

Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy

Final Executive Summary



**Prepared for Colchester Borough Council by Land Use Consultants
October 2011**

Acknowledgements

This Green Infrastructure Strategy was steered by a client group led by Beverley McClean (Colchester Borough Council) and involving Adrian Gascoyne (Essex County Council), Liam McKarry and Bob Penny (Colchester Borough Council), and Catherine Whitehead and Rachel Penny (Natural England).

The strategy was prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC), working with the client group. LUC's team comprised Kate Ahern, Ed Manning, Louise Tricklebank, Melanie Downes, Katy Lock and Graham Savage, Andrew Tempany, Fearghus Foyle, Alex Massey, Matthew Tickner, Matthew Parkhill and Andrew Kirk (Heritage Cost Consultants). In addition, consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged. However, the views in this report are those of Land Use Consultants.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	AN ANALYSIS OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN COLCHESTER BOROUGH	5
3	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VISION AND PROPOSED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK	47
4	GI DELIVERY	51

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Land Use Consultants (LUC) was commissioned by Colchester Borough Council (CBC) to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Borough, covering the period to 2025.
- 1.2 This Executive Summary sets out the Strategy and Action Plan for delivering green infrastructure in the Borough. The summary identifies the key messages set out in the full plan.
- 1.3 The Strategy is Borough-wide, drawing on the rich and varied environment of the Borough, including the river valleys, woodland and arable land, estuarine salt marsh, the coast and urban green spaces. It has a particular focus on opportunities for green infrastructure improvements within the growth areas of Colchester Town. The Strategy looks for synergies with green infrastructure initiatives in neighbouring authorities and to build on the framework provided by the Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 1.4 The GI Strategy aims to:
- Identify high quality accessible green infrastructure within a comprehensive landscape structure;
 - Identify ecological networks and links between habitats to improve quality of life, help address climate change and improve access to habitats and greenspace; and
 - Deliver community well-being which complements and supports good quality housing and substantial economic growth planned for the Borough.
- 1.5 The Strategy is based on a thorough understanding of Colchester Borough – its character, heritage, natural assets and the recognised needs of its residents – and how this is likely to evolve over time in the context of future growth and a changing climate.

SOME TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 1.6 Green infrastructure is defined in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Local Spatial Planning¹, as:

¹ Department of Communities And Local Government, 2008 **Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating strong safe and prosperous communities through local spatial planning**

- 1.7 *"a network of multi-functional greenspace, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities."*
- 1.8 This definition is amplified by the one provided by the Town and Country Planning Association², which refers to the concept of a strategically planned and managed network of greenspaces and other environmental features. Natural England defines GI similarly³, although it also refers to GI's relationship to place-making:
- 1.9 *'Its design and management should ... respect the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types'.*
- 1.10 The Natural England definition also makes reference to the multiple spatial scales in which green infrastructure should operate. Green infrastructure therefore represents all aspects of the physical environment between and around urban areas, considering not just spaces but also linear routes, whether for access (recreation, health or commuting) or for wildlife connectivity.
- 1.11 In addition terms defined specifically for this study are set out in the box below:

Terms and definitions derived specifically for the Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy

Action zones The framework developed in this Green Infrastructure Strategy for organising and articulating the proposed Green Infrastructure Network and component projects, and for assessing functional GI provision and need. Action zones are based on distribution and assessment of common character and green infrastructure assets. The Action Zones derived for this Green Infrastructure Strategy are set out at **section 2**.

ANGSt Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards – a four level spatial typology advocated by Natural England to evaluate provision of accessible (semi) natural greenspace, such as nature reserves, parks and gardens, allotments and amenity greenspace. The four levels are neighbourhood (minimum 2 hectare accessible greenspace), district (minimum 20 hectare accessible greenspace), county (minimum 100 hectare accessible

² TCPA, 2008 **The essential role of green infrastructure in Eco Towns: Eco Towns green infrastructure worksheet**

³ Natural England, 2009 **Green Infrastructure Guidance**

greenspace) and sub regional (minimum 500 hectare accessible greenspace). The intention was for the model to be applied primarily to urban areas and settlements originally although the standard has since become a widely accepted provision standard. The standard applies to spatial elements and not linear features such as paths and rights of way

Green corridors Tracts of undeveloped land in otherwise predominantly urban space, which may be of variable width but sufficient to encourage biodiversity, the movement of wildlife, enhancement and restoration of landscape character and connectivity. Green corridors may also, where desirable and possible, incorporate 'green transport links', encourage leisure use and 'green exercise'. A Green Infrastructure Strategy often establishes the principle of both multi functional green corridors and where there may be appropriate opportunities for green transport links. The precise disposition and composition of uses and functions supported by corridors will necessarily be a matter for more detailed site investigation, site planning and design, e.g. that a GI Strategy establishes strategic first principles only.

Linear routes Green infrastructure proposals/projects which relate to provision of access and connections which are primarily for people. Such routes may either be strategic linear routes, that is cross district links or forming part of a wider GI network, or local linear routes, that is linking sites and features at district level.

Non spatial green infrastructure projects Green infrastructure projects which are of an interpretative, academic or conceptual nature e.g. thematic or educational initiatives or those associated with advocacy or promotion of the green infrastructure concept. Projects which do not involve capital works to deliver.

Spatial green infrastructure projects Green infrastructure projects which have a spatial expression/footprint. Often capital works projects although they can also cover land management initiatives and revenue (management) activity.

Structure of this summary document

1.12 This executive summary, provides the key messages from the full report and covers:

- Green infrastructure context and analysis of deficiencies and needs;

- Green infrastructure vision for Colchester Borough and Town and proposed network;
- The green infrastructure project shortlist; and
- Next steps for delivery.

1.13 Detailed information on the proposed Green Infrastructure Network and all supporting recommendations can be found in the full Green Infrastructure Report.

GI Context and Analysis



2 AN ANALYSIS OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN COLCHESTER BOROUGH

- 2.1 This section describes the existing green infrastructure resource in the Borough and identifies issues and opportunities for future GI.
- 2.2 A set of six functions for green infrastructure in Colchester Borough are identified. In addition, baseline information on socio-economic factors such as deprivation is also considered. Functions are an essential 'building block' of green infrastructure planning. There is often considerable overlap between the green infrastructure functions. For example, habitat provision and access to nature and landscape character and context are closely related. For reasons of clarity, current functional provision and the proposed green infrastructure network are evaluated in terms of these separate functions, although this is not to say that because a site performs one function it does not perform several others. Corridors which function in terms of access and recreation are often also valuable wildlife corridors and therefore also fulfil a function in relation to habitat provision and access to nature.
- 2.3 Aspects of the GI resource are shown in **Figure 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Green infrastructure functions in Colchester Borough

GI Functions	Description
Habitat provision and access to nature	Conserving and enhancing areas of existing wildlife habitat, as well as providing new habitat, and opportunities for access for a range of social and age groups (outdoor classroom etc).
Landscape character, setting and context	To respond to landscape character and to provide enhanced landscape: townscape interface and setting. Conservation and enhancement of landscape assets and their settings. Provision of high quality environments in which to live and work.
Cultural heritage	Conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage assets and their settings. Provision of high quality environments in which to live and work.
Sustainable resource management & climate change adaptation	Consideration of sustainable management of water resources, opportunities for floodrisk adaptation, and for climate change adaptation through more flexible multi functional approaches to urban and landscape design and management. Note: The analysis in this section is confined to flood risk. Climate change

GI Functions	Description
	adaptation does cover a much wider area of interest, and this is picked up within other GI functional analysis and implemented within individual GI projects, e.g. urban shading and cooling, microclimate amelioration, local food production etc.
Locally Productive Landscapes	Opportunities for food production at the local level ('edible landscapes'), including allotments, community orchards, community gardens and urban farms. Also sustainable fuel production.
Access, recreation and movement	Provision of sustainable transport and access routes, and a variety of recreational opportunities for the widest range of social, interest and age groups.

2.4 Seven **GI Action Zones** are identified based on the assessment of common characteristics and GIS assets. The zones are as follows:

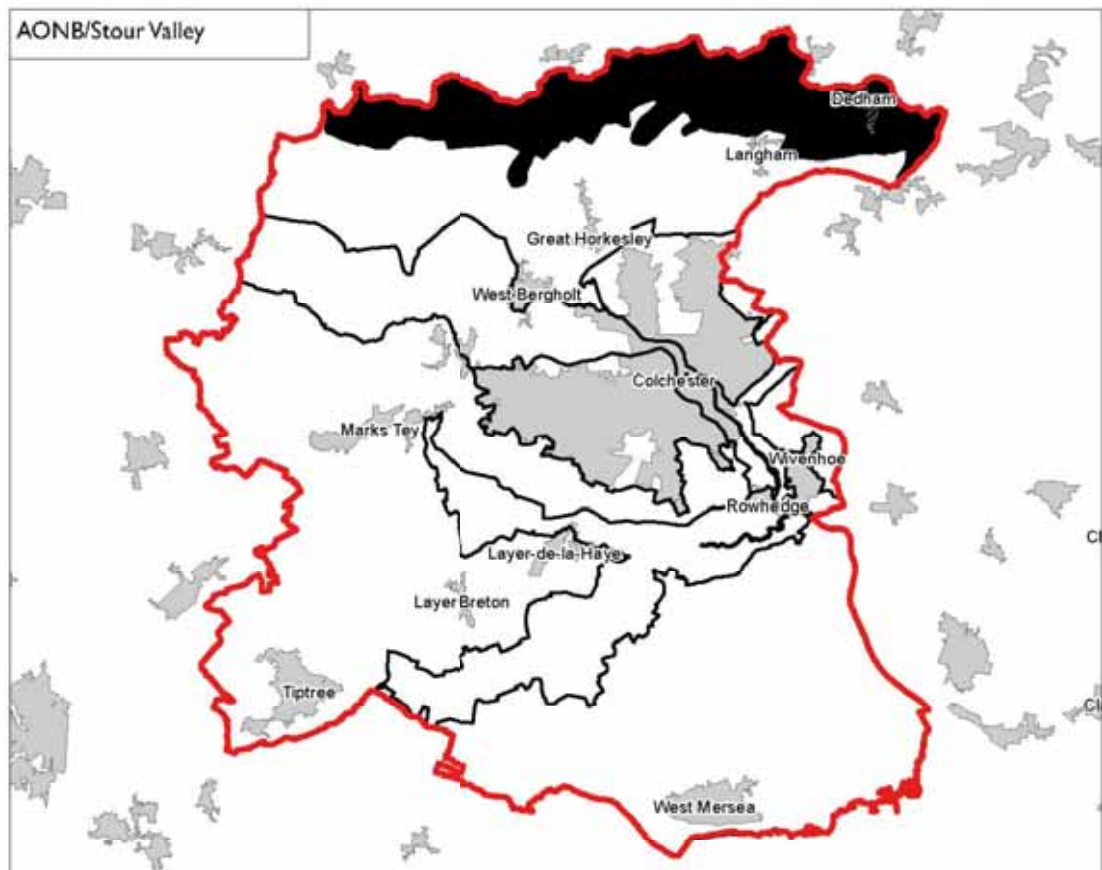
- Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Northern Farmland
- Colne River Valley
- Greater Colchester
- Roman River Valley (including Abberton Reservoir)
- Southern Farmland (includes plateau between Colne and Roman River valleys)
- Coastal Zone

2.5 The key functional needs and deficiencies for each Zone are examined to give pointers on the opportunities and need for future GI.

ZONE 1: DEDHAM VALE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) AND STOUR VALLEY

2.6 The Zone covers much of the northern edge of Colchester Borough, and includes the AONB. The AONB boundary extends north into Babergh, Suffolk and to the East into Tendring. The Stour Valley extends to the West and North into Braintree and St Edmundsbury. The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-15 meets the statutory obligations placed on AONB local authorities and were produced by the Joint Advisory

Committee under delegated powers from those authorities. Management of the AONB is guided by the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project who produce a detailed Management Plan for the area. The Action Zone includes all of the AONB and the Stour Valley. The Action Zone also links to Essex Living Landscape project 65: Stour Valley.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.7 There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites and areas of ancient woodland along the Stour Valley and tributaries including;
- Accessible community managed sites at Langham and Dedham.
 - Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley
 - Wormingford Mere – A natural water filled feature which is designated as a County Wildlife Site.
 - Lodge Hills Local Wildlife Site.
 - Ancient Woodland (e.g. at Creaks Grove, Boxted Hall, Cophedge Farm Wood and Ash Wood).
 - Two large areas of former heathland at Boxted and Dedham Heath.

- 2.8 Fragmentation of biodiversity habitats, particularly woodland, has occurred along the Stour Valley and tributaries. Much has been done to address this. The area's landscape and biodiversity has benefitted from agri-environment schemes, being a target area for Higher Level Stewardship and the classic schemes. There is further potential to increase biodiversity connectivity along the valley which would also benefit sustainable water resource management.

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.9 The Stour Valley bounds the northern edge of this Zone and the Borough and is categorised as flood risk zone 2 and 3, with a high probability of fluvial flooding. Whilst this area is unlikely to come under significant development pressure, land uses and management that promote sustainable water resource management should be promoted along the valley.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.10 The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1970, recognising its lowland river valley landscape of national importance and associations with the paintings of John Constable. There is a need to conserve the generally undeveloped nature of the floodplain along the River Stour and the AONB to reduce the use of narrow and minor lanes, particularly during the peak tourist season. Many parts of the river are lined by closely planted cricket bat willows that form an important income source to landowners but can have adverse effects on the landscape character. New willow plantations need to be restricted to help conserve the valley landscape whilst marginal riverside habitats such as marshland and pasture, reed-bed and off-stream wetlands need to be conserved and restored.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.11 The Dedham Vale Stour Valley has a significant amount of cultural heritage and also has particular associations with Gainsborough, Munnings and others as well as Constable which is a draw for many visitors. Numerous cultural heritage features which form part of the landscape, including:
- Archaeological sites (e.g. prehistoric cropmark complexes) and historic landscape features (e.g. routeways running north-south down the valley sides to ancient river crossings).
 - Historic settlements (e.g. Dedham – Conservation Area).
 - Historic manors and parkland.

- 2.12 Four villages throughout the northern zone are Conservation Areas (Wormingford, Little Horkesley, Boxted and the largest area Dedham which also has a significant cluster of Listed Buildings). The proximity to the AONB provides significant potential to interpret and enhance cultural heritage in the area.
- 2.13 The following Historic Environment: Character Areas (HECAs) fall within Zone 1: 1. River Stour Valley, 2. Bures and West Fordham and 3. Great Horkesley and West Bergholt. In respect of historic environment, the River Stour Valley provides several green infrastructure opportunities, including conservation and enhancement of ancient field pattern and landscape structure, the riparian environment of the Stour (pollard willows and areas of historic pastures), and ancient woodlands on the valley sides, and protection of important prehistoric cropmark complexes. Only a small part of the Bures and West Fordham and Great Horkesley and West Bergholt HECAs fall within this zone, so main opportunities in relation to these are discussed under Zone 2.

Locally Productive Landscapes

- 2.14 The AONB/Stour Valley Zone has a significant number of small orchards throughout (but particularly to the east) and a significant area of orchards at Boxted Lodge. There are no allotments or community gardens in the Zone; whilst this is not surprising given the lack of large centres of population, the presence of areas of high quality Grade 2 agricultural land in much of the Zone means that there is significant potential to increase the amount of productive land that is linked to nearby communities and is accessible, potentially using the AONB as a vehicle for this. The National Trust is currently developing some community allotments at Dedham. The AONB/Stour Valley Zone has one of the most significant clusters of small woodland in the Borough which again through linking to the AONB has the potential to provide woodfuel to the local area.

Access, Recreation and Movement

- 2.15 The AONB/Stour Valley Zone has some of the most significant deficits in terms of accessible green space in the whole Borough. Yet the River Stour and its valley provide a range of recreational opportunities, including the Stour Valley Path, a sixty mile regional route. Part of the Essex Way (a strategic route linking Epping and Harwich) also runs through the Zone from north to south, and down into the Northern Farmland Zone. There is also a circular walk between Wormingford and Bures. The AONB is a popular area

for recreational boating and boats are available for private hire at Dedham and Flatford. Organised boats trips are also available along the River Stour and there are also plans to introduce a river taxi between Dedham and Flatford. There is however a relative lack of bridleways in the AONB and Stour Valley, and in particular there is a lack of cycle routes between Manningtree north into the Dedham Vale. The AONB/Stour Valley Zone has one of the densest concentrations of footpaths in the Borough, however there is poor connectivity especially to the north to other areas of the AONB and south to Colchester Town, resulting in most visits to the AONB being by car. This is despite the close proximity to Colchester Town and the excellent rail links between Colchester and Manningtree stations from where visitors can pick up the AONB Hopper Bus.

Key GI Assets / opportunities in the AONB/Stour Valley Zone

- There is a significant opportunity to improve the biodiversity connectivity along the Stour Valley at the same time as improving the sustainable management of water along the floodrisk zone in the valley.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen the link between the productive landscape (orchards, woodfuel and other local produce), the AONB and the local community (largely in Colchester Town).
- Cultural Heritage is a significant draw for the area and creating recreational spaces in the north east of the Zone that enhance the visitor offer of the area as well as provide much needed recreational space for the local population of Dedham will be of significant benefit to the area.
- There is a need to improve the long distance connectivity through the Zone between the AONB and Colchester Town.

