

## **North Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure**

Local Framework Study for Corby

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Final report by SQW, April 2005

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## Foreword

This document sets out the vision and process for establishing a local green infrastructure framework for Corby set within the Strategic framework that has been developed for North Northamptonshire (Rockingham Forest area).

Green Infrastructure comprises a network of multifunctional greenspace set within, and contributing to a high quality natural and built environment. It is an essential requirement for the enhancement of quality of life, for existing and future generations, and an integral element in the delivery of 'liveability' for sustainable communities. Its provision, and importantly, its connectivity is relevant at every level from county wide rural landscapes down to a local level within the larger urban as well as small rural settlements.

The concept and importance of green infrastructure is endorsed in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy. This statutory document is committed to the provision of GI as an integral part of the planned development and growth within the Sub-Region ensuring that the new and expanding communities can access and enjoy the benefits of a network of green space from doorstep to countryside.

To meet these aspirations, the ODPM supported River Nene Regional Park Initiative, in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council, The Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Sport England, and the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund commissioned and funded a study of green infrastructure provision across the county. The first stage of the study focused on the North Northamptonshire LDV (Rockingham Forest area) and growth settlements. It identified a Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework for North Northamptonshire, and defined a network of interconnecting sub regional and local corridors linking many of the principal settlements. This second stage takes the process forward to a more detailed level, and examines the settlement of Corby, as a pilot study. The identification of a Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby will provide the basis for testing the approach and methodology, and interrelationship between the Local and Strategic levels of GI provision.

The selection of Corby as the pilot for the Local Green Infrastructure Framework study is particularly appropriate as it coincides with a period of planned population growth and economic regeneration within the town, which is affirmed in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy. In early 2003, prior to the preparation of the Strategy, the Catalyst Corby Urban Regeneration Company issued 'The Regeneration Framework' which set out an ambitious development and regeneration plan for the town. Since then, however, new statutory planning procedures have been introduced, and the form and direction of Corby's growth and associated regeneration will now be determined by Northamptonshire Together, the LDV tasked with implementing the growth agenda for the area, and which includes Corby Borough Council. Building on the Core Spatial Strategy, and the 'North Northamptonshire Plan', Corby Borough Council will establish a Local Development Framework (LDF) that incorporates a Proposals Map that sets out in more detail the spatial representation of current and future needs and the accommodation of growth targets. It will also take account of comprehensive public consultation and community involvement that is now a statutory requirement of the planning procedure. Catalyst Corby's regeneration aspirations and assumptions will be re-examined as part of this process

As part of the regeneration of Corby, there is an aspiration to enhance the town's environment and ensure a better quality of life for its communities. The identification of a network of multifunctional green infrastructure corridors leading into and through the town will make an essential contribution to a strategic vision for the town's long term development. Moreover, it can provide a flagship for demonstrating how the principles of Green Infrastructure can be put

into practice and applied in due course to other growth towns within Northamptonshire. In parallel with this, there is also the opportunity to integrate the findings into the emerging Core Spatial Strategy and Plan for Northamptonshire Together, the Local Delivery Vehicle for North Northamptonshire, and the more detailed Local Development Documents that form part of Corby Borough Council's LDF.

## Acknowledgements

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of Study

The concept of Green Infrastructure, and the commitment to its delivery, is endorsed in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands, and specifically in the Milton Keynes & South Midlands (MKSM) Sub-Regional Strategy.

In response to this commitment, the Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure (GI) Project has identified a Strategic Framework of green infrastructure for North Northamptonshire. This report and findings forms part of the wider strategic project, but is focused on the growth settlement of Corby. Its principal purpose is to define a Local Green Infrastructure Framework for the town and its setting that is fully integrated with the Sub Regional Strategic Framework, but also address local conditions, opportunities and constraints.

The Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework study will act as a demonstrator for the process of determining and delivering green infrastructure at a settlement level, including the surrounding countryside that forms the setting to the town. This pilot study will also develop methodologies and demonstrate the application of new techniques and approaches. Subject to the outcome of the Corby study, and the availability of match funding, it is intended that Local Green Infrastructure studies will be undertaken for the remaining growth settlements in Northamptonshire.

Within the context of Corby, the Local Green Infrastructure Framework will have regard for the character and diversity of the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage resource of the settlement and its surroundings, and support the need to respect and enrich local distinctiveness. It will also consider the socio-economic conditions within different parts of the town, and how these can inform the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure.

The findings of the study will act as an 'enabler' and provide the context for the identification of areas for green infrastructure enhancement, improved connectivity and the creation of new green infrastructure in areas of low provision. It will form an integral part of the process of planned growth, development and regeneration that is underway within and surrounding the settlement.

In addition to the wider strategic study, the findings of this Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby is well timed to inform the preparation of the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Plan, and at a more local level, the Corby Borough LDF which will be focused on more detailed issues and policies relevant to the Borough, including Area Action Plans.

### 1.2 Scope of the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework Study

In order to define the physical limit of the study area, an assessment of Corby and its area of influence was undertaken at an early stage. The physical and visual relationship of the town with the wider rural landscape was examined, together with its geographical connectivity with the neighbouring growth town of Kettering. The study area was defined as a 2.5km catchment area beyond the existing edge of Corby. It formed an appropriate limit to the study area as it accommodated the setting of the town and zone of visual influence but also retained a geographic separation from Kettering. The 2.5 km limit was also tested against the neighbouring growth towns of Kettering and Wellingborough and found to be a compatible limit for future potential Local Green Infrastructure studies. The extent of the study area enabled two distinct but complementary levels of assessment to be identified for the study, comprising 'Corby Town' and 'Corby Doorstep', the latter embracing the wider setting and 'doorstep countryside' that surrounds the town.

To inform this local level of assessment, the study undertook a comprehensive examination of the baseline conditions and local assets, in conjunction with wide consultation and workshop engagement. Following on from this, the baseline data was analysed through a series of



separate but interlinked themes, focusing on key assets. The resulting interpretative mapping identified key opportunities and synergies, and a network of potential green infrastructure corridors. During this process the findings of the wider strategic study were also considered, to ensure that the network of Sub Regional and Local Strategic corridors fully integrated with and informed the emerging Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby.

The emerging Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby is aspirational and represents a long term vision for the town over the next 20 - 30 years. It provides a framework within which future projects and initiatives can be established and progressively strengthen the integrity and physical presence of the corridors. Nevertheless, even at this early stage there are specific sites and opportunities that can be identified which will form the first stages of a developing an interconnected multi functional greenspace system that will enrich and enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents of Corby, ultimately connecting them from their dwelling through the local to the sub-regional GI network within the wider surrounding countryside.

### 1.3 Structure of the Report

This report forms the second part of the Phase 1 Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure Project and presents a Local Framework for Corby. It is set out in five sections and supported by a series of Figures that illustrate delivery principles and methodology for Green Infrastructure in Corby and its immediate setting, the development proposals, and the Local Green Infrastructure Framework Plan for Corby. For completion, the principal baseline and interpretative mapping sets that have been key to informing the findings are included in separate Appendices.

**Section 1**, comprising this section, introduces the project, and sets out its purpose and scope. It also summarises the Methodology for the project.

**Section 2** describes the background to the study, commencing with a brief review of the national and regional strategies for Green infrastructure and Planning Context. It then looks at the Local Planning Context in more detail in relation to Corby, and the relationship of green infrastructure to this emerging planning framework as well as the proposed Strategic Green Infrastructure Network that has been developed within the wider North Northamptonshire study.

**Section 3** looks at the Local Context of Corby. In order to set the scene, a brief historical review of Corby's development is provided, followed by an introduction to the setting and development of the settlement form. An analysis of the urban form and setting of Corby is considered further in Section 4. Social and economic issues are also briefly considered as these also contribute to the unique character of Corby, distinguishing it from other Northamptonshire towns. The section also considers the proposed growth within the town, as confirmed in the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy, and the key players and initiatives that will be involved in this process.

**Section 4** comprises an examination and analysis of the baseline resource within Corby and its Study Area to inform the emerging Local Green Infrastructure Framework. In view of the complexity of the data, the evaluation has been considered within a number of Local Themes, each of which have an important role in contributing to the multi-functional nature of green infrastructure. For consistency and correlation with the North Northamptonshire GI Strategic Framework study, these principally correspond with the Strategic Themes. Further themes have been introduced, however, to specifically address issues relevant to Corby. These comprise urban form, socio-economic and health issues and development initiatives and proposals. Within each theme, the resource is summarised followed by the information sources. The subsequent analysis and interpretation of this complex range of data, supported by the comprehensive GIS mapped data, enables both general, and where appropriate, specific opportunities to be identified, to further inform the determination of a Local Green Infrastructure Framework. The key baseline data, termed Baseline Mapping, is summarised in the maps presented in Appendix 1.

For some of the Local Themes, specific methodologies have been developed, to enable the identification of 'gaps' or 'missing links' in the existing Green Infrastructure resource. This critical analysis stage is illustrated where relevant by Interpretative Mapping which is included in Appendix 2. Through this analysis, opportunities are identified for the creation or enhancement, as well as protection of the resource, so as to form part of a comprehensive Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby.

**Section 5** commences with an explanation of the emerging Local Green Infrastructure Framework Plans generally, and specifically for Corby. General delivery principles are also examined followed by opportunities for delivery on the ground, with a review of potential projects. Finally areas for further work are also considered.

#### 1.4 Summary of Methodology

The key stages of the Phase 1 Local Green Infrastructure Framework study, and constituent elements, are set out below, and also illustrated as an integral part of the process in the Flow Diagram shown on Figure 3.

<b>Stage 1</b>	<p>Project Inception and Development of Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project set up and inaugural meeting of the Corby Sub Group (CSG);</li> <li>• Development of the methodology for the project; and</li> <li>• Agreement of the study area, methodology, scope of work, key stages and programme with the CSG.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<p>Initial Consultation and Research</p> <p>Consultations with the Corby Sub Group and research of data and information sourcing from key stakeholders, and statutory and non statutory organisations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one consultations with the CSG, Catalyst Corby and Key Stakeholders, including major developer and landowner interests;</li> <li>• Consultation with wider stakeholders, primarily by email and telephone;</li> <li>• Background research and information collation into a project library &amp; data base;</li> <li>• Review and incorporation of Rockingham Forest Trust material into study.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3</b>	<p>Detailed Data Collation, Audit and Mapping of Corby and its Doorstep Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collation, audit and mapping (refer to Baseline Mapping included in Appendix 1 for key baseline mapping, Figures 1.1-1.8 inclusive)</li> <li>• Detailed analysis of data for Corby and the doorstep area in accordance with the defined range of Local Themes to cover the following topic areas: Settlement Analysis; Environmental Character; Hydrology; Designated Nature Conservation Sites and Biodiversity; Heritage and Culture; Recreation and Leisure; Access and Movement; Rockingham Forest; Community Resources; Open Space Resource; Potential Development Areas; Transportation / Service Infrastructure and Connections; Minerals and Waste; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collation of published information and data sets into a comprehensive database system and project library.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<p>Baseline Review Workshop</p> <p>Setting up and managing of Workshop for CSG and Key Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of project and baseline findings;</li> <li>• Verification of baseline mapping by CSG / stakeholders and amended as required;</li> <li>• Identification of key issues and objectives through engagement with stakeholders;</li> <li>• Application of the Countryside Agency's Quality of Life Capital Approach as an integral part of the Workshop to identify 'What Matters and Why?'</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 5</b>	<p>Analysis and Interpretation, based on Key Baseline Mapping included in Appendix 1, Figures 1.1-1.8 inclusive, and Interpretative Mapping included in Appendix 2, Figures 2.1-2.6 inclusive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of key existing resource assets and their mapping, and new emerging assets associated with development proposals; analysis and interpretation of the baseline resource and key assets, using 'Local Strategic Themes' as a framework for the approach;</li> <li>• Examination of the socio-economic context of Corby of relevance to the study in association with SQW Sub Consultants to encompass a review of issues including geographical distribution on a ward basis of crime incidence, employment, health, car ownership; and summary Indices of Multiple Deprivation;</li> <li>• Specific examination of the biodiversity resource and testing of English Nature's recommendations and guidance in respect of the Accessible Natural Greenspace Targets (ANGST) model, and evaluation of provision;</li> <li>• Identification of opportunities and constraints relevant to Green Infrastructure provision based on Local Strategic Themes;</li> <li>• Separate detailed examination using interpretative mapping techniques of further Themes comprising: Greenspace , Access and Movement Network, and Heritage and Culture assets and their distribution;</li> <li>• Further interpretative mapping to identify potential 'gaps' in the resource and determination of where there is potential for the existing Green Infrastructure network to be enhanced through proposed links /resource creation; and</li> <li>• Overlay of interpretative mapping to create a composite plan to form the basis of the emerging Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Stage 6</b></p>	<p>Green Infrastructure Framework Review Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of first draft Green Infrastructure Framework Plan;</li> <li>• Setting up and running of Framework Review Workshop with CSG and stakeholders; explanation of rationale and engagement of workshop attendees in further input and feedback on amendments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 7</b></p>	<p>Green Infrastructure Reporting and production of Local GI Framework Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of workshop findings, and further review of process and local application;</li> <li>• Finalisation of supporting plans for inclusion with report, to include further interpretative mapping exercises and the development of key corridor alignment considerations to guide the development of the Final Corby Green Infrastructure Framework Plan. Refinement and adjustment of the Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework to meet the more detailed local findings and opportunities;</li> </ul> <p>Preparation of supporting report to include detailed review of analysis and interpretation stage of the Local Themes; introduction and examination of the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework; Opportunities for Delivery; and potential Green Infrastructure projects; and potential areas for further work.</p>

## 2.0 Study Background

### 2.1 Green Infrastructure: National and Regional Strategies and Planning Context

National and regional strategies in respect of green infrastructure are reviewed in detail in Section 1.3 of the Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure Strategic Framework report. This sets out the wider strategic and planning context. In respect of North Northamptonshire, and the delivery of a Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby, the key planning context is embodied in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands. For completion the principal references to green infrastructure and the basis for its provision are included below.

#### 2.1.1 Regional Spatial Strategy and the MKSM Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy

The '*Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy*', sets out the spatial framework and objectives for sustainable communities within the sub-region, with planned growth focused on the realisation of a flourishing economy, housing delivery, and social and communications infrastructure. The *Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands* (RSS8), (March 2005), incorporating the *MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy*, formally identified the requirement for the provision of 'green infrastructure'.

The MKSM Strategy has six principal objectives, one of which is:

'To ensure that development contributes to an improved environment ....protecting and enhancing environmental assets (including landscape and biodiversity) and providing greenspace and related infrastructure (green infrastructure)';

Paragraph 52 of the document also states:

*'The provision of green infrastructure needs to be addressed in planning development throughout the Sub-Region so as to ensure a net gain to meet the needs generated by growth and, where relevant, help to address existing deficiencies. This may take the form of protection, enhancement or extension of existing resources or the provision of new or replacement facilities. Green infrastructure includes recreational and sports facilities, pathways and routes, natural and historic sites, canals and water spaces, as well as accessible countryside. A network of multi-function green spaces in urban areas, the countryside in and around towns and the wider countryside needs to be established. It will also be important that the character and diversity of the wider countryside is protected and, wherever possible, enhanced.'*

Green Infrastructure is therefore firmly embedded into the RSS and at every tier from a strategic sub regional level down to local communities.

### 2.2 Local Planning Context

The development of a Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby must be considered in the context of the statutory changes to the planning system, and the programme of regeneration and growth that is in now underway within Corby, linked to its identification as a growth town in the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy.

The RSS8 has confirmed that 52,100 new homes will need to be accommodated within North Northamptonshire in the period 2001 to 2021. Much of this growth, together with a supporting infrastructure of services and facilities, will take place at the three neighbouring growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. Beyond this period to 2031, more growth is envisaged with the prospect of a further 28,000 homes to be provided within the towns, with 16,000 homes allocated for Corby. This signifies another period of dynamic change and further growth for Corby and an extension of the form and footprint of the town.

The key documents and issues that inform this period of change are considered below.

### 2.2.1 Corby Borough Local Plan and emerging North Northamptonshire Local Development Framework (LDF)

The Corby Borough Local Plan, Adopted June 1997 is the current statutory plan for Corby and sets out the policies and proposals for the town. Since the adoption of Alteration 1 for the period 1988 to 2006, there has been a major change in the statutory planning system. Corby Borough Council now forms part of a Joint Planning Unit for North Northamptonshire and is working towards a Joint LDF which will replace the current Local Plan. The findings of the Strategic Green Infrastructure study will be integrated into the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy. Similarly, the more detailed Green Infrastructure Framework findings for Corby have the potential to be integrated into emerging Local Development Documents, including Area Action Plans and Site Specific Proposals for land within Corby Borough.

### 2.2.2 Corby's Environmental Resource

With such levels of change taking place, a full consideration of the town's environmental resource and the establishment of a long term Vision for its future development is an essential part of this process of change. This is particularly pertinent in the context of current Government policy in respect of delivering Sustainable Communities and the need to achieve a better quality of life.

Corby's environmental resource, both within the town and in the wider Corby doorstep landscape that forms its setting, is rich and varied, and makes a major contribution to its unique sense of place. Whether it is the quality of the public realm within the town centre, the character of the housing or business environment and accessibility to greenspaces, or the integration of the transport network including walking and cycling networks and accessibility; each of these demand that environmental issues are appropriately and comprehensively considered and form an integral part of the town's planned growth.

