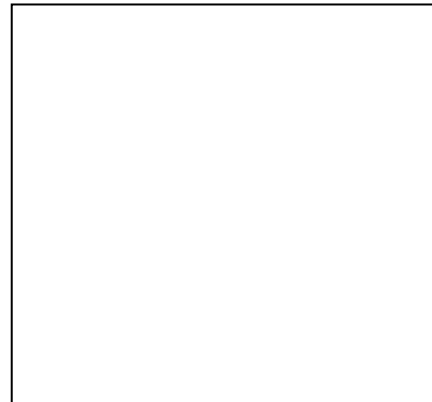


1C Tees Woodland

- Manage invasive species e.g. the Giant Hogweed, to improve wildlife connectivity and strengthen the buffer zone between woodland and agricultural land;
- Provide more space for trees and ground plants to establish within a healthy ecosystem to support a wider range of protected and priority habitats and species;
- Diversify the mix of wetland and wet woodland habitats to provide shade for mammals, birds, invertebrates and fish and to help improve water quality and flood management;
- Survey semi natural woodland along the Tees to establish quantity and quality of different species to inform long term management.

1D The Banks

- Convert stiles to kissing gates and re-surface paths to improve use by people of all abilities including families with children, older people and those with disabilities;
- Create new access points and a network of connecting paths to create a new radial route to promote greater use of the wider space;
- Increase the extent and mix of protected and priority habitats and species for example the otter;
- Improve resting places, signs and interpretation to aid movement and understanding of the surrounding landscape and to encourage greater use of villages services;
- Improve management of trees and brambles to enhance landscape quality and create a more biodiverse environment;
- Create designated areas for fishing to reduce potential conflicts between fishing and access.



2. RIVER SKERNE CORRIDOR

The River Skerne will be transformed into a quality riparian environment attractive to people and wildlife. Access for sustainable travel will be significantly improved; pedestrians and cyclists will be able to travel continuously along a new green corridor between Rockwell Local Nature Reserve through the Town Centre Fringe to South Park, while people will be able to easily reach Skertingham Countryside Park in the north and Hurworth Riverside through a well connected rights of way network. More will be made of this green river townscape; the restoration of a more natural wider river course south of Westbrook Terrace, set within greener river banks, grassland, wetlands and trees will provide a softer river edge with greater connectivity for wildlife, which will also prove attractive to developers who will recognise the benefits locating in a high quality, green urban landscape can have for future residents and employees. Opening up the river corridor will also provide flood management, sustainable drainage and water quality benefits. Value will be added to the setting of important heritage assets like the Skerne Bridge where a unique blend of interactive public art and information technology will encourage people to experience Darlington's distinctive past in an innovative way. Local community groups will take the lead in improving the quality of Rockwell Local Nature Reserve and Beech Wood Park so that they continue to meet the recreation, play and educational needs of the local community. Towards the urban fringe, the new Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve will span the river, providing a mosaic of wetlands, wet woodland, meadow and grassland where a variety of protected and priority species including otters, water voles, Goosanders and wild trout can live in numbers. The well established Blackwell Meadows will become renowned as a centre for sporting excellence, while a short distance away, Blackwell Grange Golf Club will become a destination for the competitive or casual golfer. Low key improvements to Skertingham Countryside Park will ensure that this highly accessible urban fringe remains a popular destination for those wanting to enjoy informal recreation, family cycling and nature close to home.

Green infrastructure benefits

- A long established strategic wildlife corridor;
- Water quality has improved significantly over the last 20 years;
- Rockwell Local Nature Reserve is a strategic wildlife resource;
- Skerne Path is a green multi user route following the river from the Skerne Bridge north;
- Numerous heritage assets exist including South Park (Registered Park), Skerne Bridge (Scheduled Monument), Victoria Embankment and Haughton Village (Conservation Areas);
- South Park and Skerne Park are flood storage areas;
- Several sports facilities exist; Blackwell Meadows (playing pitch hub), Blackwell Grange Golf Club (pay as you play and members);
- A large green wedge spanning the Skerne separates Haughton and Red Hall.

Issues and opportunities

- Accessible green space is limited in the Town Centre Fringe;
- The Town Centre Fringe strategic development location should include a multifunctional green corridor providing space for biodiversity, sport and recreation;
- New development should build in green features like green roofs, living walls and trees particularly next to the river;
- Blackwell Meadows has the potential to provide three more playing pitches for adult and junior football;
- New green infrastructure should promote access to heritage;
- A strategic flood risk management scheme is required for the Town Centre Fringe including flood storage, restoration of the natural floodplain and sustainable drainage systems.

INSERT SKERNE MAP

2A: Skertingham Countryside Park

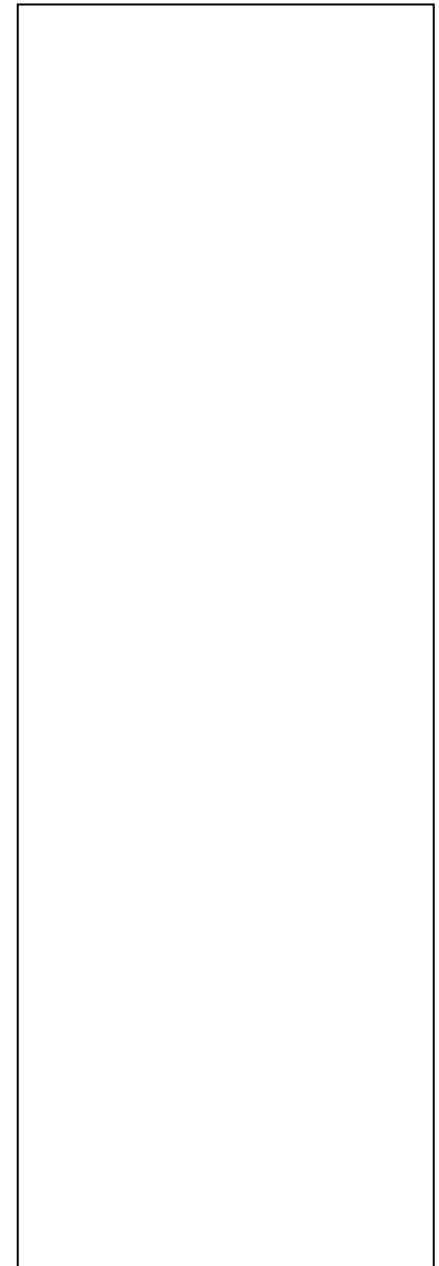
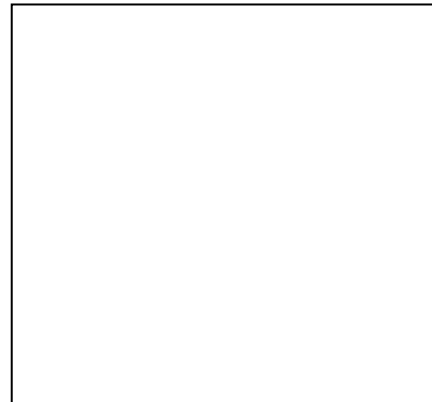
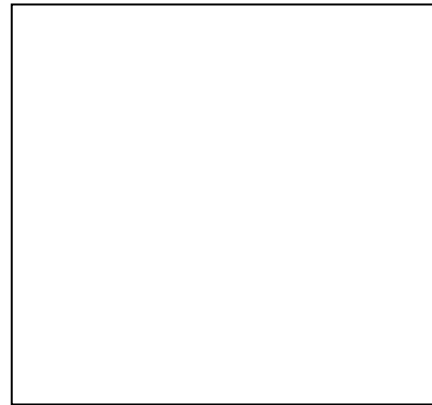
- Extend the cover and mix of broad leaved semi natural woodland and hedgerows particularly between Green Lane and Skertingham, to enhance biodiversity value;
- Promote agri-environment schemes to create a wildlife friendly landscape with biodiversity rich field margins;
- Extend the rights of way network and permissive routes within Skertingham, to the urban area and in the Ketton countryside, particularly for family cycling and walking to encourage more active use by different user groups;
- Improve the visitor experience; a small car park next to the track off Barmpton Lane and more signs will improve access and orientation for those with limited mobility and people with disabilities. Interpretation will aid understanding of sites of interest like Ketton Bridge;
- In partnership with landowners and farmers, encourage rotational coppicing to improve the availability of biofuel locally, creating a more varied, productive landscape between the edge of the urban area and Skertingham woodland.

2B Barmpton Lane Allotments

- Extend the site by creating 50 new plots to help meet local needs and make Darlington more food sustainable;
- Improve the biodiversity and recreational value of the corridor by incorporating wetlands and a fishing pond;
- Incorporate renewable energy to pump water from the pond to irrigate the plots.

2C Beech Wood

- Change management regime to improve the quality of veteran trees to enhance biodiversity value;
- Enhance the mix of native plants within the park, to add variety for wildlife and visitors;
- Re-design the layout of the park to help provide a wider range of functions to meet local people's needs;
- Provide and/or improve lighting, street furniture and signage to encourage more people to visit the park and stay longer;
- Improve the quality and mix of play facilities to meet the changing needs of local children.

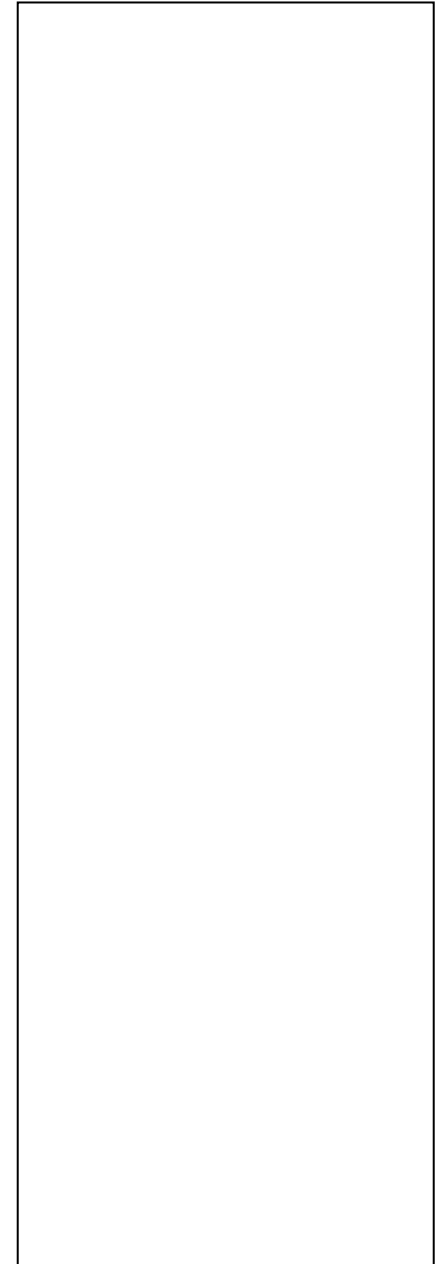
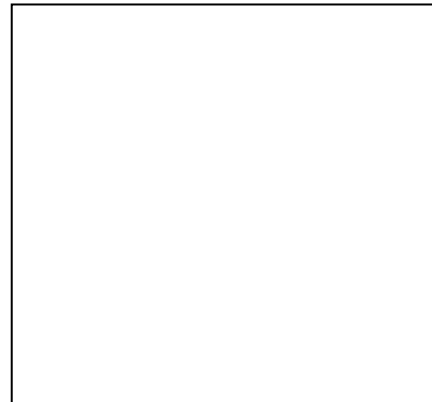
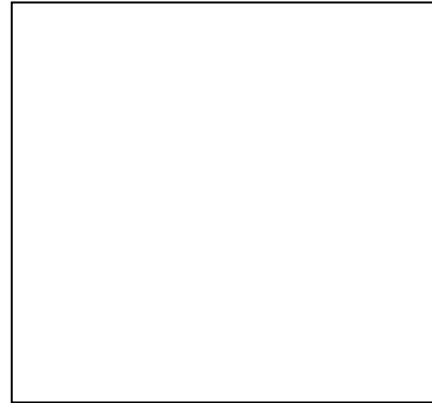


2D Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve

- Designate a new Local Nature Reserve that spans the River Skerne;
- Improve the mix and quality of protected and priority riparian habitats and species; more native trees will be planted at the river edge to create areas of shade to help reduce water temperatures in summer and to reduce excessive in channel reed growth. Grasslands, wildflower meadows and wetlands dominated by ponds, fen and marsh will be added, enhancing landscape quality and providing stepping stones for wildlife, particularly butterflies and bees, between town and country;
- Create microhabitats and nesting sites for specialist insects, hepifauna, mammals and birds - bird and insect nesting boxes may be used where there is a shortage of natural nesting habitats;
- Enhance east-west connectivity between Haughton and the Eastern Urban Fringe via a network of low key leisure routes and a new foot/cycle bridge across the Skerne;
- Protect the flood plain, its edges and seasonally wet areas to help manage flood risk;
- Provide interpretation to educate visitors on the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Establish a new Friends Group to lead on the Reserve's management plan.

2E Red Hall Stables

- Re-design the existing open space to provide a safe, accessible, wildlife friendly environment for adults and children to relax and play;
- Integrate a new foot/cycle path network to provide safe, easy access for all between home, shops, school and green spaces;
- Provide new native tree and shrub planting to improve the biodiversity and landscape value of the local environment and improve connectivity for wildlife;
- Change management regime to improve the quality of veteran trees to enhance biodiversity value.



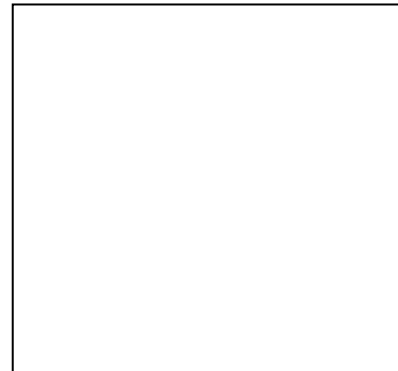
2F Rockwell Local Nature Reserve

- Create a community wildlife garden to maximise the educational value of the space for local residents, school groups and visitors;
- Create a teachers park as an educational resource for schools and youth groups;
- Restore the meadows near the new Haughton pedestrian/cycle bridge using locally sourced wildflower seeds and trees;
- Provide for adventurous, natural play linked with opportunities to explore and learn about the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Provide more on site interpretation and information boards to help people learn more about the local natural environment;
- Provide and/or improve seating, picnic tables and signage to encourage more people to visit and stay longer.