Existing GI projects in the AONB & Stour Valley Zone

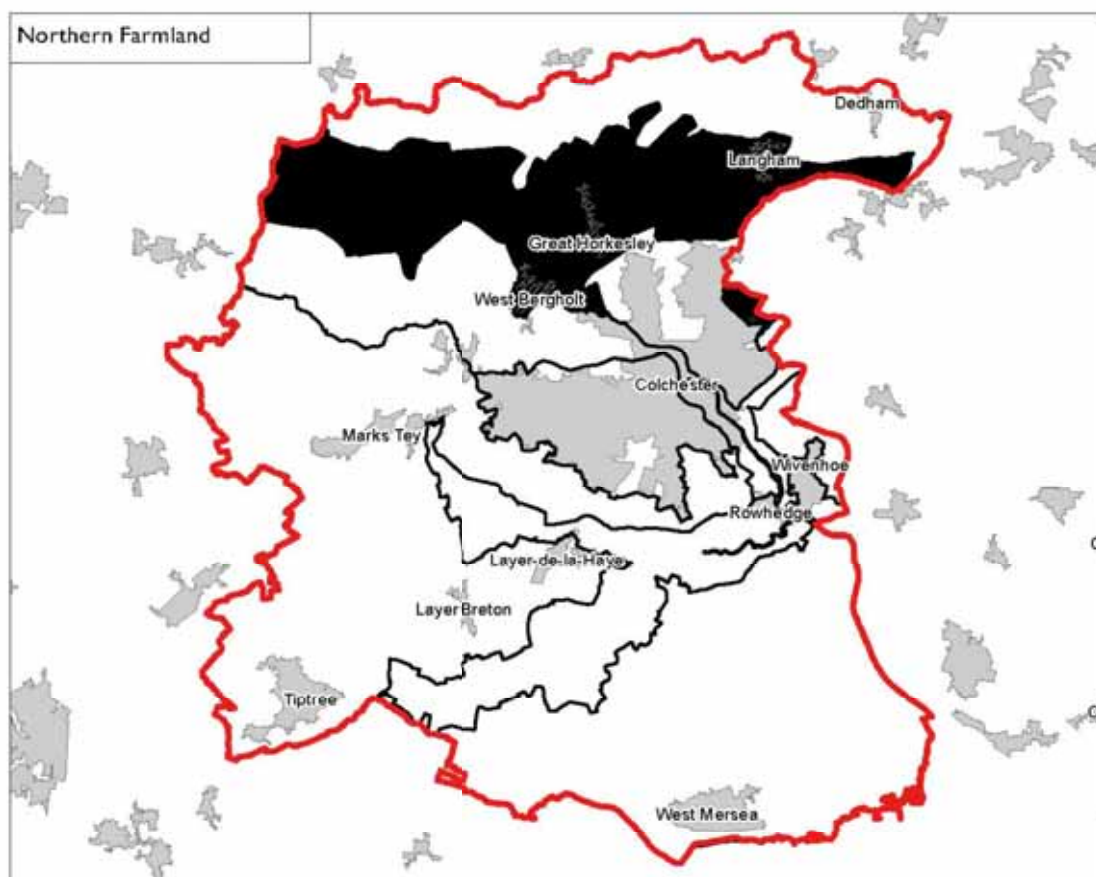
- 2.16 Existing projects and initiatives in the zone which we have taken account of when identifying projects are listed below:

Project	Web	Description
Stour Valley 'Managing a masterpiece' project	http://www.managingamasterpiece.org/	Managing a Masterpiece is a £1m three year scheme to understand, conserve and celebrate the historic landscape and features of the Stour Valley. It is funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme, seven local

Project	Web	Description
		authorities, English Heritage and Natural England. The Scheme is divided into three programmes covering biodiversity; landscape; archaeology; conservation of built and natural features; art; recreation and transport. Managing a Masterpiece will focus on clusters of heritage hotspots around Clare, Sudbury, Bures, Stoke by Nayland and Dedham. Some of the projects already implemented since June 2010 include public archaeological projects, re-introduction of the Dedham Vale hopper bus, the restoration of a Stour lighter (a barge), tree and hedgerow planting exhibitions, traditional building workshops, 360 degree panoramic photographs from church towers, and walking and cycling guides.
Living Landscapes	http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/livinglandscapes.aspx	The Essex Wildlife Trusts are spearheading an initiative called 'Living Landscapes'. Living Landscapes are large landscape scale areas of the countryside which are ecologically stable and 'bursting with life'. Essex Wildlife Trust has produced a Living Landscapes Map of Essex with partners to identify 80 Living Landscape areas, based upon their existing ecological value and their potential to become even more vibrant. A key target is to have management plans in place for all of these areas. 12 of these Living Landscapes fall wholly or partially within the Borough of Colchester, and include wetland, coastal and estuarine, woodland and 'mosaic and grassland' areas, as well as 'corridors' between these. One of these areas is the Stour Valley. A Living Landscape management plan for this area has not yet been developed.

Zone 2: Northern Farmland Zone

- 2.17 The Northern Farmland Zone is the broad band of farmland plateau to the north of Colchester Town between the Colne and Stour Valleys. It is essentially a medium to large scale arable landscape, with some areas of woodland and orchards.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.18 The Northern Farmland Zone is well-wooded in southern areas including a number of orchards (e.g. Sergeant's Orchard) and areas of ancient woodland (e.g. at Pitchbury, Stitching and Slough Grove). However, there is fragmentation of woodland habitats which is partially being addressed by several projects which are already underway to make the woodland network more extensive (such as the Woodland Trust community woodland at Fordham), which extends into the Colne Valley Zone. Although not many significant areas for nature conservation exist in the zone there are a number of small sites including Black Brook Local Wildlife Site.

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.19 Although there is no significant potential to improve sustainable resource management in the Zone, localised improvements to sustainable water resource management could be made along the tributaries to the River Colne. Reducing diffuse pollution from runoff would be particularly beneficial given the largely arable nature of much of the farmland.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.20 Changes in agricultural practices and farmland management threaten the landscape character of this Zone for example the loss of hedgerows and small scale rectilinear field patterns due to further intensification and the expansion of pony paddocks. The A12 road corridor and increased pressure on more minor roads also increase disturbance and intrusion in this zone.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.21 Significant cultural heritage features in this zone include:
- Remains of the Colne Valley railway line.
 - A Norman Motte and Bailey castle (Mount Bures) which is a Scheduled Monument. Several moats are recorded within this Zone.
 - An Iron Age hill-fort exists at Pitchbury Ramparts (a Scheduled Monument) which survives as a substantial bank and ditch within an area of ancient woodland, the remainder is visible as a cropmark.
 - Fordham and Chappel are also Conservation Areas.
- 2.22 Although the proposed Growth Areas do not lie within this Zone, edge effects from the growth of Colchester Town may start to have a negative impact on the landscape and cultural heritage of the area. For example, urban features such as tarmac pavements and street lighting may start to appear on country lanes.
- 2.23 The following HECAs fall within Zone 2: 2. Bures and West Fordham and 3. Great Horkesley and West Bergholt. The Bures and West Fordham HECA presents the following key historic environment opportunities for green infrastructure: Potential for interpretation of feature such as the Motte and Bailey Castle at Bures, and of Second World War defences and industrial archaeology/relics associated with the railway line from Marks Tey to Sudbury. Great Horkesley and West Bergholt HECA presents the following opportunities: Potential for heathland restoration and heathland creation to link remnant areas of heathland (and also for orchard creation, to reinstate aspects of historic landscape character) through take up of agri environment schemes. Also interpretation of other, significant aspects of the historic environment accessible from the green infrastructure network, such as the hillfort at Pitchbury Ramparts.

Locally Productive Landscapes

- 2.24 West Bergholt has a significant allotment / community gardens but given the

high quality of agricultural land in the area including an area of Grade I agricultural land, south of Boxted, there is significant potential to link communities to high quality produce. This area south of Boxted also contains a cluster of small orchards.

Access, Recreation and Movement

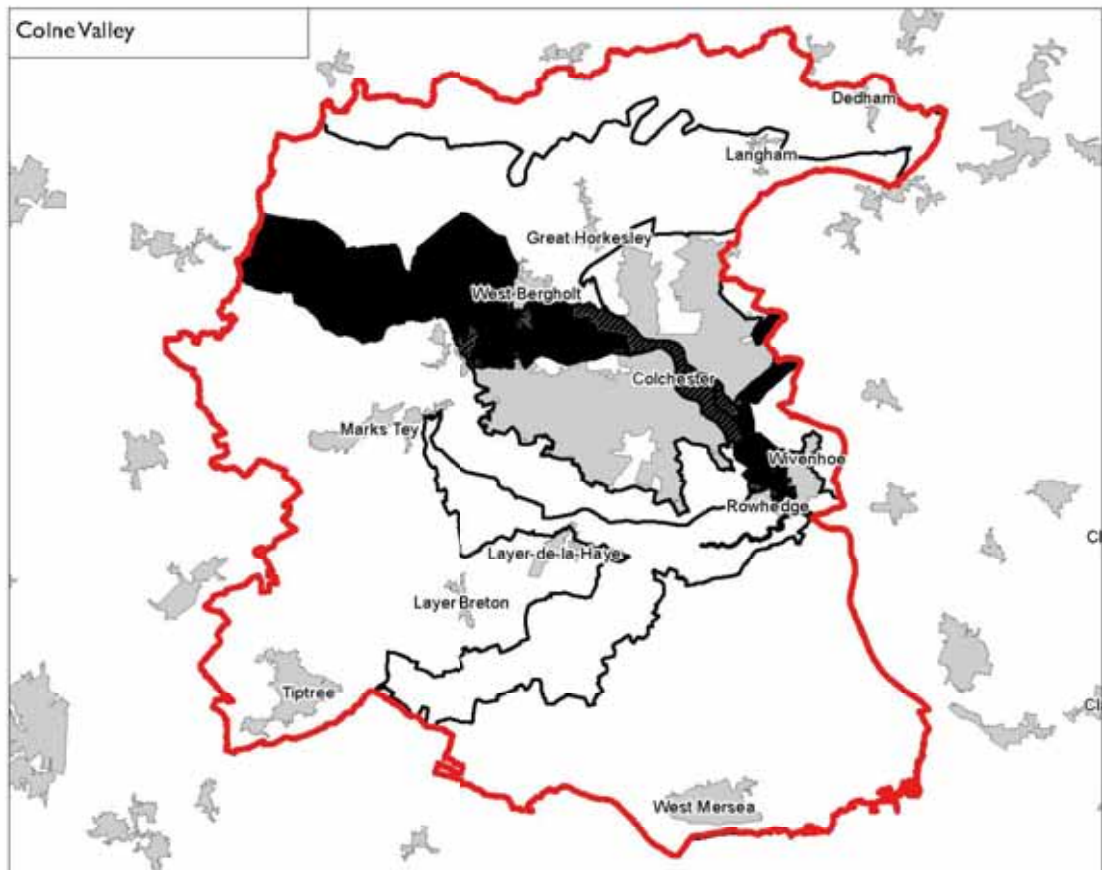
- 2.25 The zone has two county scale sites of accessible greenspace and significant areas of outdoor sports facilities with the Golf Course (although not publically accessible, other than rights of way) and the recreation ground at Mile End both near Colchester Town in the east of the Zone. There remains a need for smaller scale sites to serve local communities in this area. The Essex Way (strategic route) runs diagonally through the Zone from the north east to the south west, as well as a National Cycle Route, and extensive network of rural lanes. However, there is a notable gap in the Rights of Way network (between the north of Colchester Town and the southern edge of the AONB Zone). – plus severance from Colchester Town by the A12. Increasing and enhancing crossing points across the A12 would significantly benefit connectivity to the surrounding countryside.

Key GI Assets /Opportunities in the Northern Farmland Zone

- Continue the work to reduce woodland fragmentation such as the Woodland Trust's community woodland at Fordham.
- Creation of new community gardens and allotments in the east of and south of the Zone to cater for people in Colchester Town (there is a need for allotments in Boxted and Great Horkesley).
- Remove both physical and visual barriers to crossing the A12 for example creating and improving bridges and underpasses.

ZONE 3: COLNE RIVER VALLEY ZONE

- 2.26 The Colne River Valley Zone follows the valley extending from the Borough boundary in the west, through the urban area of Colchester Town to Wivenhoe and along Colne Estuary. This Action Zone links to the Essex Living Landscape project 63: Colne Valley and project 70: Colne Estuary.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.27 The Colne River Valley Zone has a significant number of wildlife sites within it, particularly south of West Bergholt. There are a number of ancient woodlands to the east of West Bergholt and small broadleaved woodlands sites to the north-west and east of Wakes Colne. Fordham community woodland has also been established by the Woodland Trust site around Fordham Hall.
- 2.28 There is a loss of species-rich riverside grassland and marshland in this zone due to intensive grazing management. More should be done to link these floodplain habitats to create wildlife corridors and help address more sustainable water resource management. The east of the Zone is very rich in wildlife sites including:
- Hythe Lagoons.
 - Bull Meadow Local Nature Reserve.
 - Upper Colne Marshes - Grazing marshes with associated ditch and open water habitats (SSSI).
 - Wivenhoe Woods and Wivenhoe Ferry Marsh.

- The Moors (also in Colchester Town Zone) – An important wildlife habitat in an area known locally as the Moors between the River Colne and Hythe Hill.
- Coastal floodplain and grazing marsh (Colne Estuary Ramsar/SPA/SAC)
- Reed bed in East Colchester (BAP habitat).

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.29 There is significant potential to improve sustainable water resource management and adaptation to climate change in this zone. The Colne river valley is classified as Flood Risk Zone 3 and areas of East Colchester and Wivenhoe are potentially at risk given their built up nature and the planned development in these areas. New development should not occur in the functional river valley flood plain and land use and management practices should be employed to maximise the flood attenuation potential of areas particularly in the west (upstream) of the Zone.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.30 There is a need to conserve the open character of the floodplain and maintain cross valley views. Development on the edge of Fordham, Wivenhoe, West Bergholt and Colchester Town all needs to be of appropriate scale, form and design to ensure that it does not have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of this area. The wet meadows, marshland and pasture all need conserving and managing as well as the wooded valley sides to help ensure landscape character is maintained.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.31 Areas of cultural heritage interest in the Zone are primarily associated with Colchester Town e.g. Area of Archaeological Interest at Cymbeline Meadows, Castle Park and Colchester's Historic Core, the industrial maritime heritage associated with the Hythe/East Colchester Growth Area. However, to the west of the Zone there are a number of important sites including;
- Chapel Viaduct – one of the 'finest and largest brick railway viaducts in the East of England' – this is protected as a Conservation Area along with the historic core of Chapel.
 - Crop marks and other archaeological remains – also WW2 pill boxes

associated with Marks Tey to Sudbury railway branch line

- Representation of industrial production from mill with surviving mill race at Ford Street, Newbridge and Cook's Mill.

2.32 This Zone contains some of the most significant cultural heritage assets in the Borough and sites should be enhanced and integrated into recreational and open spaces provision that provide a range of functions.

2.33 The following HECAs fall within Zone 3: Small parts of HECAs 2. Bures and West Fordham and 3. Great Horkesley and West Bergholt (both discussed in relation to Zone 2 above). Also HECA 4. Colne Valley, 5. Modern Colchester and 14. Colne Estuary. Key historic environment opportunities in relation to the Colne Valley HECA are interpretation of Iron Age archaeology associated with the formative evolution of Colchester (dyke system and Cymbeline meadows) and of modern era relics such as the Second World War Eastern Command line of defence and associated structures. Zone 3 covers only a small part of the Modern Colchester and Colne Estuary HECAs, and these are discussed in relation to Zones 4 and 7 respectively.

Locally Productive Landscapes

2.34 This Zone contains a couple of small allotments and community gardens, but given the eastern part of the Zone's proximity to the edge of Colchester Town there is significant potential to create new allotments and community gardens in these urban fringe areas. Given the agricultural nature of the area there are also opportunities for increasing the connection between the farming community and the wider community.

Access, Recreation and Movement

2.35 There is a deficiency in sub-regional scale accessible natural green space in the west of this Zone and throughout the Zone there is a deficiency in neighbourhood scale sites. There is a lack of a coherent system of rights of way from Cymbeline Meadows westwards through and along the Valley to the west with the A12 forming a significant barrier. Links to West Bergholt from Colchester Town are also limited and need to be improved to encourage modal shift and reduce congestion in Colchester Town. There is also a need to improve access connectivity through the Zone linking Colchester Town to Fingringhoe, Brightlingsea and the coast. The Wivenhoe Trail and the improvements that have taken place as part of the 'town to sea trail' and the Cycle Colchester programmes have improved the routes through the town and towards Wivenhoe (particularly to the east of the

River Colne) but further work is needed beyond Wivenhoe out to the coast. There is also a proposed link to the National Cycle Network between Colchester Town and Sudbury to the northwest, and Wivenhoe and the coast, along the Colne. Colchester's Local Development Framework proposes the creation of a new riverside walk between East Colchester and Rowhedge.