The emerging Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework will go some way to beginning the process of defining a more comprehensive Environmental Strategy for the Town. As a 'local strategic level' study, it is intended to provide the framework for more detailed studies, notably a PPG17 Assessment and Greenspace Strategy. It should also steer related studies such as Public Realm initiatives at the local / neighbourhood level.

### 2.2.3 Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnership

A Community Strategy for Corby has been prepared which covers the period 2003 - 2008. The Local Strategic Partnership who drew up the Strategy share a common Vision for the town and the whole Borough, and support the need to create positive change. The Strategy includes a number of Strategic Aims, one of which includes Environment, which states:

*'Create an area of delightful greenscape and attractive living areas with enhanced public transport through sustainable development of the urban environment and conservation of the natural environment.'*

Although the concept of Green Infrastructure had not been developed within Northamptonshire at the time that the Strategy was prepared, the wider principles underlying the Environment Strategic Aim concur with the concept of green infrastructure.

The Community Strategy is to be reviewed by Corby Borough Council in conjunction with the preparation of the Corby LDF.

### 2.2.4 Catalyst Corby and the Regeneration Framework

Catalyst Corby was the first of the Urban Regeneration Companies to be launched by the Government. It was established with the principal purpose of leading and securing the changes necessary to invigorate the town, through public and private sector partnership working. Since then, with the confirmation of Corby as a growth town through the MKSM Sub-Regional

Strategy, further underlines the role of Catalyst Corby to work in partnership with Corby Borough Council. As planning authority, however, Corby Borough Council will be responsible for the statutory plans that will guide the growth of the town.

The Regeneration Framework, launched in January 2003, set out the Vision and Strategy for delivering the physical, cultural and social changes, and is based around five interlinked components. These comprise: the Corby Central Framework encompassing an ambitious programme to create a vibrant heart to the town; a New Housing Strategy with five urban extension areas identified on the periphery of Corby; a Housing Regeneration Strategy with substantial enhancements of the physical and social environment of existing housing areas; an Economic Strategy focused on the delivery of a diversified and thriving economic base with wider employment and training opportunities; and a Transport Strategy to provide for the changing transport and infrastructure needs to serve and integrate with Corby's growth and development.

Each of these interlinked components makes reference to the importance of the environment as an integral part of delivering these changes. Nevertheless, it is significant that this radical and ambitious Regeneration Framework does not include a separate Environmental Strategy for the Town.

#### **2.2.5 Rockingham Forest Trust and Greenspace Strategy**

The Rockingham Forest Trust (RFT) has worked closely with Corby Borough Council to develop a Corby Borough Greenspace Programme for the town, and has prepared a Framework Document Summary. A survey has been undertaken to examine and record all of the greenspaces, and report on their condition. At present, the study has not been fully completed. Nevertheless, the partial findings have provided a valuable source of information for the Corby Green Infrastructure study, and will provide core information for the emerging PPG 17 study which is in progress.

#### **2.2.6 County Wildlife Site Reporting: Local Wildlife Trust and English Nature**

Corby is fortunate in the extent of greenspace and woodland within as well as on the perimeter of the urban areas, many of which have a high biodiversity value. Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites are located within the heart of Corby, as well as in the surrounding area, principally associated with areas of ancient woodland and calcareous grassland. The Local Wildlife Trust, in conjunction with English Nature, has an important role in managing the nature reserves. The Trust is also undertaking a wider review of existing and potential new County Wildlife Sites, a number of which are likely to be identified within the Corby doorstep area.

### **2.3 Strategic Green Infrastructure Context**

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework for North Northamptonshire sets out proposals for a network of multifunctional corridors based on the interrelationship and opportunities related to a series of Strategic Themes. The Strategic Corridors tier down to a local level, however, so the Local Corby study draws from these strategic findings and interprets them at a more detailed level. The following corridors link into Corby; these will be further developed and examined in relation to the local study.

#### **2.3.1 Sub Regional Corridors**

- Ise Valley
- Jurassic Way
- Willow Brook
- Harper's Brook

2.3.2 Local Strategic Corridors

- Stoke Albany –Little Albany
- Boughton Park – Titchmarsh Wood
- Geddington – Stanion
- Stanion Deene Park
- Gretton- Harvingworth (Jurassic Way)
- Welland Valley



## 3.0 Local Context

### 3.1 Introduction: What makes Corby Distinctive?

Corby has a strong sense of place. Located on a broad plateau within the wider Rockingham Forest, its urban form is balanced against the extensive network of mature ancient woodlands and plantations that extend up to and visually contain many parts of the town, as well as within the settlement. Beyond the built area, the surrounding rural landscape with its mosaic of woodlands, hedged fields, and an encircling necklace of stone villages and historic parkland estates, all contribute to an attractive and memorable setting. The underlying geology is fundamental in defining Corby's special character. As well as determining the grain and elevation of the landform, and hence the wider setting of the town, the availability of rich ironstone deposits within the Middle Jurassic rocks that underlie the area have been the catalyst for Corby's remarkable growth and form.

### 3.2 Transformations

Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Corby has witnessed a series of startling transformations, firstly from a small stone built Northamptonshire village to a boom steel town during the 1930s and then a New Town in the 1950s with associated planned expansion. Following massive unemployment and decline in the 1980s after the closure of the Steel Works, further growth and reconfiguration has taken place in more recent decades. Its dynamic and resilient nature, embodied in the town's motto of 'Deeds not Words', is evident in the town's ability to re-invent itself and come through these challenging times. Today, Corby is a lively commercial manufacturing and distribution centre with a population of around 55,000. 90% of the population of Corby Borough live in the town itself, emphasising the contrast between the bustling town and the peaceful, rural landscape on its doorstep

Corby is now poised to undergo yet another transformation as it looks to the future as one of the principal growth towns in Northamptonshire. There are major opportunities for Green infrastructure to integrate with this new growth and ensure that a network of multifunctional greenspace responds to both the existing assets and well as delivering new networks that enhance liveability and a sense of place for its communities.

### 3.3 Physical and Cultural Dimensions

The development of a Green Infrastructure Framework for the Corby area needs to be based on a clear understanding of origins of the character and form of the settlement and its setting, as well as the historical associations that are an intrinsic part of its local identity. The study has therefore reviewed the physical and cultural assets of the town and wider doorstep area, and the broad development of the settlement and its urban form.

#### 3.3.1 Geology

The underlying geology is inextricably linked to Corby's character and setting, as well as its economic development. Although largely masked by extensive deposits of boulder clay, the town overlies the great Jurassic stone belt that extends across the county. Locally the Northampton Sand Formation, the oldest rock of the Inferior Oolite Group, underlies much of the area together with exposures of the younger Grantham Formation and the Upper Lincolnshire Limestone Formation, in the vicinity of Stanion and Weldon respectively. The Corby Ironstone Member, the lowest division of the Northampton Sand Formation, is present in the Corby area and has been key to the town's historical development yielding rich supplies of iron ore that have supported the industrial development of the town and periods of prosperity and growth. Although the ironstone has now been completely worked, and many of the quarries reclaimed, the legacy of some of the workings are still evident as 'gulleys'.

The Northampton Sand and the Lincolnshire Limestone Formations have provided important sources of building stone which is reflected in the local vernacular. The stone built villages that encircle Corby, as well as the vernacular stone buildings that are prevalent within its historic core, display a unified and distinctive building style emanating from the rich geological resource. These vary according to the stone source; thus Rockingham is predominantly constructed in the warm brown Northampton Sand, in contrast to Weldon with the paler creamy hues of the Lincolnshire Limestone.

### 3.3.2 Landform

Physiographically, the broad stone belt is represented as an extensive and gently undulating plateau dissected by the upper reaches and headwaters of east west flowing Harper's Brook and Willow Brook, and smaller tributaries such as Gretton Brook. Broad views across this plateau are intercepted by the extensive areas of woodland that characterise Rockingham Forest. Immediately to the north west of Corby the land falls steeply down to the Welland Valley. The extensive areas of woodland on and above the valley slopes separate Corby physically and visually from the Welland Valley.

### 3.3.3 Origins and the Essence of Corby

The name Corby derives from the Old Norse 'Koriby'. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century a group of Danish invaders, led by Kori, settled in the area and established 'Kori's by' (Kori's homestead). By 1086 the spelling was Corbei or Corbie which also means raven. This has perpetuated to current times, as the Raven forms the crest of the Town Arms. Further references to the town's history are also symbolised on the Arms. Oak leaves and Saxon crowns represent the old forest and Corby's status as an ancient Royal manor, and a gad of steel held in the raven's claw is linked to the town's industrial past and the role of iron and steel manufacturing in its growth and economy.

### 3.3.4 The Legacy of Iron Ore

Iron ore lies at the heart of the Corby's history. Deposits were excavated and worked before the Romans, who also had an ironworks in the vicinity of the town. These rich deposits continued to be used over a long period. Royal furnaces, or 'ferraria', were set up at nearby Geddington and Gretton from the time of Edward the Confessor's reign to that of Henry III, and the Domesday Book names the 'Manor of Corbei' as an iron producing centre. During the Saxon period charcoal smelting works were set up in Rockingham Forest where wood was abundant. Rockingham Castle, built by the Normans, functioned as a military headquarters and hunting lodge but was also as an inspection point for the Royal ironworks. The smelting stopped when wood needed to be conserved for building Tudor ships, and was mostly forgotten for three hundred years. This was set to change, however, when iron ore deposits were revealed in the cuttings excavated to construct the Midlands Railway in the 1880s.

### 3.3.5 Twentieth Century Changes: A Dynamic Settlement

Up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Corby was a typical stone built Northamptonshire village, with a modest population of 860 recorded in 1851. Following the 'rediscovery' of iron ore, quarries were opened up and by 1910, when Corby had its own ironstone works and blast furnaces, the process of change and transformation of the town had begun in earnest. In the 1930s, Stewarts and Lloyds constructed the most advanced steel plant in Europe, manufacturing tubes for the world's markets. To meet the rapid rise in the industrial base of the town, workers flooded into Corby from all over Britain, and as early as 1934 the first contingent from Scotland arrived to form a large proportion of the new population.

The steel works continued to flourish and by 1950 Corby was designated a New Town. The Development Corporation was charged with providing housing, and services to cater for the rapidly expanding population, which in the following twenty years more than trebled to 49,000. Extensive house building, the New Town shopping complex, and civic buildings took place

during this period. 1980 was a major turning point for Corby, however, when British Steel announced the closure of the Corby Steel Works resulting in the loss of the town's principal employment base. So began a period of massive unemployment and decline in the town's economy.

Following the winding up of the Development Corporation, the former Corby District Council took over the responsibility for the planning and regeneration of the town. The primary aim of the first Draft Local Plan in 1981 was the securing of land for new employment sites and job creation. Since this period Corby has witnessed a dramatic recovery aided by the arrival of large companies such as RS Components, and Oxford University Press. These have provided new and much needed opportunities for employment, and a return of confidence.

### **3.4 Proposed Growth and Development Proposals**

Corby is poised to accommodate further growth and dynamic change, with its confirmation as one of the Growth Areas in the MKSM Sub Regional Strategy. To achieve the ODPM's aspirations for Corby, as well as the other growth towns within North Northamptonshire, it must meet the challenge of demonstrating its ability to become a 'Sustainable Community'. Delivering a better quality of life, which includes meeting environmental objectives, are inherent in the principles underpinning Green Infrastructure.

The debate concerning the potential directions of growth for Corby, and accommodation of new residential and economic development, and associated infrastructure and regeneration of the town, will be determined through the new planning procedures that are now in place, and as detailed in PPS12. In particular, the process will take account of the Government's emphasis on priority for the redevelopment of previously developed land within urban areas. The earlier work undertaken in association with the Catalyst Corby Regeneration Framework and Major Growth Options Study informed the MKSM Sub Regional Strategy. The assumptions and basis for the determination of patterns of growth set out in these studies will now be re-examined in the context of government policy, the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy, and at a more detailed level, the emerging Proposals Map for Corby, AAPs, and site specific policies, which together will form part of Corby's LDF.

The future pattern of this growth is important in view of its potential to contribute to a wider and interconnected network of green infrastructure. At present the only confirmed direction of growth comprises Oakley Vale on the southern perimeter of the town, which is now under construction.

Other potential development areas on the perimeter of Corby comprise Prior's Hall to the east; the land west of Stanion (on land allocated as Site R8 on the adopted Corby Local Plan); land east of Weldon at Weldon Park; and Stanion Plantation. All of these sites are subject to current planning applications, but are not approved. They will therefore be considered within the wider statutory process of determining the appropriate locations for future growth as part of the emerging LDF. The various sites and planning status are shown on Appendix 2.1.1.

### **3.5 Corby Key Players and Initiatives**

Numerous partners and organisations are committed to the Vision for an expanded and thriving Corby, with the core partners and drivers represented by Corby Borough Council and Catalyst Corby. The Corby Community Strategy (2003 - 2008) identifies a wide range of organisations and interest groups, together with relevant plans and strategies covering many topic areas. These address issues of relevance to Corby and cover the whole spectrum of social, environmental and economic issues.

The key partners together with these other organisations and stakeholders form a powerful and motivated group that are working towards the delivery of the shared Vision for Corby. In view of

the multifunctional nature of Green Infrastructure, all of these partners and strategies will benefit from the long term aim to establish a comprehensive Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby. It is therefore essential that all partners are fully committed to the principle of Green Infrastructure and its delivery.

## 4.0 The Resource: Analysis and Interpretation

### 4.1 Introduction to the Local Themes

In order to assess the wealth of environmental, cultural and social data that has been amassed for the Green Infrastructure Assessment, and in accordance with the methodology established for undertaking Green Infrastructure projects in the county, discrete Local Themes have been established. These, on the whole, replicate the themes established at the Strategic Green Infrastructure scale but represent a finer resolution of mapping and interrogation. As a result, the mapping is undertaken at a larger scale (1:60,000 and 1:30,000) and the analysis and identification of opportunities is more refined to accurately reflect local considerations for Corby town and the wider 'doorstep' landscape that is encompassed within the defined study area.

The Themes that are considered in the Analysis and Interpretation of the Resource are summarised below. In order to set the framework for this study that is focused on the settlement of Corby, Existing Land Use and Urban Form is considered first followed by a series of themes that address the natural followed by cultural and human resources.

- Settlement Analysis
- Environmental Character
- Hydrology
- Biodiversity
- Heritage and Culture
- Greenspace Resource
- Access and Movement
- Social, Economic and Health
- Development Initiatives and Proposals

## 4.2 Settlement Analysis

### 4.2.1 Principal Sources

Appendix 2: Interpretative Mapping

Urban Analysis Plans:

- Figure 2.1.1 Settlement Form: Existing and Proposed Development
- Figure 2.1.2 Settlement and Woodland
- Figure 2.1.3 Settlement Evolution
- Figure 2.1.4 Visual Connectivity and Landmarks
- Figure 2.1.5 Urban Rural Interface
- Figure 2.1.6 Movement, Nodes and Gateways
- Appendix 2.4 Corby Heritage and Culture (Rockingham Forest Trust Data /historic analysis)

### 4.2.2 The Resource

- The historic core of old Corby consists of a small collection of stone and brick cottages and the 13<sup>th</sup> century church. Although this is a significant asset, its influence on townscape character is very local.
- Corby has seen marked growth since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the arrival of the steel works and railway. During the 1930s Stewart and Lloyds, a Scottish firm acquired the assets of several local industries and located a major production plant in the eastern part of the town. The Company established a garden suburb to house workers and their families (now the Lloyds Conservation Area).
- Corby was designated as a New Town in 1950 to provide better quality housing for the rising population and employees at the new steel works. Subsequent growth led to a strong zonation of land uses within the town, as shown on plan 2.1.3.
- Iron industries declined in the 1970s and the steel works closed in 1980. The heavy industrial base has been replaced other industrial premises and the town is now a major distribution centre. It is the base for over 60 foreign owned companies with local industries including food and drink, print and packaging, motor sport and engineering and logistics and distribution. This has created typical 'big shed' townscapes in discrete areas of Corby, notably on the southern fringe of the town and at Euro Hub.
- Housing stock associated with the Corby New Town expansion is showing signs of decline and decay, such as the Radburn estates of the Kingswood area. Some areas display significant decline and these correlate with areas of the town that display poorer scores in the socio economic analysis (see section 4.9). The emerging LDF will include the areas of declining housing stock as housing renewal areas, and there is also to be a Kingswood Area Action Plan (AAP).
- The centre of the town has a tired and run-down appearance. The town centre has suffered from a cycle of decline stemming from the industrial decline in the 1980s and competition from other commercial centres. As a consequence its public realm is poor. Ambitious proposals to transform the civic heart of Corby will form part of the Town Centre Area Action Plan. This will include the Parkland Gateway proposals and adjacent area of ancient woodland to the west, at Hazel Wood; the retail centre; and the proposed railway station site.
- There are significant areas of open space and ancient woodland within the town, the retention and extension of which emanated from the philosophy and planned development

associated with the designation of Corby as a New Town. The most notable areas of woodland are King's Wood and Hazel and Thoroughsale Woods, providing valuable greenspace and biodiversity asset.

- Rockingham Speedway is a bold new statement within Corby and symbolic of the future scale and ambitions for development. The Speedway is a regional attraction and forms a prominent landmark feature that dominates the eastern fringes of the town.
- The area of countryside beyond Corby is interspersed with a necklace of small villages, large scale woodland areas and historic parkland landscapes. Many areas display evidence of mining with areas of former mineral workings restored to agriculture.