2G Town Centre Fringe

- Create a more natural river course, with more natural flood storage next to the Skerne, reducing the flood risk to people and property;
- Increase the river and flood plain storage, add wetlands and de-culvert the river at Victoria Bridge to create an improved greener environment, establish berms, flow deflectors to improve water flow and quality and provide a quality environment for species to live, breed and disperse;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage systems; balancing ponds, swales, reedbeds and wetlands will help reduce flood risk particularly at the Cocker Beck-Skerne confluence;
- Provide safe, sustainable access for pedestrians and cyclists between the Skerne Bridge and Victoria Embankment, to the river edge and to adjoining neighbourhoods;
- Incorporate new multifunctional greenspaces for recreation, exercise and play to promote healthy lifestyles;
- Improve the mix of priority habitats along the river banks; native broadleaved trees, orchards, grassland and wetlands will reinforce the corridor's capacity to accommodate a range of protected and priority species including otters, water voles, salmonids and coarse fish, particularly for spawning and fry;

- Incorporate green features e.g. green roofs and green walls in new development to create a natural, flexible and positive urban river edge;
- Create a greener riverbank; planting up concrete ledges, cutting small niches in the riverwall for plants to cascade, replacing invasive species with native and aquatic plants like common sedge, rush and reed communities (e.g. branched bur reed, flowering rush and crowfoot) to provide an attractive biodiverse corridor;
- Improve the setting of listed heritage assets (e.g. Russell Street, Chesnut Street and John Street bridges) and the Skerne Bridge Scheduled Monument to create an attractive environment;
- Interweave public art and interpretation including Smart applications to promote the importance of the river in the foundation and growth of the town;
- Promote community interaction and management of the river.



2H South Park-Hurworth

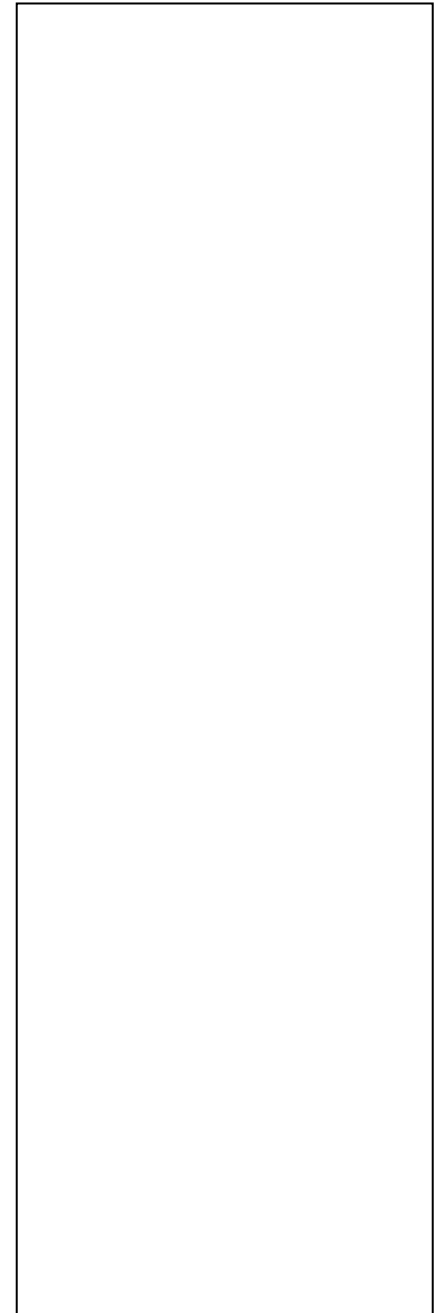
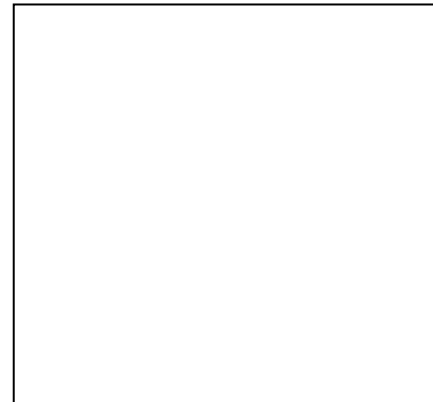
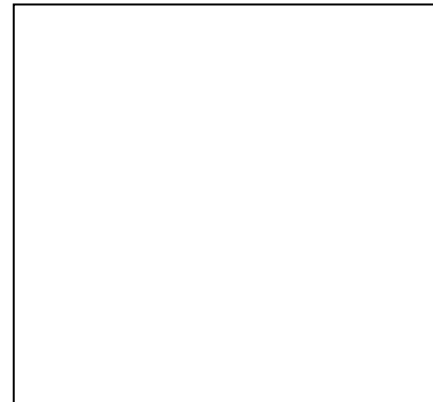
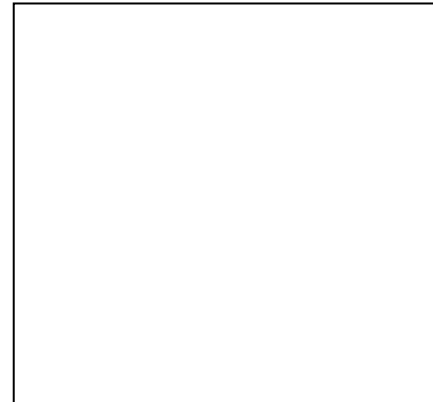
- Extend the rights of way network to improve access to the Tees Way and encourage greater exploration of the southern urban fringe near Hurworth;
- Add traditional planting along the route; native hedgerows, broad leaved semi natural woodland and meadows will improve landscape quality south of the A66 and connectivity for wildlife;
- Restore the wetland landscape next to the Skerne; shelves, scrapes and wetland tree planting will improve biodiversity and provide a micro climate to mitigate climate change;
- Provide more signage and interpretation to help orientation and understanding of heritage and natural assets like Rockcliffe Hall, South Park and Hell Kettles SSSI;
- Explore opportunities to create a new community woodland;
- Provide and/or improve signage and interpretation, particularly to promote the Lewis Carroll connection, to encourage more people to visit the area and stay longer.

2I Blackwell Meadows

- Provide three quality football pitches for adults and juniors with appropriate ancillary accommodation, to meet an identified need in Darlington;
- Incorporate native planting and hedgerows at the boundaries to help species e.g. bats and birds, move between town and country. Wildflower planting and meadows will provide a softer riverside environment.

2J Blackwell Grange

- Improve the mix of priority habitats within the parkland to improve the naturalness of the landscape; native broadleaved tree planting, orchards, hedgerows and meadows will be considered;
- Integrate traditional planting along boundaries with new residential development; native semi natural woodland, hedgerows and mature trees will reinforce the distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Create a new publicly accessible open space (about 1ha) adjacent to Bridge Road/Carmel Road South to accommodate the recreation and play needs of those living in the adjoining new residential development

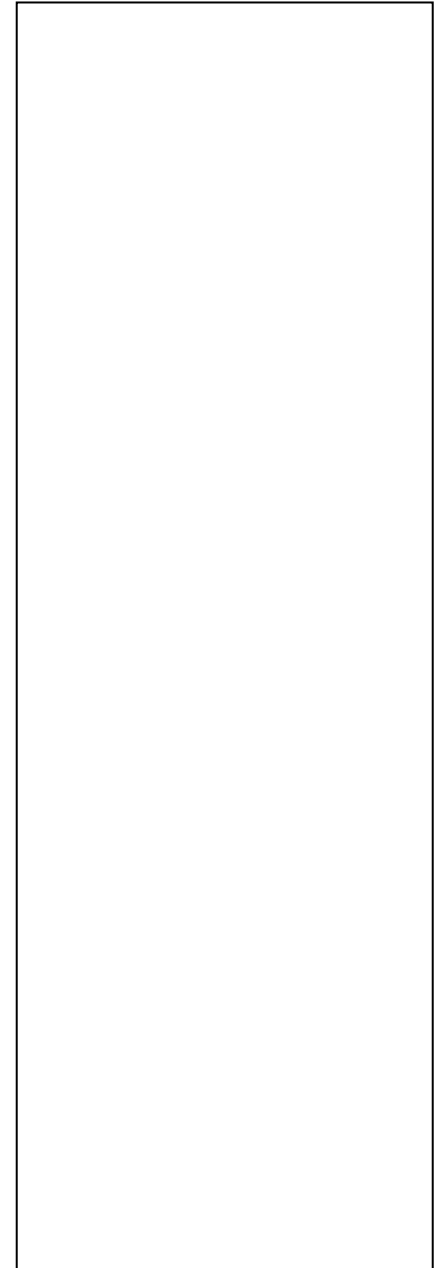
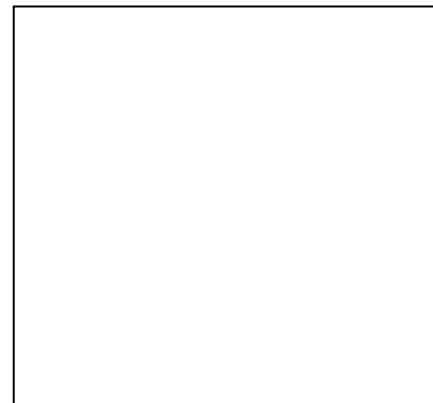
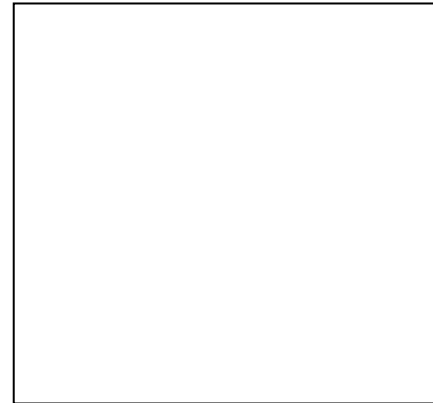
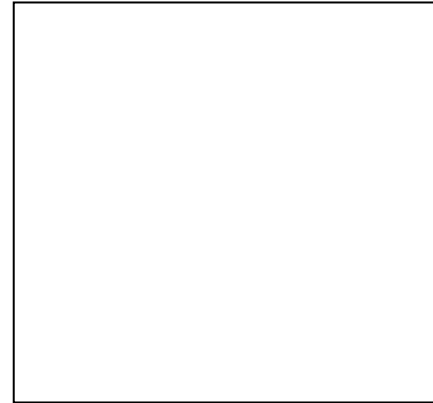


2K The Pastures

- Create a new adventurous play area and playing pitch as part of a new community hub at Skerne Park;
- Enhance the landscaping surrounding The Pastures; more native trees and planting of priority species will create an attractive, biodiverse setting for people and wildlife and integrate the community hub with the landscaping belt.

2L Blackwell Grange Golf Club

- Introduce a programme of course improvements for members of the newly merged Blackwell and Stressholme Golf Clubs, and for those who wish to pay and play; the quality and aesthetics of the golf course will be significantly improved, holes could be remodelled and the landscape re-sculpted making it more enjoyable to play year round;
- Improve ancillary facilities; changing rooms and car parking will be extended to improve users experience;
- Add more native tree, woodland and shrub planting to improve the landscape quality, the diversity of species particularly for bats, birds, invertebrates and smaller mammals.



3. RIVER SKERNE TO FAVERDALE

This biodiversity rich, multifunctional green corridor will help connect the reinvigorated River Skerne, the Darlington-Stockton corridor, the Barnard Castle trackbed and the substantial new neighbourhoods near West Park and Faverdale for people and wildlife. Landscape and biodiversity quality along its route will be maximised; substantial areas of early successional brownfield land will be integrated into the highly successful Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve, while a distinctive new tree lined green corridor will improve connectivity to the increasingly popular Faverdale Whin Local Wildlife Site, for species moving between the town and the urban fringe. The Green Flag winning West Park will continue to be popular with residents and visitors alike for a range of active and passive recreational activities, while its wildlife value will be steadily improved; new tree and native ground flora planting will add value to the establishing mixed native broadleaf woodland, lowland wildflower meadows, neutral grasslands, wetlands and reedbeds creating a haven for protected and priority species such as the Water Vole along West Beck, the White-letter hairstreak butterfly on nearby Wych Elm, the banded demoiselle dragonfly on the many vegetated and established ponds and the kingfisher feeding from purpose built balancing ponds. The wetland and woodland habitats of the well established Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve will continue to be enhanced to provide an exemplary outdoor classroom for everyone to learn about nature close to home. Making better use of an existing greenspace, the newly established Ridgeway Allotments will ensure residents can enjoy the benefits of home grown produce. In the inner urban area, people will be able to follow in the footsteps of the world's first passenger railway; the exciting, new 1825 Heritage Trail will take people on a unique journey through Darlington's railway heritage area, passing such landmarks as the famous Skerne Bridge, one of the country's finest examples of industrial heritage.

Green infrastructure benefits

- West Park is Darlington's newest, strategic park;
- West Auckland Road pond is an important sustainable drainage resource for the West Park area;
- Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve is a well established, local site;
- Extensive areas of wildlife friendly greenspace sit on derelict land close to the former Barnard Castle railway line.

Issues and opportunities

- Faverdale Whin Local Wildlife Site is an undervalued and underused resource in the urban fringe;
- More should be made of the extensive areas of wildlife friendly derelict land;
- The new West Park green corridor lacks connectivity to other green infrastructure;
- Green infrastructure should be used to promote links with the former Darlington to Stockton railway line.

INSERT SKERNE-FAVERDALE MAP

4A: West Park

- Incorporate new cutting regimes and seeding in the meadows and selective thinning of woodlands to enhance the biodiversity value of the mixed native broadleaf woodland, lowland wildflower meadows and neutral grasslands;
- Incorporate new areas of habitat creation e.g. new native ground flora and bulb planting at West Park, will be allied to existing features so that protected and priority species e.g. the Great Crested Newt and Reed Bunting, can move, feed, disperse, migrate and reproduce easily;
- Upgrade the downhill cycle track to meet the needs of a wider user group;
- Provide new signage to West Park from adjoining neighbourhoods and the former Barnard Castle trackbed to encourage greater use by local people;
- Add bespoke public art to help educate visitors on the ecological importance of habitats and aid orientation around the park;
- Continue revising and implementing the West Park management plan, in partnership with the Friends Group to help achieve Green Flag status.