Key GI Assets / opportunities in the Colne River Valley Zone

- There is significant functional potential to improve sustainable water resource management and adapt to climate change in this Zone.
- This Zone contains some of the most significant cultural heritage assets in the Borough and sites should be enhanced and integrated into recreational and open spaces provision that provide a range of functions.
- Create new allotments and community gardens in these urban fringe areas to the east of the Zone.
- Create new rights of way from Cymbeline Meadows westwards through and along the Valley.
- Seek the creation of new accessible greenspaces of at least 2 ha throughout the zone to address the deficiency in neighbourhood scales sites close to where people live.
- Establish a green corridor along the Colne westwards from the urban centre to deliver multiple benefits
- Establish a new riverside path between East Colchester and Rowhedge Village.

Existing GI projects in the Colne Valley Zone

2.36 Existing projects and initiatives in the zone which we have taken account of when identifying projects are listed below:

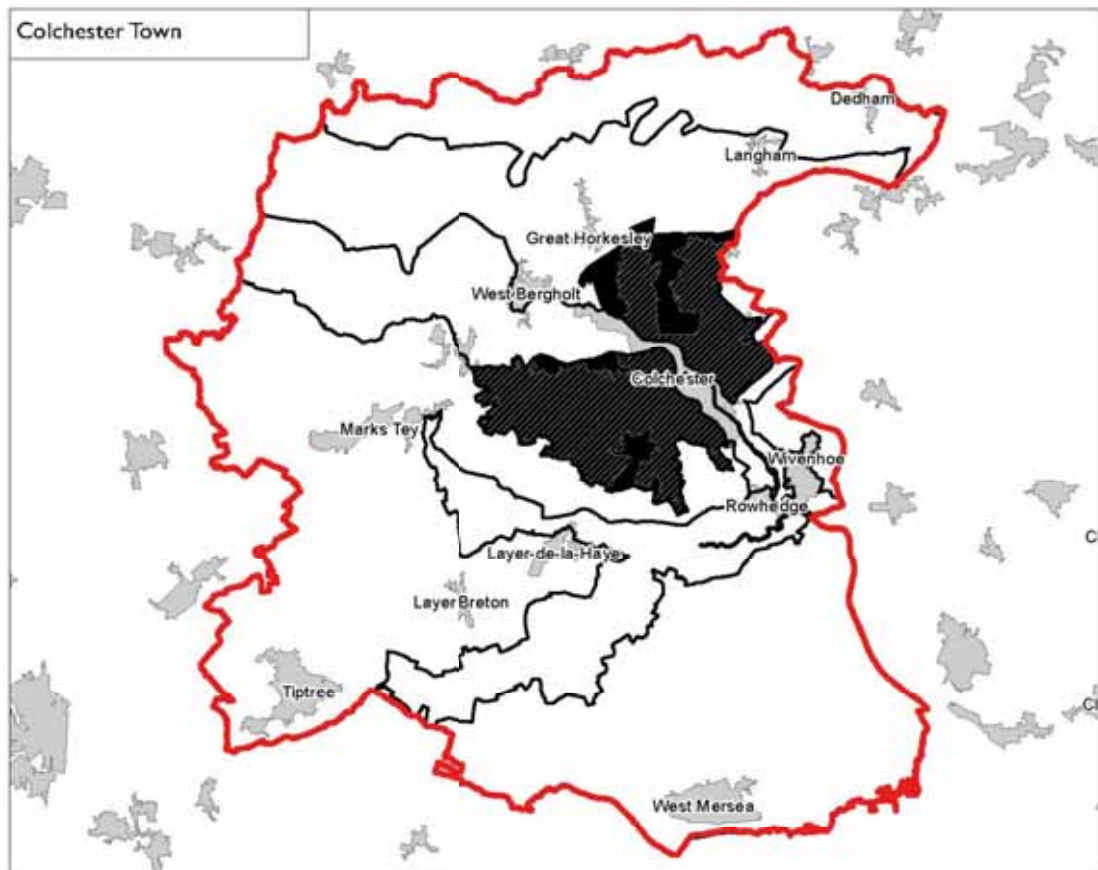
Project	Web	Description
The Colne Valley Path	http://www.colnevalley.com/	The Colne Valley Path was opened in May 2006 as part of the River Colne Countryside Project. The Colne Valley Path links Great Yeldham to Colchester. The route allows walkers to enjoy the Colne Valley from the rivers edge to high on the valley side that opens up long views of this

Project	Web	Description
		<p>wonderful valley. Starting at the Great Oak in Yeldham the path takes in the historic villages of Castle Hedingham, the great viaduct at Chappel and Lexden Dyke near Colchester before finishing at Balcerne Gate in Colchester.</p> <p>The route includes a range of wildlife habitats including grazing marsh, woodland and past ancient hedgerows. In addition the route crosses the Woodland Trust's new estate at Fordham as well as passing by a number of County Wildlife Sites that are in private ownership. The route follows existing public rights of way and open space and is waymarked with yellow discs to guide walkers. In addition a route guide is available from the Project that describes the route as it crosses meadows, woodlands and flits from the river bank to high up on the valley sides. The walk is 22½ miles in length. The River Colne Countryside Project was a partnership project between Braintree and Colchester Councils and was completed in 2009.</p>
Living Landscapes	http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/livinglandscapes.aspx	<p>The Essex Wildlife Trusts are spearheading an initiative called 'Living Landscapes'. Living Landscapes are large landscape scale areas of the countryside which are ecologically stable and 'bursting with life'. Essex Wildlife Trust has produced a Living Landscapes Map of Essex with partners to identify 80 Living Landscape areas, based upon their existing ecological value and their potential to become even more vibrant. A key target is to have management plans in place for all of these areas. 12 of these Living Landscapes fall wholly or partially within the Borough of Colchester, and include wetland, coastal and estuarine, woodland and 'mosaic and grassland' areas, as well as 'corridors' between these. One of the Living Landscapes is the Colne Valley, and another 'Hythe-Wivenhoe'. A Living Landscape management plan for these areas has not yet been developed.</p>
The Moors	The current website is not operational	<p>The Moors Movement is a local group of volunteers who look after the important wildlife habitat in an area known locally as the Moors. The Moors is a hilly green area between the River Colne and Hythe Hill.</p>
The View Finder Trail	http://www.visitcolchester.com/Colchester-The-View-Finder-Trail	<p>The view finder trail is a 28km cycle trail which explores Colchester Town and runs along the east bank of the Colne to Wivenhoe, with a</p>

Project	Web	Description
	Finder-Trail/details/?dms=13&venue=0273328	number of key views and vistas identified. At ten of these locations, a sign has been erected depicting the view. These look like road signs but are handmade paintings by artist Michael Goodey.
The Colchester Town to Sea Trail	http://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/CE/cms/pdf/towntosea.pdf	A 3.2km art trail designed for walkers and cyclists which follows the tidal River Colne from the Visitor Centre in Colchester town down to the Hythe, through some of the lesser known areas of Colchester.
Walk Colchester	http://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/	Walk Colchester is a green community mapping initiative, new in 2010. Its main aims are 'to record and protect Colchester's paths, parks, woodland and open spaces, and to promote enjoyable, accessible, informed pedestrianism for walkers of all ages and abilities'. It currently includes an interactive website which includes several themes walks in and around Colchester town and the wider Borough. Some of the routes run alongside the River Colne.
Cycle Colchester	http://www.cyclecolchester.org.uk/cycle_index_det.asp?art_id=8453&sec_id=2163	'Cycle Colchester', a partnership between Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council, local cycling groups and a number of other organisations (including Sustrans), are delivering £4 million of improvements to Colchester's cycle paths and signs, and offering cycle training. The organisation's website promotes a number of cycle routes through Colchester Town. Some of the routes run alongside the River Colne.

ZONE 4: COLCHESTER TOWN

- 2.37 This zone includes the existing urban area and its future urban Growth areas including Town Centre, North Growth Area, East Growth Area, South Growth Area, Stanway Growth Area. Colchester Town contains two thirds of the Borough's population (which is due to expand significantly) and provides the primary source of Green Infrastructure 'users', both in terms of residents and visitors. Growth proposed in the Zone presents important opportunities for investment in Green Infrastructure. The Colne River Valley runs right through this Zone and is integral to it. There is a potential contribution/links in this Action Zone to the Stanway Complex Living Landscape project.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.38 Given the urbanised nature of this Zone there are a large number of Local Wildlife Sites (nature reserves and wetland areas) close to the town centre and readily accessible by large numbers of people. These include Cymbeline Meadows to the west of the town and Local Nature Reserves at Bull Meadow, Colne, Hilly Fields, Lexden Park, Salary Brook, Spring Lane Meadows and Welsh Wood). High Woods Country Park provides a large area of ancient woodland close to the town centre to the north although it is poorly used by adjacent communities. A new community garden is under development at Highwoods Country Park and there is also an area of 'natural and semi-natural' area to the south east at Middlewick. Another important wildlife habitat in the area is known locally as the Moors between the River Colne and Hythe Hill, looked after by a local group of volunteers called The Moors Movement.
- 2.39 The Zone has a number of existing wildlife corridors including Bourne Valley in East Colchester to Gryme's Dyke near Stanway. These corridors and the other wildlife sites in this zone will come under particular pressure from development in the Growth Areas, and need not only to be protected from

encroachment but also to be enhanced and additional sites found. New green corridors and strategic areas of open space should also be created within and from the Growth Areas to the town centre and out to the surrounding countryside. The River Colne forms a significant wildlife corridor through this zone.

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.40 Flood risk (from fluvial and surface water flooding) is an issue throughout this Zone. Use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) and GI to manage flood risk are good, cost effective solutions as they also deliver wider benefits. The town must adapt to the impacts of climate change and green infrastructure and urban greening measures can make a significant contribution to this, for example, through flood alleviation; local food production; street trees, green roofs and walls providing urban cooling and improving air quality.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.41 The central core of Colchester Town is designated as a Conservation Area, and the town's situation on a hill allows views out to the open countryside which cements the relationship between the town and the rest of the Borough and should be retained as a key part of the town's character. Housing growth on the periphery of the existing town has the potential to extend the urban character of these areas into the farmed landscape, with a loss of tranquillity and a negative effect on landscape character as noise and light pollution and the visual impact of development starts to encroach on the surrounding countryside. Environmental quality in the East Colchester Growth Area is identified as being particularly poor and will need significant restoration.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.42 Colchester Town – 'the oldest recorded town in England', contains a vast number of important cultural heritage features, plus the possibility for undiscovered cultural heritage and the creation of new cultural heritage. There is a concentration of these in the historic core but they are also spread throughout the urban area. Those of particular relevance for GI include:
- Registered parkland associated with Severall's hospital.
 - The Castle and Castle Park – A Grade II listed Victorian Park in Colchester's historic core which encompasses much of Colchester's rich heritage within its boundaries and boasts over 1 million visitors a

year⁴.

- Colchester Roman Circus.
- System of Iron and Roman dykes (e.g. Grymes Dyke) which provide valuable wildlife corridors and recreational links between this zone and the Roman River Valley (Zone 5) to the south
- Significant below ground archaeological remains and earthworks in areas of formalised Green Infrastructure such as Gosbecks Archaeological Park, which provides an important recreational area and wildlife resource on the urban fringe and links to the Roman River Valley (Zone 5).
- Ancient woodland in High Woods.
- Maritime Industrial heritage and The Hythe, Wivenhoe and West Mersea.
- Military heritage associated with the Garrison area.
- Gosbecks Archaeological Park (also associated with the Roman River Valley Zone).
- New cultural heritage such as the Visual Arts Facility in St Botolphs Quarter
- Colchester Town walls around the historic core which are a distinctive feature of the built environment and important refuge for wildlife
- Colchester Cemetery

2.43 Cultural Heritage is extremely important in defining the identity of Colchester Town as well as a significant economic implication through tourism and creating a desirable place where people want to live. It is therefore vital that cultural heritage in the town is conserved managed and enhanced and that the public realm enhances the setting for this important resource.

2.44 HECAs 5 (Modern Colchester) and 6 (Colchester Walled Town) fall within Zone 4. Key historic environment GI opportunities presented by HECA 5 are Severalls Hospital and grounds (Grade II Registered Park and Garden), located within the planned Colchester North Growth Area, but providing a strong landscape template for future development. There is also a network of Iron Age and Roman dykes, such as Lexden, Gryme's Dyke and Triple

⁴ http://colchester.gov.uk/service_landing_level_3.asp?sec_id=3741

dyke, now within areas of open space in the urban area, which link with the countryside to the south and north and provide opportunities for enhanced management, including interpretation.

- 2.45 HECA 6 presents the following historic environment opportunities in relation to GI: Enhanced interpretation of the Roman archaeology such as the circus and town walls as part of future public realm improvements. Also interpretation of key urban sites such as Castle Park (Grade II Registered Park and Garden) as part of the green infrastructure network (e.g. forming nodes on a town to sea trail).

Locally Productive Landscapes

- 2.46 There are deficiencies in allotments/ community gardens in the south of Colchester Town as well as a high demand for allotments in this area. The northern edge of Colchester Town also has deficiencies in provision of allotments and community gardens. Although new allotments are being provided at Berholt Road and a new community garden is being developed in New Town, given the increases in population of this area there may still be a need for increased provision throughout the whole of this Zone.

Access, Recreation and Movement

- 2.47 There is a deficiency of sub-regional accessible natural greenspace in the north of the Zone and also a need to create more neighbourhood level spaces in the south and north-west and centre of the Zone. This need will become acute when development takes place in the Growth Areas and will need careful planning given the more limited options in this built up area. GI opportunities will be identified through the masterplan being developed for this area but green corridors along the river corridors and floodplains are a key opportunity. High Woods Country Park – a large publicly accessible greenspace running northwards from the town centre to the fringe provides a valuable resource for this Zone and includes ancient woodland, grassland designated as SSSI and a number of cultural heritage assets. It will be important to protect, manage existing and create new accessible links to this key asset from its surrounding residential areas. The rights of way network is extensive in this Zone but there is a need for better promotion and maintenance of routes. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation data shows that the Garrison and East Colchester Growth Areas have poorer health than the rest of the town, so walking and cycling routes into the centre and out to the surrounding countryside will be particularly important in these areas, as will more recreation/activity facilities needed for all, particularly children and

young people. As part of recent development at the Garrison significant new walking and cycling routes are being established to address this need to a certain extent. There is good provision of outdoor sport facilities surrounding the town centre.

Key GI Assets /Opportunities in the Colchester Town Zone

- High level of access to nature opportunities close to large numbers of people. However, notable deficiencies in nearby accessible natural greenspace for much of the Zones' population which need addressing by the creation of new high quality greenspace and enhanced links to existing spaces such as High Woods Country Park.
- Create new green corridors through the flood risk zones to enable sustainable water resource management, create wildlife corridors and encourage increased movement by walking and cycling through the Zone.
- Highlight the significance of cultural heritage assets in the Zone protecting and enhancing assets and increasing public access and understanding of them.
- Increase locally productive landscapes throughout greenspaces in the town both informally and through more formal community gardens and allotments.
- Help the town adapt to climate change through measures to help urban cooling and reduce surface flooding.
- Enhanced interpretation of the town's Roman legacy including the Circus and town walls as part of future public realm improvements.
- Enhanced interpretation of key urban sites such as Castle Park, St Botolphs Priory and other historic graveyards as part of the GI network (e.g. forming nodes on a town to sea trail), as well as interpretation of and links to sites such as Gosbecks Archaeological Park (transition with Zone 5).
- Creation of recreational routes and improved wildlife corridors from urban areas to the countryside through enhancements to and promotion of existing GI assets and creation of new GI e.g. historic waterfront and regeneration area of the Hythe to the Roman River Valley (Zone 5) via the historic mills and associated mill ponds of the Bourne Valley, Colchester's Victorian Cemetery, allotments south of the Crematorium, Middlewick Ranges, Thomas Lord Audley school playing fields and Berechurch Dyke, and King George Playing Field Stanway to Roman River Valley (Zone 5) via Gryme's Dyke and Stanway

Green.