#### 4.2.3 Analysis

##### Settlement Form (Existing and Proposed) (Figure 2.1.1)

- Corby lies at the heart of the smallest local authority area in Northamptonshire with built up areas extending to the southern and north eastern edges of Corby Borough. Approximately 25% of the Corby Study Area is urban.
- Housing development at Oakley Vale is in progress, forming a southern extension to the town. Other extensions are subject to the findings of the emerging development plan which will form part of the Corby LDF, and the determination of planning applications that have, or may be submitted. Potential housing developments at Prior's Hall, on land to the west of Stanion on the allocated site R8, and at land to the east of Weldon, at Weldon Park all have the potential to extend the built up area of the town to the Borough boundary. The north eastern section of the proposed Priors Hall development would extend the built up area beyond the Borough boundary into neighbouring East Northamptonshire District.
- A necklace of small stone built villages are located in the surrounding landscape that forms the wider setting of Corby, and act as reminders of Corby's original form.
- Kettering is the largest town in the vicinity of Corby and lies approximately 4km to the south. The rural landscape between the towns forms an important landscape buffer ensuring that the towns do not coalesce.

##### Settlement and Woodland (Figure 2.1.2)

- Woodland is a significant structural element within the wider study area, and represents an important element offsetting the mass of Corby Town.
- Larger woodlands tend to lie on higher boulder clay capped hills and have a significant role in screening views to the town from the surrounding landscape and providing a 'woodland setting' for Corby. Typical examples are Brookfield Plantation, Carlton Purlieus, Weekley Hall Wood, and the Stanion Lane and Cowthick Plantation.
- As Corby expanded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, significant areas of woodland were incorporated into the heart of the town. King's Wood, Hazel and Thoroughsale Woods are a significant nature conservation and recreational resource within the town. Analysis of Rockingham Forest Trust data reveals that these woodlands extended over a much wider area in 1810 but contracted to approximately their current extent by 1880.
- Corby is punctuated by significant areas of green and often wooded space within the main built up area. These are concentrated in the western residential district of the town. Industrial areas of the town generally contain less formal open space.

**Settlement Evolution (Figure 2.1.3)**

- In contrast to the London 'Overspill' New Towns, Corby was designated to provide better quality housing for the growing population drawn in by the employment opportunities. The subsequent planned expansion has resulted in the zonation of the town's main functions. The industrial sector lies to the east of the main centre of the town, the rail line forming a strong physical and perceptual 'barrier'. The Earlstrees Industrial area lies to the north, sandwiched between residential areas and Brookfield Plantation. Residential and retail services are concentrated to the south and west of the town, although light industry and distribution units are located in Oakley Hay Industrial Estate in the extreme south west of the town in the triangle of land between the A6003 and A6014.
- Old Corby is a significant resource marking the medieval core beyond which the settlement expanded as a result of industrialisation. It is detached from the centre of modern Corby and the main shopping area that developed as a result of industrial expansion and post war development.
- A number of the 'necklace' of villages in the surrounding landscape contain old historic cores of comparable size and their distribution provides some clues as to the evolution of settlement patterns in the study area.
- The Lloyds Conservation Area is a distinctive and memorable area within the town. Although the current condition of many of the individual dwellings is declining, collectively the area presents a strong unity forming an attractive leafy suburban housing area typical of the 'Garden City movement' with mature street trees and hedged gardens. There are also important historic and cultural links with the planning and development of the area, associated with a significant period of Corby's development and growth.
- The sharp zonation of land use functions at Corby has implications with regard to its permeability. Notably, movement through distribution and industrial areas can be very limited. This is of particular relevance to this study because of the proposed addition of residential neighbourhoods to the east of the industrial heartland of the town and its associated trunk roads and rail lines. Provision should be made to increase permeability through these areas through the enhancement of movement corridors particularly for sustainable users and in the interest of local biodiversity objectives.

**Visual Connectivity and Landmarks (Figure 2.1.4)**

- The crest of the steep north facing slopes of the Welland Valley defines the limit of views from the rural landscapes of the Valley. Despite its proximity, the urban mass of Corby is not visible in views from the floodplain and lower valley slopes. Woodlands to the north of the town also form a barrier to views from the north and further contribute to the town's sense of enclosure. However, the tall chimneys of the Corby Power Station are visible above the tree line from some locations within the Welland Valley.
- Woodlands surrounding Corby provide a structural framework to the town and strong visual containment, restricting long distance views of Corby from much of the surrounding landscape with only occasional views possible between woodlands on the approaches to the town.



- Views from the fringes of the town are often restricted by intervening woodlands and as such reinforce the concept of Corby as a 'woodland town'.
- The key 'first' views to the town from road approaches comprise:
  - Views westwards from Kirby Lane (Deene Road) in the vicinity of Kirby Hall with Rockingham Speedway and Power Station on skyline;
  - View westwards from A43(T) Stamford Road south of Priors Hall site
  - View west-northwest from A427 Oundle Road south of Weldon Park Plantation
  - View northwards from A6003 at southern approach into Corby at the Oakley Road, A6104 and A6003 roundabout
- Other principal local and short distance views to the built edge of Corby from transportation / movement corridors comprise:
  - View southwards to the northern edge and approach into Corby from A6003 Rockingham Road to the roundabout at crest of hill at A6003/A6116 interchange
  - View eastwards from A427 east of East Carlton and from Corby Road east of Cottingham
  - View northwards into the Oakley Vale development from Little Oakley to Great Oakley Lane to the west of the railway viaduct
  - View northwards from the southern approach into Corby on A43(T) beyond the Hilton Hotel and approaching Max Park.
- Corby has strong associations with mining industries and its landscape setting in Rockingham Forest. However, the town itself lacks an outstanding landmark, feature or public realm that is memorable, or creates a strong sense of place or symbol of the town's heritage.
- There are a number of local landmarks /memorable features within and on the perimeter of the town. These comprise: The system of Water Towers both on the perimeter of the town and within the core of the built area; the railway viaduct east of Great Oakley; Rockingham Speedway; Rockingham Castle; and the twin chimneys of the Corby Power Station. The mass of the former Corby Steel works site is also a significant feature. Although not built structures, there are a number of avenues or lines of Lombardy Poplars within and on the perimeter of the town, such as those on the perimeter of Tower Hill and immediately to the south of the two Water Towers on the western perimeter of the town. These form notable local features, particularly during the summer months.

#### Urban Rural Interface (Figure 2.1.5)

- Busy A roads encircle the town creating a harsh and impenetrable barrier to the surrounding countryside. As a result, there is very little land on the outskirts of the town identified as displaying typical urban fringe characteristics and therefore there is an abrupt urban/rural interface in many places.
- Industrial areas also create a strong urban rural interface on the northern and eastern perimeter of the settlement.

- The urban rural interface is more gradual at Oakley in the south, Weldon and Stanion in the south east and at the northern fringes of the town where woodlands soften the urban edge.

**Movement, Nodes and Gateways (Figure 2.1.6)**

- Corby is approached from a number of principal routeways. The A6003 runs along the western edge of the town and brings road traffic from the north and south. The northern approach is via the attractive ironstone village of Rockingham, with Rockingham Castle forming a prominent landmark feature to the west of the route. From the south, the town is approached along the same road, through an area of countryside that separates Corby from Kettering.
- The A427 approach to the town from the west is through an area of countryside that contains East Carlton Village and Country Park. This is diverted into the town along the course of the old Roman Road. The eastern approach along this route is through Weldon and the industrial zone of Corby.
- A further principal approach is from the south along the A43(T). A re-alignment of this route, comprising the A43 Corby Link Road / Geddington Bypass, is to be provided. This key funded and committed investment will extend across the open countryside to the south of Eurohub and the south east of Corby, and affect access and linkages as well as the green corridor alignments. There will be a need to protect these corridors at the detailed design stage. The relationship with the proposed Eurohub / Stanion Lane development, and associated mitigation proposals, will also be a consideration should this development be approved. The indicative alignment for the route, which links into the existing alignment of the A43(T) to the west of Weldon, is shown on Appendix 1.8.
- Gateways mark the entrance points into the town where visitors perceive a sense of arrival. The principal entrances are located to the north and south of the town on the A6003, and on the eastern fringe of the town at Weldon on the A43(T) and also on the A427 entrances into the town both from the west, and from the Oundle Road where panoramic views to Corby are obtained. These do not currently perform a well defined gateway function, however, and provide an unexceptional entrance to the town. Catalyst Corby have confirmed proposals and funding allocation for enhancement of the Southern Gateway at the intersection of the A6003 and the A6014 Oakley Road in order to create a memorable entrance into Corby. Similar enhancement proposals should be sought for the remaining vehicular gateways.
- Nodes represent the points where key routeways cross. The principal nodes are located at the intersection of the east west aligned A427 with the A6104 in the centre of the town; the A43 (T) crossroads with the A6086, adjacent to the historic core of the town; and the intersection of the A43 with the A427 on the eastern perimeter of the town.

**4.2.4 General Opportunities:**

- Strong zonation within the town is a characteristic of Corby and a consequence of its evolution. The progressive reconfiguration of existing land uses and new development in association with a Local Green Infrastructure framework, offer opportunities to address long standing issues with regard to the distribution of particular land uses and the identity and functionality of the town. There are opportunities for improving permeability through industrial areas to prevent isolation of residential communities that are detached from the commercial core.

- The Local Green Infrastructure Framework offers significant opportunities to link existing and proposed developed areas and non developed areas of the town in a coordinated and strategic way. The urban/rural interfaces are currently not conducive to movement patterns to key destinations and services, and from residence to countryside. Green Infrastructure can offer a more successful movement network, effective links and a more vibrant urban environment.
- There is a significant amount of accessible open greenspace between developed areas, but much of this appears to be underutilised. The Green Infrastructure framework can begin to integrate the greenspaces into a coordinated network that is geared towards meeting the needs and aspirations of Corby's residents, workers and visitors to the town.
- Significant post war residential areas and indeed the commercial heart of the town are tired and run down, and the town suffers from a poor public image, which has led to low aspirations from residents in the town. In recognition of these concerns, the Town Centre AAP, incorporating the Parkland Gateway proposals, will address these issues in detail, and incorporate Green Infrastructure and public realm improvements as an integral part of the Plan proposals. These improvements will offer opportunities to create a more vibrant and memorable image of the town that places significant importance on the quality of its greenspaces and sustainable movement networks. As well as engendering a sense of local pride for residents of Corby, this will enhance the wider perception of the town by visitors, act as catalyst for enhancements to the built fabric of the town, and increase the potential to attract inward investment.
- Expansion of the town outside the ring of roads that surround and enclose it offer significant opportunities to soften the urban – rural interface and integrate town and country more successfully, where this is appropriate.
- The 'necklace' of villages around Corby are a key asset, and development should seek to protect and enhance their particular characteristics and qualities.
- The rural area between Corby and Kettering should be protected and enhanced to retain and strengthen the separation between these two settlements.
- An operational railway line runs through the town, forming a strong barrier between the residential and industrial sections of the town. The rail line represents a significant opportunity to create a 'green corridor' and opportunities to break down this barrier should be sought. The proposed railway station, if it is developed, also offers opportunities for public realm enhancement, and connectivity with a network of pedestrian and cycle links to the station.
- In addition to the operational railway line, there are a number of sections of disused mineral railway lines, linked to former ironstone working area, either within or on the perimeter of Corby. These form part of the industrial heritage of the town, and have the potential to be incorporated as green corridors.
- East Carlton Countryside Park, and its associated heritage centre is a notable local asset with opportunities for establishing a dedicated route to the Park and Centre from the town.
- Old Corby is a significant resource. Opportunities to enhance the contribution it makes to the character of the town should be considered. Similarly, the Lloyds Conservation Area represents a local valuable built asset.

- Weldon, whilst maintaining its own character distinct from Corby, is at risk from being absorbed into the town and as a result losing its separate character and identity.
- The retention of the wooded setting of Corby, a key characteristic of the town and the wider landscape, is vital; this also has benefits in the delivery of accessible natural greenspace and biodiversity interest. Extension of the robust wooded framework will also benefit the integration of new development, in terms of its impact on visual amenity and contribution to landscape character.
- There is growing recognition of the contribution to biodiversity of particular land uses in urban areas. Gardens, cemeteries, allotments, verges, and what are perceived to be 'untidy' landscapes such as neglected and marginal land, brownfield sites and derelict land all contribute to biodiversity resources. Care must be taken not to 'tidy up' the urban and rural landscape to the detriment of biodiversity.
- Vehicular movement through the town is primarily along busy A roads. Gateways and Nodes offer significant opportunities to provide a good 'first impression' of the town and immediately convey something of the vibrant character of Corby. A Public Realm Strategy in association with Green Infrastructure will offer an opportunity to address the issue of movement patterns into the town and enhancement of its approaches.
- The security needs of commercial land uses are an important consideration when planning development and Local Green Infrastructure.

#### 4.2.5 Specific Opportunities

- Opportunities should be sought to enhance the gateways and nodes identified on Appendix 2.1.6, celebrating them as important key arrival points at and within Corby, and to improve the legibility of the vehicular movement pattern.
- Strong links should be established between proposed residential areas on the perimeter of the town, and the commercial and retail centre at the heart of Corby, should these developments be granted permission. Subject to the proposed Priors Hall development proceeding, it is vital that pedestrian and cycle routes are established to link the residential areas with the centre of the town in order to avoid isolation of these communities. There are positive opportunities to establish these routes in association with wildlife corridors. Similar issues would need to be addressed in respect of any development on land to the east of Weldon, again subject to its inclusion within the future development and growth of the town.
- New commercial developments within and on the perimeter of Corby also offer opportunities for integration with and delivery of green infrastructure. The proposed expansion of the Freight Interchange at Eurohub within Stanion Lane Plantation is subject to planning approval and will be considered in relation to the emerging LDF. To compensate for woodland loss to accommodate the development, the mitigation proposals include new native woodland creation, and management of ancient woodland assets. Should the scheme proceed, these proposals offer opportunities for biodiversity gains and integration with green infrastructure.

### 4.3 Environmental Character

#### 4.3.1 Principal Sources:

The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment (draft 2004)

Figure 1.1 – Environmental Character

#### 4.3.2 The Resource

- The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment identifies the town of Corby wholly within the Rockingham Forest Environmental Character Area (ECA). The Corby Local Green Infrastructure Study Area Boundary extends 2.5km beyond this built up area and as a result encompasses a limited area of the Welland Valley ECA and very small areas of the Central Northamptonshire Clay Plateaux and Rolling Valleys, and West Northamptonshire Ironstone Uplands and Rolling Farmlands ECAs.
- The Rockingham Forest ECA represents one of the most well known and celebrated landscapes in the county. It takes its name from the royal hunting forest that existed across the northern portion of Northamptonshire from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The area identified in the assessment as the Rockingham Forest ECA comprises only a small fraction of what was designated as the Royal Forest.
- Extensive areas of ancient woodland are a particularly strong and unifying characteristic of the area and contain a wealth of historical and ecological resources. Replanted ancient woodland sites and new plantations are also characteristic of the area, although these are characterised by less rich flora and fauna. Larger woodlands tend to lie on the highest boulder clay capped hills, emphasising relief and forming prominent skyline features that screen long distance views. Large scale arable and pastoral fields are interspersed between woodland blocks. These are generally delineated by neat low hedges with intermittent tree groups. In recent decades, hedgerows have been removed and field sizes have increased.
- Settlements, many of which contain historic cores of old stone buildings clustering around the church, often lie off the boulder clay along the valleys where more easily cultivated land is available. Here, a more intimate landscape persists with smaller pasture fields, enclosed by robust hedgerows or stone walls which contrast with the more expansive and open areas of the wooded uplands.
- Vernacular architecture is also an important unifying element across the Rockingham Forest area. Older buildings in the east are generally from the creamy grey Lincolnshire Limestone such as at Weldon, and often roofed with Collyweston Slate. In the west of the area ironstone from the Northampton Sand Formation is more common. Many villages contain little modern development and retain a quiet, dignified rural character. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, a greater expansion occurred within some settlements at the edge of the forest.
- Historic Parks and Gardens are characteristic of the Rockingham Forest landscape. Three of the area's largest parks, comprising Rockingham Castle, Deene Park, and Boughton Park, are located to the north, east and south respectively and add significantly to the wooded character of the landscape. Kirby Hall is located 2km to the east of the town, the gardens of which are less extensive than neighbouring parklands. The hall and gardens lie in a natural shallow valley and bowl on the line of the Gretton Brook and as a result the site retains a secluded character, despite the close proximity of the industrial fringes of Corby, and particularly Rockingham Speedway which dominates views in the locality.
- The Welland Valley ECA defines the northern boundary of the county. The upper, north west facing side of the valley are defined by a steeply sloping scarp that falls from the

plateau landscapes of Rockingham Forest down to the wide and shallow valley bottom. Corby is situated on the plateau area immediately above the scarp edge. In the vicinity, Rockingham Castle is located on the upper slopes of the scarp, and takes advantage of the expansive, panoramic views across the valley. There is little settlement or development within the valley bottom and it retains a quiet rural character, with arable and pastoral farming the predominant land use. Areas of permanent pasture often contain remnant areas of ridge and furrow, adding to the perception of time depth in these agricultural landscapes. Hedges divide the landscape into a neat patchwork, although within the floodplain, post and wire fences are often used to delineate individual fields. The steep scarp that defines the northern side of the valley, together with the extensive woodlands that extend across and at the top of the scarp, intercept and screen views to Corby and the large structures within the industrial districts.

