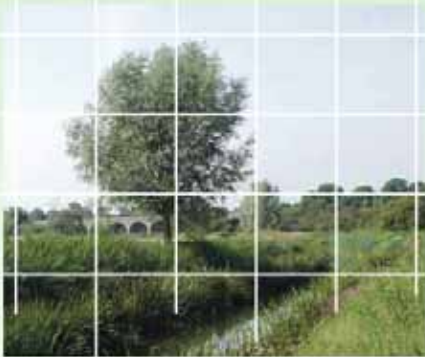


Thurrock Greengrid Strategy 2006 - 2011



“Creating a sustainable network of multi-functional greenspace and links within Thurrock’s towns and countryside”



Creating Greener Places in Thurrock

Putting residents first

THURROCK  **COUNCIL**
www.thurrock.gov.uk

THURROCK GREENGRID

Thurrock Greengrid is a forward-thinking partnership approach to planning, design and management of multi-functional green infrastructure across Thurrock. The Greengrid aims to achieve the following vision:

“Creating a sustainable network of multi-functional greenspace and links within Thurrock’s towns and countryside”

The existing open space and natural environment assets of the borough, along with the present and future needs of the residents of Thurrock, have been considered in developing the vision and aims of the Thurrock Greengrid. Through working in partnership with key organisations and initiatives operating in the borough, and neighbouring boroughs Havering, Basildon and Castle Point, Thurrock Council expects the Greengrid to achieve the following aims:

- Create high quality, multifunctional green space to meet the needs of the current and future communities.
- Green urban areas on the doorstep and link them with the wider countryside through a network of green spaces, and to improve access to open space in line with Thurrock’s open space standards.
- Promote a network of footpaths, cycle paths, and green transport options that encourage healthier living.
- Conserve and enhance international, national and locally important biodiversity assets, and to create new assets.
- Create an inclusive network of open spaces and green links that can be enjoyed by all members of the community.
- Create an accessible and vibrant riverfront.
- Provide a network of accessible, child friendly, inspiring and multi-functional open spaces.
- Enhance Thurrock’s important heritage, with the creation and enhancement of green infrastructure.
- Secure delivery of a greenspace network for managing flood risk, adaptation to climate change, creation of renewable energy infrastructure and local food production.
- Enhance the perception of Thurrock as a place to live and work, and improve the key features of the landscape to provide a ‘sense of place’.

WHY IS A GREENGRID NEEDED?

The common aim of Greengrid strategies is to strengthen the character and function of the landscape, creating a vibrant and dynamic green landscape that connects the town and countryside, celebrating the strength and diversity of local culture, and the built and natural heritage. The need for a Greengrid in Thurrock has been identified in relation to a number of key drivers. These are:

- The proposed increase in urban development and in population as part of the Thames Gateway Growth Area.
- The need for adaptation and mitigation for climate change and increased flood risk.
- Poor use of, or access to, existing green space.
- Existence of major barriers (such as major roads) to movement of people and wildlife through the borough.
- Deficiency of accessible open space in some parts of the borough.
- The role of good quality greenspace in attracting business and investment in previously degraded areas, and in providing a sense of pride and place.

The creation of Greengrid is supported by both national and local policy and strategic plans, including the Sustainable Communities Plan Greening the Gateway Plan, the newly published Thames Gateway Interim Plan, the draft East of England Plan and the South Essex Greengrid.

Greengrid was introduced as an environmental concept within Regional Planning Guidance for the Thames Gateway in RPG 9a in the mid-1990's as a means to enhance greenspace networks and the environmental image of the area. The Greengrid concept was developed through the South Essex Greengrid Strategy, which was published in 2005 by a partnership comprising Thurrock Council and other local authorities, statutory and non-statutory environmental bodies and the East of England Development Agency. The strategy sets out a vision for the Greengrid in the Thames Gateway South Essex region and **proposes a range of green infrastructure elements for Thurrock** and the wider sub-region.

The South Essex Greengrid in 2005 is supported by the government's 2005 'Greening the Gateway' strategy, and combined with a review of policy through the Local Development Framework process, the need has arisen for Thurrock to develop its own local Greengrid. Reflecting the South Essex Greengrid, the Thurrock Greengrid provides a much finer grain framework, based on field research and local knowledge gained through consultation. At a local level, this strategic approach will inform policy development within the Local Development Framework, the local development plan, and the strategy itself may be considered for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Key sites for creation and enhancement of green infrastructure assets as part of the Thurrock Greengrid are shown in **Figure 1**. Further information on open space deficiency and biodiversity assets within the borough are shown in **Figures 2 & 3**. **Figure 4** provides an example of how the principles of the Thurrock Greengrid could be applied in practice.