Existing GI projects in Colchester Town Zone

- 2.48 Existing projects and initiatives in the zone which we have taken account of when identifying projects are listed below:

Project	Web	Description
Walk Colchester	http://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/	Walk Colchester is a green community mapping initiative, new in 2010. Its main aims are 'to record and protect Colchester's paths, parks, woodland and open spaces, and to promote enjoyable, accessible, informed pedestrianism for walkers of all ages and abilities'. It currently includes an interactive website which includes several themes walks in and around Colchester town and the wider Borough.
Cycle Colchester	http://www.cyclecolchester.org.uk/cycle_index_det.asp?art_id=8453&sec_id=2163	'Cycle Colchester', a partnership between Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council, local cycling groups and a number of other organisations (including Sustrans), are delivering £4 million of improvements to Colchester's cycle paths and signs, and offering cycle training. The organisation's website promotes a number of cycle routes through Colchester Town.
The BIG Garden Project	http://www.colchester.gov.uk/news_det.asp?art_id=8950&sec_id=3313	This organic fruit and vegetable community garden is a short walk from High Woods Country Park Visitor Centre off Turner Rd and has been running for over 3 years. The garden has received a Green Flag award for its innovation in Conservation and Heritage. The project aims to 'promote health and well being by producing local food in a sustainable way and to encourage community involvement'. People of all ages and abilities are encouraged to volunteer and have a share in the harvests. Public events such as 'apple day' and smaller 'horticultural therapy sessions' are run at the site, as well as sessions for school visits.
Myland Community Garden	http://www.colnehousing.co.uk/corporate/communities/cam-project.php	In 2007 a community garden was developed at Myland through the Community Action Mile End (CAM) project, which was part funded by Colne Housing. The Community Action in Mile End (CAM) project was set up in June 2006.
Community Garden at Old Heath	http://www.newtowngarden.org/	Residents in Old Heath and New Town have been working with Colchester Borough Council to realise ideas for a community garden at Old

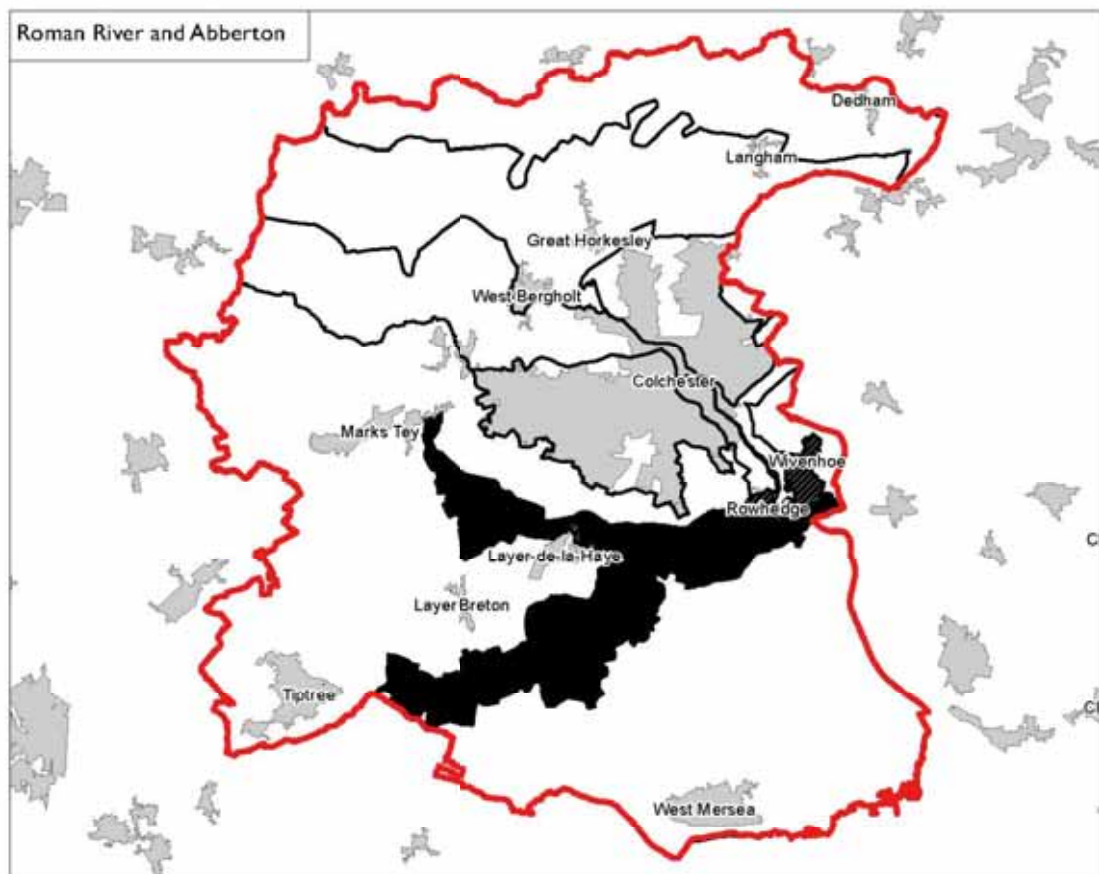
Project	Web	Description
Road Recreational Ground		<p>Heath Road Recreational Ground, supported by the Safer Colchester Partnership. The New Town Community Group initially suggested the idea of a community garden to Colchester Borough Council's Community Projects team, in order to improve the facilities at Old Heath Road Recreational Ground. Interest from residents was high and the project took off. The community garden will be an open community space for residents of New Town, Old Heath and the Hythe to access, see and experience. Colchester Borough Council will be on hand to offer ongoing support. Following consultation with Colchester Borough Council and other partners, including the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), the garden design has been completed by a group of local residents, with the emphasis on bringing more wildlife to the park and meeting the needs of local people, including children and families and older residents. Key features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and nut orchards • Wildlife areas, including long grasses, edible hedges, pond and 'bug hotel' • Sensory plants • Child-centred spaces – e.g. nature play areas • Vegetable growing • Social spaces • Food preparation area.
The Moors	The current website is not operational.	<p>The Moors Movement is a local group of volunteers who look after the important wildlife habitat in an area known locally as the Moors. The Moors is a hilly green area between the River Colne and Hythe Hill.</p>
North Station Masterplan SPD (note that this is draft and subject to change)	http://www.colchester.gov.uk/Info_page_two_picture_2_det.asp?art_id=10615&sec_id=2226	<p>Key features of relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'priority green link' linking High Woods with Castle Park • Pedestrian, cycles and public transport priority movement corridor between the station and along North Station Road. <p>Station Gateway (character area):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle storage/better pedestrian routes/public realm

Project	Web	Description
		<p>improvements/widened footpaths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New cycle and footpath connection to and from Station and Turner Rise/High Woods Country Park <p>North station Road Urban Village:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widen footpaths by reducing carriageway to minimum widths to improve pedestrian mobility and provide temporary space for cafe tables, florists etc, to attract passing trade. Complete the riverside footpath on the north side of the bridge. Introduce street trees to help disguise poor buildings, emphasise good spaces and provide a link to the passing of the seasons. Pocket parks and pedestrian links. <p>Cowdray Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cowdray Green acting as a linking green space between Castle Park and High Woods Country Park, including provision of a direct approach to an enhanced pedestrian subway Relocated junction with signal controlled access to aid access to and from the Leisure Centre and Castle Park Clarendon Boulevard creates a new linking street between Essex Hall and Cowdray Avenue providing a high quality and accessible business address. Redevelopment provides the opportunity to recreate a strong street tree line along this section of Cowdray Avenue.
The Stadium Green Way Project	http://transitioncolchester.blogspot.com/	<p>The Stadium Green Way project will see the creation of a tree lined link between High Woods and the new Weston Homes Community Stadium. Volunteers have already planted 1250 of the 10,000 trees, one for every seat at the new Stadium, which will be planted along the route. More in the Colne Valley</p>

Project	Web	Description
		Countryside Project folder.
AbbeyField Community Project	http://abbeyfieldcommunity.com/	The 'AbbeyField Community Project' is a group of local churches working together with the residents of AbbeyField to establish and maintain a thriving community where everyone has a sense of belonging and value.
The View Finder Trail	http://www.visitcolchester.com/Colchester-The-View-Finder-Trail/details/?dms=13&venue=0273328	The view finder trail is a 28km cycle trail which explores Colchester Town and runs along the east bank of the Colne to Wivenhoe, with a number of key views and vistas identified. At ten of these locations, a sign has been erected depicting the view. These look like road signs but are handmade paintings by artist Michael Goodey.
Transition Towns Colchester	http://transitioncolchester.blogspot.com/	This Transition Towns group is relatively new. It already runs numerous events and has a blog on its website which is currently under development.
The Colchester Town to Sea Trail	http://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/CE/cms/pdf/townto sea.pdf	A 3.2km art trail designed for walkers and cyclists which follows the tidal River Colne from the Visitor Centre in Colchester town down to the Hythe, through some of the lesser known areas of Colchester.

ZONE 5: ROMAN RIVER VALLEY (INCLUDING ABBERTON RESERVOIR)

- 2.49 The Roman River Valley Zone is a well wooded valley following the course of the Roman River as it runs laterally west to east across the Borough. The Zone extends south to include the Abberton Reservoir. This Action Zone links to Essex Living Landscape project 68: Roman River Complex.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.50 The Roman River Valley contains a rich and complex mosaic of woodland, scrub, heath, grassland and fen as well as some floodplain and grazing marsh. It has been described as 'one of the best preserved river valleys in Essex⁵. The northern part of the Zone has the most significant amount of woodland (ancient and deciduous) in it for the whole Borough and whilst the southern part supports a number of nationally threatened habitats including heathland and deciduous woodland some of which are designated as SSSI, SPAs, Ramsar and Local Wildlife Sites. Notable GI woodland sites within the valley include Friday Woods, Donyland Woods and the Roman River Valley Nature Reserve (a 44 acre reserve which contains a fragment of traditional river valley landscape maintained by the Essex Wildlife Trust). The unimproved acid grassland is one of the few sizeable areas remaining in Essex, which together with the other habitats supports a diverse breeding bird population and over a thousand species of moths and butterflies.
- 2.51 Abberton Reservoir is the largest freshwater body in Essex and one of the

⁵ Roman River Complex (Living Landscape 68), A Visioning document prepared by Essex Wildlife Trust, 04/05/10.

most important wetlands for wildfowl in the UK. It includes a visitor centre and nature reserve managed by Essex Wildlife Trust. The extension of the reservoir, which is currently taking place, includes the relocation and expansion of the existing visitor centre, and the expansion of the network of permissive paths, cycle routes and bridleways near the reservoir, providing increased opportunities for access to nature.

- 2.52 Stanway Growth Area is adjacent to the Roman River. Without careful planning, this growth could threaten the habitats in the zone however, it also provides an opportunity to reduce fragmentation of habitats and create new access to nature opportunities.

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.53 The Roman River has a high probability of flooding (categorised as flood risk zone 3 as land is assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding (>1%)). Creation of new GI and management of existing habitats within the zone by reinstating a more natural functioning floodplain will help to minimise the impact of flood risk, for example through the creation and management of wet grassland and wet woodland habitats which are allowed to flood. The extension of Abberton Reservoir may alter the hydrology of the area and will have been taken in to account in water resource planning for the area.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.54 Where accessible there are panoramic and diverse views along the Roman River Valley as it widens towards the confluence with the Colne and up the heavily wooded sides of the valley. Poorly sited development and loss of the existing woodland areas on the valley sides could lead to the loss of the undeveloped character and setting of the flood plain. There is also a need to seek opportunities to restore habitats along the floodplain and manage and control potential fertiliser run-off from nearby farmland.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.55 The Roman River Valley includes important Iron Age dykes and earth works and other associated iron age and roman settlements at Gosbecks area. The Gosbecks archaeological park lies between the Roman River Zone and Colchester urban area, and is the most significant cultural heritage asset in the Zone.
- 2.56 HECAs within Zone 5 are HECA 12: Roman River Valley, 13. Abberton Area

and a small part of HECA 14: Colne Estuary (this HECA is discussed in relation to Zone 7). Key historic environment GI opportunities in relation to HECA 12 are the opportunities for enhanced interpretation of Iron Age and Roman heritage such as at Gosbecks, as well as conservation and enhancement of historic valley floor fieldscapes and pastoral landscape features.

- 2.57 In relation to HECA 13. Abberton Area, principal GI opportunities are to enhance landscape links to the more intact historic landscapes within HECA 12, e.g. to conserve and enhance relict historic field boundary structures. The 1930s Abberton Reservoir presents opportunities for interpretation as part of enhanced perimeter access.

Locally Productive Landscapes

- 2.58 This Zone has very mixed quality of agricultural land. The highest quality land is to the east of Abberton, and there is also a significant cluster of traditional orchards around this settlement. There is potential to increase the number of orchards in this area.

Access, Recreation and Movement

- 2.59 The stretch of the Roman River Valley between Colne Marshes and Gosbecks is notable in its good provision of accessible natural greenspace. However, there is a lack of small scale neighbourhood sites that should be addressed especially given the large amount of growth that is planned to the north of the Zone. There is currently a limited access network to the south-west of Colchester Town and this provides a significant opportunity to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists from Colchester Town out to the Roman River valley and to certain parts of Abberton Reservoir (where access provision is good). There is an opportunity for multifunctional green corridors to be established along the historic dykes running between the Roman River and south Colchester. Some of the dykes already have access along them but there is great potential for enhanced access and better management of these important archaeological features as well as enhancing their potential as corridors enhanced for biodiversity and landscape character. Abberton Reservoir has the potential to be a significant destination for visitors, and detailed consideration has been given to agree improved access provision and the creation of visitor facilities as part of the ongoing expansion of the reservoir. Some areas of the reservoir support internationally important bird populations and are particularly sensitive to recreational disturbance; provision has been designed to ensure balance

between people and wildlife at this important location. East – west access is poor through the Zone although the planned provision of new walking cycling routes could go some way to address this. The GI assets in this zone will be further enhanced by the provision of a new area of strategic open spaces that is to be provided as part of Growth Area proposals.

Key GI Assets / Opportunities in the Roman River Valley

- The northern part of the Zone has the most significant amount of woodland in it for the whole Borough and there are opportunities to better manage and link these sites for multiple benefits through the development of a 'woodland necklace' in this part of the zone.
- There is a need for better access from the south of Colchester Town to the Roman River and to link in with the improved access at Abberton Reservoir. Opportunities include the establishment of multifunctional green corridors along the historic dykes running between the Roman River and south Colchester;
- Create new multifunctional green corridors through the flood risk zones to enable sustainable water resource management;
- Gosbeck Archaeological Park is in need of enhancement as part of wider opportunities to enhance the nationally important archaeological resource of this Zone.

Existing GI projects in Roman River Valley and Abberton Zone

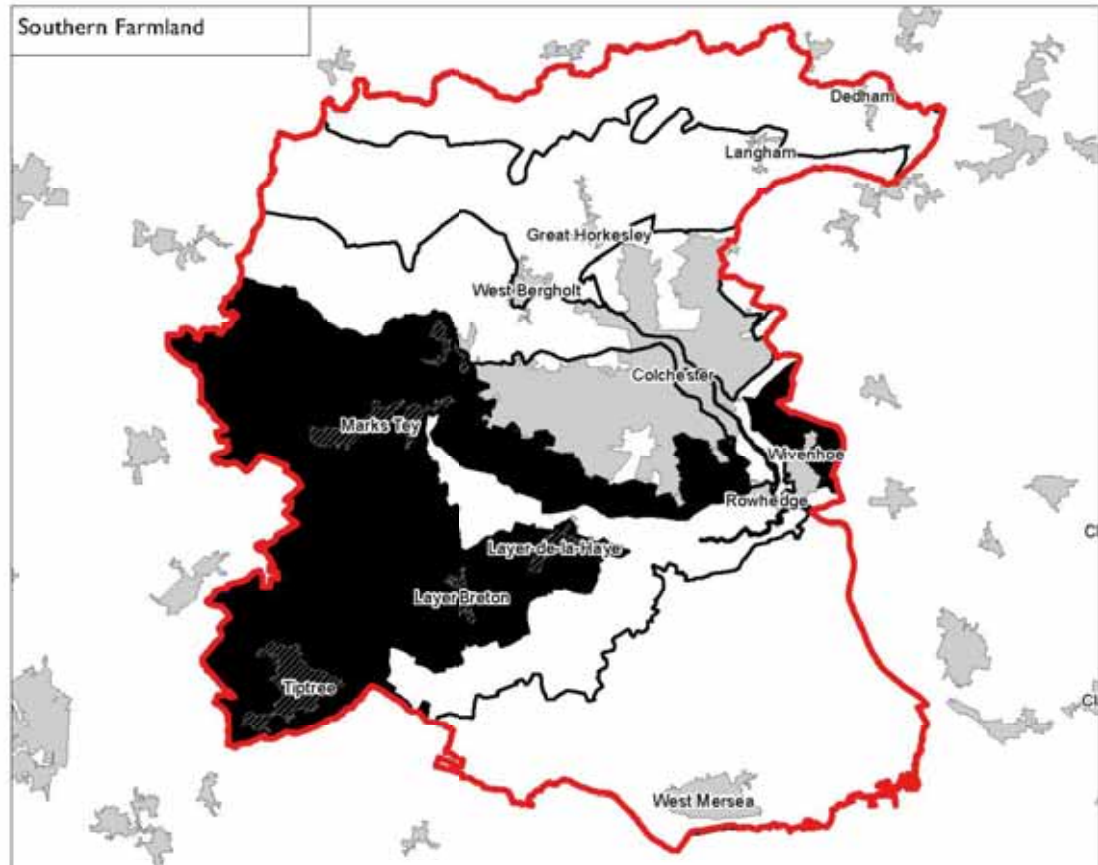
2.60 Existing projects and initiatives in the zone which we have taken account of when identifying projects are listed below:

Project	Web	Description
Living Landscapes	http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/livinglandscapes.aspx	The Essex Wildlife Trusts are spearheading an initiative called 'Living Landscapes'. Living Landscapes are large landscape scale areas of the countryside which are ecologically stable and 'bursting with life'. Essex Wildlife Trust has produced a Living Landscapes Map of Essex with partners to identify 80 Living Landscape areas, based upon their existing ecological value and their potential to become even more vibrant. A key target is to have management plans in place for all of these areas. 12 of these Living Landscapes fall wholly or partially within the

Project	Web	Description
		Borough of Colchester, and include wetland, coastal and estuarine, woodland and 'mosaic and grassland' areas, as well as 'corridors' between these. Several of these areas already have management plans or are beginning the process with a visioning document. In Colchester these include the Roman River Complex, Aylesford Quarry, and Tiptree Heath. The plans include detailed targets and costed actions for the sites. In this zone Living Landscapes identified include the Roman River Complex, and Abberton Reservoir. A management plan for the Roman River Complex was prepared in 2010. A living landscape management plan for Abberton Reservoir has not yet been developed.
Expansion of Abberton Reservoir	http://www.eswater.co.uk/whatot_herssay2007_5473.aspx	Abberton Reservoir is to be expanded and the works have already commenced. Essex & Suffolk Water (ESW) will be increasing the network of permissive footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways near the reservoir, increasing the network from 4km to 16km. The new routes include a circular walk around the central section of the reservoir. In addition, ESW has made funds available towards the provision of new rights of way in the proximity of the reservoir. The existing Essex Wildlife Trust Visitors Centre will be relocated as part of the proposals.