#### 4.3.3 Analysis

- Corby lies within a distinctive and well known landscape. Whilst the strength of character is strong throughout the Rockingham Forest area, this has been partially eroded through 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural change, and urban and industrial development within the town.
- Agricultural landscapes and numerous villages and other settlements around Corby retain strong rural characteristics; their quality and integrity should be retained and protected, and promoted and marketed.
- Landscape and townscape character within and surrounding the study area combine to express a sense of place and time, contribute to a strong sense of identity and enhance a sense of community. The quality of the landscape and townscape resource is therefore central to promoting a positive image of the town and its wider setting.
- The scale of the characteristic landscape features within the study area, such as bold areas of woodland and the strong landform features associated with the Welland Valley, enable the landscape to successfully accommodate new development.
- There is a range of key elements and features that are characteristic of the local landscape, such as large scale broadleaved woodlands, vernacular architecture and hedgerow networks; these are important that should be enhanced and managed appropriately to strengthen local character and distinctiveness.

#### 4.3.4 General Opportunities

- A sound understanding of Environmental Character, together with the detail provided in each of the Historic Landscape, Current Landscape and Biodiversity Character Assessments, should inform and underpin all development proposals.
- Opportunities should be taken to complete local scale assessments of both landscape and townscape character within the hierarchy established) to ensure adequate fit of new development at a local scale.
- Opportunities should also be sought, where appropriate, to create new landscapes, although this may occur where no references are remaining to ensure good fit with the local surroundings. In such cases, innovative use of elements and features characteristic of the locality are likely to offer opportunities.
- The character of each of the Strategic Green Infrastructure corridors, whilst being informed by the nature of the spaces and places it encompasses and links, will also offer opportunities

for the enhancement of local environmental character. Similarly, issues such as design detailing, materials and woodland planting will, at the Corby Green Infrastructure level, be important considerations and offer opportunities to enhance local environmental character. This will be achieved through analysis of the wealth of character assessment information that is available and through more detailed analysis of landscape, historic landscape and biodiversity character at the local scale.

- Delivery and strengthening of local landscape character is achievable through a range of opportunities including planning gain associated with new development, landscape projects and Environmental Stewardship Schemes. New development offers opportunities to utilise characteristics of the local environment to inform the siting and design of proposals and through the integration of appropriate mitigation measures.

## 4.4 Hydrology

### 4.4.1 Principal Sources: Figure 1.2 – Hydrology

Note: A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has recently been undertaken, but the findings are not yet available to inform this baseline review and analysis of hydrological features or the emerging Local Green Infrastructure proposals.

### 4.4.2 The Resource

- The River Welland is the major river in vicinity of Corby, with the limit of the Welland catchment area principally defined by the upper section of the steeply rising north facing slopes of the valley. To the south of this, the plateau area above the distinctive break of slope forms part of the wider Nene catchment area with the headwaters of the Nene tributaries of the Willow Brook and Harper's Brook rising within and in the vicinity of Corby.
- The plateau on which Corby is situated falls gently to the north and east, with the town itself lying on or close to the head of a number of water courses, all of which feed into the Willow Brook and Harper's Brook, and therefore influence water quality of these tributaries of the Nene.
- Within the built area of Corby, only limited stretches of these watercourses are open as a result of culverting to accommodate building and development. It is notable that water courses generally become open to the east of Corby's industrial zone.
- The River Ise flows to the south of Corby. This rises in open countryside to the south east of the town and water quality is therefore not affected by development to the same degree as Willow Brook and Harper's Brook.
- Headwaters of the Willow Brook rise within the agricultural land to the west of Corby and also within the town in Thoroughsale Wood, where the watercourse feeds into a recreational lake in Hazel Wood. To the east of Corby the Willow Brook flows north eastwards to King's Cliffe beyond which it flows south to the Nene.
- Gretton Brook, a tributary of the Willow Brook, rises in the north eastern part of Corby within Gretton Brook Plantation and follows a parallel course to the Willow Brook. Kirby Hall is located in the valley of Gretton Brook, and Deene Hall also occupies the Willow Brook valley. A further un-named stream follows this alignment, rising to the south of Rockingham Speedway and joining the Willow Brook at Deene.
- Headwaters of the Harper's Brook rise to the west of Corby at Dob Hall Farm approximately 1.5 km to the north of Desborough. The Brook flows eastwards through the southern part of Corby, close to Great Oakley. Following a similar course to Willow Brook, the watercourse flows eastwards to Stanion and then south eastwards to the Nene.
- The Ise Brook rises near Clipston, to the west of the study area, and flows eastwards within 2km of the southern limit of Corby and thereafter southwards from Geddington towards the Nene.
- Eyebrook Reservoir and Rutland Water represent significant man-made water bodies to the north of the study area in Leicestershire and Rutland and offer nature conservation and recreational resources.



### 4.4.3 Analysis

- The River Welland is the main river in the study area. Although lying in close proximity to Corby the landform has dictated that the plateau on which Corby is situated drains eastwards then southwards to the Nene, rather than the shorter distance northwards to the Welland. The grain of the drainage pattern is therefore entirely separate and focused away from the Welland despite the proximity of this main river;
- River and tributary streams in the study area are designated as Flood Zone 3 status by the Environment Agency representing high risk with annual probability of flooding of 1% or greater. The Flood zone of the Willow Brook extends into the town beyond the extent of the watercourse's surface expression. Although these flood risk areas identified by the Environment Agency within Corby are localised, they present a significant threat to homes and businesses.
- The Welland is bordered by wide areas designated as Flood Zone 3 status.
- Water courses are generally culverted in the town, although a significant body of open water is located in Hazel Wood to the south east of the Hospital. The occasional stretches of open watercourses within the town are locally significant features such as the section on the southern perimeter of Thoroughsale Wood.
- The brooks and tributaries contribute to local landscape character, distinct from other more elevated and wooded landscapes in the vicinity. Key characteristics should be protected and enhanced wherever possible.
- The corridor of land adjacent to the brooks, and other forms of open water or wetland habitat are important local contributors to the biodiversity resource; opportunities should be sought to maximise their potential, particularly through delivering an interconnected biodiversity resource.
- The valleys that extend into the wider area have been long settled and possess a rich heritage of vernacular buildings and rural settlements.

### 4.4.4 General Opportunities

- Comprehensive Flood Risk Management information has not been made available for the purposes of this study; however, there are significant opportunities throughout the study area for flood risk management initiatives to contribute to Green Infrastructure delivery.
- Flood risk management poses significant challenges over the coming years. Issues of climate change and sustainable development will require that development makes best use of water resources and limits damage to the environment, whilst protecting buildings and services in flood risk zones. Flood risk will be a significant factor in directing the planning of new and the reconfiguration of existing development. The identification of protected zones can benefit the delivery of Green Infrastructure objectives as these can accommodate the multifunctional corridors of open space provision, biodiversity enhancement and access routes.
- The Environment Agency should be engaged as part of the delivery of Green Infrastructure and utilise the framework to deliver its water cycle and flood risk management proposals. All new developments should seek to explore opportunities for zero surface run off, green roofs, porous paving and sustainable drainage systems.

- River channels and water bodies offer significant opportunities to deliver Green Infrastructure and contribute to health, education and biodiversity agendas. Green Infrastructure represents an opportunity to restore river corridors and floodplains for the benefit of both wildlife and people.
- Watercourses, and the contribution these have made to evolution of the landscape such as settlement and movement patterns, and also to local biodiversity interest offer significant opportunities for learning and education.
- The rivers and water bodies also have significant leisure and recreational potential and an attractive setting for recreational paths and routes.
- All proposals alongside and within river corridors should maintain or create areas of informal wildlife space that is appropriate for local landscape and biodiversity character, and include inaccessible refuge areas that are free from disturbance.
- A buffer zone of typically 8m will be required alongside watercourses which do not include hard development. Footpaths and cycleways are considered hard development and as a result creative approaches will be required to create new routeways in these areas.
- Priority should be given to establishing open water resources in school grounds, areas of public realm and within public open spaces.

### General Opportunities within Corby:

- The Harper's, Willow, and Gretton Brook corridors provide opportunities for establishing good physical links for walking, cycling and for biodiversity enhancement. There should be no continuous riverside paths along both banks of a river or stream in order to secure areas of informal wildlife space.
- Opportunities should be sought to open up and 'naturalise' previously culverted stretches of water courses within Corby and integrate these into the urban fabric.

## 4.5 Biodiversity Resource

### 4.5.1 Sources

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Character Assessment (draft 2004)  
 Environmental Assets and Opportunities in Northamptonshire (2003)  
 English Nature, Natural Areas in the East Midlands(1999)  
 Northamptonshire Biodiversity Partnership, A Biodiversity Action Plan for Northamptonshire (2002)

- Figure 1.2 – Hydrology
- Figure 1.3 - Designated Nature Conservation Sites and Landscape Biodiversity Figure
- Figure 2.2.1 – ANGST Assessment – Strategic Local
- Figure 2.2.2 – ANGST Analysis of Proposed Natural Greenspace
- Figure 2.3.1 – Biodiversity (Woodland)
- Figure 2.3.2 – Biodiversity (Grassland)
- Figure 2.3.3 – Biodiversity (Wetland/Open Water)

### The Resource

### 4.5.2 The Existing Semi-natural Greenspace Resource

Corby and its immediate hinterland (Corby Local Green Infrastructure Study Area) is situated within the Rockingham Forest Natural Area. At a more local level it is also located within or adjacent to seven of the nine Biodiversity Character Types for Northamptonshire found within the North Northamptonshire area.

The Biodiversity Character Areas covered by or adjacent to Corby and its hinterland are:

- Limestone Slopes,
- Boulder Clay Woodlands,
- Limestone Quarries and Gulleys,
- Liassic Slopes
- Limestone Woodlands
- Minor Floodplain (Willow Brook and Harper Brook)
- Major Floodplain (River Welland)

To the west, south and east of the urban centre of Corby is the Boulder Clay Woodlands Biodiversity Character Type, although to the east this BCT is separated from the urban edge by the minor floodplain of the Willow Brook and part of the Limestone Quarries and Gulleys BCT. To the south, Harper's Brook flows through the southern part of the urban area of the town together with the Limestone Slopes BCT associated with the valley edges of this watercourse.

On the western side of the town there is the farmed landscape of the Boulder Clay Woodlands BCT which supports a series of semi-natural ancient woodlands (Pipewell Wood, Askershaw Wood, Swinawe Wood) with varying levels of designation including SSSI and County Wildlife Sites. These woodlands form part of a woodland habitat reservoir of the North Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure. On the northern edge of the Boulder Clays Woodland BCT on this side of Corby is the parkland of Rockingham Park situated between Corby and Cottingham which supports a good mosaic of habitats including deciduous and coniferous woodland and grassland and is part of a second woodland habitat reservoir that borders the northern side of Corby.

To the north and east of Corby is the Limestone Quarries and Gulleys BCT which merge further to the north east into the Limestone Woodland BCT and to the north into the Liassic Slopes BCA

of the Welland River Valley and eventually in the bottom of the valley into the major floodplain BCTof the River Welland. Two water courses, the Gretton Brook and Willow Brook drain much of this area. Calcareous and neutral grassland area key habitats within this area associated with former ironstone quarries and to a lesser extent the Liassic Slopes and Limestone Slopes on the edge of the Welland Valley. There are two grassland habitat reservoirs in this area which overlap with the woodland habitat reservoir on the northern side of Corby centred on Brookfield Plantation. There is also a variety of woodlands including a range of small plantations as well as broadleaf woodland including Brookfield Plantation which is a County Wildlife Site. The eastern calcareous grassland reservoir is centred on former ironstone workings south east of Deene Park and Dibbin's Wood which includes a County Wildlife Site designated for its calcareous grassland. This area is also part of a woodland habitat reservoir that includes Deene Park, Dibbins Wood and areas of plantation woodland.

To the south east of Corby there is an important element of the North Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure which runs along the northern edge of Harper's Brook. It comprises plantation woodland (Stanion Lane Plantation), and semi-natural ancient woodlands (South Wood and Oakley Purlieus). Stanion Lane Plantation also supports calcareous grassland and forms part of a calcareous grassland habitat reservoir associated with former ironstone workings.

To the south of Corby there are no habitat reservoirs abutting the urban area but there is a woodland habitat reservoir and a calcareous grassland habitat reservoir some two kilometres to the south on the northern edge of Kettering.

Within the urban area of Corby there are few major greenspaces with large areas of semi-natural habitats. Woodland and grassland habitats are relatively well represented however and these habitats provide the principal semi-natural habitats within the town. Other habitats include intensively managed grasslands of amenity spaces and calcareous and neutral grasslands of roadside verges and former industrial land. Wetlands are limited. There is an ornamental lake and small sections of the upper reaches of Willow Brook in the Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood site. Harper's Brook flows through the southern tip of the town and Willow Brook forms a continuous corridor from the eastern side of the town along the southern edge of the major industrial land on the north-eastern side of Corby.

Key woodland sites in the central and southern parts of the town are the two semi-natural ancient woodlands of Kings Wood LNR and Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood. Apart from these, however, there are few other woodlands within the town and they comprise mixed and coniferous plantations that are located on the edge of formal greenspace, in cemeteries or along roads.

A variety of grassland communities are present within the town ranging from neutral unimproved grassland within Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood to neutral grasslands associated with the industrial land on the north eastern side of the town. Also in this area there are calcareous grasslands associated with former ironstone workings.

There are few continuous linear habitats within the urban area. Along the eastern side of Corby, a railway line provides a strong linear link between the habitat reservoirs south of Corby, the eastern habitat reservoirs at Oakley Purlieus, South Wood and Stanion Lane Plantation and the northern reservoirs centred on Brookfield Plantation. The line supports a typical mosaic of scrub, secondary woodland and grassland.

Other linear habitats can be found along roadsides where there are roadside grasslands, woodland and roadside trees. Relatively wide plantings and verges occur along the A6014 and there are good stands of street side trees along the A427. Grassland verges and hedgerows

occur along the edges of the A6003, especially where it passes through cuttings on the western side of Corby.

Within the industrial area on the north eastern side of the town there is a good mosaic of grassland verges which collectively provide a well connected series of neutral and calcareous grasslands.

#### 4.5.3 The Proposed Semi-natural Greenspace Resource

An extension to the urban area of Corby is being built at Oakley Vale, to the south of Corby between the existing urban area and the eastern railway line. Further areas are proposed to the east and south east of Corby at Priors Hall, on land west of Stanion, land east of Weldon at Weldon Park, and at the proposed Eurohub extension at Stanion Lane Plantation (see Appendix 2.2.2).

Subject to the emerging LDF and the approval of the proposed sites, each will offer opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and gains. The proposed landscape structure at Priors Hall will provide a large area of semi-natural greenspace including woodland and calcareous grassland. It protects existing County Wildlife Sites and provides linkages back towards Corby.

The proposed masterplan for land east of Weldon will provide extensions to existing high quality sites such as Weldon Park SSSI and provides greenspace along the Willow Brook corridor.

Oakley Vale and land west of Stanion would together provide small (over 2ha) areas of accessible natural greenspace which will provide for the new residents within these areas. The proposed habitats will also protect and extend the potential to integrate with green infrastructure in these areas especially at Stanion.

Finally, the proposals for the extension to the Eurohub Freight Interchange, within the Stanion Lane Plantation, seek to offer comprehensive mitigation proposals. These would result in an overall biodiversity gain through the planting of substantial areas of new woodland, and management of existing areas of ancient woodland, to compensate for loss of woodland to accommodate the development proposals.

#### 4.5.4 Analysis

- Corby lies within the Rockingham Forest Natural Area and abuts seven of the nine Biodiversity Character Types in the North Northamptonshire area as such it is situated in an area with a diverse range of habitats.
- Corby lies on the edge of important and strong elements of the Green Infrastructure of North Northamptonshire with three grassland habitat reservoirs and four woodland habitat reservoirs abutting the urban area of the town. Three additional woodland habitat reservoirs and one other grassland habitat reservoir also occur within the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Study Area.
- Important woodland and grassland sites lie within and on the fringes of Corby. Key habitats include semi-natural ancient woodland, neutral and calcareous grassland.
- A single woodland reservoir occurs within the town centred on Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood and Kings Wood is a Local Nature reserve and a designated Wildlife Site. Both of these woodlands provide a connection for the residents of Corby to the former extensive woodland habitats of the Rockingham Forest Natural Area.