4B: Faverdale Whin Green Corridor

- Extend the rights of way network north from Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve to improve access to Faverdale Whin Local Wildlife Site, to businesses in the Faverdale area and to encourage greater exploration of the northern urban fringe for all users;
- Maximise opportunities to improve biodiversity along its route; new native trees and hedgerows should complement and connect with the existing lowland meadow and young tree plantation to increase the carrying capacity for wildlife, birds and mammals;
- Use of appropriate landscaping will be an essential requirement for new development; native trees and planting should foil new development and create a porous landscape and townscape edge;
- New signage should promote links to points of natural and cultural interest, and innovative interpretation will create an incentive for use;

4C: Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve

- Extend Brinkburn Pond Local Nature Reserve to include the nearby Horsefield Pond and Black Path ponds so that more space is protected for wildlife;
- Enhance the mix and extent of wetland habitats; reedbeds, wetland scrapes, ponds, and wet grassland will create an important breeding site for species like the Great Crested Newt and Dingy Skipper Butterfly;
- Improve meadow diversity through changes to long grassland management; new cutting and seeding regimes will make the area less vulnerable to drought and pollution;
- New native tree and blackthorn scrub planting should complement and connect with the existing mixed native broadleaf woodland and grasslands to allow protected and priority species to thrive;
- New signage and interpretation will encourage people to explore the wider area and find out more about its natural and cultural heritage;
- Prepare a new management plan for the extended Reserve, in partnership with the Friends Group, to ensure priorities for biodiversity, recreation and access are delivered.

4D: 1825 Heritage Trail

- Establish a trail from the Head of Steam to the River Skerne to link points of natural, historic and cultural heritage; the Head of Steam, North Road Railway Station, Hopetown Carriage Works, Skerne Bridge will be linked through the use of public art and interpretation and access where appropriate;
- Ensure the trail is level and barrier-free for most of its length, so is suitable for people of all ages and abilities, for cyclists, for wheelchairs and disabled people.
- New signage will promote the Trail as well as links to adjoining neighbourhoods, to the River Skerne improving connectivity within the inner urban area for residents;
- Protect and integrate valuable protected and priority habitats on derelict land into new green infrastructure so that they can flourish;
- Provide new habitats, native trees and planting to improve the biodiversity value and setting of heritage assets;
- Promote opportunities for imaginative and innovative learning, play and education. Produce a teachers pack to maximise use by school and community groups.

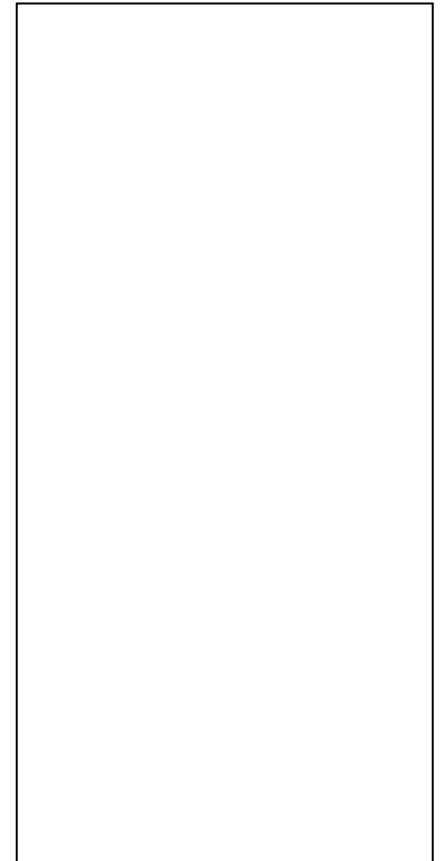
4E: Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve

- Create a community wildlife garden to maximise the educational value of the space for local residents, school groups and visitors;
- Create microhabitats and nesting sites for specialist insects, hepifauna, mammals and birds - bird and insect nesting boxes may be used where there is a shortage of natural nesting habitats;
- Restore overgrown wetland areas by selectively removing vegetation to create a range of successional habitats and planting with local native provenance water plants;
- Carry out selective thinning of urban woodlands and plantations to provide a more varied age structure and planting woodland flora where appropriate.
- Create a teachers park as an educational resource for schools and youth groups linked to different stages of the national curriculum;

- Provide for adventurous, natural play linked with opportunities to explore and learn about the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Provide more on site interpretation and information boards to help people learn more about the local natural environment;
- Provide and/or improve seating, picnic tables and signage to encourage more people to sit and relax and stay longer.

4F: The Ridgeway Allotments

- Create 12 new plots by re-using an average quality amenity space as allotments to help meet local needs;
- Establish a self management association to ensure users manage the space to meet their needs, and promote greater community ownership of the local environment.



<p>5. DARLINGTON, MIDDLETON ST GEORGE, A66/67 CORRIDOR TO STOCKTON</p>	
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Following in the footsteps of the Darlington to Stockton railway, this strategic corridor will continue to be an important focus for the green infrastructure network between inner Darlington and Middleton St George. Whether using the National Cycle Network to go to Stockton or for local journeys between the Borough’s neighbourhoods and green spaces, those who travel on foot or by bike will pass through a series of different, but complementary landscapes. The extensive wildflower meadows that line the Eastern Transport Corridor and the ponds, wetlands and reed communities of the established Red Hall Local Nature Reserve will bring an array of wildlife to the town, while the newly planted tree lined streets, species rich grasslands and wetlands of the growing Eastern Urban Fringe will connect spaces for sport, recreation, play and local food. Over time this substantial new neighbourhood will integrate with the River Skerne corridor, creating a softer, accessible riparian edge while retaining its important role as a fully functioning flood plain. An extensive network of sustainable drainage ponds will provide further flood management benefits as part of a distinctive wildlife and recreation resource. Moving east, the pedestrian and cycle bridge will continue to provide easy, safe access over the A66 (T) to the mature South Burdon Community Woodland where the old and young alike can walk, cycle or ride through this distinctive woodland, enjoying the new interactive art railway heritage trail or perhaps catching a glimpse of a roe deer or sparrowhawk. Darlington’s oldest Local Nature Reserve, The Whinnies in Middleton St George is an unexpected rich blend of butterflies, birds and dragonflies at the end of the Darlington journey.

<p>Green infrastructure benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eastern Transport Corridor (and National Cycle Network 14) links the urban area to Middleton St George via a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the A66; • Brinkburn Pond and The Whinnies are important Local Nature Reserves; • South Burdon Community Woodland is establishing either side of the corridor; • Red Hall ponds are a new but valuable sustainable drainage resource and wildlife habitat. 	<p>Issues and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eastern Urban Fringe strategic location should include significant greenspace to meet residents needs for biodiversity, sport, recreation, play and local food; • There are shortfalls of quality greenspace in the Central and Lingfield wards; • More should be made of extensive areas of wildlife friendly derelict land in the urban area; • Green infrastructure should be used to promote links with the former Darlington to Stockton railway line; • Appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area that will stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.
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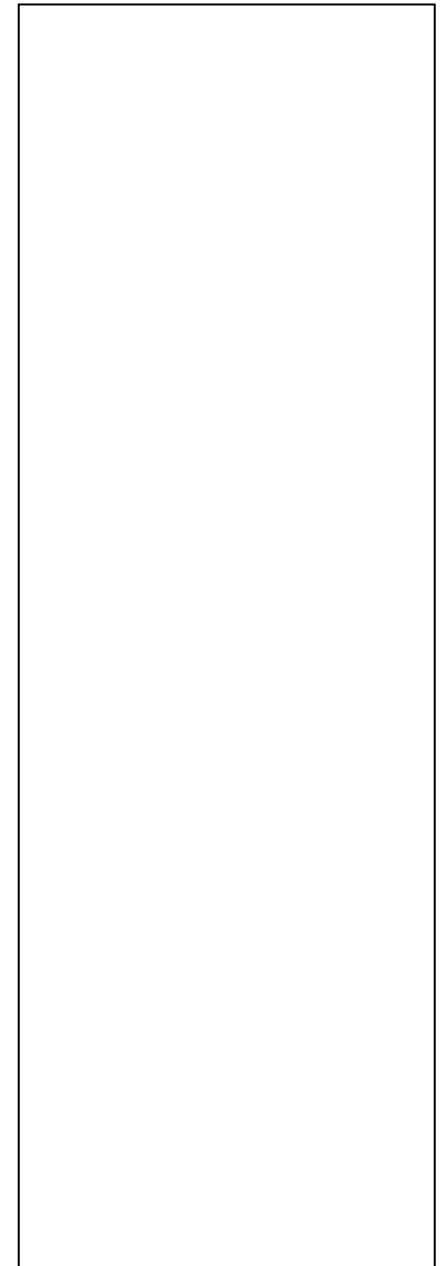
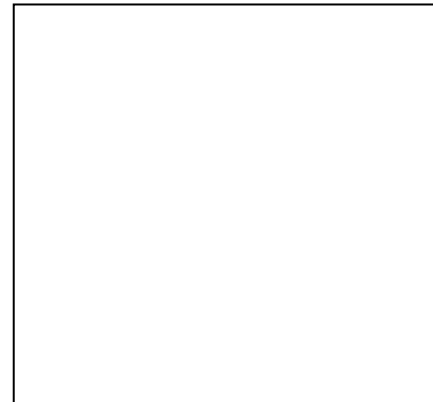
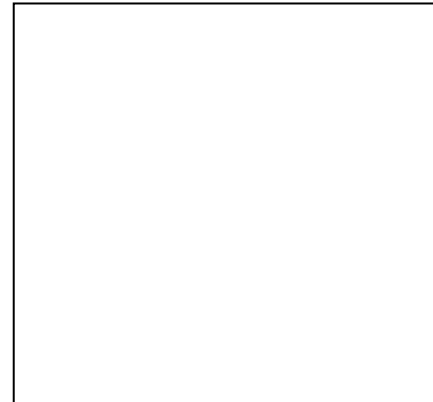
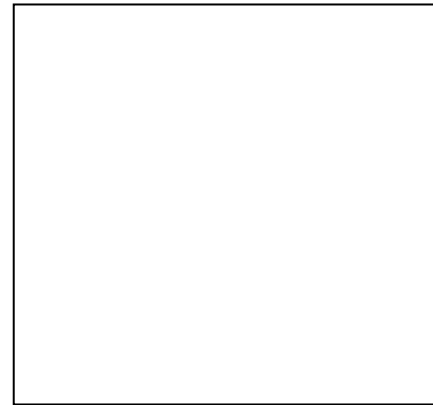
INSERT DARLINGTON-STOCKTON MAP

5A: Red Hall Wetland Local Nature Reserve

- Designate a new wetland and woodland Local Nature Reserve for protected species like the Great Crested Newt and species rich, neutral grassland to establish;
- Increase the area of land protected to include 6km of roadside landscaping (to the west) and three new ponds and wetlands to reinforce this valuable breeding site for the protected Great Crested Newt;
- Improve the diversity of species; new native hedgerows, trees and species rich meadows will be added to complement the adjoining Skerne and A66 corridors;
- Provide interpretation to educate visitors on the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Establish a new Friends Group to create a management plan to balance nature conservation and surface water management priorities with access for recreation and education.

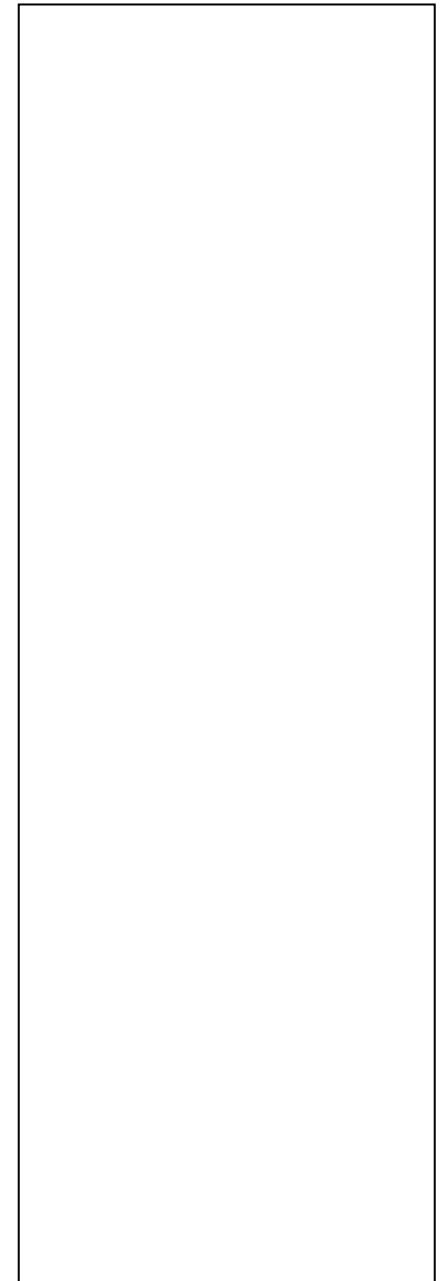
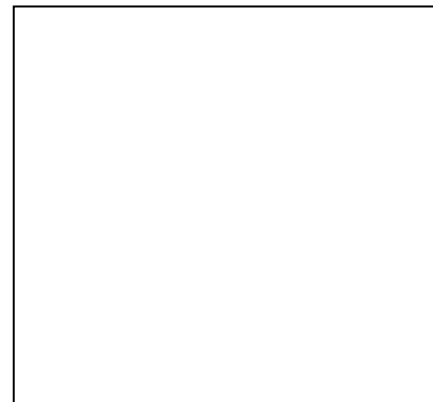
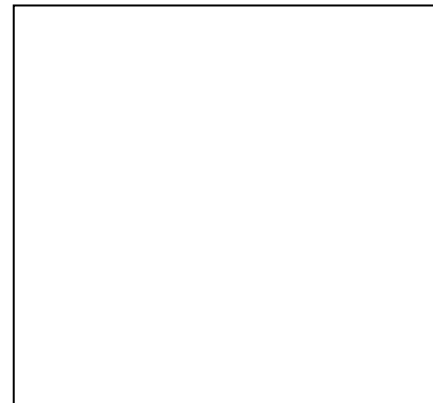
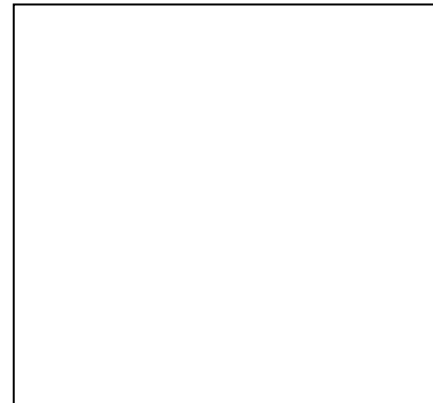
5B: Eastern Urban Fringe

- Provide substantial native tree planting along the A66 and the Eastern Transport Corridor to improve landscape quality and connectivity with South Burdon and Red Hall Wetlands;
- Create a network of safe, attractive multi user green corridors; permeability for residents and wildlife to the Eastern Transport Corridor, Red Hall and Mill Lane Local Nature Reserves, South Burdon, the River Skerne and the rights of way network will all be improved;
- Provide new neighbourhood spaces for adventurous and natural play, sport, recreation and food to address residents needs and enhance the setting of the built environment;
- Retain the natural flood plain and create sustainable drainage ponds to reduce flood risk and provide a unique wetland resource;
- Create a high quality green townscape and streetscape (landscaping, public realm, street trees and public art) as part of a sustainable environment;
- Provide a new managed playing pitch hub with space for a range of pitch sports to meet local needs;
- Provide quality maintenance; a management levy will be established with the developer to provide for all new greenspace in the long term.