ZONE 6: SOUTHERN FARMLAND ZONE

- 2.61 The Southern Farmland Zone includes the band of farmland plateau between the Colne River Valley and Colchester Town in the North, to the Roman River Valley in the South. It includes the town of Tiptree and an area to the east of the Colne Estuary, around Wivenhoe. This Action Zone links to Essex Living Landscape project 67: Birch Complex.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.62 Although many are small in size the Southern Farmland Zone contains a significant number of the Borough's important wildlife sites. A number of these are found around the town of Tiptree:
- Layer Wood ancient woodland.
 - Pods Wood ancient woodland.
 - Tiptree Heath - the largest area of lowland heathland remaining in Essex (SSSI).
 - Birch Wood ancient woodland.

- 2.63 Creating broad ecological restoration zones connecting these sites would be particularly beneficial. Marks Tey Brick Pit SSSI and part of Tiptree Heath SSSI to the south of Colchester Town also lie within the Zone. Tiptree Heath SSSI is the largest surviving fragment of heathland in the County and shows the complete succession from acidic grassland and dwarf shrub heath through gorse and birch scrub to secondary woodland. It supports a number of plants rare in Essex.
- 2.64 The Southern Farmland Zone contains a significant amount of woodland (including ancient and semi-natural woodland) which starts to form a 'necklace' around the southern edge of Colchester Town. This woodland is still quite fragmented, but there is significant potential to create one of the most substantial wildlife corridors in the Borough in this area. A large part of this zone falls within the Living Landscapes 68 – Roman River Complex.

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.65 There is significant potential to improve sustainable water resource management in the zone as the Rivers Colne & Roman and Domsey Brook are all categorised as Flood Zone 3. Improvements to catchment management to reduce runoff and diffuse pollution could help to improve the quality of all of these watercourses and as well as improved river and floodplain management could help to alleviate flood risk downstream in the more heavily built up areas around Colchester Town.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.66 The mostly rural character of the area should be conserved and is under pressure from further expansion of the linear communications and settlement corridor and visually intrusive expansion of Marks Tey and Tiptree settlements. There is also a need to strengthen and enhance landscape features such as hedgerows with hawthorn that have become gappy and depleted, historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.67 There are a number of important cultural heritage assets throughout the Zone including significant areas of archaeological potential on the southern fringes of Colchester Town and Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Layer Marney Tower Registered Park and Garden, WWII heritage associated with the airfield, Marks Tey branch Line and numerous Conservation Areas covering villages throughout the Zone. The Gosbecks Archaeological Park is in need of

improvements however the Stanway Growth Area provides an opportunity to deliver new GI.

- 2.68 HECAs which fall within Zone 6 are HECA 9. Great Tey Area, HECA 10. Messing and Marks Tey Area and HECA 11: Village of Tiptree. In addition, smaller parts of HECAs 12 and 13 also fall within this zone, however these are discussed in relation to Zone 5 above.
- 2.69 With regard to HECA 9. Great Tey Area principal GI opportunities relating to the historic environment are conservation and enhancement of historic pastoral landscapes associated with the Roman River, which could also include opportunities for protection and interpretation of prehistoric and Roman below ground archaeology (e.g. burial mounds and Barrows).
- 2.70 HECA 10. Messing and Marks Tey Area presents the following opportunities for green infrastructure. Conservation and enhancement of remnant heathlands such as at Tiptree Heath, seeking opportunities to create enhanced heathland linkage through agri environment schemes. Also conservation, enhancement and re linking of areas of ancient woodland.
- 2.71 Key GI opportunities in relation to HECA 11: Village of Tiptree are presented by potential interpretation of aspects of historic urban character associated with the growth of the settlement in the 19th and 20th centuries. Notable examples in this context are the Wilkins Jam Factory and the disused railway line (Crab and Winkle Line). Also links to aspects of historic landscape character, relics of which survive in adjacent HECAs (e.g. remnants of the heathlands of Tiptree Heath, within HECA 10).

Locally Productive Landscapes

- 2.72 There is a functional deficiency of locally productive landscapes caused by a lack of allotments and community gardens in this Zone (and the adjoining southern part of Colchester Town) which, given the significant populations in Tiptree and fringe areas of Colchester Town, needs to be addressed, especially given the increases in population around the Stanway Growth Area. There are a number of orchards in the Zone, particularly around the southern edge of Tiptree linked to its fruit growing and jam making businesses, with opportunities to develop more orchards.

Access, Recreation and Movement

- 2.73 Significant gaps in the rights of way network exist between Tiptree and Colchester Town and the Growth Areas on the southern edge of Colchester will increase the population pressure in this Zone, putting further pressure on

Rights of Way and designated and non-designated recreation and nature Conservation Areas. There are already several large areas of the Zone that experience deficiencies in accessible natural greenspace that need addressing, with recreation and amenity spaces for the villages of Marks Tey and town of Tiptree being a priority. There are a number of sand and gravel extraction sites which are currently in use in the Zone but are allocated as informal recreation areas after restoration. Opportunities to liaise with minerals companies should be sought to ensure this restoration is planned for in a coherent way to deliver multiple benefits from these sites and to ensure they are well integrated in a coherent GI network.

Key GI Assets/ Opportunities in the Southern Farmland Zone

- Increase the connectivity of the 'necklace' of woodland to the south of Colchester Town for both biodiversity, recreational and other benefits.
- Improve Gosbecks Archaeological Park to help ensure the protection of some of the Borough's most significant archaeological assets in the face of the future growth of Colchester Town.
- There is a need to create community gardens and allotments around Tiptree and the southern fringe of Colchester Town to help increase the provision of locally productive landscapes in the Zone.
- Prioritise the creation of recreation and amenity spaces associated with the villages of Marks Tey and Tiptree. Sand and gravel extraction sites which are currently in use but are allocated as informal recreation areas after restoration should be incorporated now into forward planning for the green infrastructure network.

Existing GI projects in the Southern Farmland Zone

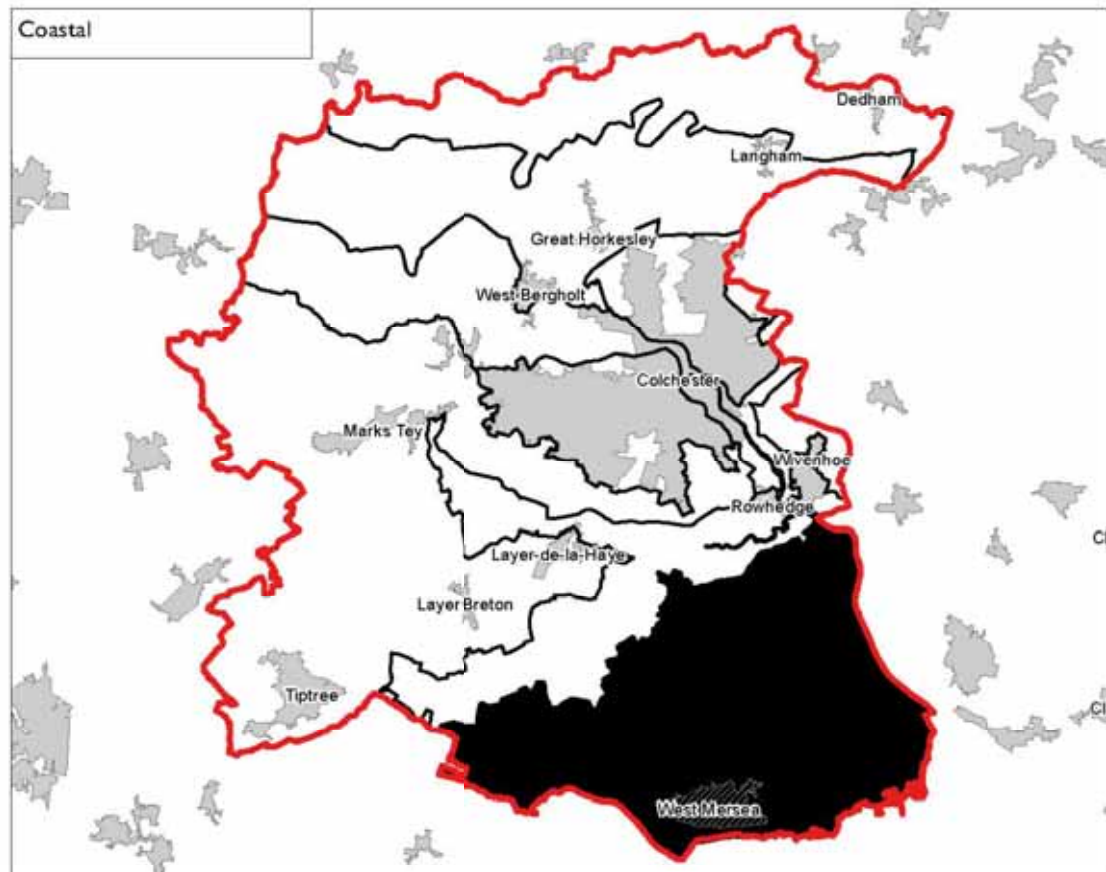
2.74 Existing projects and initiatives in the zone which we have taken account of when identifying projects are listed below:

Project	Web	Description
Living Landscapes	http://www.essexwildlife.org.uk/livinglandscapes	The Essex Wildlife Trusts are spearheading an initiative called 'Living Landscapes'. Living Landscapes are large landscape scale areas of the countryside which are ecologically stable and

Project	Web	Description
	capes.aspx	<p>'bursting with life'. Essex Wildlife Trust has produced a Living Landscapes Map of Essex with partners to identify 80 Living Landscape areas, based upon their existing ecological value and their potential to become even more vibrant. A key target is to have management plans in place for all of these areas. 12 of these Living Landscapes fall wholly or partially within the Borough of Colchester, and include wetland, coastal and estuarine, woodland and 'mosaic and grassland' areas, as well as 'corridors' between these. In this zone Living Landscapes identified include the 'Stanway Complex', the 'Birch Complex', and the 'Tiptree Heath complex'. A Living Landscape management plan for the Tiptree Heath Complex has been adopted. Management plans for the other Living Landscape areas in this zone have not yet been developed.</p>

ZONE 7: COASTAL ZONE

- 2.75 The Coastal Zone is the area to the south of the Roman River Valley and Abberton Reservoir and runs along the coastal and estuarine areas of the Colne and Blackwater rivers and includes Mersea. It contains a wealth of significant coastal habitats, of national and international importance. This Action Zone links to Essex Living Landscape project 70: Colne Estuary.



Key Needs/deficiencies

Habitat Provision and Access to Nature

- 2.76 The Coastal Zone has some of the most significant nature conservation provision in the whole Borough, with extensive areas of the coastline covered by SAC, SPA, Ramsar and SSSI designations. There are several significant local wildlife sites in addition to these internationally/ nationally designated areas.
- 2.77 Whilst Mersea Island has good green links around its beaches, the large coastal marsh areas around the coast, estuary and Fingringhoe Firing Ranges creates a significant continuous swathe of largely undisturbed wildlife corridor, links to the west and north – west are currently less developed (note much of this is not publicly accessible).

Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.78 The majority of the coast line of Mersea Island (particularly in the north) and along the coastline of the Zone is identified as Flood Zone 2 and 3. The potential for managed realignment has been identified south of Wivenhoe, at Ballast Quay on the Colne Estuary and along the south and west of Mersea Island. There is significant opportunity to increase the function of the area for sustainable water management and adaptation to climate change.

Landscape Character, Setting and Context

- 2.79 West Mersea Waterside Area of Special Character is a local designation, recognising the unique character of this part of Mersea which has been strongly influenced by maritime, fishing and boating uses. Development proposals are expected to enhance the existing traditional maritime character of the West Mersea Waterside Area of Special Character, and its role as a major yachting, fishing and boating centre. The open countryside surrounding West Mersea also forms part of the Coastal Protection Belt. However, sea level rise threatens to change the landscape and seascape of the coastal marsh areas significantly both around Mersea Island and on the mainland. The use of Fingringhoe Ranges for military uses also means that whilst the landscape is left undisturbed for much of the time, intensive use for Military exercises can have quite a detrimental impact on the landscape at a relatively localised scale. Changes to the use or frequency of the use of the firing ranges could have a significant landscape impact.

Cultural Heritage

- 2.80 Mersea Island has some significant areas of cultural heritage with maritime heritage along the coast, a Conservation Area covering the western shoreline of West Mersea and an area of high archaeological potential in the settlement. There are also three scheduled monuments and a number of listed buildings spread throughout the Island. There are limited cultural heritage assets on the mainland area of the coastal zone. Although not designated as a future area for growth, the popularity of West Mersea as a place to retire to and its importance within the local economy (tourist destination) may mean, that there could be an increase in development pressure which may negatively impact on the cultural heritage of the settlement.
- 2.81 This zone is covered by three HECAs: HECA 13. Abberton Area, discussed in Zone 5 above, HECA 14. Colne Estuary and HECA 15. Mersea Island.

Principal GI opportunities in relation to HECA 14. Colne Estuary are as follows: opportunities for interpretation of remnants of Saxon and medieval marine industry and archaeology to the shoreline, and which have shaped much of the present day landscape character.

- 2.82 Several opportunities apply to both HECA 14 and HECA 15: Mersea Island. These are notably access to and interpretation and management of historic coastal grazing marshes (a historic landscape type of considerable wildlife importance). Interpretation of coastal defences from the Second World War may present opportunities for GI and access proposals. Opportunities specific to HECA 15 are conservation and enhancement of remaining ancient field patterns.

Locally Productive Landscapes

- 2.83 There are some traditional orchards throughout the Coastal Zone and there are opportunities for these to be less intensively managed and to improve their functionality by increasing community access. This would help to address the deficit of accessible locally productive landscapes which is present throughout the rest of the Zone particularly in West Mersea. Whilst much of the Zone is marshland or poorer quality grade 3, 4 or 5 agricultural land with saline conditions, the pocket of grade 2 agricultural land to the north of West Mersea may have significant potential for use for food growing. The Coastal Zone has very little existing woodland however, the potential for woodfuel is likely to be very localised and demand led.

Access, Recreation and Movement

- 2.84 The Coastal Action Zone has a deficiency in neighbourhood scale sites within 300m of households, although the area is well catered for in terms of larger scale accessible natural greenspace. Mersea Island would benefit from more medium sized accessible natural greenspace as well. Mersea Island has a good variety of different types of greenspace, whilst the mainland part of the Coastal Action Zone has a more limited range of spaces, reflecting its less densely populated nature.
- 2.85 The rights of way network is fragmented especially in the west and north of the Coastal Zone, however there are some substantial footpaths that cover long distances including around almost the entire coast of Mersea Island. Walking and cycling links from the Coastal Zone north to Colchester Town and west to Tiptree are also poor and fragmented. The Fingringhoe Firing Ranges form a barrier in terms of publicly accessible greenspace between Colchester Town and the coastal areas. Grass headland paths behind the

marshes give access to the sea wall, although access is restricted on some paths in winter. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on Natural England to improve access to the English coast through creation of a continuous long-distance walking route around the coast and a margin of accessible land along it and this will provide an important access opportunity within Mersea.