- Semi-natural greenspace links into the main residential parts of Corby are restricted and new links of woodland and grassland in particular should be created and enhanced.
- New habitats could be created through a variety of mechanisms including planning gain and changes in formal greenspace management.
- The drainage routes from the majority of the existing and proposed extensions to the Corby area are along Harper's Brook, Gretton Brook and Willow Brook which all discharge eventually south and east into the River Nene.
- The ANGST analysis has shown that Corby is relatively well served by very large accessible semi-natural greenspaces (100 to 500 ha within 5 kilometres) with significant parts of the North Northamptonshire green infrastructure abutting the urban area of Corby. As a consequence with the exception of the southern tip of Corby all the residential areas are within 5 kilometres of very large areas of semi-natural habitat at Brookfield Plantation and Brigstock Country Park.
- The ANGST analysis has shown that in contrast to locally accessible semi-natural greenspace Corby is well supplied in terms of larger semi-natural greenspace (over 20 ha within 2 kilometres). In particular Kings Wood and Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood both provide large accessible greenspace to the whole of the residential areas of the town.
- The ANGST analysis of Corby has highlighted deficiencies in locally accessible greenspace (within 300 metres of sites greater than 2 ha) in the northern and western parts of the main residential areas of the town. As a consequence, natural greenspace provision required in parts of Corby in order to meet the requirement under ANGST for people to live within 300 metres of a natural greenspace over 2 ha in area.
- Proposed new developments provide significant opportunities to protect, enhance and link important habitats, in particular calcareous grassland, woodland, neutral grassland and wetland.
- Proposed new developments also provide the opportunity to ensure ANGST targets are met for small locally accessible natural greenspace for new residents.

### 4.5.5 General Opportunities

- The biodiversity targets set out in the UK Biodiversity Action, the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan, the sub-regional strategy encompassed in Planning Sustainable Communities and the Biodiversity Character Areas should inform and underpin all development proposals.
- The ANGST analysis of Corby should underpin and inform future development proposals, especially to the north and west of the town.
- Opportunities should be sought through planning and land management options to create new semi-natural greenspace within deficient areas of Corby to reduce the number of residents not within 300 metres of an accessible natural greenspace.
- Opportunities should be sought to strengthen links between the urban area of Corby and the major elements of the North Northamptonshire green infrastructure to reduce the effects of habitat fragmentation and improve access to areas of semi-natural greenspace.

#### 4.5.6 Specific Opportunities for GI Delivery

The following list of opportunities should be read in conjunction with Appendices 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3. The list is not exhaustive but identifies the key specific opportunities that currently exist to enhance the green infrastructure of Corby, improve links to the wider green infrastructure of North Northamptonshire and to improve access for the people of Corby to semi-natural greenspaces.

##### North-East and East Corby

- The development of land at Priors Hall provides an opportunity to protect and enhance an extensive and important area of calcareous and neutral grassland with woodland and small wetlands that will provide a large area of high quality accessible natural greenspace.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to link the grassland habitats at Priors Hall to calcareous grassland within Brookfield Plantation and the eastern railway corridor through the creation, protection and enhancement of grass verges through the industrial estates east of Corby and along Willow Brook North that runs along the northern boundary of the Priors Hall site into the Lake in Deene Park.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to link grassland habitats at Priors Hall with grasslands in Stanion Lane Plantation and the eastern railway corridor through the creation and enhancement of species-rich neutral and calcareous grasslands through the industrial estate east of Corby where there are existing wide grassland verges associated with large industrial plants and complexes. Subject to the approval of the proposed extension to the Eurohub Freight Interchange at Stanion Lane Plantation, further opportunities for grassland creation would be achieved through the provision of grassland habitat linkage to the Forestry Commission land at Laundimer Wood to the east.
- Opportunities to improve woodland connections between Priors Hall and Weldon Park SSSI should be identified, the delivery of which could be achieved through the development of the land east of Weldon, should this potential site be approved. These should aim to make a strong connection to Weldon Park SSSI across the Willow Brook Corridor. Weldon Park SSSI should be protected from adverse impacts that may arise from adjacent development and opportunities to enhance the Willow Brook corridor should also be identified and implemented. Target habitats should include new dry and wet deciduous woodland and fen and marsh associated with sustainable urban drainage systems that ensure no net deterioration in the water quality of Willow Brook.
- Subject to its approval, the proposed development at Priors Hall should aim to ensure that water quality within the Willow Brook does not deteriorate as a result of proposed development. In recognition of this potential effect, the development proposals include the planting of reed beds to improve the water quality of Willow Brook
- The Stanion Lane Plantation comprises an important 'green reservoir' within the wider setting of the southern side of Corby, with connectivity with adjacent woodland areas. In view of this sensitivity, careful balancing of the biodiversity and landscape significance of the woodland needs to be taken into account in the context of potential development within the woodland comprising the proposed Eurohub Freight Interchange extension.
- The proposed extension to the Eurohub Freight Interchange at Stanion Lane Plantation recognises the importance of the Plantation and proposals for the site include detailed consideration of the landscape and biodiversity resource. Comprehensive mitigation proposals include compensation for the loss of areas of woodland, with a net biodiversity

gain achieved through the creation of over 70 ha of new woodland, and management of ancient woodland area. There would also be a contribution to green infrastructure linkages. Such proposals are subject to the findings of the emerging LDF, and approval the proposed development.

#### North of Corby

- Opportunities should be sought to improve links along the southern scarp edge of the River Welland Valley between grasslands associated with Brookfield Plantation and Rockingham Castle.
- Opportunities should be sought and implemented to create, protect and enhance grassland links through the industrial estate on the northern edge of Corby to support and enhance grasslands within and around Brookfield Plantation.

#### Central Corby

- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to enhance woodland connections between Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood, the North Northamptonshire green infrastructure to the east of Corby and Kings Wood LNR through new street side planting along roads and in existing greenspaces.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to enhance woodland connections between Hazel and Thoroughsale Wood and woodland and parkland habitat on the north western side of Corby through street side tree planting and shelter belt planting in existing open greenspaces.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to improve access to small areas of semi-natural greenspace in the north and west Corby through the creation of new woodland, grassland and wetland habitats as part of any potential expansion of Corby to the west of the A6003, and through habitat creation works and changes in land management within existing open spaces.



## 4.6 Heritage and Culture

### 4.6.1 Principal Sources:

Northamptonshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment (draft 2004)

The Historic Landscape of Rockingham Forest (Rockingham Forest Trust, 2003)

Appendix 1 of Strategic Green Infrastructure Study: Figure 1.8 – Historic Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1.4 –Heritage and Culture

Figure 2.4 – Corby Heritage and Culture (Rockingham Forest Trust Data)

### 4.6.2 The Resource

The study occupies a landscape that is rich in historic character and features. The Northamptonshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment describes in some detail the character of the landscape, and assesses the resource broadly as:

- A significant area of wooded landscape to the south east of Corby that represents surviving woodland and land associated with the former medieval hunting forest of Rockingham. Whilst some of the unwooded landscape was enclosed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, grubbing out of hedgerows in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in a fieldscape of large modern fields between areas of ancient and replanted ancient woodland. Several medieval deer parks are evident in the landscape and in some, earthworks defining park boundaries can still be seen. The Rockingham Forest Trust assessment identified deer parks at Rockingham, Stoke Albany, Brigstock, Weldon and Kirby.
- Landscapes to the north and west of Corby are characterised by pre 19<sup>th</sup> century non parliamentary enclosures. These are comprised largely of 18<sup>th</sup> century fieldscapes of irregular patterns, grand houses and garden remains. Further to the north, the historic landscape, principally along the Welland, is characterised by fragmented parliamentary enclosures and 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentary enclosure. To the south and east, extraction has resulted in modern fieldscapes that were created after the closure of mineral workings.
- Asset mapping identifies sites, monuments and features that are designated for their historic or archaeological importance. Designations might be regarded as ‘critical capital’; however, they represent only a small percentage of the known and indeed unknown heritage resource and as a result detailed analysis of the SMR and each development site should be undertaken at a local level.

### 4.6.3 Analysis

Broad interpretation of the key assets has identified the following:

- A wide variety of urban and rural archaeological, historic and cultural sites and monuments are distributed evenly across the study area.
- A significant stretch of the course of the Roman Road that ran between Roman towns at modern Leicester and Huntingdon survives in the course of the A427 through Corby town.
- A significant part of the surrounding landscape represents areas of former Royal hunting forest. It was one of three major Saxon woodlands in the county and became known as Rockingham Forest after the Norman invasion. The forest was an area of legal jurisdiction rather than simply a wooded area and encompassed areas of woodland and agricultural villages and their fields. The area of the forest expanded up to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, from

whence it contracted until it was extinguished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rockingham Castle, a short distance to the north of Corby was at one time the administrative centre of the forest.

- The fine Elizabethan House of Kirby Hall (Grade II\* Listed), built in local Weldon stone, is considered to be one of Northamptonshire's jewels, although its setting has been compromised by the effects of industrialisation and mineral workings, and more recently by the impact of development on the eastern perimeter of Corby, notably the Rockingham Speedway. Potential further mixed use development to the south, at Priors Hall, may also affect its wider setting. The grounds to the Hall are listed as Grade II\* in English Heritage's (EH) Register of Parks and Gardens. EH intends to recreate 'the Wilderness' which forms the wider setting, as well as undertaking further improvements to the formal garden that surrounds the Hall.
- Former deer parks at Rockingham, Kirby and Brigstock evolved into designed parks and gardens that are currently on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest in England.
- The ancient woodlands throughout the study area are a significant historical and ecological asset.
- A significant concentration of remnant ridge and furrow survives along the Welland Valley, in the vicinity of Cottingham, Rockingham and Gretton.
- Conservation Areas, containing concentrations of listed buildings occupy the centre of many historic settlements around Corby. The area of planned 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion is designated as a Conservation Area (the Lloyds Conservation Area).
- The urban form of Corby is evidence of the major growth associated with the iron and steel industry and the migration of workers. It also displays many characteristic features of urban planning and domestic architecture dating from when it was designated as a New Town in the 1950s. (refer to Section 4.2)
- Mineral railways, factories and other structures and their settings represent important features from Corby's industrial past.
- A significant proportion of Corby retains a strong Scots identity as a result of the large numbers of Scottish workers that moved to the town for employment in the steel works. The town also has one of the largest groups of Gaelic speakers outside of the Highlands. Although in decline in Scotland, where the percentage of speakers is down to 1.2%, in Corby, it is estimated that 3% of the population can speak Gaelic (Rampant Scotland issue 310, 22 March 2003).
- Corby lies at the centre of a major initiative that seeks to conserve and enhance the environment of Rockingham Forest through community involvement and enterprise. A substantial amount of information pertaining to the historic and cultural assets of the Rockingham Forest area has been generated through detailed research and community consultation through the Rockingham Forest Trust (RFT).
- The RFT historic landscape survey work has provided relatively detailed mapping of features that illustrate, in general terms, two key phases in the evolution of the landscape around Corby comprising that of the medieval landscape, and the post medieval landscape (circa 1810-1880). The study highlights the distribution of a number of small villages along the

course of the Willow Brook and along the scarp slope of the Welland Valley and significant areas of wood pasture and meadows. The post medieval plan illustrates the contraction of woodlands between 1810 and 1880, which has seen further decline up to the modern period.

#### 4.6.4 General Opportunities

- Heritage assets contribute significantly to the celebration of Corby's sense of place, time and community. This encompasses ancient history associated with key events and features such as the Royal Hunting Forest and more recent developments such as the industrialisation and rapid expansion of the town.
- Ironstone mining and working have their origins in the Roman Period, and have been a consistent thread through the evolution of the local landscape. This industrial heritage link should be communicated and celebrated more effectively.
- The contribution that the heritage resource makes to the character of the townscape and landscape should be recognised and exploited.
- The Rockingham Forest Trust represents a unique forum for gaining local knowledge relating to cultural assets. Significant work has also been undertaken on mapping and analysing a wealth of heritage features and this also should be treated as a significant resource when planning local green infrastructure.
- The educational benefits and use of heritage assets and cultural identity as a resource for learning and improving skills should be recognised and exploited.
- The contribution heritage and cultural assets make to the local economy should be recognised and exploited, either directly through tourism or indirectly through creating a vibrant environment with a distinctive and interesting history.
- The heritage resource has, over recent years, suffered fragmentation through the loss or degradation of features and landscapes.
- There is a strong interrelationship between heritage and biodiversity assets that should be exploited wherever conflicts do not exist, and where development of one is not to the detriment of the other.
- Corby and its surrounding landscape represents a unique heritage resource, recording a fascinating range of events and episodes that are manifest in the fabric of the landscape and the features that lie within it. Broad scale studies such as the County Historic Landscape Character Assessment and detailed surveys, such as those undertaken by the Rockingham Forest Trust offer a wealth of information pertaining to the resource and should be utilised in the development of Green Infrastructure and to inform the character, function and appearance of Green Infrastructure corridors.
- There is an opportunity to provide access to and interpretation of key heritage sites that help tell the 'story' of the landscape, settlements within it and the communities that are resident. Heritage resources offer destinations and incidental points of interest along the way. Beyond this, an opportunity exists to achieve a coordinated network of strategic destinations that characterise the distinctiveness of Corby and the study area supplemented by events that provide a focus for community groups and tourists. In this context, the East Carlton Countryside Park is already an important asset and 'destination', with a Heritage Centre

dedicated to the display of local industrial heritage items. There are therefore opportunities to establish an industrial heritage trail that includes the Heritage Centre at East Carlton, and links to the former Steel Works site, and the Lloyds Conservation Area. The educational potential of the heritage resource is significant and opportunities exist to set learning and the acquisition of skills in the context of the historic environment. Similarly the resource can be utilised to engender local identity, pride and meet other cultural agendas.

- Green Infrastructure offers opportunities to halt fragmentation of the heritage landscape. This might be achieved by the restoration or re-creation of contemporary landscapes surrounding particular monuments or features or halting the decline in hedgerows and field patterns surrounding historic villages.
- The management of heritage sites, monuments and indeed landscapes offers opportunities to deliver biodiversity targets, as there is often a correlation between increased biodiversity interest in areas that are 'mature', or that have already received management that is specifically designed to protect the monument.

#### 4.6.5 Specific Opportunities

- Opportunities should be sought to enhance and celebrate the former Roman Road alignment, due to its relevance to the development and continuing prosperity of the settlement;
- The integrity and remaining features within the historic core of Corby should be protected and enhanced wherever possible. Opportunities should be sought to reconnect and reinstate the relationship of this important area of the settlement with the adjacent built areas. For example, the proposed 'node enhancement' at the A6086 and A427 intersection could entail reconfiguring the locality to reinforce visual and physical links to this area.
- Opportunities to celebrate the industrial heritage of the town and its association with the Steel Works and industry should be considered, with a potential Museum or Interpretation Centre. This could incorporate an industrial heritage trail, taking in the urban growth of Corby such as the first houses erected by Stewarts and Lloyd at Bessemer Grove.
- Restoration of the Lloyds Conservation Area should be considered in order to strengthen the integrity and local identity of this notable residential area and its symbol of the transformation and growth of Corby in association with its industrial heritage.
- In view of the national importance of Kirby Hall, this is a resource that should be readily accessible and enjoyed by local people, so opportunities to forge stronger pedestrian and cycle links between Corby and Kirby Hall needs to be provided. There is also an opportunity to widen local people's understanding and sense of pride in the importance and value of Kirby Hall as a unique historic resource that is integral to the character and wider setting of Corby and its historic development and associations.

## 4.7 Accessible Greenspace Resource

### 4.7.1 Principal Sources:

Corby Borough Greenspace Programme Framework Document (Final Draft)

Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies, Mayor of London, 2003

Appendix 1: Key Baseline Mapping:

Figure 1.5: Accessible Greenspace Resource

Appendix 2: Interpretative Mapping: 2.5.1: Sub-Regional Accessible Greenspace (over 20 ha);

Figure 2.5.2: Local Accessible Greenspace (below 20ha);

Figure 2.5.3: Proposed Accessible Greenspace

### 4.7.2 Introduction

Green Infrastructure represents an important opportunity to coordinate the management and delivery of existing and planned accessible greenspace resources. Accessible greenspaces represent significant opportunities to deliver Green Infrastructure, with each space in the network operating as a ‘stepping stone’ from an urban context to accessible areas of the countryside and specific assets or destinations.

Analysis has been undertaken on the specific catchments of different sizes of accessible greenspace to identify deficiencies in the resource. Further analysis has been undertaken to ensure that Green Infrastructure delivery takes the best advantage of existing and emerging planned accessible greenspaces.

Catchment analysis has been undertaken using criteria set out in the Mayor of London ‘Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies, Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London Draft Best Practice Guide’, June 2003. The approach set out in the guide establishes indicative catchments for the different sizes of accessible greenspace in the ‘Open Space Hierarchy’. The hierarchy is as shown in Table 1 below. This study has acknowledged that some inconsistencies may arise from utilising catchment analysis criteria that were developed specifically for London in view of the urban and rural context of the Corby study area.

**Table 1** Open Space Hierarchy (adapted from Mayor of London, Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies, June 2003, itself sourced from Draft London Plan, June 2002)

Open Space Type (applicable to London Context only)	Approximate Size	Indicative Catchment Area	Corby Study Greenspace Hierarchy
Regional Park	Over 400 hectares	8 km	Sub regional
Metropolitan Park	60 – 40 hectares	3.2 km	Sub regional
District Park	20 – 60 hectares	1.2 km	Sub regional
Local Park	2 – 20 hectares	400 m	Local
Small Local Park	0.4 – 2 hectares	400 m	Local
Pocket Park	Less than 0.4 hectares	400 m	Local
Linear Open Space	Variable	Where feasible	Local

Catchment analysis based on the London Plan criteria aims to illustrate, spatially, the relative influence of varying sizes of public greenspace. It assumes that larger areas of accessible greenspace have greater catchment areas or spheres of influence than smaller areas. The analysis reveals the areas of the study area that fall within the catchments of greenspace resources but more importantly, the areas that fall beyond the indicative catchment areas, as it is these that can be regarded as having a potential deficiency in accessible greenspace.