5C: South Burdon Community Woodland

- Diversify the species mix and landscape quality; new grasslands and meadows will provide improved habitats for the Kestrel, Barn Owl and the many small mammals they depend upon, including priority species like the Harvest Mouse, Water Vole and Brown Hare, and for the skylark and migrant bird species to breed;
- Create microhabitats and nesting sites for specialist insects, hepifauna, mammals and birds - bird and insect nesting boxes may be used where there is a shortage of natural nesting habitats;
- Restore overgrown wetland areas by selectively removing vegetation to create a range of successional habitats and planting with local native provenance water plants;
- Carry out selective thinning of urban woodlands and plantations to provide a more varied age structure and planting woodland flora where appropriate.
- Provide space for active and passive recreation; picnic areas and natural play will encourage greater use;
- Provide a variety of looped paths and trails of different distances for walking, cycling and horse riding to further link the woodland with the green corridor, National Cycle Route 14, public rights of way, the urban area and Middleton St George;
- Create an arts heritage trail within a mature woodland setting to encourage visitors to learn about the historic Stockton and Darlington Railway and its part in Darlington's past;
- Create a small car park next to the A66 to encourage greater use by visitors from further afield or those unable to access the woodland by alternative means;
- In partnership with landowners and farmers, promote rotational coppicing and the use of wood waste to improve the availability of biofuel locally and help mitigate climate change
- Provide more on site interpretation and information boards to help people learn more about the local natural environment.



<p>A. FORMER BARNARD CASTLE TRACKBED</p>	
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This popular former railway line will encourage people to travel, on foot, bike or horse through the quality Walworth and Tees countryside between the historic village of Piercebridge and the extensive new development in the North Western part of the town. Greater use will be made of the western urban fringe and the attractive countryside that lies beyond; whether its learning about Darlington’s unique past at the Piercebridge Roman Fort, enjoying the picturesque historic churches and villages that lie alongside the River Tees, experiencing the tranquillity of the many Local Wildlife Sites or visiting one of the many green venues along the way, people will spend more time enjoying the local countryside for a day or afternoon visit. Native planting along its route will also improve connectivity for small mammals and birds between town and country. An attractive distinctive landscape will provide the setting for the significant new neighbourhood in the North West; opportunities for sport, recreation, play and growing food will be created within a highly connected, distinctive, wildlife friendly environment. Public art will feature heavily, helping to create a unique identity and sense of place for its residents, while helping to integrate with the nearby West Park. Multifunctional sustainable drainage schemes will manage flood risk and provide ideal wetland environments for amphibians like the Great Crested Newt and wetland birds such as the Reed Bunting to establish. More will be made of local greenspaces; recreation, play and opportunities to enjoy nature positively and in a quality setting will be enhanced through the regeneration of homes and the environment close to Minors Crescent.

<p>Green infrastructure benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The former Barnard Castle trackbed is a well established and well used green corridor; • Many Local Wildlife Sites including Ulnaby Beck are found in the rural area near this corridor; • Numerous heritage assets exist including Piercebridge Roman Fort, West Hartburn Medieval village (Scheduled Monuments), Piercebridge (Conservation Area); • Quality Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land is found near the River Tees and in the Walworth countryside; • Extensive rights of way network crosses the rural area; • Several green venues are found in the Walworth countryside including Archers Jersey ice cream and Piercebridge Farm Shop and Café; • Most of the area remains a productive landscape; Farmways is based at Piercebridge. 	<p>Issues and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North Western Urban Fringe strategic location should include significant greenspace to meet residents needs for movement, sport, recreation, play, biodiversity and local food; • A significant sustainable drainage system should be incorporated to manage flood risk from all new development within a wildlife friendly setting; • Improving multifunctionality of existing greenspaces will improve access to quality recreation and play space close to home particularly in the wider Cockerton area; • Green infrastructure should be used to promote links to Darlington’s railway, rural and Roman heritage; • Appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area that will stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.
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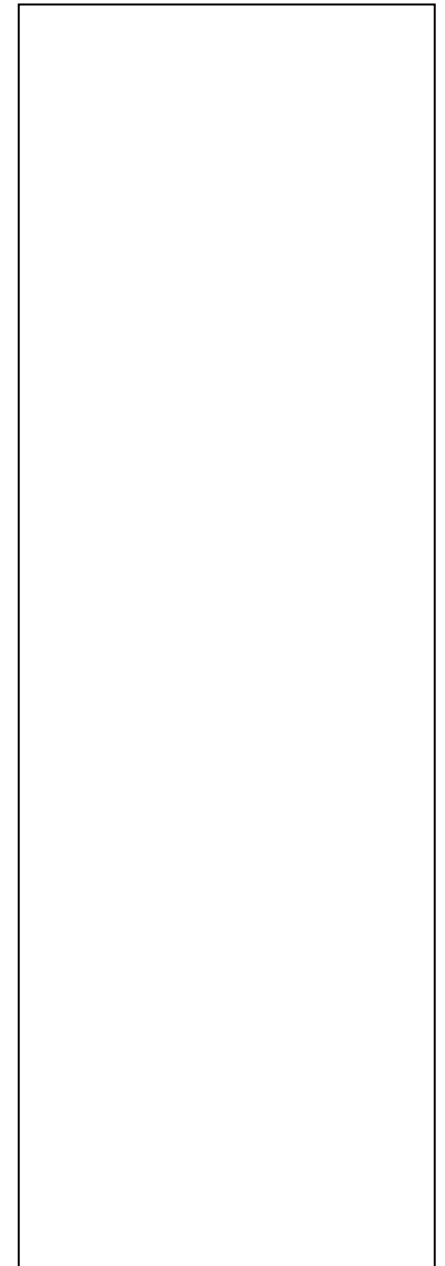
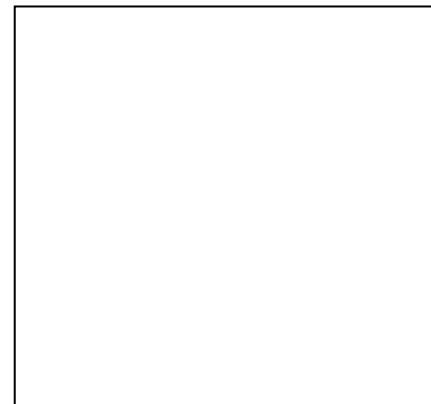
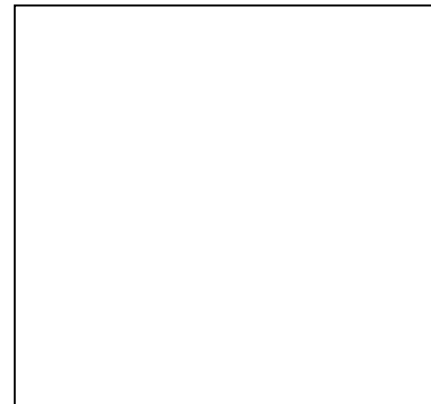
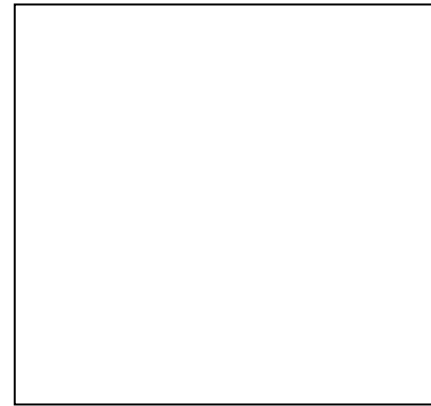
INSERT BARNARD CASTLE MAP

A1: Piercebridge Path

- Extend the rights of way network between Piercebridge and Branksome to improve connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders particularly under the A1 (M) to the rural public rights of way network and the countryside to the west of the town;
- Reinstate traditional landscape features alongside the path; coppicing, native hedgerows and broad leaved semi natural woodland will improve landscape quality and create a healthy wildlife corridor between otherwise isolated spaces, particularly for small mammals through the tunnel under the A1(M);
- Provide new signage to encourage greater use of the path and attractions along and near it such as green venues (farm shops and sites of interest like the Piercebridge Roman Fort and Ulnaby medieval village).

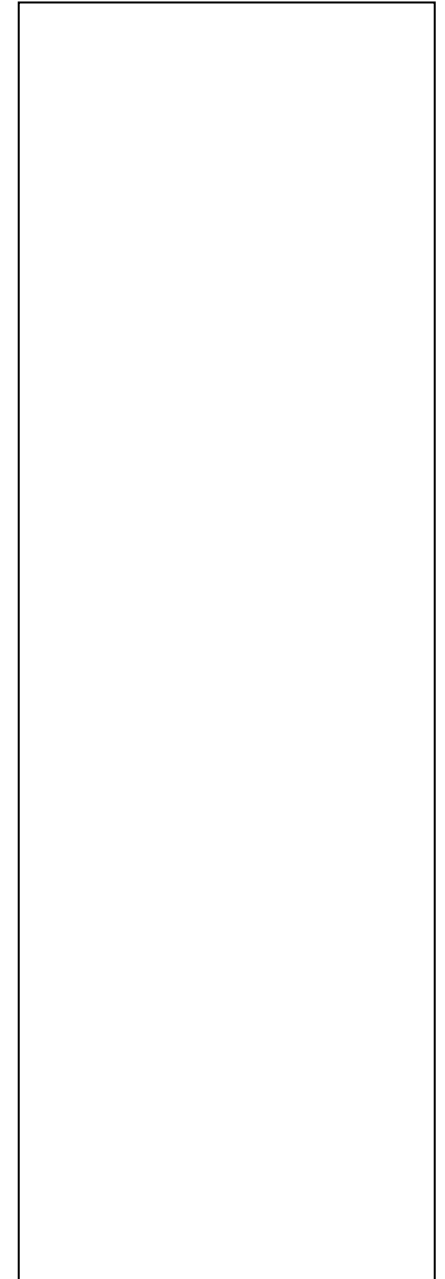
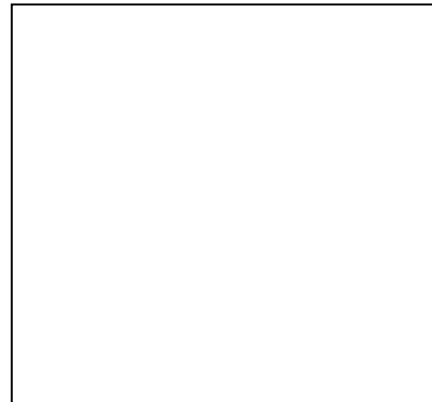
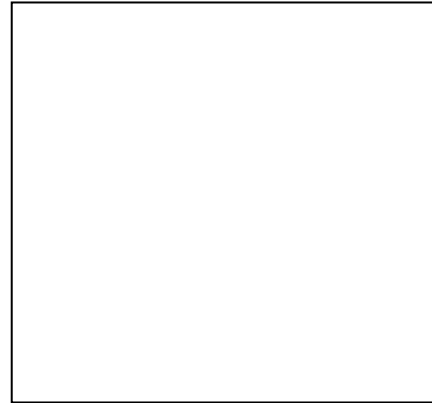
A2: North West Urban Fringe

- Create a network of permeable, safe, attractive multi user green corridors to improve connectivity with Newton Lane, the former Barnard Castle trackbed, the new Faverdale Whin Corridor, the new Piercebridge Path and local greenspaces;
- Integrate substantial mixed woodland and species rich planting along the A1(M), Newton Lane and West Auckland Road to improve landscape character and improve connectivity for wildlife between the urban area and the urban fringe;
- Integrate multifunctional greenspaces (for adventurous and natural play, recreation, local food) to address local needs;
- Create a high quality, distinctive, sustainable green townscape (coordinated landscaping, public realm, lighting and public art) for new development to take place;
- Create a network of sustainable drainage ponds to reduce flood risk and provide a unique wetland resource;
- Incorporate a new managed playing pitch hub to provide affordable space for a range of pitch sports to meet local residents needs;
- Provide quality maintenance; a management levy will be established, with the developer to add capacity for all new greenspace in the long term.



A3: Minors Crescent

- Re-design, re-locate and re-provide the existing children's play area and recreation space across three smaller spaces to provide a safe, accessible, wildlife friendly environment for adults and children to relax and play;
- Provide a new children's play space in a central location to encourage positive, stimulating use, so that children can explore, climb, run, jump and interact in a managed environment;
- Integrate a new foot/cycle path network to provide safe, easy access for all between home, shops, school and green spaces;
- Provide new native tree and shrub planting to improve the biodiversity and landscape value of the local environment and improve connectivity for wildlife;
- Promote the use of public art and new signage to create a distinctive setting for new development and to help with orientation.



B COCKER BECK

A superior quality riparian landscape will bring the countryside into the town; new backwaters and meanders will re-connect Baydale Beck to the River Skerne, substantially improving water flow in the Cocker Beck Valley while continuing to provide significant benefits as a natural floodplain. This tranquil, clean water course will provide the ideal environment for water vole communities to re-colonise in numbers while resident kingfishers, dragonfly species like the Banded Demoiselle and Blue Tailed Damselfly will continue to flourish. A mosaic of wetland habitats will span the river; wet woodland, floodplain grazing marsh and wet grassland will provide important habitats for small mammals and ground nesting birds to live in the new Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve. Established species rich neutral grasslands and long grass meadows will cover the idyllic expanse of the wider Cocker Beck Valley with colour and variety; flowering plants such as the Common Knapweed, Yellow Rattle, Harebells, Cuckoo Flower will provide food for Orange Tip caterpillars or habitats for Common Blue butterflies, the Burnet Companion and Cinnabar Moth to establish. This species rich landscape will become truly multifunctional; interspersed in the wildflower meadows will be short mown grassland for informal recreation, complemented by outdoor sports facilities and play space, while its outstanding connectivity to the nearby historic Cockerton village and Branksome will ensure that local people can enjoy a range of activities in a vibrant, green river setting. Better use will be made of nearby local greenspaces; the new Bylands Way Allotments will ensure local people can grow fruit and vegetables locally. Those living nearer the Skerne confluence will benefit from having the newly restored, multifunctional Brinkburn Denes on their doorstep; sport, recreation, play and nature will be enjoyed in a natural but modern wooded landscape.