Key GI Assets / Opportunities in the Coastal Zone

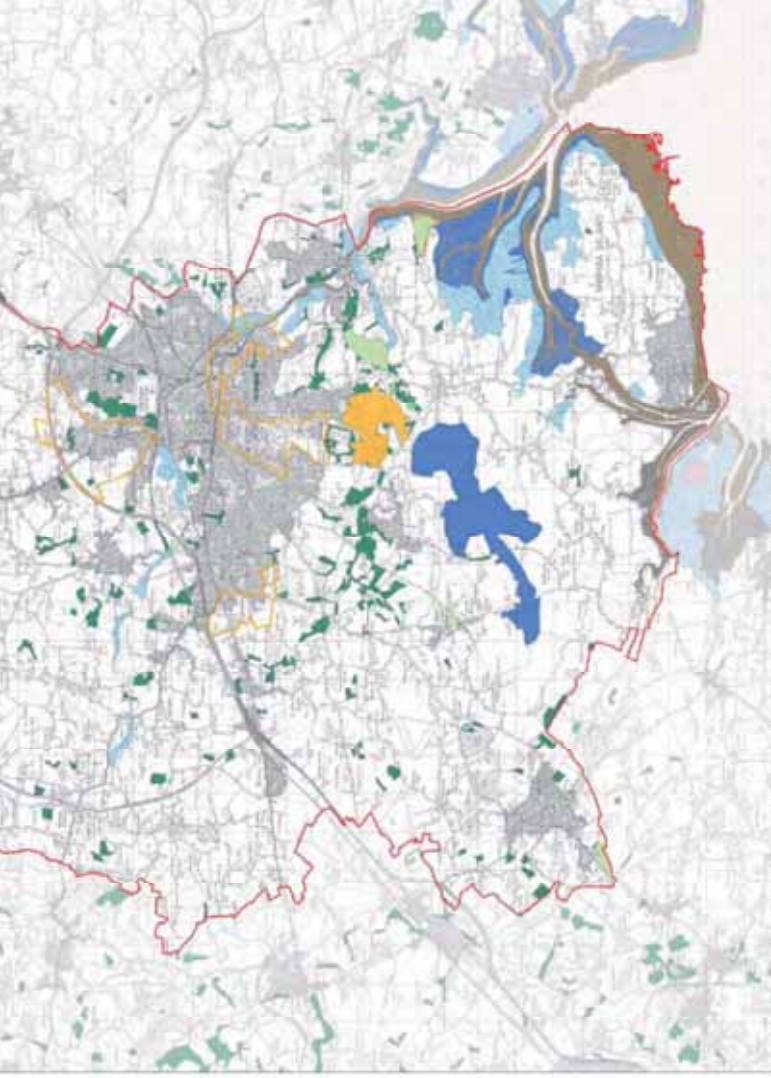
- The most significant biodiversity potential in the Borough with a range of internationally and nationally protected sites including SPA, SAC, Ramsar, SSSI providing a wide variety of habitats and landscape features which provide habitats for a range of species.
- There is a need to provide more accessible locally productive landscapes around West Mersea, although saline influences may limit opportunities. Conserving, managing and enhancing orchards in the wider zone and creation of community gardens in West Mersea is an opportunity.
- Need to increase the adaptability of the coastal areas to climate change and provide sustainable water management. Working with the Regional Habitat Creation Programme to deliver new multi-functional fresh water and intertidal habitats that deliver the objectives of the Shoreline Management Plan, by allowing for provision of this habitat elsewhere as well as providing high quality GI.
- Need to improve the connectivity of walking / cycling routes from the coast to the west (Tiptree) and north to Colchester.
- West Mersea maritime heritage is important in terms of the landscape and cultural heritage setting of the southern part of the Borough. This heritage needs to be protected along with raising awareness of its importance.
- Historic Coastal grazing marshes.

Existing GI projects in the Coastal Zone

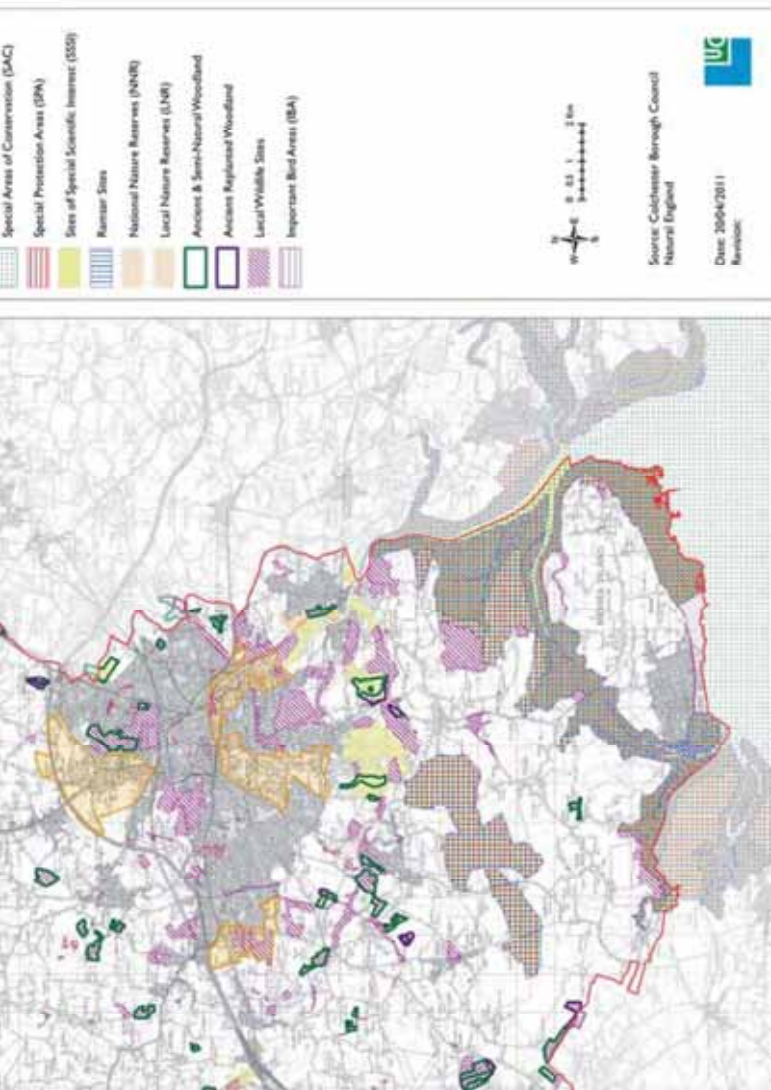
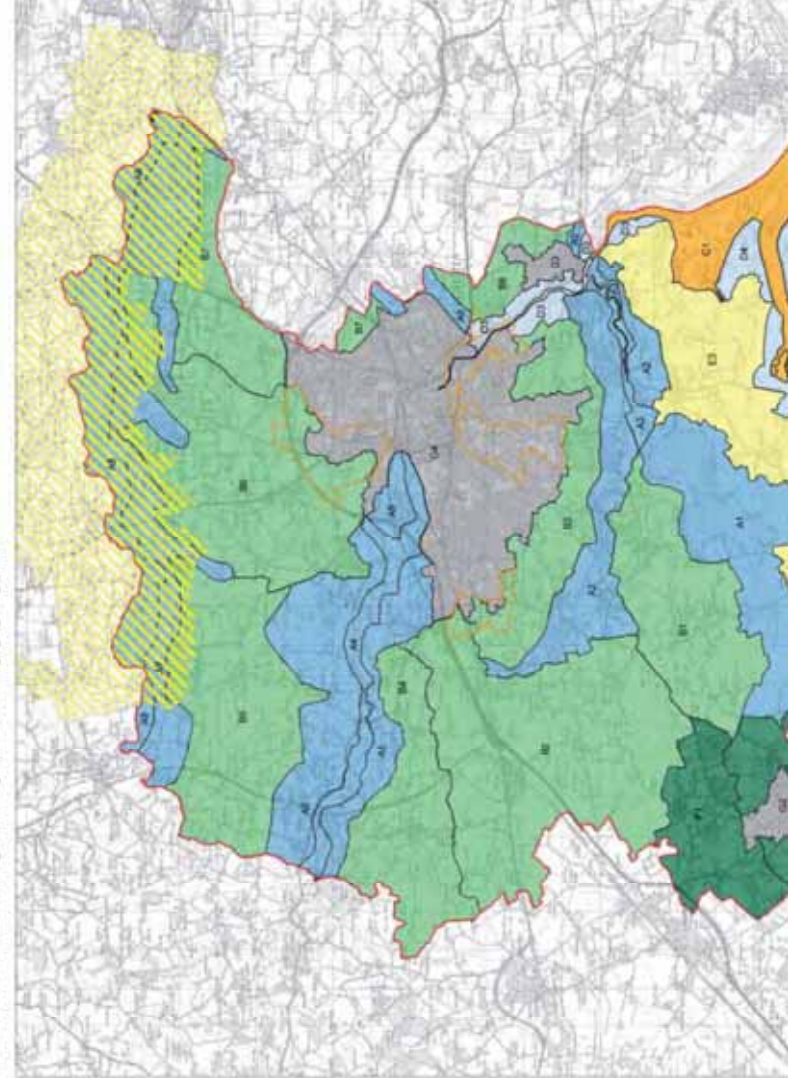
- 2.86 Existing projects and initiatives in the zone which we have taken account of when identifying projects are listed below:

Project	Web	Description
Natural England Coastal Access	http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/our-work/enjoying-places/coastal-access/default.aspx	Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on Natural England to improve access to the English coast through creation of a continuous long-distance walking route around the coast and a margin of accessible land along it. Natural England has published a scheme setting out how this will be

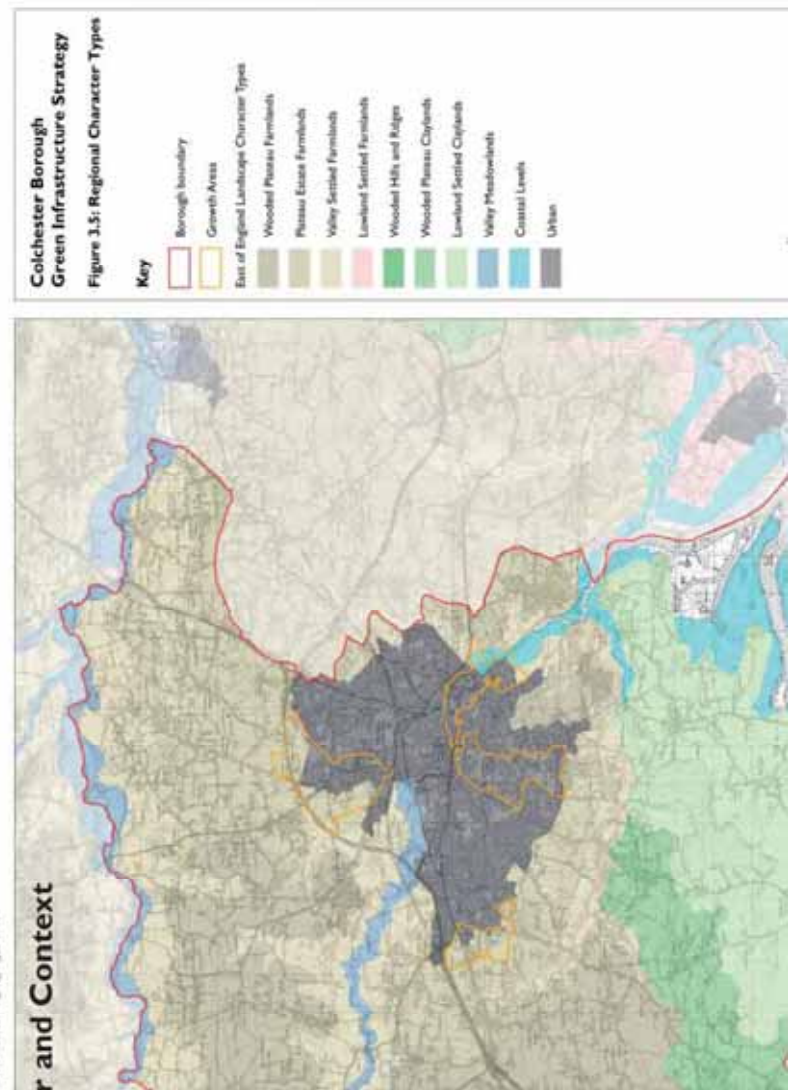
Project	Web	Description
		implemented. For the first time people will have the right of access around England's entire open coast, including – where appropriate – 'spreading room' along the way where they can rest, relax or admire the view.
Living Landscapes	http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/livinglandscapes.aspx	The Essex Wildlife Trusts are spearheading an initiative called 'Living Landscapes'. Living Landscapes are large landscape scale areas of the countryside which are ecologically stable and 'bursting with life'. Essex Wildlife Trust has produced a Living Landscapes Map of Essex with partners to identify 80 Living Landscape areas, based upon their existing ecological value and their potential to become even more vibrant. A key target is to have management plans in place for all of these areas. 12 of these Living Landscapes fall wholly or partially within the Borough of Colchester, and include wetland, coastal and estuarine, woodland and 'mosaic and grassland' areas, as well as 'corridors' between these. One of the Living Landscapes is the Colne Valley, and another 'Hythe-Wivenhoe'. A Living Landscape management plan for these areas has not yet been developed.



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey data with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Land Use Conditions. Licence Number: 18011033. For a complete list of conditions, visit <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>.

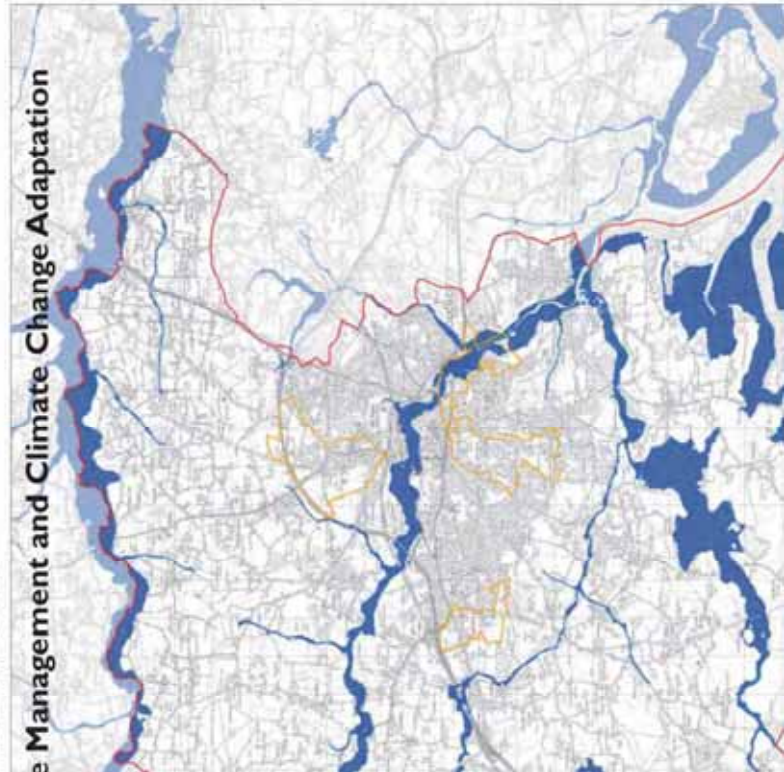
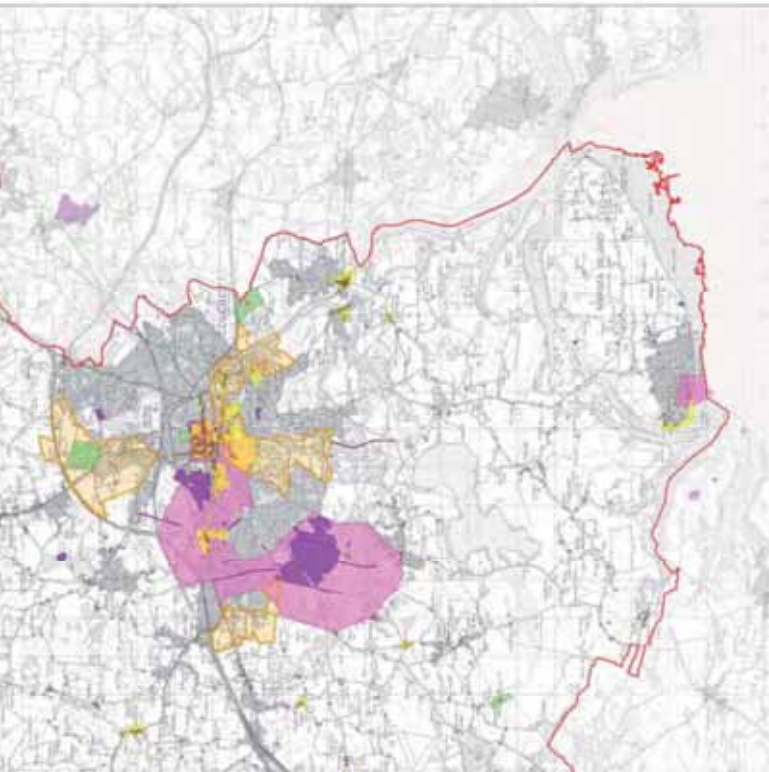


Reproduced from Ordnance Survey data with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Land Use Conditions. Licence Number: 18011033. For a complete list of conditions, visit <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>.