The 'influence' of public greenspace refers to the facilities and open space experiences and opportunities that it is likely to provide. For example, a country park will provide a much broader range of opportunities than a pocket park and will therefore have a greater 'influence'.

The approach does not also take account of the fact that individual open spaces may have larger or indeed smaller catchments depending on other quality and functional criteria. The areas of deficiency that are defined in this assessment are therefore indicative only and should only be used as a guide to broadly identify those areas of the borough which are deficient in publicly accessible open space.

Following the testing of the London Open Space Hierarchy on the Corby study area it was concluded that this urban hierarchy was not appropriate for the rural context, as analysis was found to be over complicated and inconclusive. Buffer analysis used in this study therefore considers the greenspace resource at two levels; sub-regional and local, as shown in Table 1.

### The Resource

#### **Existing Strategic Accessible Greenspace (Corby Doorstep)**

Strategic Accessible Greenspace assessed as part of this study comprises major areas of publicly accessible greenspace such as Local Nature Reserves, Country Parks and Woodlands with Public Access that are above 20ha in size.

#### **Existing Local Greenspace (Corby Town)**

The Corby Borough Greenspace Programme represents a record of all significant greenspaces in the built up area of Corby (excluding industrial areas and neighbouring towns and villages). The project initially sought to undertake a comprehensive survey for the borough; however, this aspect of the work was not completed. Sites were surveyed and the results compiled into a GIS survey database, and provided information on the location and type of all greenspace in the town, including whether sites were accessible to the public. The survey also identified the size of individual greenspaces. This enabled a catchment analysis to be undertaken, using guidance set out in the Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies (Mayor of London, June 2003).

Whilst the results revealed that there is generally excellent accessibility to publicly accessible greenspace in the town, the limitations of this broad level of assessment confined it to an evaluation of the quantity and levels of greenspace provision. It did not, therefore, consider other qualitative factors, notably:

- The function and quality of sites;
- Issues such as safety, which can have a profound influence on the use of greenspaces;
- The presence of particular facilities; and
- The accessibility of sites and the effects of barriers, and other constraints such as busy roads, watercourses and land ownership.

The survey identified that Corby has a significant number of greenspaces within the built up area of the town. The principal findings of the catchment analysis, based on indicative catchments for different sizes of accessible greenspace from the London Plan, are discussed in the analysis section.

### Future Greenspace Resource

Development proposals for the principal existing or potential residential growth areas around Corby, comprising Oakley Vale, Priors Hall, and west of Stanion were also considered and analysed to determine the contribution the proposed new greenspaces may make to accessible greenspace provision in the town, should the proposals be delivered.

#### 4.7.3 Analysis

Catchment analysis of Existing Sub-Regional Greenspace (Corby Doorstep) revealed the following:

- Titchmarsh and Fermyn Woods represent the largest Strategic Accessible Greenspaces that exert an influence on the study area. Together these total almost 500ha of accessible greenspace and have an indicative catchment that extends to the eastern fringes of Corby town.
- With regard to the top tier of Strategic Accessible Greenspace, the analysis revealed that almost all of the Corby study area, excluding the south eastern portion, is beyond the indicative 8km catchment of a Sub-Regional Greenspace Resource over 400ha in size and highlights a potential significant deficiency. A site of Accessible Greenspace over 400 hectares in size on the western side of the town would compensate for this deficiency.
- Laundimer Wood, Wakerley Great Wood and Thoroughsale Woods represent Strategic Accessible Greenspaces in the 60 – 400ha category and have catchments of 3.2km. Thoroughsale Wood is the most important resource in that its catchment extends over all of the residential areas of Corby town and continues to cover neighbouring settlements of Rockingham, Little Oakley, Cottingham and much of Middleton. Laundimer Woods catchment area extends to cover Stanion and Weldon. Wakerly Great Wood is sited to the north of the study area and its catchment extends only a short distance into the Corby Doorstep landscape.
- The distribution of these sites ensures that catchments encompass the main residential areas, and as such, deficient areas are largely rural settlements to the north (Gretton), west (East Carlton) and south (Rushton) of Corby. Whilst Deene is not within the catchments of Greenspaces of this size, it is located a short distance from the catchments of Wakerley Great Wood (to the north) and Laundimer Wood (to the south) and might, for this reason, be regarded as not deficient.
- The smallest sites constituting Strategic Accessible Greenspace are represented by East Carlton Country Park, West Glebe Park, Kings Wood LNR and Mounterley Wood. The catchments of these sites are more limited (1.2km) and as such significant areas within the study area might be regarded as deficient. The indicative catchments of Kings Wood and West Glebe Park extend over much of Corby Town and leave a small area on the north west of the town deficient. East Carlton Country Park has a localised catchment that extends to cover neighbouring settlements of East Carlton, Cottingham and Middleton and does not extend into Corby town.
- When the results of the catchment analysis are combined, it is clear that much of the study area falls within the catchment of some form of Sub-Regional Greenspace, with the main town of Corby well catered for. However, some parts do not fall within any catchment. These are located on the northern and south western fringes of the study area and are principally rural locations with limited settlement. Gretton is significant as this lies beyond the catchment of Strategically Accessible Greenspaces.

Catchment Analysis of Existing Local Greenspace (Corby Town) revealed the following:

- Publicly accessible parks or greenspaces of less than 0.4ha: Residential areas in the north of the town are well catered for with deficiencies almost exclusively located in the south of the town.
- Publicly accessible parks or greenspaces between 0.4ha and 2ha: Even distribution throughout the town resulting in major residential areas falling within indicative catchment areas of 400m.
- Publicly accessible parks or greenspaces between 2 and 20ha: Wide distribution throughout the town, with some residential districts falling outside indicative catchment areas, principally those to the north and east of Thoroughsale Wood. Significant residential areas on the south eastern fringes of the town at Great Oakley also fall outside catchment areas.
- Publicly accessible parks or greenspaces between 20 and 60ha: Two sites of this scale are located within the town (Rockingham Road/ West Glebe Park and Kings Wood Nature Reserve). Indicative catchments of 1.2km encompass the majority of residential districts in the town although residential areas in the north west of Corby lie beyond these catchments.
- Publicly accessible parks or greenspaces of between 60 and 400ha: Hazel and Thoroughsale Woods represent a major public greenspace resource. The indicative catchment of the area extends over the entire built up area of Corby.

Areas not covered by catchment areas can be regarded as deficient. However, when all sizes of greenspace were buffered with their respective catchments, it was found that few residential areas of Corby are deficient, and almost all areas have access to publicly accessible greenspace.

A further assessment was undertaken in which all local accessible greenspaces in excess of 0.4ha were illustrated and buffered by a 400m indicative catchment area. This overview revealed that only small areas of residential development within the town are deficient in locally accessible greenspace. Of these areas the following display the most significant deficiencies:

- Housing area to the south of Lodge Park Technical College up to Vian Way;
- Housing area to the east of the British Steel Sports Ground; and
- The Snatchill area to the east of Oakley Road and housing to the west of Brooke Weston Technical College.

Weldon Park is a significant area of accessible greenspace that provides important access provision to residents within the village. Residential areas to the north and east of the village lie beyond the indicative catchment and for this reason might also be regarded as deficient with regard to this local scale of provision.

Catchment Analysis of Proposed Accessible Greenspace revealed the following:

- Priors Hall represents the largest proposed housing area. The master plan makes provision for extensive greenspace centred upon the retained Corby Old Quarry Gullet County Wildlife Site. Analysis has been undertaken on the assumption that the scheme contributes approximately 300 hectares of accessible greenspace, the indicative catchment of which extends across the industrial area of east Corby and residential areas in the north east of the town. This contributes significantly to local provision, although this is coincident with



the catchments of other strategic accessible greenspaces to the east of the town and as a result does not address the deficiencies identified on the western fringes of the town. It does, however, address the deficiencies noted for the village of Gretton.

- The Oakley Vale development is located on the south eastern fringes of Corby and contributes a number of public greenspaces that have a more limited catchment area to those associated with the Priors Hall scheme. Indicative catchments extend into the south eastern portions of the town and cater for the deficiencies identified for residential areas on the south eastern fringes of the town.
- The Land west of Stanion extension is sited to the east of the main built up area of the town, south of the Stanion Lane Plantation, and with a clear separation between this area and the village of Stanion to the east. The proposed master plan for the site is structured around two linear parks that follow valleys that create a linked network of open greenspaces. The indicative catchments for these areas do not extend as far as existing residential areas of Corby and as such greenspace provision is primarily to service the residential areas of the development itself. Footpath and green links beyond the site are proposed, however, utilising the route of the Roman Road that extends through the adjacent area of mature woodland. A green lane link to Stanion Village, and to the Nene Valley, is also included within the master plan.

#### 4.7.4 General Opportunities

- The value of a park or publicly accessible greenspace increases exponentially when it is easily accessible and connected to a larger system. Connecting the existing greenspace resource into a seamless network is crucial and a guiding principle of delivering the green infrastructure framework.
- Public greenspace contributes to the town's sense of place and identity. Corby has a significant amount of greenspace within the town and this should be seen and exploited as a key asset of the settlement. Enhancement of the existing and future greenspace resource will contribute to a range of agendas (health, education, well being) and to sense of place, identity and civic pride.
- Improvement of environmental quality, planning and design of new and proposed publicly accessible greenspace should encourage use and ensure that all spaces meet their full potential and the needs and aspirations of the local community.
- The value of the new and proposed greenspace resource for improving biodiversity through habitat creation, enhancement and management should be recognised and exploited.
- The historic and cultural value of publicly accessible greenspace should be recognised and exploited. Features of historic, archaeological and cultural interest should form the backbone of such development.
- The educational benefits and use of parks and accessible greenspace as a setting and resource for learning, improving skills etc. should be recognised and exploited.
- Design and management solutions to combat anti-social activities in parks should be explored and resources made available to decrease personal and property safety issues.
- The current opportunities for public art in accessible greenspace that has been initiated should be further extended. Public art should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the

image and identity of Corby and a forum for the local community to express itself. The educational and skills improvement opportunities associated with identifying and exploiting public art should also be recognised. Employing professional artists and design professionals for key sites and developments assist the empowering of communities to participate where appropriate. The 'Paths of Desire ' project that has been initiated in West Glebe Park is an example of successful collaborative working with the local community

- The potential for greenspaces to contribute to flood risk management and water quality should be recognised and exploited.
- The economic benefits of the greenspace resource through the perception and reality of the quality of the environment should be exploited.
- The creation of new strategic and local parks and accessible greenspaces in deficient and new development areas should be ensured. Attention should be given to ensuring new accessible greenspace meets local and strategic needs.
- Existing and future accessible greenspace provision offers opportunities to improve the permeability of the settlement and create a more effective urban-rural interface.

#### 4.7.5 Specific Opportunities

There is a good distribution of accessible greenspace within Corby. However, based on the catchment analysis of different strategic and local greenspaces the following can be summarised:

##### Accessible Greenspace

- Provide a Strategic Accessible Greenspace over 400 ha, to the west of Corby to ensure that all Corby residents fall within the catchment of an area of accessible greenspace of this size.
- Provide a Strategic Accessible Greenspace of between 20–60 ha, to the north-west of Corby in the vicinity of Rockingham Castle to ensure that all Corby residents of north western Corby fall within the catchment of an area of accessible greenspace of this size.
- Whilst deficiencies in localised areas exist at each scale of provision of local accessible greenspace, the composite summary plan indicates that almost all of the residential areas of Corby fall within the 400 m indicative catchment of some form of local accessible greenspace. However, the buffering analysis suggests that local accessible greenspaces (of less than 20 ha) should be provided at the housing area to the south of Lodge Park Technical College up to Vian Way; to the east of the British Steel Sports Ground; and in the Snatchill area east of Oakley Road and housing to the west of Brooke Weston Technical College.
- There is an opportunity to provide a co-ordinated network of existing and new parks and open spaces through this strategy. The Corby Green Infrastructure Framework combined with the findings and recommendations of the PPG17 Open Space Assessment, will enable the Borough Council to direct its policies to provide a clear framework for the development and improvement of the open space, sport and recreational facilities of the borough and can be used to inform a variety of strategies including the Leisure Plan, Parks Strategy, Regeneration Strategies, the Cultural Strategy and Community Strategies.
- The Green Infrastructure Framework will have the added benefit of enabling greenspaces to contribute to other agendas. The development of GI in the town will assist in the delivery of, amongst other things, a coordinated network of habitats, a sustainable movement network and better planned urban development within and surrounding the main town.

## 4.8 Access and Movement

### 4.8.1 Principal Sources:

Appendix 1: Key Baseline Mapping: Figure 1.6 – Transportation/ Service Infrastructure and Connections and Figure 1.7 – Strategic Access and Movement

Appendix 2: Interpretative Mapping: Figure 2.6.1: Corby Doorstep: Access and Movement, and Figure 2.6.2: Corby Town: Access and Movement The Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment (draft 2004)

### 4.8.2 The Resource

Datasets supplied by Northamptonshire County Council illustrate the access and movement resource in great detail. County Paths and National Trails represent the top level in a hierarchy of pedestrian and cycle routes. Vehicular traffic movements have been assessed by interpreting the distribution of roads, bus routes and key destinations. There is no mainline rail station in the town, although the course of the existing and former (and now derelict) lines have been assessed.

### 4.8.3 Analysis

#### Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access and movement is a key consideration in Corby, given the relatively large proportion of Corby residents that do not have access to a car. The concept of providing stepping stones of accessible greenspace from dwelling to countryside is a key aspect of green infrastructure provision.

- Within North Northamptonshire, the Nene and Welland valleys contain the principal recreational routes, comprising the Nene Way and Jurassic Way. These traverse the county from east to west. Principal north – south routes are provided by the Midshires Way which links Buckinghamshire to the Peak District and the Banbury to Stamford section of the Macmillan Way, although only limited stretches are present in the wider North Northamptonshire study area. The Lyveden Way is a less extensive route linking the Nene Way to Brigstock Country Park. The Jurassic Way provides access to the Midshires Way and Macmillan Way.
- Although Corby lies a short distance to the south of the Jurassic Way, residents have no direct pedestrian access to it. Similarly, Corby residents have no direct pedestrian access to the Lyveden Way/ Nene Way. The absence of direct links to the south east also prevents footpath access to key Sub-Regional Greenspace Assets such as Fermyn Woods, Titchmarsh Woods and Brigstock Country Park.
- There are numerous designated footpaths throughout the study area; however, no coordinated or linked network is evident. Key routes provide pedestrian access to the surrounding countryside and local villages although severance of routes by major roads and significant breaks result in an incomplete network. The absence of a linked and coordinated network from the heart of the town or from within residential zones makes pedestrian access to key destinations in the locality difficult. For example no pedestrian route links the town to Rockingham Castle, Rockingham village or the Welland. To the west of the town, no direct pedestrian link provides connectivity to East Carlton Country Park and similarly to the east of the town, Weldon Country Park, Rockingham Speedway or Kirby Hall are not serviced by a pedestrian links from the town.

- Within the town, there is only a very limited Public Rights of Way network. No information has been provided that illustrates the location of roads with perimeter footpaths, although it might be assumed that within the town, the majority of roads are bordered by paths. Whilst these provide pedestrian links within the town, they do not form a coordinated inter-settlement movement network that links to core destinations in the town, including safe routes to school, shops, etc as well as destinations into the rural areas surrounding the town.
- As part of the statutory requirements of the CROW Act 2000, Northamptonshire County Council has a duty to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RWIP), and to set up a Local Access Forum (LAF). The production of the plan is being led by the County Council's Rights of Way Section, in close collaboration with the Northamptonshire LAF, which was created in 2003. The emerging draft plan will undergo wide public consultation and provide essential information to guide and update the current condition and future requirements of public access and rights of way at a strategic down to a local level. Importantly the LAF has a duty to not only advise on rights of way and wider public access to the countryside through the RWIP, but also to connect with other agendas, notably health, tourism and sustainable transport. It therefore has a vital role to play in integrating with emerging aspirations for multifunctional green infrastructure links, and guide the prioritisation of the future enhancement and strengthening of linkages within the network. The information arising from this study has the opportunity to inform and integrate with future rights of way improvements that are applicable at a local level to Corby and its wider rural setting.

#### Cycle Network

- There are no national Cycle (Sustrans) routes in the study area. The nearest route (6 and 6A) lies to the west of the North Northamptonshire boundary. This is part of the South Midlands Cycle Route from Oxford to Derby via Northampton and Market Harborough. It forms a central spine through the county.
- Sustrans route 6 forms a central spine to a series of County Cycle Tours. Corby lies to the east of these cycle tours, the closest being at Cottingham. No designated cycle routes link the town to this County Cycle Tour and the wider network. A further series of Cycle Tours are located approximately six kilometres to the east of Corby centred on the wooded landscapes around King's Cliffe and Apethorpe and linked to a more comprehensive network along the Nene. Again, there is no formal cycle link to these tours. Cycle Tours are not present over the larger portion of the study area.
- Other cycle routes, comprising Calmed Routes, Cycle Lanes and shared use paths are primarily located in built up area of Corby, centring on a well developed network within and surrounding the Lloyds Conservation Area. The industrial areas to the east of the town are not serviced by cycle routes and only a limited network is evident in the south of the town. Similar to pedestrian rights of way, there is poor linkage to key destinations surrounding the town. Whilst a cycle route is evident from the western fringes of Corby to East Carlton Country Park, the route ends at the busy A6003 and does not continue into the heart of Corby. No designated cycle routes link the town to Rockingham Castle or village to the north, to Rockingham Speedway/ Kirby Hall to the east or to the Sub-Regional accessible greenspace assets to the south east of the town at Fermyn Woods/ Titchmarsh Wood.