Green infrastructure benefits

- The extensive Cocker Beck Valley green wedge stretches from the urban fringe to Cockerton Village providing space for recreation, play, sport, biodiversity and flood management;
- Numerous sports facilities exist at Brinkburn Denes (for tennis) and Darlington School of Maths and Science (pitch sports), Cockerton Cricket Club (cricket);
- A multi user network follows Cocker Beck providing connections to the River Skerne, Baydale Beck and West Beck;
- Brinkburn Denes is a strategic park;
- Parts of Cocker Beck are a valuable Local Wildlife Site;
- Cocker Beck is an important natural flood plain.

Issues and opportunities

- The size of Cocker Beck Valley provides significant opportunities for biodiversity and recreation;
- The water flow and quality of Cocker Beck would benefit from improvement;
- Sports facilities at Darlington School of Maths and Science would benefit from improvement to meet local needs;
- Provision of new allotment space would meet an identified local need.

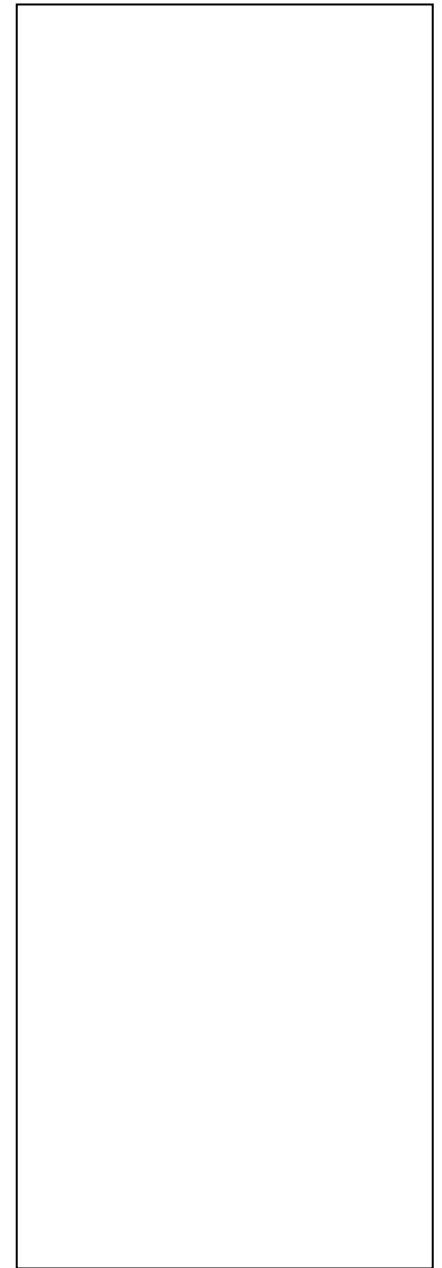
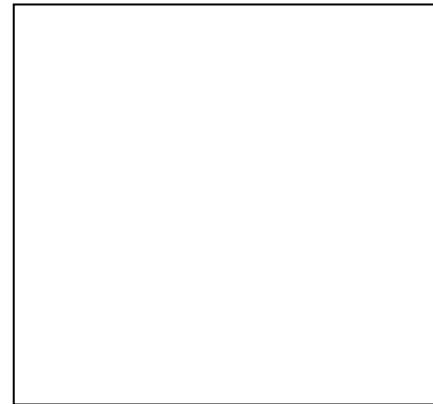
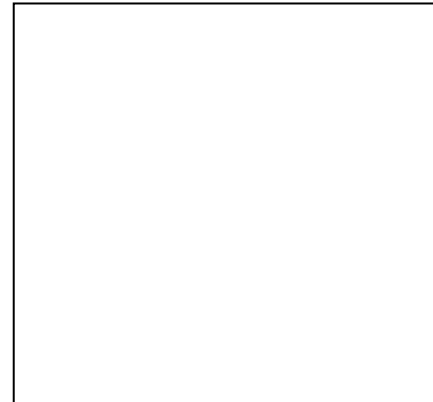
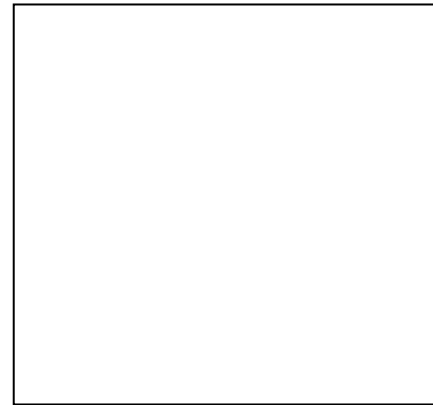
INSERT COCKER BECK MAP

B1: Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve

- From the re-connected Baydale Beck, through new backwaters and meanders, improve the flow and quality of the river in a controlled way to enhance flood management and storage;
- Designate a new Local Nature Reserve to protect the valuable riparian (reed communities, wetlands, wet woodland and wet grassland) and grassland environments (species rich neutral grasslands and long grass meadows) and enhance its function as a wildlife corridor; new marginal vegetation, waterside tree planting and wetlands will create a more natural river environment, improving the quality and distribution of priority and protected species particularly otters and water voles;
- Provide important space for informal recreation; short mown grass will encourage a wider range of people to use Cocker Beck more often and positively for picnics, kickabouts or nature based activities including bird watching and photography;
- Provide appropriate interpretation to encourage a greater understanding of local ecology and heritage;
- Establish a new Friends Group to create a management plan to balance nature conservation and flood and water management priorities with access for recreation and education.

B2: Bylands Way Allotments

- Re-use of an average quality amenity grassland space as allotments will create 6 new plots to help meet local needs and make Darlington more food sustainable;
- Establish a self management association to ensure users manage the space to meet their needs, and promote greater community ownership of the local environment.



<p>C WEST BECK</p>	
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This increasingly important local green corridor will provide an invaluable safe and tranquil off road leisure route for pedestrians and cyclists between the historic Cockerton village and Faverdale, connecting a mix of smaller local greenspaces that play an important role in meeting every day green infrastructure needs. Improved signage will promote greater use of Cockerton village and its wide range of shops and services, while low key interpretation will encourage visitors to explore the attractive historic terraces, cottages and churches that are found around the distinctive open, tree lined village green. The environmental quality of this riparian corridor will be significantly enhanced; sustainable drainage ponds set within wildlife rich, wetland environments will improve water quality and flood management in the Beck while creating ideal habitats for the protected Great Crested Newt and water voles to live, breed and disperse. Greater use in the landscape and at boundaries of new development of native trees, particularly Darlington’s well known Black Poplar, mature hedgerows and use of locally sourced wildflowers will encourage a greater variety of birds, including the Kingfisher, butterflies such as the White Letter Hairstreak Butterfly and insects, moths, bats and dormice to be present. Sugar Hill Park will also benefit from increased use from people passing through while its wildlife value will benefit from the increasing biodiversity value of the adjoining Beck; species like song birds, sparrows and hedgehogs will be more common. In the north a unique wetland and wet woodland environment at Faverdale will improve biodiversity, water quality and flood management of West Beck.

<p>Green infrastructure benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Beck is an important local green corridor; • Sustainable drainage ponds provided through the new Park View development help mitigate flood risk and also provide wetland habitats; • Sugar Hill Park is a popular local park; • Cockerton Allotments provide 91 full and/or half plots to meet the demand for local food; • Cockerton village green provides the setting for the historic listed buildings that surround it and is a key part of Cockerton Conservation Area. 	<p>Issues and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential exists to strengthen the connectivity of the West Beck corridor with local spaces and adjoining neighbourhoods; • A flood risk management scheme should be designed for the Faverdale Reserve site; • Links to Darlington’s medieval and Quaker heritage should be maximised.
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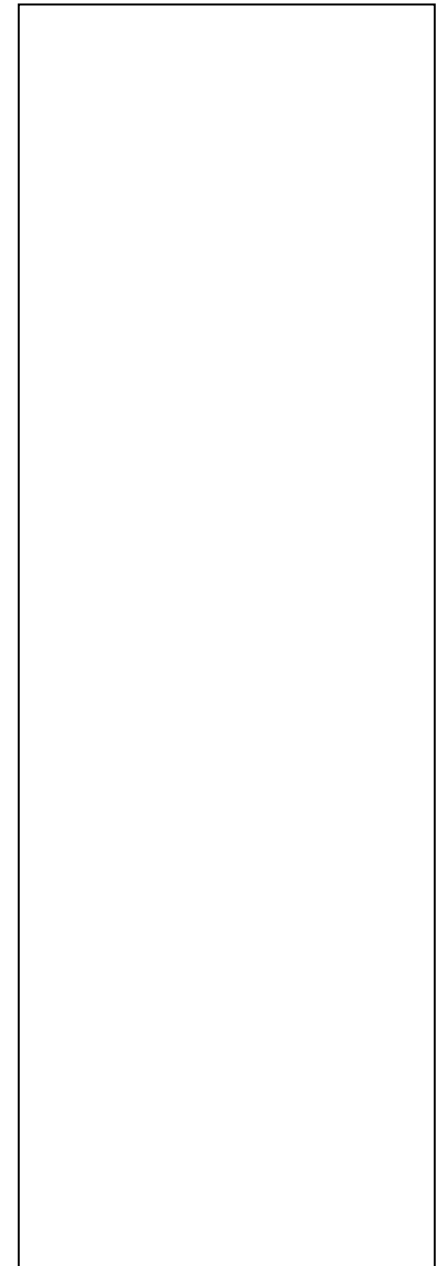
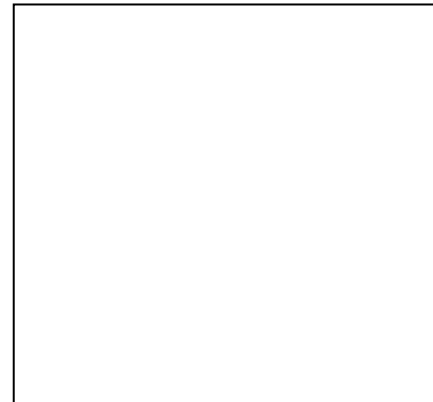
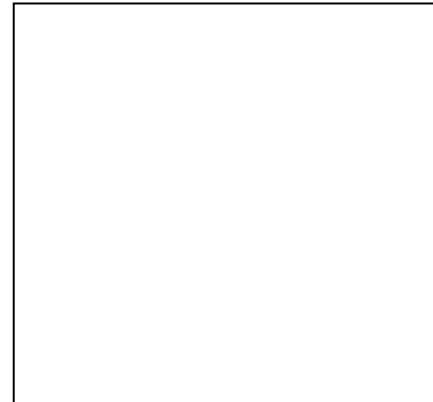
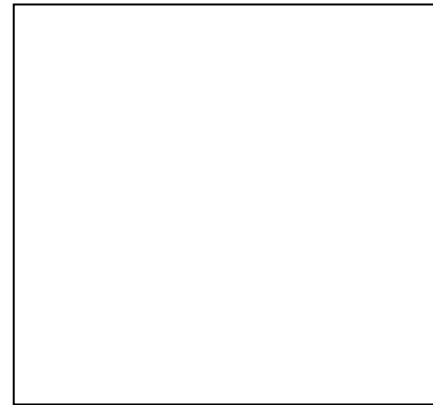
INSERT WEST BECK MAP

C1: Faverdale Flood Management Scheme

- Protect and enhance the flood management opportunities next to West Beck; de-culverting the river, providing flood storage, sustainable drainage ponds and swales will help reduce fluvial and surface water flood risk to new development;
- Restore riparian habitats (wetlands, wet woodland and waterside tree planting) to help improve connectivity for wildlife and improve local landscape character.

C2: West Beck Green Corridor

- Improve surfaces between Bates Avenue and Sugar Hill Park to provide a safe off road link for pedestrians and cyclists, families with pushchairs and people with disabilities within a quality green environment;
- Continue to maintain the beck and its banks to provide a much needed haven for the endangered and decreasing water vole population;
- Change the management of native hedgerows and mature trees to encourage a greater mix of wildlife particularly birds, butterflies and insects to live there;
- Incorporate more native planting along the corridor to enhance biodiversity, integrate the beck with new development and promote links with adjoining spaces, particularly Sugar Hill Park, which should benefit from improved landscape quality;
- Improve the multifunctionality of existing spaces (Sugar Hill Park) to encourage more positive, active use and provide for a greater mix of wildlife.



<p>D. BAYDALE BECK</p>	
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Meandering through wildflower meadows and shady mature woodland with its distinctive protected Black Poplar trees, Baydale Beck will seamlessly merge town and quality countryside. Through this mature woodland, pedestrians and cyclists will be able to travel off road between Coniscliffe Road and Staindrop Road, enjoying glimpses of the working landscape that lies beyond the beck. A bridge will provide easy access for those who are enticed into the countryside to visit the establishing Merrybent Community Woodland, where increasingly the Roe Deer, Sparrowhawk and nesting species like the Tree Sparrow will be seen in this important habitat. This tranquil water environment will create a haven for wildlife; whether it's the Great Spotted Woodpecker, Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting in the native trees, the Common Reed along the beck or the protected Water Vole and Otter in the beck itself, movement and life will be all around. The adjoining extensive, vibrant wildflower meadows filled with Cuckoo Flower, Cowslip, Common Knapweed, Yellow Rattle and species rich grassland will extend this softer wildlife friendly environment into the built area, providing valuable links to the nearby Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane Local Wildlife Site. New native tree and shrub planting will over time help integrate the new development at Yiewsley Manor easily into this distinctive green landscape, while significant improvements will ensure that a quality play and recreation experience can be enjoyed across Baydale Meadows by all. The Baydale Beck/Cocker Beck confluence will become an important focus for quality biodiversity; new wetlands will provide a vital stepping stone for wildlife while continuing to deliver flood management, drainage and water quality benefits.