**Colchester Borough
Green Infrastructure Strategy**
Figure 3.5: Regional Character Types

- Key**
- Borough boundary
 - Growth Areas
 - East of England Landscape Character Types
 - Wooded Pasture Farmlands
 - Pasture Estate Farmlands
 - Valley Settled Farmlands
 - Lowland Settled Farmlands
 - Wooded Hills and Ridges
 - Wooded Pasture Claylands
 - Lowland Settled Claylands
 - Valley Meadowlands
 - Coastal Levels
 - Urban

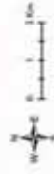


Management and Climate Change Adaptation



Agricultural Land Classification

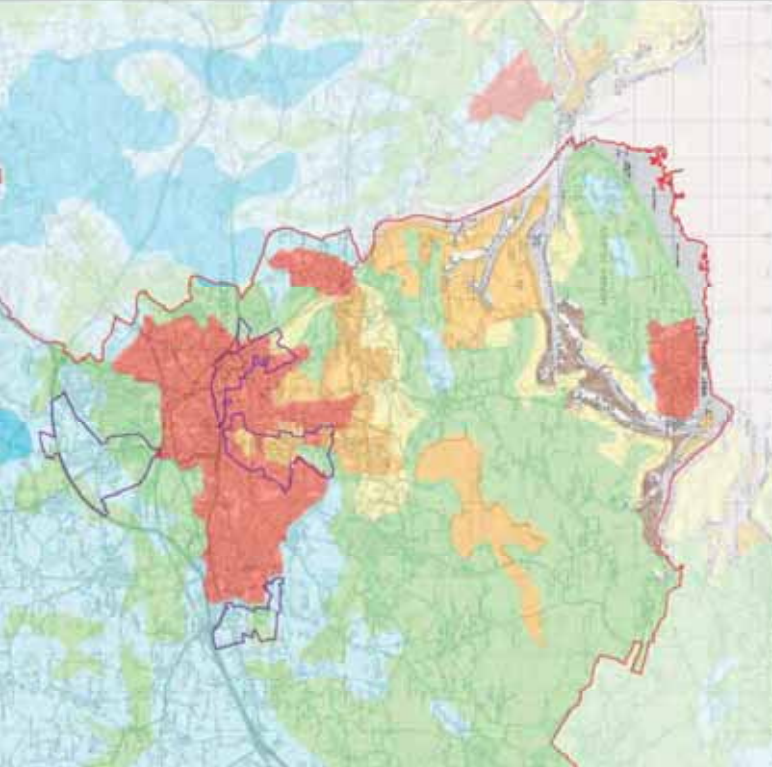
Grade 1
Grade 2
Grade 3
Grade 4
Grade 5
Non Agricultural
Urban



Source: Natural England

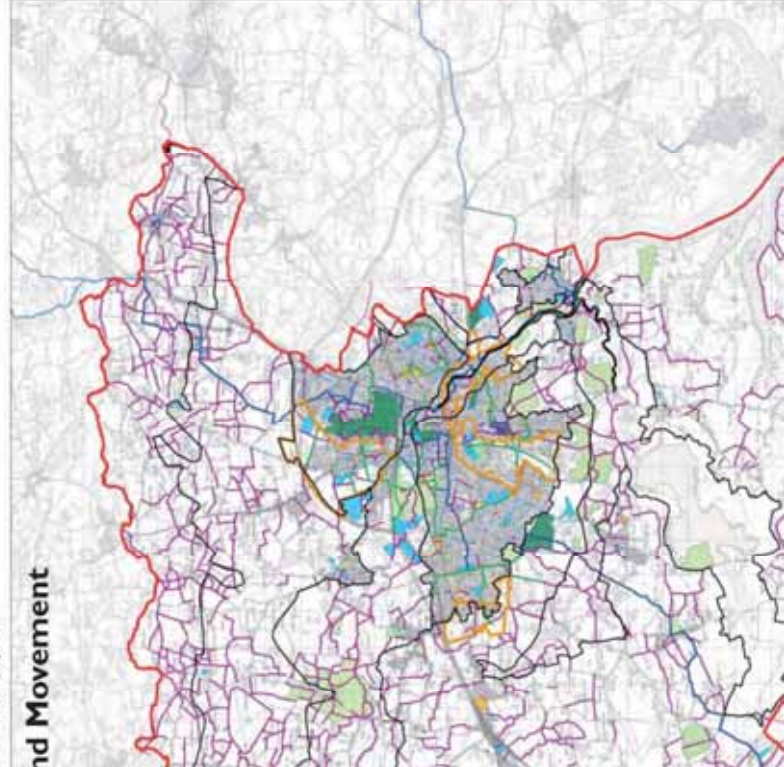
Date: 20/04/2011

Revision:



City of the Future's Sustainability Office. Content Copyright. Land Use Classification. Licence Number: 1001/1003

and Movement

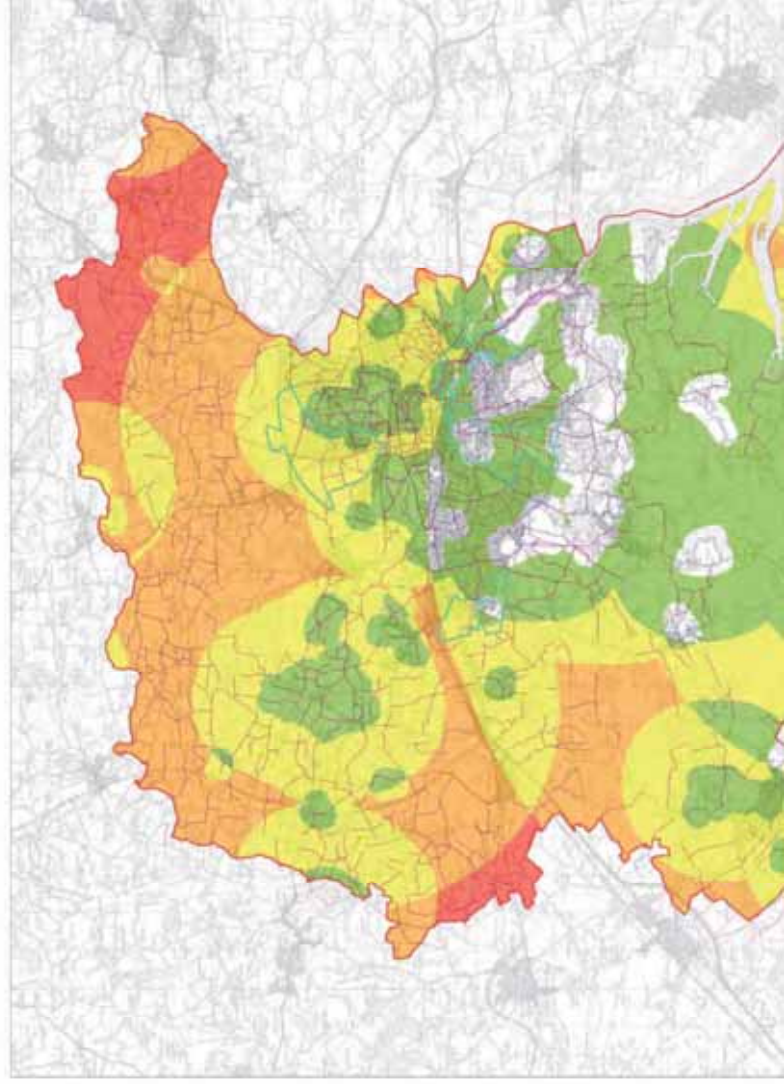


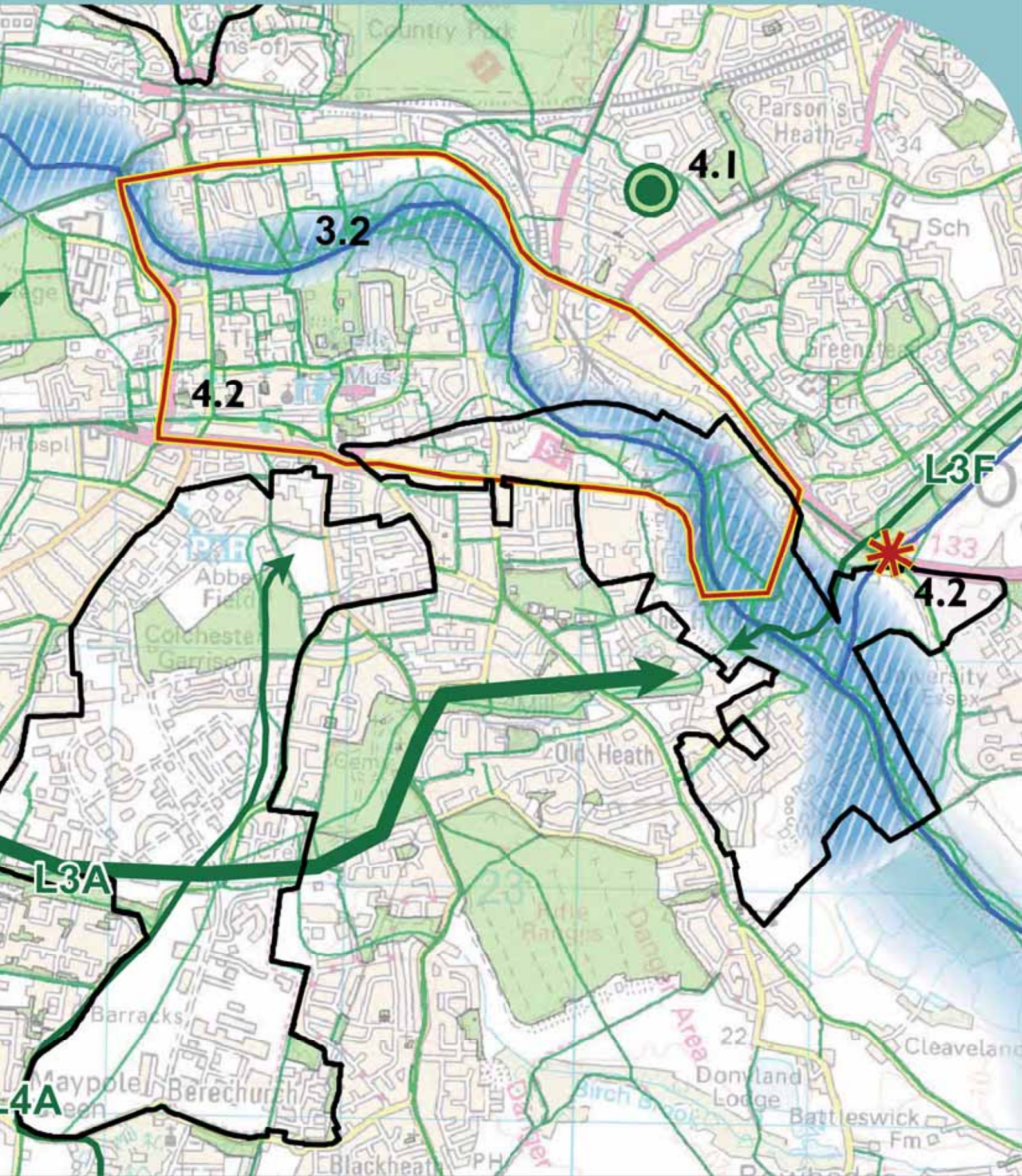
Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy

Figure 3.12: Open Spaces

Key

- Borough boundary
- Action Zones
- Growth Areas
- Green links
- Access links
- National Route (A103)
- NCN Link (Quintons)
- Local cycle routes
- Open Space**
 - Allotments and community gardens
 - Amenity greenspace
 - Cemeteries and churchyards
 - Civic spaces
 - Green corridor buslines & estuaries
 - Greenspace
 - Outdoor sports facilities
 - Parks and gardens
 - Young people & children





3 Green infrastructure vision and proposed green infrastructure network

VISION

- 3.1 The vision for green infrastructure in Colchester is aspirational and long term considering GI needs beyond the plan period. The vision provides the context for the GI network and projects set out in this chapter. It has been derived through stakeholder consultation (two workshops) and responds to the deficiencies and needs highlighted in the functional analysis and the policy drivers and opportunities derived through desk study.
- 3.2 The vision is divided into two parts – a short vision for the Borough as a whole, and a more detailed one for Colchester town.
- 3.3 This is followed by objectives for each of the GI action zones.

A Vision for green infrastructure in Colchester Borough

In 2025 Colchester is a Borough that conserves, enhances and celebrates its rich Green Infrastructure assets including the connected GI network along and between the river valleys of the Colne, Stour and Roman, the coastline and the heathland and woodland resources. The distinctive cultural heritage and sense of place associated with and derived from its rich historic environment, including its Roman and later maritime history, is protected, understood and promoted providing a focus for Green Infrastructure and a catalyst for renewal and regeneration. The discovery and creation of new cultural heritage extends the resource.

The integrated Green Infrastructure network contributes to quality of life. New and existing GI assets (both large and small local sites) are linked through multifunctional corridors, which are accessible to all. This includes approximately 345 miles of public rights of way within Colchester District. The integrated GI network enables: access to nature; sustainable travel, connected habitats; a setting for the cultural resource; thriving and healthy communities; and adaptation to climate change.

A Vision for green infrastructure in Colchester town

The natural environment and rich cultural heritage of Colchester town are recognised and celebrated as part of a well designed, accessible urban green infrastructure network including the Colne River Valley and key green

corridors that infiltrate the town and link it to the wider countryside as at High Woods, North Colchester and The Garrison. Provision is made for climate change adaptation as an integral part of the approach, to create comfortable, attractive environments for people and contribute to enhanced quality of life.

Key points of the vision for urban green infrastructure are:

To conserve and enhance

- Heritage assets such as Roman archaeological remains like the circus and town walls are understood, protected and interpreted as part of the cultural GI network. The connection and promotion of the cultural heritage along the Colne Valley is central to the identity of the town.
- Existing quality townscape and vernacular, using these to provide cues for the design of the public realm and for new sustainable development, in a contemporary style which incorporates urban greening;
- Urban GI assets and biodiversity opportunities, notably the sites and meadows along the River Colne, creating landscape links to the wider riverine environment e.g. Roman River and the important green corridors that infiltrate the town as at High Woods.

To improve and create

- Greater opportunities for interpretation of cultural heritage and historic legacy, seeking to reference these to inform the design of new greenspace and associated with the Growth Areas;
- Inclusive access for all, creating better connectivity and movement across the town, and in relation to existing barriers (railway, A12), providing enhanced access within the town and from the town to the countryside and the river valley network, for health, recreation, sustainable access and enjoyment of nature;
- Opportunities for urban greening and for adapting the urban environment to climate change, through street trees, green roofs, walls and enhanced greenspace management;
- High quality, multi functional greenspace, through new development and delivered through enhanced landscape management to deliver biodiversity benefits, and which alleviates pressures on existing sites

such as High Woods;

- Opportunities for Green Infrastructure to contribute to enhanced public realm within Colchester and public open space to connect into a linked and continuous GI network.

To recognise and value

- The importance of the historic environment and of Colchester's evolution from an Iron Age tribal centre and then Roman Town to medieval market town and Victorian military garrison, seeking to promote the historic environment as part of the GI network and an educational resource;
- The importance of the urban riverine environment of the Colne as part of the accessible urban green infrastructure network;
- The importance of the landscape setting of the town (river valleys), considering the design of enhanced visual and physical connections as part of new development;
- The importance of different approaches to landscape management e.g. small scale urban greening, in helping address greenspace provision issues;
- The importance of joined up, partnership working to deliver urban GI, and encourage and appropriately support the involvement of local community, voluntary groups to create and manage GI to meet their needs as part of the wider network.