#### Road Traffic

- Corby is well connected, lying approximately 20 miles from the M1 and close to the A14 east west cross route. Local road networks are considered to be good in a national

context, with A roads providing access to the main local and regional centres. Busy roads delineate a harsh urban fringe and around much of the town cause physical and perceptual severance between the town and the surrounding rural landscape.

- The busy nature of the roads serves to limit or preclude shared use for pedestrian access or cycling to reach key assets in the vicinity of the town.

### Public Transport

- Proposals for the re-opening of Corby's passenger rail service are under consideration. The Strategic Rail Authority has confirmed that there is a positive business case subject to Corby's projected growth and a technical feasibility study is now in progress.
- It is clear that bus routes are established to service demand and therefore the network has been designed to provide essential links within and between the town to surrounding settlements. This has the dual benefit of providing access to key services from the rural villages and the ability of residents in the town to access resources surrounding Corby. Analysis reveals, however, that no bus service currently links the town to Rockingham Speedway or to Kirby Hall. Other key destinations in the vicinity of Corby lie on or close to existing bus routes.

#### 4.8.4 General Opportunities

- Green Infrastructure presents a major opportunity to develop an integrated sustainable movement network in Corby. GI also offers an opportunity to ensure paths and greenspaces are integrated into built developments (whether residential, retail or industrial) and that high standards of planning and design are employed. Well executed and considered development will integrate more successfully with the existing local community.
- Existing road networks are good, but as capacity is reached, significant opportunities exist to embed the principles of the GI Framework and Strategy at the planning and design stages of upgrading the network or implementing new infrastructure. Transport proposals need to recognise the opportunities for creating good design that addresses all the strategic themes of the strategy including pedestrian and cycle access, healthy living, biodiversity, environmental character, flood risk, views and landmarks.
- There is a need to establish a primary network of high quality connections from 'dwelling to destination'. The destinations should encompass tourism and recreation destinations, areas and sites of historic, cultural or biodiversity interest, schools, places of work and open spaces. This would encourage inclusiveness and use of the outdoor environment for informal recreation contributing to healthy living and a sense of well being.
- All proposals for footpaths and cycleways should be accompanied by a recreation strategy and masterplan which illustrates how proposed paths integrate with the existing network.
- Improved accessibility to heritage, cultural and biodiversity resources would enhance perceptions of a sense of place, identity, pride and community.
- Increased access that provides opportunities for experiencing the variety and quality of local cultural and environmental resources would encourage exploration and learning.
- A connected network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways that is safe, attractive and well publicised would create a major leisure and recreational resource.

- Opportunities exist through development and reconfiguration of transport infrastructure to create a more successful rural-urban interface. Crossing points offer significant opportunities for iconic 'bridges' between the town and the countryside and destinations in the wider landscape.
- Movement corridors that incorporate functional environmental infrastructure will contribute to improved water quality management, and increased rural and urban biodiversity.
- Access and Movement through the study area should exploit existing and proposed views, landmarks and destinations.
- Improved access would raise the profile of the study area as a place to live, visit and work and through this attract inward investment.
- Safe routes to schools, sports facilities, retail areas, nature reserves, parks and other destinations would enhance liveability.
- Easy access to information about routes and the integration of other forms of transport to form a sustainable travel network would encourage future use.
- Opportunity exists to implement a proposed Sustainable Movement Network that successfully links the town to key destinations. The interface between the town and the wider countryside needs to be well designed, as does signage issues that assist navigation through the town. A specific opportunity exists, through the implementation of the Sustainable Movement Network, to establish a 'Round Corby Walk' that links East Carlton Country Park, Rockingham Castle, Kirby Hall, and Weldon Country Park. The way that this circular route links to Corby town is an important consideration.
- The rail corridor that runs through Corby is a significant barrier and opportunities exist for implementing new crossing points at key locations to facilitate adequate pedestrian movement through Corby.
- Busy road corridors sever routes at the urban rural interface and as such pedestrian movement from the town to countryside are intercepted in a number of key locations. Opportunities exist to provide crossing points and access routes that facilitate safe pedestrian movement between town and countryside.

### Road Traffic

- There are opportunities to utilise existing key road routes as multi functional GI corridors. Roads and verges should be re-designed to provide safe cycle and footpath routes to key destinations that are currently not accessible, whilst maintaining their function as personal vehicular and public transport movement. This is applicable both within the town and the wider countryside.

### Public Transport

- A review of public transport / bus routes and stops in light of the GI Proposals, and the establishment of an integrated transport network, would contribute to sustainable movement patterns and deliver wide benefits such as an improved environment, including better water and air quality.
- The case for re-establishing a passenger railway station in Corby is in progress but unlikely to be realised before 2010. Subject to approval there are opportunities to begin the process

of establishing safe routes and 'greenways' to encourage future passengers to walk or cycle to the station.

#### 4.8.5 Specific Opportunities

The assessment has identified a Strategic Movement Network, which centres on the provision of a network of access routes that deliver connectivity at a range of scales for different purposes. The proposed Local Strategic Movement Network seeks to refine the broad routes proposed at the strategic scale and utilises wherever possible existing rights of way, cycle routes and other forms of access route. Proposals for new links and routes are put forward where there is an absence of suitable existing resources. It should be stressed that consideration is not given at this scale to the functionality of particular routes to deliver the specific purpose it is proposed for, so a more comprehensive review would be required prior to detailed planning, design and delivery.

The following summarise the priorities for establishing an effective Strategic Movement Network for Corby. The course and location of particular routes are illustrated on Figure 2.6.1 and Figure 2.6.2. Delivery will be subject to a number of factors including a detailed review, consultation with access groups and demonstration of need.

- Establish a new Strategic Link from the Jurassic Way at Cottingham to the Lyveden Way at Brigstock. This route will follow the course of the old Roman road, now the A427 through Corby.
- Establish a number of new leisure routes and extensions to the existing public rights of way network to provide effective connectivity with potential to form an interconnected circular route around the perimeter of Corby town with well defined connections from the town.
- Establish a number of new multifunctional routes that contribute to the proposed inter-settlement movement network.
- Provide dedicated footpath and cycle routes that link to principal destinations on the perimeter of Corby, notably East Carlton Country Park, Kirby Hall and Rockingham Castle.

## 4.9 Social Economic and Health

### 4.9.1 Principal Sources:

Provision of Social, Economic and Health Data, Final Report, SQW, April 2005 and Annexes A – H.

### 4.9.2 Socio-economic Characteristics

#### Overview

- Corby is similar to the rest of the region and national structure in terms of age structure.
- Corby is more deprived than the national average (an average Super Output Areas in the Corby Local Authority Area is within the 35% most deprived in the county).
- Deprivation is notable in figures for health and disability, crime, education, employment and income.
- Corby ranks relatively well in terms of living environment (measured using environmental indicators such as housing quality, air quality and incidence of road accidents).
- Areas of highest deprivation are concentrated in the Corby Urban area.
- Evidence suggests that there is a strong co-occurrence of poor health and other types of disadvantage, in particular education, employment and income.
- Corby has a dominant 'working class' single tier socio-economic structure contributing to a culture of low aspirations in the town and a reduced capacity in the voluntary sector.

#### Employment

- The employment rate in Corby is slightly above average (72% compared to 70% nationally).
- The unemployment rate is also higher than average (6.0% compared to 5.0% nationally).
- Kingswood, East and Central have particularly high unemployment rates.

#### Socio-economic characteristics: Education

- Educational attainment in Corby is significantly below regional and national levels.
- 42% of 16-74 year olds have no qualifications compared to the regional level of 32%.
- 7% have a degree or higher compared to 17% in the East Midlands.
- Over two fifths of 16-74 year olds have no qualifications in Hazelwood, Kingswood, Central, East, Lodge Park and West wards.

#### Crime

- Crime is higher in Corby than in the rest of the study area on Northamptonshire.
- Within Corby, Central, Kingswood and East wards have a significantly higher number of crimes per 1,000 of population than the rest of the Corby Borough area.



- The occurrence of crime is important in terms of the use of existing greenspace, as highlighted by consultees, who indicated that some existing greenspace is considered to be unsafe by potential users.
- There was a consensus amongst consultees that greenspace is perceived as being badly planned due to a lack of lighting and lack of openness and natural surveillance. Crime figures may reflect this with particularly high crime rates in Central and Kingswood wards where there is significant existing greenspace.

### Accessibility

- A relatively large population of Corby do not have access to a car (32% in the local authority area) compared to a regional average (24%).
- In Central, East, Hazelwood and Kingswood wards (already identified as having higher unemployment and crime rates) the proportion of population without access to a car or van is particularly high.
- Poor accessibility is a potential issue across a large part of the Corby urban area, and there is likely to be greater difficulty for residents of these areas to access services, including greenspaces, that are not local. Greater reliance on walking and public transport is likely.

### 4.9.3 Health Issues

- Health is a particular issue in Corby. Neighbourhoods in Corby have an average ranking in the health and disability indicator of 21% which means that, on average, neighbourhoods in Corby are within the 21% most deprived in England for health and disability.
- Census data indicates that East ward has the highest proportion of people who think that their health is “not good” and has the highest proportion with a limiting long-term illness or disability.
- Other wards with high proportions on these indicators are Central, Hazelwood, Kingswood and Lloyds. These are the same parts of Corby that have already been identified as having other economic and social issues such as high unemployment and high crime.
- Coronary heart disease, stroke and lung cancer are recognised as being the main causes of low life expectancy amongst men in Corby. Corby is the fourth highest amongst all local authorities in the region for mortality from circulatory disease.
- There is a prevalence of mental illness in Corby, which relates to a relatively high suicide rate.
- Obesity is noted as another significant problem.
- Wider evidence on public health supported by evidence from consultees highlight links between poor health and lifestyle factors including poverty, low aspirations and environmental factors. There is a particular link between those people experiencing social and economic disadvantage and the likelihood of suffering from poor health.

### 4.9.4 General Opportunities

There is growing evidence to suggest a range of links between the availability and use of greenspace and the health of a population. Typical benefits of using greenspace include:

- General quality of life/ lifestyle benefits, such as aesthetic enjoyment of greenspace.
- Promoting greater physical activity, resulting in a wide range of cardio-vascular health benefits.
- Psychological benefits from a more attractive and appealing environmental fabric.

A lack of physical activity as a part of a healthy lifestyle can cause a range of health issues that can be alleviated through increased exercise. These health issues are core to Corby including cardiovascular disease, stroke, obesity, mental health and cancer.

Studies indicate that looking at greenspace or 'nature' goes beyond aesthetic enjoyment to include enhanced environmental well being, reduced stress and, under certain circumstances, improved health.

Organisations such as CABI Space actively promote open space as a means to improve well being.

Analysis reveals that Corby is well serviced by greenspace (both natural greenspace and greenspace that is publicly accessible for recreational purposes) and as such it is unlikely that new greenspaces is the solution to the problems identified. The quality and range of facilities, accessibility and fear of crime will need to be addressed in the design and management of all existing and proposed sites to ensure that provision meets demand and aspirations. The emerging PPG 17 Assessment will assist in the analysis process.

Low levels of current use maybe attributed to issues of crime and accessibility. Other factors may influence usage, such as the management of greenspace and the facilities present. Indeed, consensus amongst health sector consultees was that proximity to "good quality" greenspace does increase the chances of people using it. The caveat of good quality is important and evidence suggests that existing greenspace in Corby is not currently used as much as it could be due to poor design and fear for personal safety, which has meant that certain areas are considered to be no-go areas at certain times of the day. Again, the emerging PPG17 Assessment will assist in the identification of issues and target areas for improvement.

Some consultees agreed that a wider provision and improved greenspace resource will be most used by the groups with least need, implying that those who most need to use the greenspace resource may not do so without some form of encouragement, possibly as a result of low self confidence or aspirations.

A range of issues and actions have been identified that need to be considered in order to ensure health benefits are secured from greenspace:

- People vary in their preferences for how to undertake exercise. A range of recreational spaces need to be made available, from formal sports pitches through 'village green' style space to more open lungs of greenspace.
- Simply providing greenspace is insufficient; it has to be well designed to be conducive for recreational and leisure at various times of the day and year. In addition it has to be well maintained, safe and seen to be safe to use.
- Schools have an important role in encouraging children to get into the habit of taking exercise and playing sport.

- Other opportunities for more proactive ways of encouraging exercise could be achieved through a GP referral scheme. There is also a need to engage more closely with communities and examine the factors that inhibit their use of local greenspace.
- It is important to encourage people to find ways to build exercise into their day. In recognition of this need, the 'Walking the Way to Health' Initiative was launched in 2000 by the Countryside Agency and the British Heart Foundation, funded by the Big Lottery. It has provided a framework for local partnerships of health, leisure and community interests to come together to establish a programme and network of community walks to encourage people to walk and improve their health. Although the five year initiative ends in October 2005, the principles and process is now well established for integration into Corby's local communities. There is heartening evidence of local interest in promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging walking and exercise. A group called the 'Get Set and Goers' has been formed in Corby which meets regularly for local and wider walks for both exercise and social interaction. There is also a proposal to set up a 'Green Gym' in Corby,
- Other lifestyle factors are important in influencing health (such as smoking, drinking or low aspirations). Challenging people's attitudes and aspirations will help change their outlook on life and health.

#### 4.9.5 Summary

The evidence clearly suggests that physical exercise is beneficial for health in many ways and that the availability of greenspace can encourage people to take physical exercise of different forms and indeed the aesthetic qualities of greenspace can have wider emotional and psychological benefits.

Whilst Corby appears to be well served by Accessible Natural Greenspace and greenspaces generally, a number of factors may be influencing the under use of the resource that would otherwise contribute to improved health and well being scores.

Whilst some of these factors can be rectified by good design and management, and through the principles of Green Infrastructure, others will need to be addressed through other means. Promotion of healthy lifestyles and exercise, and the contribution that greenspaces makes to well being should occur in parallel to an invigorated public realm strategy that provides a linked network of high quality of greenspaces that cater for local needs and enhance the environment generally.

A range of agencies should be engaged. The Primary Care Trust, Sport England, British Heart Foundation, Northamptonshire Sport, the Local Education Authority and Schools, Catalyst Corby and the Local Authority can all help ensure that the health benefits of greenspace in Corby are realised.

The planning process, housing developers and community safety officers can also ensure that future greenspace is appropriate. Local 'ownership' of greenspace is also vital as this will assist the community to feel at home using it. Groundwork Trust could be engaged to help in this process.

## 4.10 Development Initiatives and Proposals

### 4.10.1 Principal Sources:

Corby – The Next Five Years, Catalyst Corby  
 Catalyst Corby. A New Opportunity, Catalyst Corby  
 The Regeneration Framework, Catalyst Corby  
 Corby Borough Local Plan Adopted 1997

### 4.10.2 Corby – Plans and Aspirations

The MKSM Sub Regional Strategy identifies the growth requirement for Corby for residential development with a total borough wide requirement of 16,800 dwellings between 2001 and 2021 forming part of the regeneration strategy for the town.

The North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy will guide the locations for development, with details of site specific proposals determined in the Corby LDF. The ambitious proposals for regeneration and growth of the town which Catalyst Corby set out in its Regeneration Framework in 2003 will be considered as part of this wider process.

### 4.10.3 Housing

The accommodation of new housing within Corby will enable a greater variety of housing types to be provided, including dwellings for key workers and affordable housing. Whether the development is to be provided principally within the urban area of Corby, utilising previously developed land, or as urban extensions to the settlement will be determined through the LDF process.

Notwithstanding the procedures incumbent in the new planning system, proposals for urban extensions to the settlement have already been established at Priors Hall, on land west of Stanion, and land to the east of Weldon, including masterplans for each of the sites. All of these are the subject of current planning applications, however, and none will be determined until the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy has been completed, including the more detailed proposals for Corby.

A commitment to a south eastern extension to Corby at Oakley Vale has been made, however, and the phased development of the site is now in progress.

### 4.10.4 The Town Centre

A major initiative is to reinvigorate the centre of Corby and create an attractive, vibrant, safe and modern town centre. The broad initiative is made up of the following components:

- Parkland Gateway – located to the west of George Street, the development will deliver a new town square, civic, cultural and education buildings, library, swimming pool, apartments, cafes and bars. The Civic Hub will represent a landmark building. Hazel Wood, which lies between George Street and Willowbrook Health Centre, will be made more accessible as part of this initiative.
- Central Business Park - located between Station Road and the proposed rail station.
- Shopping Centre – redevelopment of the existing shopping precinct into a regional retail destination with modern shops and leisure facilities.

Priority is given to creating attractive, safe and easily accessible routes and a new town square and public realm at Parkland Gateway. A Central Avenue is also proposed linking the town

centre eastwards to Central Business Park, although its inclusion is subject to the findings of the emerging Town Centre AAP.