<p>Green infrastructure benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baydale Beck greenspace is an extensive multifunctional space with children's play, recreation space and wildflower meadows; • Baydale Beck is a valuable wildlife and woodland corridor; • Merrybent Community Woodland has recently been planted to the west of the Beck; • A new pedestrian/cycle path and bridge connects the urban area to the urban fringe and Merrybent Community Woodland. 	<p>Issues and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baydale Beck play area would benefit from replacement; • The development of Yiewsley Manor should include wildlife friendly greenspace and landscaping to integrate the built environment with the adjoining meadows while providing for connectivity between the greenspaces to the north and south; • Further connections to the rural public rights of way network would benefit people and wildlife.
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INSERT BAYDALE BECK MAP

D1: Merrybent-Baydale Beck Green Corridor

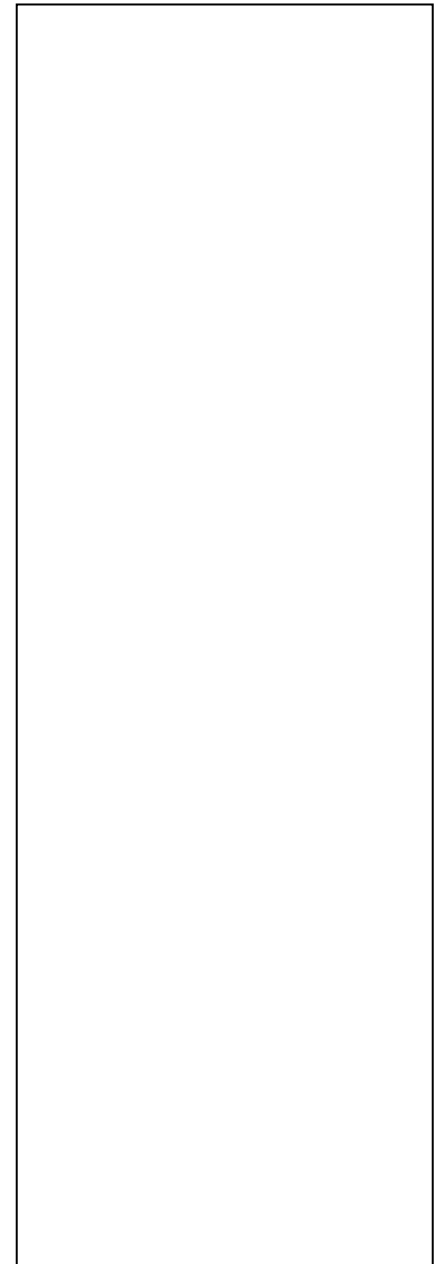
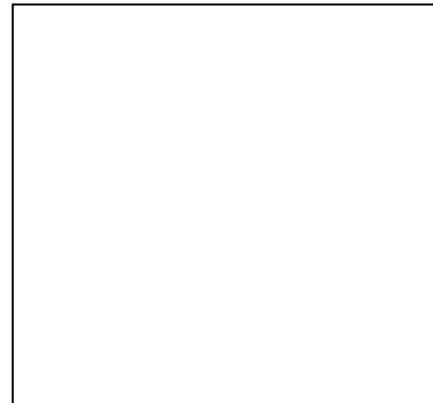
- Improve the mix of species alongside the Beck; new marginal vegetation, waterside tree and reed planting will complement the existing species mix and improve water quality;
- Add wildflower planting to provide variety in the meadows; Cowslip, Common Knapweed and Yellow Rattle will complement the Cuckoo Flower that is already present;
- Upgrade and/or replace play facilities to create a more stimulating natural and adventurous space so that children and young people will use the space more often and positively;
- Integrate traditional management techniques alongside the footpath; coppicing, native trees and hedgerows to add visual interest, and promote landscape and biodiversity quality.

D2: Merrybent Community Woodland

- Diversify the species mix; new grasslands and meadows will improve landscape quality and provide improved habitats for the Kestrel, Barn Owl, Skylark and migrant warblers to breed;
- Provide a variety of looped paths and trails of different distances to link the woodland with the green corridor and the rural rights of way network to encourage more use by all;
- Provide new seats and bins to encourage more use of the space and encourage people to stay longer;
- Promote rotational coppicing and use of wood waste, in partnership with landowners and farmers, to improve the availability of biofuel locally and help mitigate climate change.

D3: Yiewsley Manor

- Provide for green links across Yiewsley Manor to secure connectivity between the northern and southern parts of Baydale Meadows for people and wildlife;
- Integrate a biodiversity rich landscaping scheme with native trees, plants and wildflowers to seamlessly integrate the development with the greenspaces to the north and south, while providing important stepping stones for wildlife.



E. **SALTERS LANE**

This important green multi user corridor will take people across the Borough from the rolling Ketton countryside in the north to the undulating Tees landscape in the south. Greater connectivity along its length will provide plentiful opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to move between existing green corridors, the new Central Park and A66 corridors and a wide range of sports facilities and local open spaces. Existing open spaces will be reinvigorated; the Salters Lane Community Garden will be popular for recreation and play with the local people that take care of it. Opportunities to explore Darlington's unique natural and historic landscape will be numerous; Darlington's oldest church; St Andrews, the tree lined Haughton village green or the recreated Sunken Italian Garden at the new Lingfield Point can all be explored. Its tree lined streets will connect space for sport, recreation, play and local food, while a series of wildlife friendly ponds will remove barriers for wildlife, encouraging new species to inhabit the area while minimising the impact of climate change. The newly extended Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Reserve will continue to be an exemplar of good biodiversity practice, priding itself on protecting and expanding its significant wetland and grassland value for protected species including the Great Crested Newt, to the delight of the community that manage it. An improved public rights of way network south of the A66 will make sure that people feel comfortable and safe exploring the surrounding Hurworth Moor, the unique geological environment near Neasham SSSI and the picturesque historic riverside villages of Neasham and Hurworth.

Green infrastructure benefits

- Green Lane green corridor is a quality off road sustainable travel route;
- An extensive well used rights of way network links villages to the north and south of the town with the urban area;
- Numerous sports facilities exist at Springfield Park, Tommy Crooks Park, Haughton Education Village (pitch sports) and at Darlington Golf Club;
- Tommy Crooks Park is a locally important park;
- Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Reserve is a strategic wildlife resource;
- Neasham Fen SSSI is a small nationally protected site in favourable condition;
- Lingfield Point Allotments provide space to meet the demand for local food.

Issues and opportunities

- Lingfield Point should include significant greenspace to meet residents needs for recreation, sustainable movement, sport, play and biodiversity;
- Greater connectivity along its route would aid movement for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Parts of the public rights of way network would benefit from connectivity and quality improvements;
- Public playing pitches would benefit from improvements to increase their carrying capacity;
- There are shortfalls of quality greenspace in the Lingfield ward;
- Green infrastructure should be used to promote links to Darlington's heritage;
- Appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area that will stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.

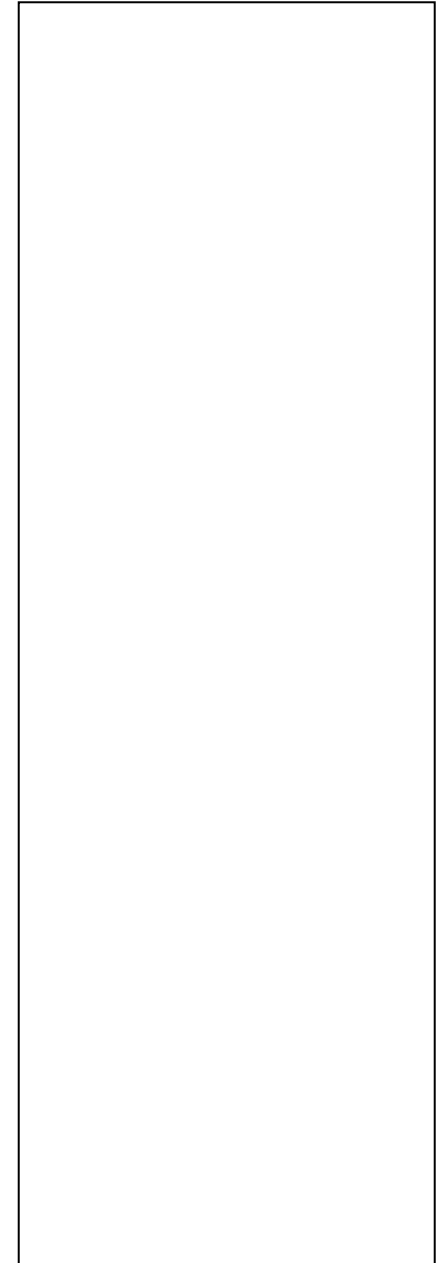
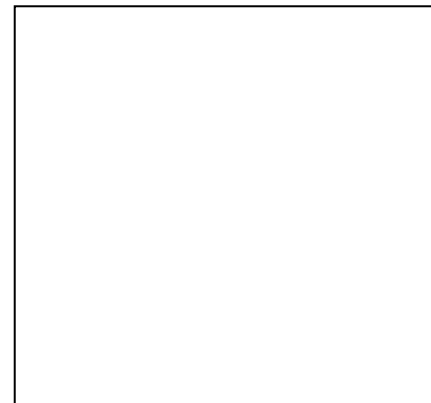
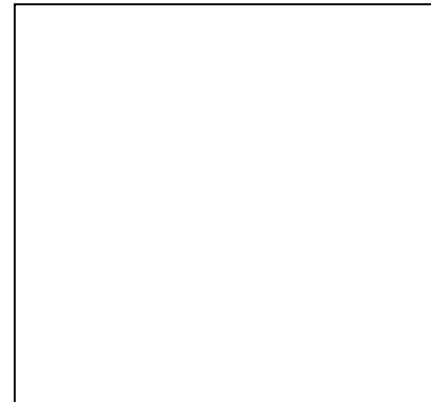
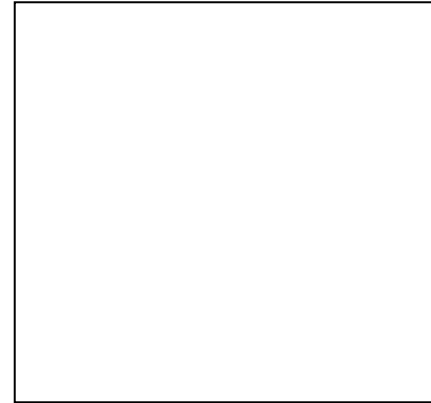
INSERT SALTERS LANE MAP

E1: Salters Lane Community Garden

- Establish a community garden for recreation, community events and education will improve the multifunctionality, quality and value of a former lower quality amenity space;
- Plant new native trees and shrubs to improve the wildlife value of a biodiversity poor space;
- Incorporate public art to add character to the local townscape;
- Establish a management and maintenance plan in partnership with the Salters Community Garden Association to maximise the value of this space for recreation, nature conservation and education for local people.

E2: Lingfield Point

- Provide substantial native mature tree and hedgerow planting along McMullen Road and the Eastern Transport Corridor to improve townscape character and improve connectivity for wildlife;
- Reinstate the unique ‘Sunken Italian Garden’ at the entrance and incorporate public art throughout to add character and focal points to aid orientation;
- Incorporate a distinctive, central walled garden through the residential area to improve connectivity for people away from the roads;
- Plant a variety of native trees, hedgerows, shrubs, climbers, wildflowers, bulbs and grasslands in the new greenspaces, pocket parks and along residential streets, to add biodiversity value to a former derelict site and attract a mix of birds and other wildlife to the area;
- Integrate multifunctional greenspaces (for adventurous and natural play and recreation) including a new park linking the residential area in the north and employment area in the south to address local needs;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage ponds with surrounding wetlands to reduce the risk of surface water flooding and provide a unique nature resource for residents to enjoy;
- Provide a new junior playing pitch to meet local needs;
- Provide quality maintenance; a management levy will be established, with the developer to add capacity for all new greenspace in the long term.



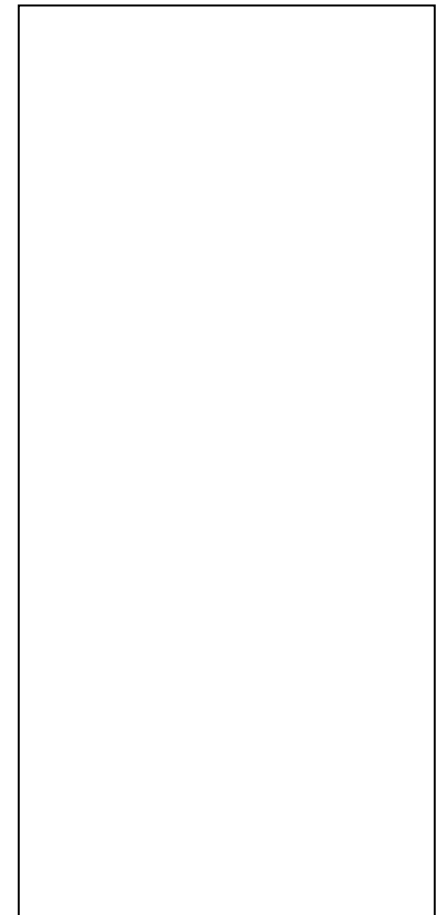
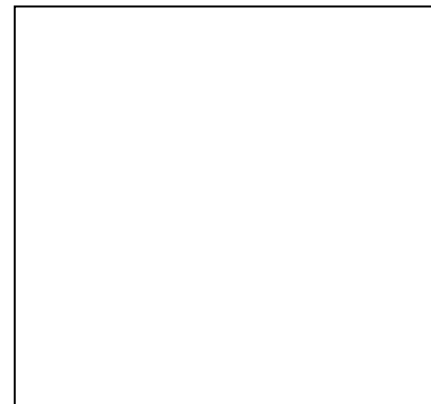
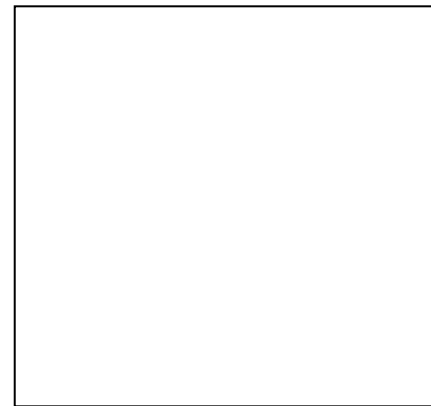
E3: Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Reserve

- Extend the existing Nature Reserve onto adjoining land to the east to provide more space for high quality scrub, wetland and grassland habitat mosaics to add to the mix of protected and priority habitats and species like the Great Crested Newt that are found there, to encourage movement to and from the space and ensure a healthy population status;
- Create microhabitats and nesting sites for specialist insects, hepifauna, mammals and birds - bird and insect nesting boxes may be used where there is a shortage of natural nesting habitats;
- Enrich grasslands by planting native local provenance wildflower plants in existing swards and changing cutting regimes to promote flowering and provide nectar sources for insects in particular bees and butterflies, beetles and hoverflies;
- Create a wide native tree and shrub belt along boundaries with railway lines to promote habitat connectivity and improve landscape quality;
- Extend recreational access from the Reserve through a network of routes to improve connectivity for users of differing abilities to the wider space;
- Provide interpretation features to help educate visitors on the ecological value of the space;
- Agree a management plan with the Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Trust for the wider space so that its biodiversity, recreation and education qualities are protected in the long term.