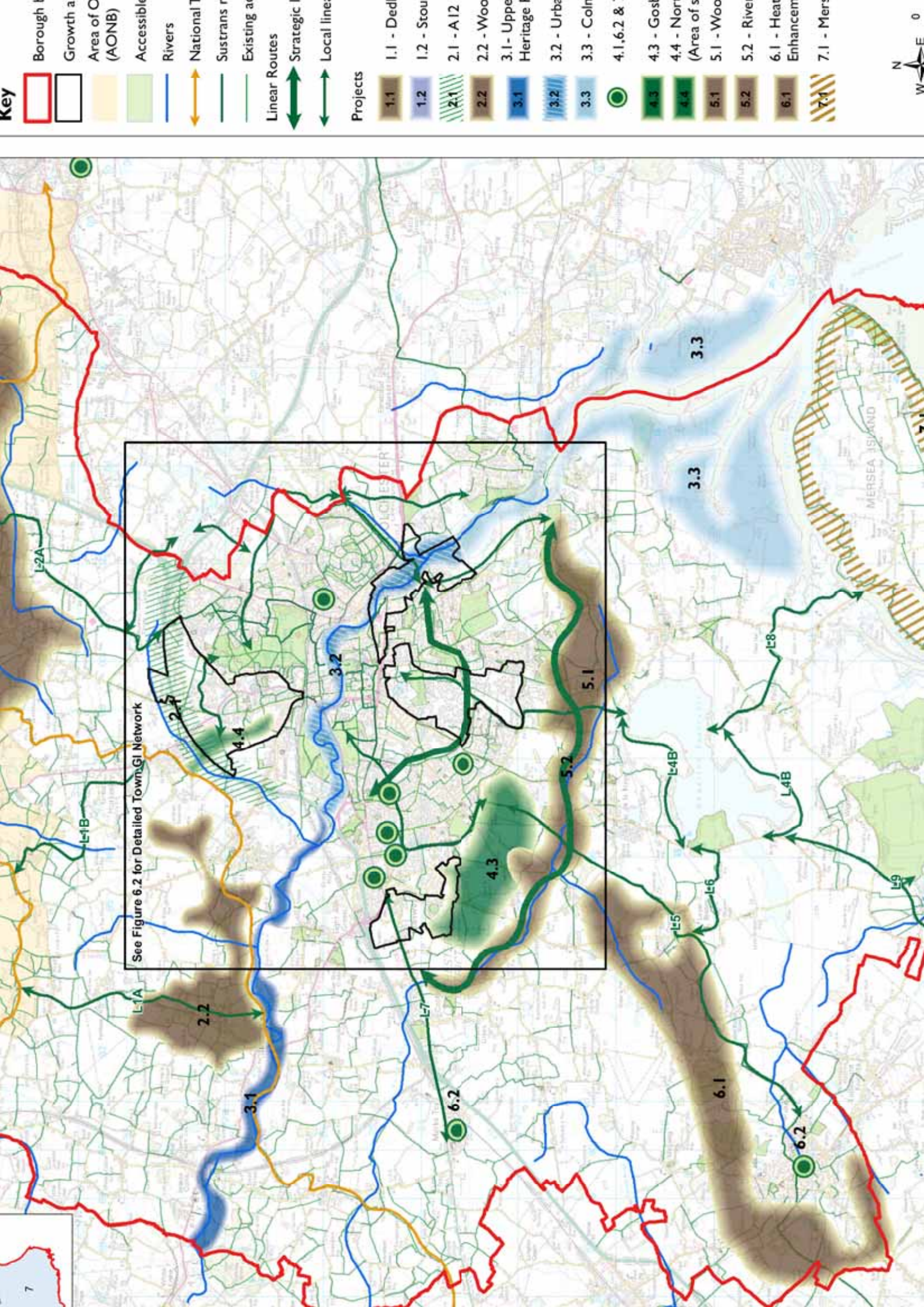
PROPOSED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

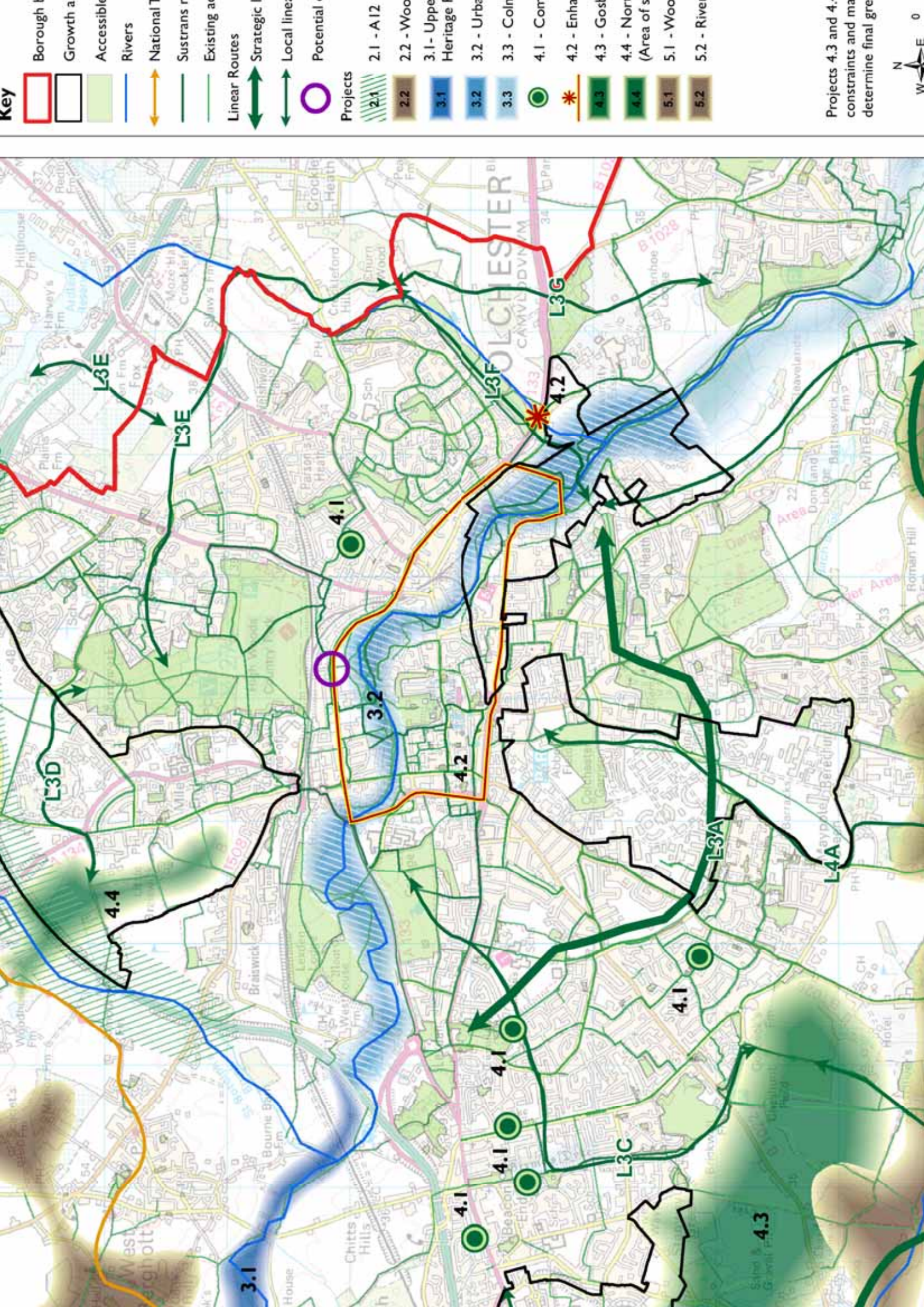
3.4 The proposed Green Infrastructure Network for the Borough is shown on **Figure 3.1**, with consideration of urban green infrastructure for Colchester Town in **Figure 3.2**.

3.5 The proposed Green Infrastructure Network has been designed to:

- respond to the existing sense of place of Colchester Borough (landscape, cultural heritage and habitats);
- conserve and enhance existing green infrastructure assets;
- identify opportunities for enhanced and new green infrastructure to increase the functional 'offer' of green infrastructure in the Borough.

- 3.6 The green infrastructure proposals have been developed with other relevant projects and initiatives in mind, and to tie in where appropriate with adjacent and strategic Green Infrastructure Strategies. The proposals are complementary to a range of strategic scale landscape and spatial planning initiatives.
- 3.7 The GI Vision and network maps provide the 'big picture'. The main GI report contains supporting information on individual projects, how they meet identified deficiencies and needs, the functions they support, and policy drivers. It also provides indicative costs for the long list of projects.





Projects 4.3 and 4.4
constraints and manage
determine final green



GI Delivery Plan



4 GI DELIVERY

- 4.1 The main Colchester Green Infrastructure Strategy contains recommendations for delivering the Green Infrastructure Network. While the vision is aspirational, the projects must be achievable and above all deliverable. The GI report provides practical advice on delivery and project prioritisation, the main points of which are summarised in this Executive Summary.

PRACTICAL DELIVERY

- 4.2 The projects within the proposed Green Infrastructure Network are prioritised according to the functions they can deliver, and how they can contribute to addressing any functional deficiencies. Other considerations which have informed the prioritisation exercise are policy support, and how projects can contribute to any local drivers and targets. Against these are balanced considerations of capital costs and future revenue (management and governance) needs, and funding eligibility, together with any identified constraints to delivery e.g. land assembly, dependence on other work/projects.
- 4.3 The following projects (Table 4.1) are accorded the highest priority for Colchester. They are drawn from a long list of projects set out in the main report. The main report also includes broad capital and revenue costs.

Table 4.1 Colchester GI: Priority Projects

Project Number	Description
Zone 1: AONB/Stour Valley (links to Essex Living Landscape 65: Stour Valley)	
1.1) Dedham Gateway Enhancement	a) Consider opportunities to create new community orchards around the Village.
	b) Link ancient woodland from Dedham to Boxted.
	c) Enhance existing footpaths and upgrade to bridle ways where possible, access routes from Dedham to the surrounding countryside.
	d) Restoration of Heathland at Boxted and Dedham Heaths.

Project Number	Description
	e) Create new walking and cycling access routes from Dedham out to Boxted and Dedham Heaths.
	f) Manage local woodland for woodfuel to supply local markets.
Zone 2: Northern Farmland Zone	
2.1) A12 Greening Project , covering the area between north Colchester growth and Severalls. Includes proposals for new structural green infrastructure for attenuation, and access enhancements	a) Creation of a green bridge (land bridge) crossing the A12 (long term aspiration). There is an opportunity to bring forward crossing improvements of the A12 (over and underpasses/ multiuse routes) which would be a short term high priority in the absence of a green bridge.
	b) Undertake access improvements to the A134 underpass, B1508 - overpass, and the overpass at Cuckoo Farm and Runkins Corner to benefit people (through provision of shared access including cycling, biodiversity and landscape setting).
	c) Create buffering by tree planting along the A12 to improve the visual setting, reduce noise and air pollution and to help create a wildlife corridor.
	d) Manage the screening belt for woodfuel.
	e) Include provision for walking / cycling where possible along the screening belt.
2.2) Woodland Enhancement Zone	a) Extension of Fordham Community Woodland to West Bergholt (partially in the River Colne Zone – note also potential links to the Colne Valley Living Landscape. Woodland enhancement projects also include enhancement of related landscape features such as copses, hedgerows and grassland – a landscape mosaic.
	b) Creation of new woodlands throughout the zone where opportunities arise.
	c) Connecting and enhancing existing woodland throughout the zone.
	d) Creation of low key signed walking routes through the woodlands.
Zone 3: Colne River Valley (links to Essex Living Landscape 63: Colne Valley)	

Project Number	Description
3.2) Urban Colne Valley Project	a) Create and enhance the setting and for cultural heritage along the Valley through landscape conservation and management. Provide greater understanding and interpretation of the heritage assets in the valley and associated public realm, including industrial heritage such as mills Links to the Town to Sea Trail would also improve connections to other strategically important sites in the urban stretches of the Colne, such as The Moors, a valued site for biodiversity and recreation, and also links to other urban GI sites such as Castle Park.
	b) Improve flood attenuation through better land management and 'space for water' Integrate SuDS into new developments to the east of the area and retrofit SuDS where possible amongst the existing development in the valley.
	c) Improve access along the river, linking to the Essex Way.
3.3) Colne Estuary Project (links to Essex Living Landscape 70: Colne Estuary)	f) Public Open Space (POS)/Sports and Recreation facilities in Wivenhoe.
	g) POS/Sports and Recreation facilities in Rowhedge.
Zone 4: Colchester Town	
4.1) Communal Greening	d) POS/Sports and Recreation facilities in East Colchester.
	e) POS/Sports and Recreation facilities in Colchester. Town
	f) POS/Sports and Recreation facilities in Stanway Growth Area.

Project Number	Description
4.2) Enhancing Gateways to Colchester	a) Restore landscape character, creating a naturalistic feel including planting of flower rich grassland, along key approaches into the town.
	b) Green the inner ring road with improvements to verges, tree planting etc to enhance the setting of and approaches to the historic town, improve the public realm and boost the economic potential of the town. Westway, Balkerne Hill and Southway provide opportunities to introduce new planting and enhanced existing planting in the central reservation. The roundabout at Colne Bank Ave / Westway would benefit from some landmark trees. Magdalen St. and the west end of Barrack St. would be greatly enhanced by some small scale greening and street trees where there is space. Maudlyn Rd, and Hythe Quay might accommodate some street trees. St Andrew's Ave east side would benefit from shrub planting to create a buffer between the footpath and vehicular traffic.
	c) Roman Walls & Town Centre Public Realm improvements.
4.4) North Colchester Growth Area	a) Conserve and enhance the landscape and historic character setting of Mile End, and landscape framework, as well as creating a new landscape setting for future development, including woodland belts, new SuDS, wetland elements and semi natural greenspace.
	b) Create a linked network of semi-natural spaces and pocket woodlands for the benefit of people and wildlife.
	c) Provision of POS/Sports and Recreation facilities in North Growth Area.
	d) Maximise opportunities for SUDS – linking into the Colne Valley (create new balancing ponds and wetlands of say 2-4ha area).
	e) Access project – walking/cycling routes into Colchester (outline project requiring more detailed consideration as part of the masterplanning of North Colchester Growth Area).
Zone 5: Roman River Valley (links to Essex Living Landscape 68 – Roman River Complex)	

Project Number	Description
5.1) Woodland Necklace	a) Create new woodland to help reduce woodland fragmentation to the south and east of Colchester
	b) Enhance biodiversity throughout the woodland areas
	c) Explore opportunities to increase access and accessibility to woodland (permissive paths)
Zone 6: Southern Farmland Zone (link to Essex Living Landscape 67: Birch Complex)	
6.2) Communal Greening Project	c) POS/Sports and Recreation facilities in Tiptree
Zone 7: Coastal Zone (links to Essex Living Landscape 70: Colne Estuary)	
7.1) Mersea Island Green Chain	a) Creation of a buffer adjacent to the shoreline around Mersea Island to provide flood alleviation, habitat provision, and create pockets of accessible greenspace which are linked together by an access route. Habitat creation should be part of and complementary to the wider Shoreline Management Plan proposals (managed realignment) being pursued by the Environment Agency.
LINEAR ROUTES The following GI projects which relate to the provision of access and connections, primarily for people have also been prioritised.	
L2: Dedham – Colchester Town – Ardleigh Reservoir Multi User Route	
L4: Garrison to Abberton Reservoir	

- 4.4 The fact that a project has not been accorded the highest priority does not mean it should be dismissed. While in the shorter term they may be less achievable, every effort should be directed to securing such projects as part of the long term programme of growth in the borough. If opportunities arise to bring forward projects identified as lower priority in the main GI Strategy then they should be implemented. The value of having a GI strategy in place is to allow individual projects to fit into and contribute to a bigger overall GI network.
- 4.5 Further information on the proposed Green Infrastructure Network and all supporting recommendations can be found in the full Green Infrastructure Report.

NEXT STEPS

- 4.6 The following alternatives are recommended in order to take forward green infrastructure delivery within the Borough:
- Creation of a dedicated Green Infrastructure Delivery Officer role (subject to resources – this may be a desirable longer term aspiration);
 - Taking GI delivery forward through existing mechanisms, also working with the council's countryside, ecological and arboricultural officers, or;
 - Convene a Green Infrastructure Advisory and Delivery Panel, consisting of officers from the Borough and County councils and key stakeholders such as the AONB Partnership, the Green Light Trust, Natural England, the Essex Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and relevant local groups such as Parish Councils and local green groups, such as Transition Colchester.
- 4.7 Whichever approaches are selected, clearly there will be a need for close working with other organisations with parallel interests and objectives. By doing this and through intelligent use of existing mechanisms and processes, a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound) approach could be achieved to GI delivery in the Borough, as described below.

A recommended approach for delivery of GI within Colchester Borough:

- Actively promote green infrastructure, liaising with key members of the Local Strategic Partnership (such as those who represent environmental and recreational interests), to ensure that green infrastructure contributes to the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework;
- Preparation and implementation of a Communications Strategy for green infrastructure in the Borough, to raise public awareness and avoid any internal conflicts with any other Council spatial planning objectives. As part of this, identify appropriate opportunities to promote, advertise and brand key GI projects or those with an important community and regeneration focus, to engender greater public support and ownership, as well as embedding positive informal management/stewardship, in addition to any more formal management structures identified;
- In this context, advise and assist a nominated green infrastructure

'champion', who should ideally be a Council member, to ensure greater potential for 'buy in' from members;

- Develop a checklist by which policies and proposals can be evaluated in relation to green infrastructure;
- Evaluate development proposals as they relate to green infrastructure against green infrastructure zones and component projects in the Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- Identification of constraints, challenges and potential conflicts of interest in relation to practical delivery, making early links with appropriate bodies (e.g. in relation to ecological advice and flood risk etc);
- As a consultee, comment on relevant planning applications through the pre application and application processes, using the proposed GI Network;
- Ensure that developers and others bringing forward green infrastructure not only take account of the key messages in relation to the green infrastructure zones and component projects, but that they also identify sustainable, resourced mechanisms for long term governance to deliver design intentions and desired environmental outcomes;
- Make appropriate links with future funding partners identified within the short listed projects, in relation to co ordination of funding bids, and also in making links with adjacent authorities for projects on the authority boundary, or that share common objectives with those in adjacent GI Strategies;
- Liaise with the relevant Local Strategic Partners, noting and using where appropriate existing processes that may be of relevance to GI delivery, for reasons of efficiency and avoiding duplication of work;
- Seek to promote links between proposed GI projects and other appropriate agendas in the Borough, such as Health Walks programmes (e.g. those in High Woods Country Park);
- Positively linking GI to the Localism Agenda: Liaison with appropriate community representatives e.g. local green groups, allotment societies, 'Friends of' Groups and Parish Councils. Also with local schools groups and in making links to the Green Light Trust (for

environmental education projects and those with a community focus);

- Develop appropriate briefs for masterplanning and detailed design services in relation to the projects within the shortlist;
- Create an audit trail of appropriate monitoring mechanisms in relation to green infrastructure delivery, making use of existing tools such as site inspections to adoption, and visitor surveys. The purpose should be to monitor performance of the green infrastructure proposals in relation to the environmental functions, to inform and refine future iterations of the spatial plan for the Borough;
- Within the Council, convene regular updates, meetings and opportunities for progress reporting during the life of the GI Plan and wider spatial plan, to disseminate results, good practice and lessons learned.