#### 4.10.5 Business and Commerce

Work is being undertaken by Northamptonshire County Council, Corby Borough Council and Catalyst Corby to implement a programme of environmental and highway works to upgrade the town's existing employment areas. New business, commerce and distribution locations have also been identified within and fringing the town. These are listed below:

- Central Business Park
- Southern Gateway Business Park
- Max Park.

#### 4.10.6 Integrated Transport Infrastructure

To achieve its broad aims one of the key objectives of the Regeneration Framework is to improve transport links to the town and to secure the re-opening of the Corby Rail Service. Progress to date includes

- Approval for the A43 Corby Link road. Funding of £12.5m has been confirmed by Northamptonshire County Council and Catalyst Corby; the proposal is to increase the road to dual carriageway standard. The indicative route alignments are shown on Appendix 1.8.
- Catalyst Corby is co-ordinating the proposals to create a new memorable Southern Gateway to the town at the A6003/ Oakley Road intersection including the redesign of the roundabout and linking roads
- Strategic corridor improvements are also planned for the town. These consist of hard and soft environmental works to upgrade the appearance of key road corridors into an through the town
- The Corby Star bus service, funded by East Midlands Development Agency, English Partnerships, the County Council and Urban Bus Challenge has delivered a fleet of 25 new buses and associated infrastructure.
- The Strategic Rail Authority has also announced that there is a positive business case for re-opening Corby's passenger rail service.

#### 4.10.7 General Opportunities

- Land use within the study area is likely to change both within and fringing the town. New development and the reconfiguration of existing residential, retail, commercial and business areas as well as transport infrastructure improvements offer significant opportunities to enhance the quality of Corby's urban fabric and its rural interface.
- Green Infrastructure can assist development plans to guide the delivery of a coordinated movement network that provides enhanced accessibility through developed and non-developed areas that successfully link dwellings to the countryside.
- Green Infrastructure recognises the importance of a coordinated network of biodiversity assets and targets areas for habitat and habitat link creation or enhancement. New development and reconfiguration of existing areas will be guided by the findings of the Green Infrastructure Assessment and will assist the delivery of strategic goals through local implementation.

- There is potential to enhance knowledge of the historic, archaeological and cultural resource through local investigation, consultation and development of sites at the local level.
- Significant opportunities exist for the exploitation of non-developed areas for flood risk and water management initiatives, with wider benefits to habitat and recreation/ movement agendas.
- Non developed areas have potential for the delivery of leisure, recreation, arts and tourism facilities that also contribute to local green infrastructure. The planning of greenspace and movement networks is particularly important in the master planning of residential areas.
- Green Infrastructure offers potential for the creation of new sequences of spaces and experiences in discrete areas of Corby and its surroundings. The creation of new, or enhancement of existing landmarks and views should also be implemented.
- The future development and growth of Corby offers significant opportunities for the delivery of Green Infrastructure. Green Infrastructure can successfully link to and through existing and proposed developed and non developed areas within the town. It can also successfully provide a network of multifunctional corridors that link town and countryside.
- The emerging Corby LDF, including the Proposals Map, Site Specific Policies, and Area Action Plans LDDs should, wherever possible, embed the principles of Green Infrastructure in order to deliver its aspirations and secure its implementation.
- There is opportunity for all new development and infrastructure proposals to contribute to a new and existing network of spaces and places that address all the themes within this strategy.

## 5.0 Local Green Infrastructure Framework

### 5.1 Introduction

The Northamptonshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework Plan represents the top tier of Green Infrastructure for North Northamptonshire. In practice, delivery of this broad framework will be at the local level, so the broad Strategic Framework will need to be refined and developed further in relation to more detailed analyses of key Local Themes and other considerations such as development proposals and local initiatives.

The determination of Green Infrastructure at a local level will be undertaken for each of the North Northamptonshire growth towns. The Corby Study has been developed as a Pilot to demonstrate this process of refinement and local verification. The Local Green Infrastructure Framework can then form the basis for informing and coordinating local delivery.

#### 5.1.1 Green Infrastructure Delivery Principles

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework Plan that has been prepared for the Strategic report (Figure 7) illustrates the proposed network of sub-regional and local GI corridors within North Northamptonshire. This proposed network is based on a detailed understanding of existing and potential assets and resources within North Northamptonshire, and the potential linkages and opportunities that exist to create a cohesive system. Notwithstanding this, it is intended to be a 'principle led' approach and is therefore a conceptual framework only, to aid the decision making process with regards to GI delivery on the ground. It is not intended to be prescriptive or inflexible, and as a consequence the network delivered in the longer term may vary depending on a multitude of local issues, not least those relating to the aspirations of local communities, land ownership and changing development context.

To ensure the vision of a multi-functional GI network is achieved in the long term, delivery should be guided by the following principles:

- The delivery of **multi-functional** greenspace is fundamental; proposals should be formulated to secure this wherever possible;
- The delivery of a **connected network** is also critical to ensure strategic and local objectives with regard to multi-functionality (ie biodiversity and access) are achieved;
- Corridors identified on both strategic and local framework plans are intended as **broad areas of opportunity** only and as such are open to adjustment/refinement as long as proposals adhere to the other related principles;
- Preference should be given to GI proposals which **complement other GI assets** and resources in the locality;
- The principle of '**net gain**' should be secured where there is to be a loss in GI resource.
- **Quality** of the GI resource is paramount;
- Opportunities to consider **socio-economic as well as environmental gains** should be sort during the delivery of GI at all times;
- Long term **monitoring of GI delivery and management** through stage reviews of the existing and proposed resource is critical to ensuring delivery opportunities are not missed;
- Options for partnering and funding of GI delivery should be **proactive and flexible** including potential competition for delivery; and
- Opportunities for GI delivery should be taken as and when they arise, and are relevant at every scale; **both flagship and small scale projects will be important** in delivering change in the long term.

These principles should be adopted by statutory and non-statutory GI delivery partners within the County to assist with the consideration of GI proposals during the development of the local network in the long term.

GI proposals should be considered in the first instance within the context of both the overarching GI planning and delivery principles set out in the Planning Sustainable Communities document (GI Guide for MKSM) and Strategic GI Guidance/Delivery Criteria provided in the Northamptonshire GI Strategic Framework Report.

**5.1.2 The Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework**

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework identifies a number of multi functional corridors in the vicinity of Corby that converge on or bypass the town. As a consequence of the methodology adopted and the acknowledged need to undertake detailed assessment to ascertain how these corridors are represented and function within the built up areas, the Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors do not enter settlements. The findings of the local study for Corby, however, provide the basis for the testing and further refinement of the Strategic Sub Regional and Local Strategic Corridors to ensure that they respond to local assets and opportunities that can only be identified at a the local level of assessment.

The North Northamptonshire study identified the following Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors linking into Corby:

Sub Regional Corridors

- Ise Valley
- Jurassic Way
- Willow Brook
- Harper’s Brook

Local Corridors

- Stoke Albany – Little Albany
- Boughton Park – Titchmarsh Wood
- Geddington – Stanion
- Stanion Deene Park
- Gretton - Harringworth (Jurassic Way)
- Welland Valley

The Corby Local Green Infrastructure develops and realigns these multifunctional Green Infrastructure corridors to ‘fit’ the local context based on the findings established through the analysis and interpretation of the series of themes have been examined in Section 4. Four additional Local Corridors are now proposed:

- Harper’s Brook – Weldon Park
- Priors Hall – Harringworth
- Corby – Cottingham
- Southern Gateway – Rockingham

The process also identified opportunities for Green Infrastructure delivery within the town itself, to form a framework of neighbourhood corridors which are intended to form the backbone of an Open Space/Public Realm Strategy for the town. They are:

- Cottingham Road
- Weldon Road (A427)
- Oakley Road (A6014)
- Rockingham Road (A6003)
- Corby Railway Line

As a consequence, the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework provides the basis for comprehensive GI provision in the study area and a tool to assist planners and developers implement Green Infrastructure across Corby Borough.

A significant amount of analysis has been undertaken in respect of a wide range of Local Themes. Two principal themes have been developed to a greater level of detail in terms of



evaluation of existing and potential assets and mapping of potential corridors. These comprise Biodiversity, and Access and Movement. In addition, the study has identified opportunities for the creation of accessible greenspace and accessible natural greenspace to compensate for deficiencies in the level of provision at the local scale. Green Infrastructure delivery is also regarded as an opportunity to improve the overall environmental quality of the town and its surrounding landscape. In this respect the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework examined urban and rural planning considerations such as gateway and nodal improvements and the creation of landmark features. A range of general opportunities are presented in Section 4, together with some more specific opportunities, but only those that have a geographic location are illustrated on the Framework Plan.

Consideration of the broader environmental issues ensures that the proposed Green Infrastructure Framework Plan for Corby is truly multifunctional and able to offer benefits to a wide range of environmental social and economic agendas.

## 5.2 The Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework Plan

The process leading to the development of the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework is described below and illustrated in the two sequential plans, Figures 4 and 5.

### 5.2.1 Stage 1:

Figure 4, Corridor Alignment Considerations, brings together the key linkages and opportunities arising from the interpretative mapping and analysis stage, based on the Local Themes of Biodiversity, Access and Movement, Greenspace and Tourism and Leisure Destinations. Building on the key existing assets in respect of biodiversity, proposed biodiversity reservoirs and links are identified. In parallel to this, the proposed strategic Sustainable Movement Network (SMN) in the Strategic GI Study is shown, with potential additions to the local network to provide access to the wider SMN, including the opportunity for a circular green routeway around the perimeter of Corby, and access to local and strategic destinations. These proposals build on the existing public rights of way and cycle networks. This process represents a refinement of the strategic proposals and as such, developments proposed for Corby tie seamlessly into the plans for these important GI related agendas.

### 5.2.2 Stage 2

The next stage involves the analysis and simplification of this complex network of linked assets and opportunities, and the identification of a local network of green infrastructure corridors. Figure 5 illustrates this network in a simplified, diagrammatic format. This is the final Local Green Infrastructure Framework, underpinned and informed by the analysis of the interrelated Local Themes. At this stage, the refinement and realignment of the broad Strategic Sub Regional and Local Corridors can also be undertaken in order to correlate with the local considerations.

In addition, proposals are put forward that compensate for deficiencies in Strategic and Local Accessible Greenspace and Accessible Natural Greenspace (through the application of Mayor of London, and ANGST methodologies respectively). Proposals for Nodal and Gateway Improvements have also been illustrated.

The Local Framework that has been developed for Corby demonstrates how the Strategic network will be progressively refined as further local studies are completed. The findings arising from conditions and opportunities identified at the local level enable the strategic corridor routes to be adjusted and also linked through the settlement areas. These corridors will provide the focus for opportunities for action and delivery in order to consolidate the network and connectivity.

### 5.3 Opportunities for Delivery

Many of the opportunities identified in the Local Themes are of a general nature and underpin the broad principles that need to guide the long term delivery of Green Infrastructure. Nevertheless, there are a number of specific opportunities that have been cited which can form the first schedule of potential projects for delivery, and form a flagship for future schemes.

Other opportunities for delivery on the ground will arise from specific initiatives and particularly through development projects, for example, where new areas of housing, industrial or commercial development can contribute through planning obligations to the delivery of the wider green infrastructure network. Likewise, new transport infrastructure or flood risk management should contribute to and help deliver the green infrastructure network where these form part of the network.

### 5.4 Potential Green Infrastructure Projects

Specific Projects and Opportunities for the delivery of Corby's Local Green Infrastructure Framework are set out below, classified under the principal Local Theme that they link to. Where appropriate, the reference code for the site or general location is given to correlate with their identification on the Framework Plan, Figure 1.5.

It should be noted that although a project may have been identified within a specific theme they will often deliver multiple green infrastructure benefits eg woodland creation and linkage may also provide an appropriate route for access and movement. Similarly flood risk zones, where development is precluded, can deliver a range of opportunities including biodiversity enhancement, access and movement routes and leisure opportunities.

#### 5.4.1 Accessible Natural Greenspace Sites

As series of sites are identified on the western and northern side of Corby which will accommodate identified deficiencies in the provision of local accessible greenspace within the urban area. These are referenced on the Corby local GI Framework Plan as B1 –B6 and also described in more detail in Section 4.5.6, Specific Opportunities for GI Delivery.

#### 5.4.2 Accessible Greenspace Opportunities and Projects

- Sub Regional Accessible Greenspace over 400 ha, to the west of Corby: S1.
- Sub Regional Accessible Greenspace of between 20–60 ha, to the north-west of Corby in the vicinity of Rockingham Castle: S2.
- Local accessible greenspaces (of less than 20 ha) within the housing area to the south of Lodge Park Technical College up to Vian Way, the housing area to the east of the British Steel Sports Ground, and in the Snatchill area to the east of Oakley Road and housing to the west of Brooke Weston Technical College (L1, L2, and L3)

#### 5.4.3 Strategic Movement Network Opportunities and Projects.

- Establish a new Strategic Link from the Jurassic Way at Cottingham to the Lyveden Way at Brigstock. This route will follow the course of the old Roman road, now the A427 through Corby
- Establish a number of new leisure routes and extensions to the existing public rights of way network to provide more effective connectivity and with potential to form an interconnected circular green route around the perimeter of Corby town with well defined connections from the town

## 5.5 Green Infrastructure Costings

Section 4.6 of the Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework Study provides ball park figures for the provision of a green infrastructure across North Northamptonshire. This addresses potential costs for the network of multifunctional corridors although it does not attempt to address the more detailed level of provision within the urban areas, and in particular associated with the growth towns, or the interconnection with urban green infrastructure and wider strategic network that links into the principal settlements.

The long term costings for the provision of the Corby Local Green Infrastructure Framework for the next 20 – 30 years will be dependant on a multitude of local issues and initiatives, as well as land ownership and the changing development context. With the wider role of community involvement in the planning process, the views and aspirations of local communities will also be an important and growing factor in stimulating and influencing green infrastructure opportunities and actions.

In view of the complexity of the potential options influencing the delivery of green infrastructure, detail costings for the Corby GI Framework have not been provided. Nevertheless, it is important that the potential order of cost for Green Infrastructure provision is identified in the context of the wider financial commitments to delivering growth and achieving ‘liveability’ and a better quality of life for the existing and new communities.

As a broad guideline, the ODPM has indicated that cost allocations for Green Infrastructure should be in the order of a minimum of 10% of the overall investment costs for the delivery of new infrastructure and housing for the growth areas. This will represent a substantial allocation of funding for the next 20 – 30 years. A commitment to this level of funding needs to be embedded into the emerging LDFs as well as national, regional and Government Agency agendas.

## 5.6 Further Work

During the course of this study further areas of potential work have been identified that will inform and guide the longer term identification of green infrastructure opportunities within Corby. The principal areas of work comprise:

### 5.6.1 Strategic Food Risk Assessment (SFRA)

This finalisation and release of the study will provide important information regarding the watercourses and river network with Corby and the wider study area. The SFRA will identify areas currently at risk of flooding and will provide general guidance for developers.

### 5.6.2 Corby Water Cycle Strategy

The Corby Water Cycle Strategy will look at all elements of the water cycle strategically to ensure that development needs do not overwhelm the available water infrastructure. It will identify any issues which could compromise development and will define high level targets for best practice with regard to receiving, using and dealing with water. The recommendations will clarify some of the opportunities at a local level for the integration of green infrastructure proposals, linked to the management of the flood risk areas.

### 5.6.3 County Wildlife Study

Completion of the comprehensive survey and audit is in progress and embraces the identification of the condition and management needs of existing and new CWSs, as well as other opportunities where appropriate, such as public access and educational / interpretation facilities. Importantly, the study is seeking to identify potential new areas for inclusion, as well as the review of existing sites. In view of the many areas of biodiversity interest in the vicinity of Corby, including areas of ancient woodland and calcareous grassland, there may be further sites that

can be included in the CWS register and contribute to the network of green infrastructure. The findings of this study in respect of the biodiversity resource may also provide a basis for informing the identification of new sites.

### **5.6.4 Review of the Rights of Way Network**

Northamptonshire County Council is in the process of undertaking a comprehensive review of the rights of way network. As part of this process the Northamptonshire Local Access Forum has been established and has a strategic role in advising and assisting in this process, particularly in respect of the introduction, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside. The emerging findings of the comprehensive review of the network, including identified deficiencies both in linkage and condition, will provide invaluable information in respect of future green infrastructure development and guiding the further development of the Strategic movement network.

### **5.6.5 PPG17 Assessment including Open Space Strategy:**

The completion of the PPG17 Assessment, which is currently in progress, will build on the partly completed Greenspace Strategy for Corby, and provide a more rigorous analysis of all greenspaces throughout the borough, with a specific focus on Corby. Importantly, as well a detailed audit of the existing resource, covering the hierarchy of parks, open spaces and both informal and formal sports and leisure facilities, the study will also identify the quality and usability of these areas. This will provide an essential basis for determining a neighbourhood level of green infrastructure that tiers up and nests within the more strategic findings of this Local Green Infrastructure Framework for Corby.

### **5.6.6 Public Realm Strategy**

A strong identity for the town's open spaces and public realm should be developed for Corby through the development of a Public Realm Strategy in combination with a PPG17 Assessment and Open Space Strategy. These should focus on the development of a strong hierarchy of street and spaces which allow 'seamless' movement from local neighbourhoods to Corby's Doorstep landscape and the wider GI network of places and spaces. It should also reflect the town's cultural history and its future aspirations through cultural and social projects. The creation of new and enhanced views and iconic landmarks should also be considered as an integral part of this study.