E4: Neasham Path

- Improve the quality and connectivity of the existing rights of way between Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Reserve and Neasham, through discussions with landowners; paths will be diverted onto farm tracks, where appropriate upgraded to cycle tracks to allow for permissive cycling, to encourage greater use of the network south of the A66 (T);

- Establish a new promoted circular route through the southern urban fringe connecting places of interest to encourage greater use of the urban fringe;
- Promote the use of traditional landscape features (coppicing and hedgerows) along the route to enhance landscape quality, improve habitat diversity and connectivity;
- Provide interpretation at local points of interest like Neasham Fen SSSI, Scheduled Monuments in Low Dinsdale and at the River Tees to aid understanding of local natural and heritage assets.



F. NUNNERY LANE-CEMETERY LANE



Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane will continue to be important, attractive alternatives to residential streets for those who wish to travel on foot or by bike through a substantially green urban environment between the western urban fringe and the distinctive tree lined streets of the West End. The quality and diversity of habitats and species along Cemetery Lane will complement the historic built character of the adjoining West Cemetery, while considerable colour and vibrancy will be added to the ground flora of Nunnery Lane and its adjoining greenspaces. Together they will create a good example of a linear Local Wildlife Site where healthy ecosystems can develop naturally, essential to dispersal and population growth; woodland planting and substantial under storey planting will encourage a wider range of birds including the Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Tree Creeper as well as bats, mammals and plants to move easily between the many wildlife friendly greenspaces the area has to offer. Consequently, capacity for wildlife in the nearby West End, West Cemetery, Nunnery Lane and West Cemetery allotments will be enhanced; a variety of birds such as the Robin, Song Thrush and House Sparrow will become increasingly common, more roosting sites will encourage birds and bats to live and breed, while those growing food will also benefit from the natural pollination a greater number of birds and insects bring. Greater use will be made of the historic West Cemetery as a space not only for quiet reflection and contemplation but where people can enjoy wildlife and heritage within its stone walls. Its significant value as a refuge for wildlife will be maximised; numerous rare and uncommon species including the dominant, mature non native trees dating from Victorian times, the woodland belt with its valuable roosts for finches as well as its outstanding range of nationally important fungi will be protected and enhanced.

Green infrastructure benefits

- Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane are well established local green corridors;
- West Cemetery is a Registered Park or Garden of Historic Importance and a Local Wildlife Site;
- Numerous heritage assets exist including Stanhope Green (West End Conservation Area) and St Clare’s and Carmel Convents (listed buildings);
- Stanhope Green and Green Park are locally important parks;
- Several sports facilities exist including Stanhope Park (tennis courts) and at Hummersknott Academy and Carmel College (outdoor sports facilities);
- West Cemetery and Nunnery Lane Allotments provide extensive space to meet the demand for local food.

Issues and opportunities

- New development would benefit from greenspace for recreation and biodiversity to address local needs;
- The Hummersknott area would benefit from more children’s play and informal recreation provision;
- Many greenspaces would benefit from increased multifunctionality and biodiversity to improve the fragmented network in this part of town.

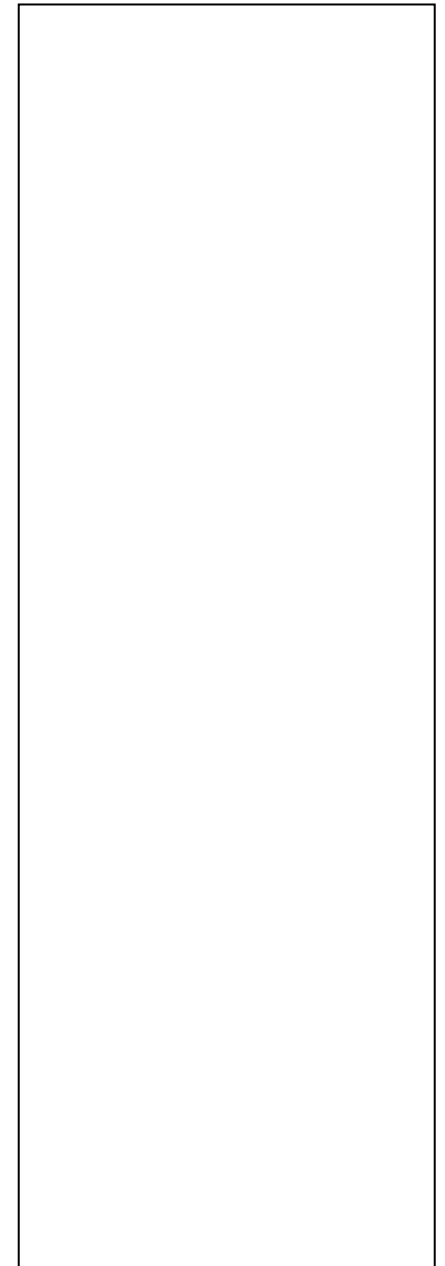
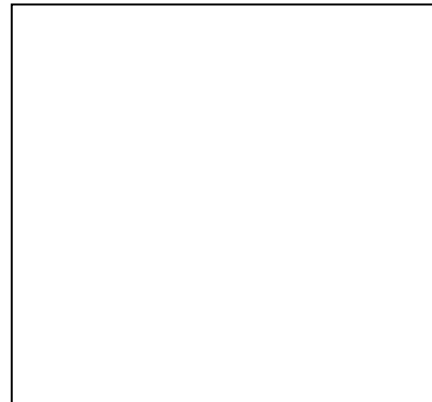
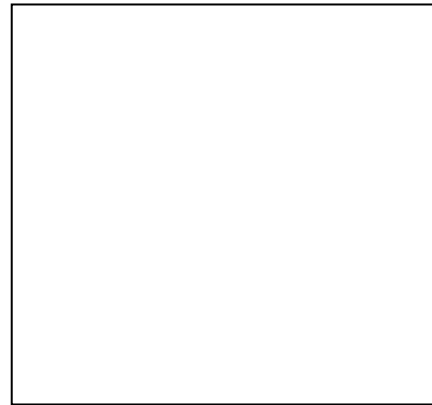
INSERT NUNNERY LANE MAP

F1: Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane Local Wildlife Site

- Designate a new Local Wildlife Site to protect the valuable woodland environment and improve the existing biodiversity; new lowland broadleaf woodland habitat, under storey managed woodland planting, grassland and native ground flora including the Snowdrop, Bluebell, Wood Anemone, Daffodil and Primrose will attract small mammals including hedgehogs and Wood Mice, helping to provide a vital corridor for dispersal, ensuring mixed gene pools and population health;
- Promote more use of Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane for recreational access to encourage greater use of Baydale Beck and West Cemetery, other local corridors and greenspaces;
- Improve resting places and the quality of the surface to encourage a greater mix of people of all abilities to use the corridors for walking and cycling particularly for local journeys;
- Incorporate interpretation and/or public art to educate users on the ecological value of area and the historic associations with the former trade routes.

F2: West Cemetery

- Incorporate new under storey native planting in the woodland tree belt to encourage a greater mix of small mammals to live there and move between this site and Cemetery Lane;
- Improve boundary walls and gates where necessary, to provide a welcoming entrance for those using the cemetery formally as well as for those enjoying informal recreation;
- Provide low key interpretation, signage and information points to help orientation and help educate visitors on the heritage and ecological value of the environment;
- Create and promote a circular walk for pedestrians through the Cemetery, to nearby Cemetery Lane and to adjoining greenspaces and neighbourhoods to encourage greater use for quiet relaxation and informal recreation;
- Establish a new Friends Group to lead on the Cemetery's management plan, in partnership with the Council to achieve Green Flag status, to encourage involvement by local people in its long term management and maintenance including school visits, bulb planting and clean-ups.



G: CENTRAL PARK LINK

The ecologically based design of this extensive derelict, urban brownfield site will create a unique multifunctional urban park that sees biodiversity and sustainability at the heart of regeneration. As a central unifying feature, the linear park will bring the north and south together while providing safe, sustainable access for new residents and employees throughout Central Park as well as to adjoining neighbourhoods, the Town Centre Fringe, Teesside University, Darlington College and the Railway Station. It will seamlessly integrate a series of contrasting multifunctional green spaces where informal recreation, natural play and nature sit side by side. Unique civic spaces with distinctive hard and soft landscaping and tree lined streets will create a visually pleasing, attractive backdrop for new development, particularly for new businesses in the commercial quarter. Woodland features, scrublands and wetlands surrounding a large biodiverse sustainable drainage pond will provide habitats for protected species including Great Crested Newts, as well as priority species including the Dingy Skipper butterfly and the Common Bird's-foot Trefoil. Public art will feature prominently along its length and at gateways depicting the ecological and railway heritage of the area while encouraging people to explore the environment. The nearby Eastbourne Sports Complex will continue to be a strategic sports facility where over time improvements for pitch sports and track and field will ensure that the venue becomes renowned for local sporting events as well as sub regional competitions.

Green infrastructure benefits

- Eastbourne Park is a locally important park;
- Lascelles Park is a locally important space for play and recreation;
- Dodmire and Lascelles Allotments provide valuable space for local grown food;
- Eastbourne Sports Complex is a strategic sports hub with a number of football pitches, a synthetic turf pitch, athletics track and bowling green.

Issues and opportunities

- Bank Top and Lingfield wards need more green space to meet local needs;
- The development of Central Park should include high quality green space to meet recreation, green movement, biodiversity and sustainable drainage needs;
- Potential exists to enhance Eastbourne Sports Complex to attract more local and sub regional competitions.

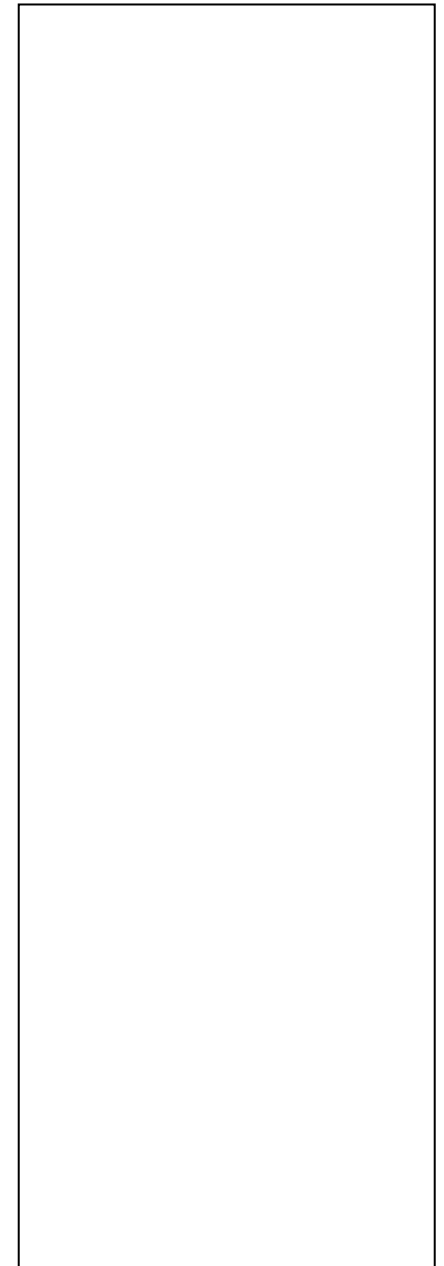
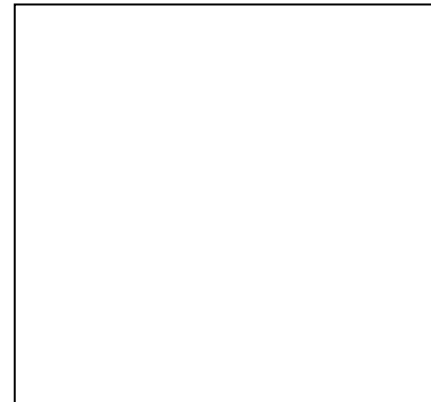
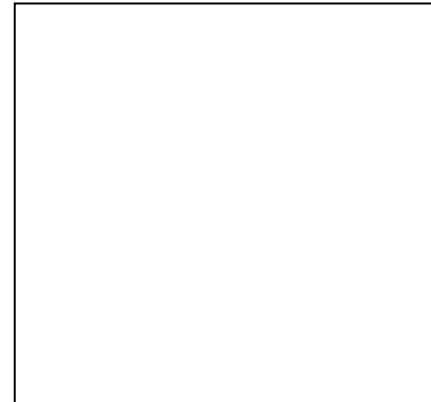
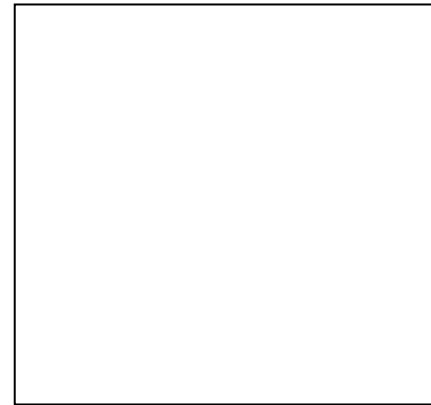
INSERT CENTRAL PARK MAP

G1: Central Park

- Provide a central linear park to encourage pedestrian and cycle movement away from the road network north-south to enhance connectivity for people and wildlife;
- Design the linear park around the principles of natural play to encourage active, positive use of the park by children of all ages and abilities;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage to reduce surface water run off and create a valuable wildlife resource;
- Incorporate wetlands, Greater Pond Sedge, Yellow Flag, Bulrush, Phragmites reed, species rich wildflower meadows, native trees and hedgerows to provide space for priority habitats and protected species like the Great Crested Newt and Dingy Skipper Butterfly and improve habitat connectivity;
- Create a quality distinctive green townscape with public art, to provide an attractive urban environment for investment and as a destination for people to live;
- Provide quality maintenance; a management levy will be established with the developer, to add capacity for all new greenspace in the long term;
- Establish a new Friends Group to create a management plan in partnership with the Council, to enhance the park in the long term.

G2: Eastbourne Sports Complex

- Refurbish the changing facilities to meet league guidelines to help attract higher level competition;
- Improve the athletics track and field including the provision of a secure storage area for athletics equipment when the track is in use, a covered stand for spectators and floodlighting to make the complex more suitable for competitions and encourage more local participation in athletics;
- Re-design the former courts to meet local needs for active recreation.



H. A66 CORRIDOR

A substantial native tree and woodland belt along the A66 (T) will create a softer townscape edge, while ensuring that mammals, insects and woodland birds will be able to move easily between the established Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve and South Burdon Community Woodland, the biodiverse setting of the Darlington Train and the many newer local greenspaces scattered along its route. Improved management of established woodland along the corridor will encourage the natural regeneration of trees while the establishment of woodland ground flora will provide important habitats for classic brownfield species like the Burnet Companion Moth, Dingy Skipper Butterfly and Common Blue Butterfly and an increasing invertebrate population. Between the woodland and the A66, roadside hedgerows and verges will provide food and shelter for invertebrates and small mammals, while carpets of wildflowers including the Ox Eye Daisy, Red Clover and Yellow Rattle will provide an attractive gateway to the built area for residents and investors. For people, a sustainable movement corridor will enable people to move safely off road throughout the eastern urban fringe, between growing and established neighbourhoods, other green corridors and the National Cycle Network. The new Darlington Arena complex will be a destination for sport; adult and junior rugby union will be enjoyed within a quality wildlife rich setting, while maximising the space available at existing greenspaces, including Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve will significantly improve the space available for recreation, play and education in this part of the Borough. Away from the urban environment, along the southern railway sidings and at field margins new woodland planting and improved grassland management will provide important ecological corridors connecting otherwise isolated habitats to the benefit of farmland birds including the Grey Partridge and Corn Bunting, as well as a diverse range of insects, butterflies and small mammals including Dormice and hedgehogs. New wetlands along these routes will mitigate the effects of climate change while providing valuable habitats for a range of amphibians and ground nesting birds.

Green infrastructure benefits

- Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve is a strategic biodiversity resource;
- A network of green corridors, public rights of way and cyclepaths help connect the A66 to surrounding neighbourhoods;
- Sustainable drainage at Morton Palms helps reduce flood risk;
- Darlington Train is a prominent piece of public art set within a wetland environment.

Issues and opportunities

- New development would benefit from wildlife friendly spaces, sustainable movement corridors and sustainable drainage systems to provide amenity and climate control benefits;
- The use of public art, quality landscaping and tree planting at key locations along the A66 should be maximised to provide unique gateways and a distinctive setting for new development;
- The re-location of Mowden Rugby Union Club to Darlington Arena provides an opportunity to expand playing pitch provision in the Borough;
- Appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area that will stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.

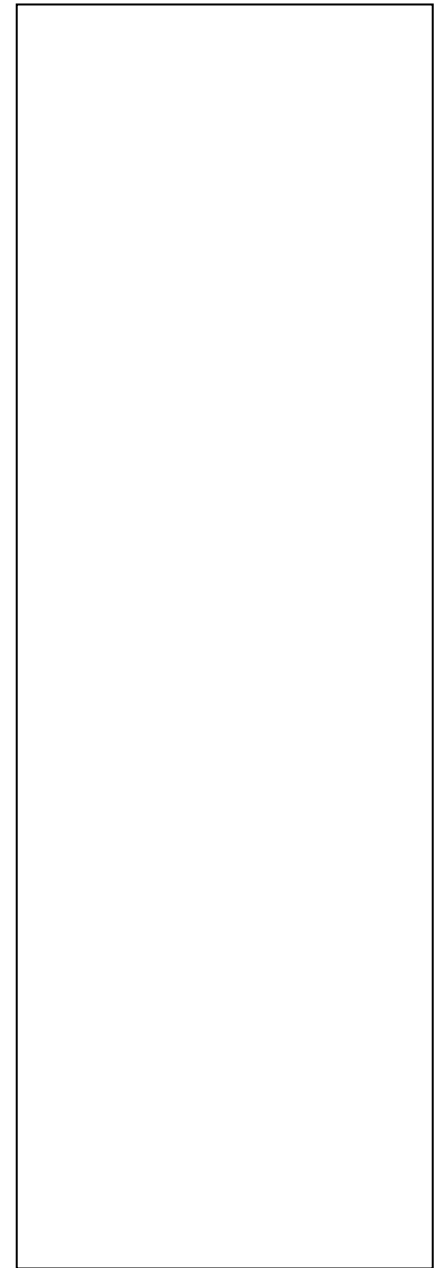
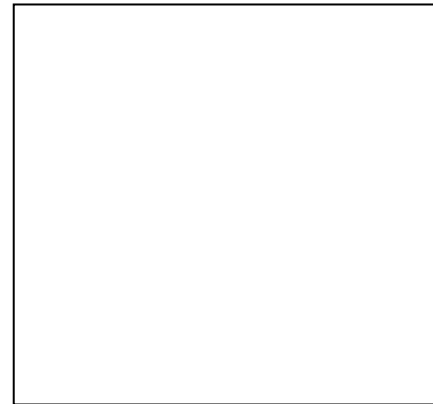
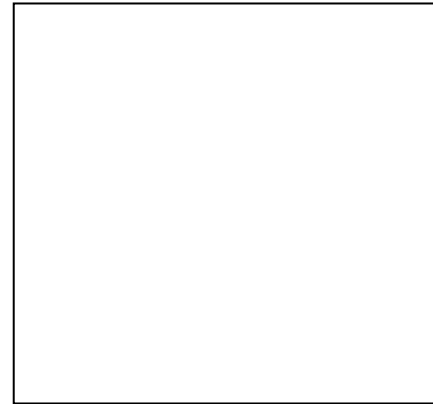
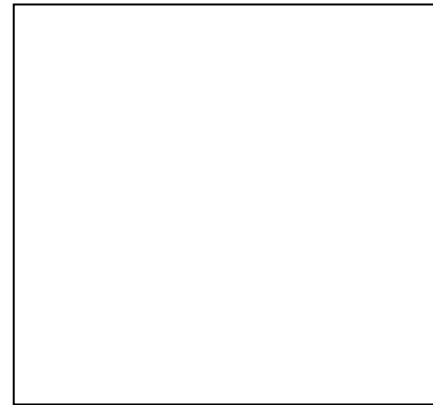
INSERT A66 MAP

H1: A66 Corridor

- Upgrade the public rights of way network between Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve and Stockton Road to improve connectivity off road for people and cyclists to the Eastern Urban Fringe, Darlington Arena and greenspaces;
- Incorporate native tree and hedgerow planting to improve the quality of the landscape and provide an attractive gateway to eastern Darlington and for the new housing and businesses that develop there;
- Manage invasive species e.g. Docks, to improve landscape character and quality while providing more space for a range of species to establish and grow;
- Provide space for neutral grasslands, wildflower meadows containing Ox Eye Daisy, Birds Foot Trefoil, Red Clover and Yellow Rattle and native hedgerows to ensure that small mammals and classic brownfield species like the Burnet Companion Moth, Mother Shiptons Moth, Common Blue Butterfly and Small Heath Butterfly will become more common and can move easily between designated and other green infrastructure;
- Incorporate an appropriate stand off distance between new tree planting and the A66 (T) to protect habitats for species (e.g. bats) and other small mammals;
- Incorporate signs to aid orientation to other green corridors, places of interest and new development.

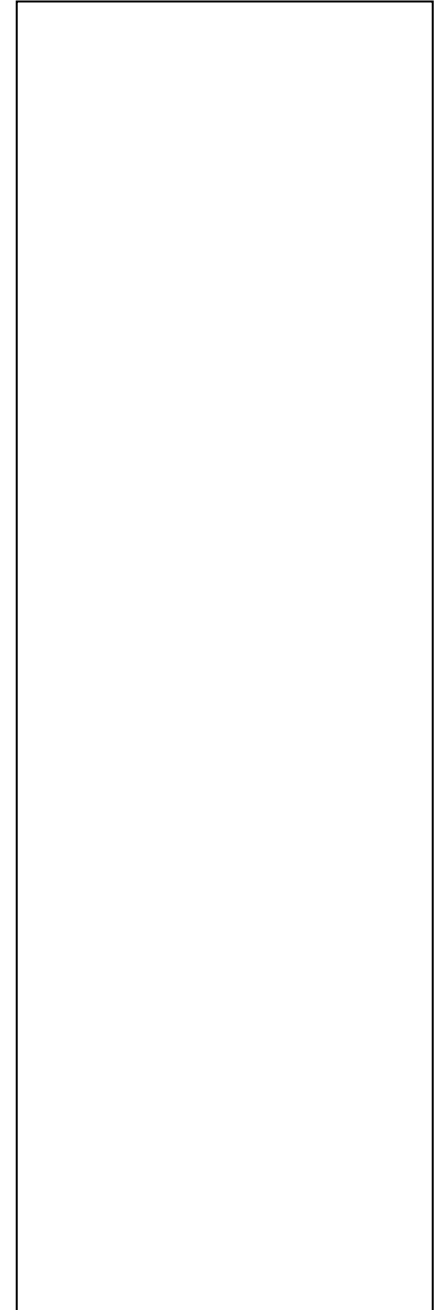
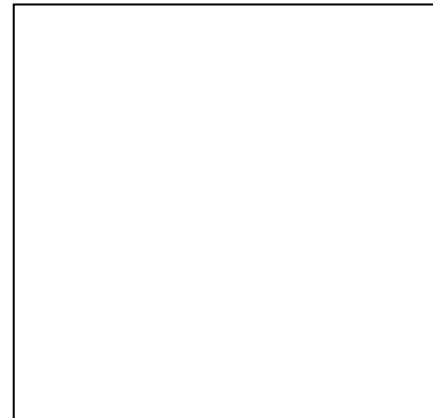
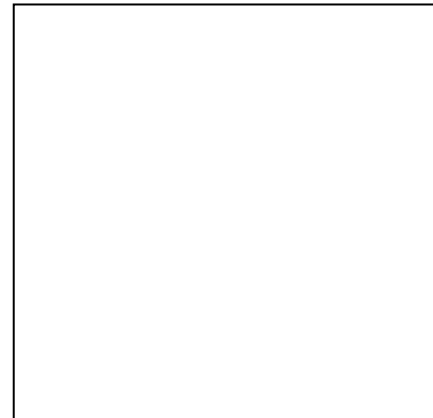
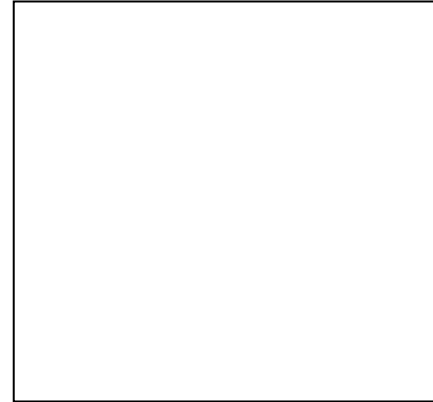
H2: Darlington Arena

- Provide five quality pitches for adults and juniors, particularly for rugby union with appropriate ancillary accommodation, to meet an identified need and improve opportunities to participate in sport in Darlington;
- Incorporate native planting and hedgerows at the boundaries for many species e.g. bats and birds, to move between town and country;
- Provide sustainable drainage to reduce flood risk and provide valuable habitats for protected species including the Great Crested Newt.



H3: Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve

- Create a community wildlife garden to maximise the educational value of the space for local residents, school groups and visitors;
- Create a teachers park as educational resource for schools and youth groups linked to different stages of the national curriculum;
- Provide for adventurous, natural play linked with opportunities to explore the space and learn about the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Provide and/or improve seating, picnic tables and signage to encourage more people to sit and relax and stay longer.



RURAL AREA

Covering 80% of the Borough, this extensive area of green infrastructure is predominantly private Grade 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land with a Rights of Way Network throughout. Traditional food production will sit comfortably alongside other initiatives that promote the sustainable use of land, particularly renewable energy, flood management and green venues. A greater proportion of Darlington's land will be involved in Entry Land or Organic Level agri-environment schemes or will benefit from environmentally farming; new wildlife corridors, improved watercourses and enhanced field margins with hedgerows and hedgerow trees will enhance connectivity for wildlife and provide important feeding habitats for farmland birds including the Yellow Hammer, Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Linnet and Meadow Pipit, invertebrates like Ground Beetles and Hoverflies and provide nectar sources for bumblebees and butterflies. Notable improvements in landscape, water and soil quality will be seen as a result. Improved public rights of way will mean that access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders to the wider rural area is improved; people of all abilities will be able to enjoy many of Darlington's hidden historic gems including Sockburn Hall or Piercebridge Roman Fort. Subtle interpretation will promote greater understanding and encourage people to visit the countryside more often. The strategically important Skerningham, South Burdon, Merrybent and Broken Scar will continue to provide the base from which the local people and visitors can explore Darlington's urban fringe and wider countryside.

Green infrastructure benefits

- Numerous heritage assets exist including Walworth (ornamental parkland), Great Burdon bombing shelter (Scheduled Monument), Bishopton (Conservation Area);
- 300km of public rights of way crosses the rural area;
- Rivers Tees, Skerne and Cocker Beck and numerous becks run through the area;
- 41% of the Borough is covered by an Entry Level Environmental Stewardship scheme;
- Skerningham, South Burdon and Merrybent Community Woodland are important recreation and biodiversity resources;
- The majority of the agricultural land is Grade 2 and 3, only a small part is below average quality Grade 4;
- Over 50% of newly designated Local Wildlife Sites are in the Rural Area.

Issues and opportunities

- Potential exists to reconnect landscape through the development of green corridors;
- Potential exists to improve the quality and connectivity of the rural rights of way network to spread the load of users more evenly;
- Improving access and interpretation of the Borough's Scheduled Monuments and other heritage features where these adjoin public rights of way may generate more use;
- Opportunities should be taken to widen the amount of land involved in entry and organic level environmental stewardship schemes as part of promoting more biodiversity friendly cultivation;
- Appropriate opportunities should be taken to support the farming sector, rural businesses and enterprises to help them diversify and grow.

INSERT RURAL AREA MAP

I1: Heritage Assets

- Negotiate greater permissive access year round or at certain times of the year to heritage features to encourage greater use of the green infrastructure network away from the built environment and could help generate an income for owners to help support the ongoing maintenance of features, particularly those 'at risk' like Sockburn Hall;
- Provide low key signage and interpretation along way marked paths to aid understanding and enjoyment and ensure visitors do not disrupt the landscape character or the asset itself;
- Enhance village greens and associated landscape structures to enhance local identity;
- Identify and promote circular walks or trails along public rights of way to help people reach heritage features safely and easily.

I2: Environmental Friendly Farming

- Encourage farmers and landowners to use more environmentally friendly farming methods; alternatives to the use of fertilisers and other chemically based pest controls will be promoted to help improve soil and water quality within a viable farming industry;
- Encourage more land to take part in Entry Level and Organic Level agri environmental schemes to improve the quality of field margins, hedgerows and woodlands as a feeding habitat for farmland birds including the Grey Partridge, invertebrates like Ground Beetles and provide nectar sources for bumblebees;
- Promote more biodiversity friendly, organic local food production methods to improve landscape character, enhance biodiversity and reintroduce the living landscape into the urban/rural fringe;
- Restore traditional landscape features (wetlands, ponds and scrapes and previously common arable wildflower species like Field Scabious, Greater Knapweed and the now rare Corn Buttercup) will improve landscape quality.