Three key pieces of research informed this document, the **Open Space Strategy**, the **Biodiversity Study** and the **Green Infrastructure Framework Plan**. The original documents including text and mapped information on Thurrock's existing environment are available in full on the Thurrock Council website.

"Successful partnership working will be the key to turning Europe's largest collection of brownfield sites into a world-class model of sustainable development with a living landscape at its heart" - Terry Robinson, Natural England, on the regeneration of the Thames Gateway in *'Delivering a new urban fringe'*, 2006

GREENGRID OPPORTUNITIES MAP

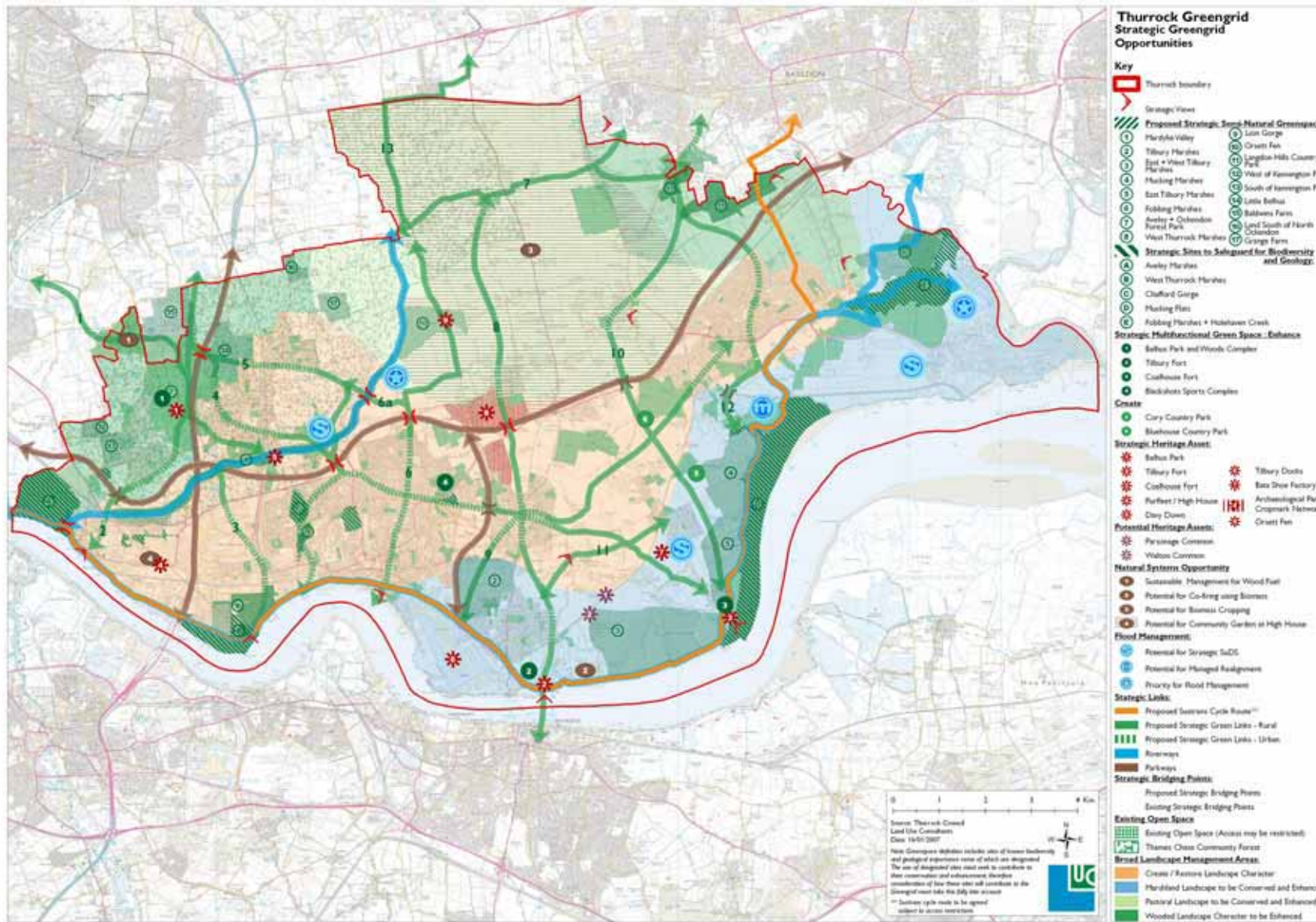


Figure 1 shows the Strategic Greengrid Opportunities identified through the Thurrock Greengrid studies. These opportunities reflect the findings of both field work and consultation. Local level studies and partnership working will be key to the realisation of these opportunities in Thurrock.

TYPES OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THURROCK

Strategic Multi-functional Greenspace: Sites which should be managed to provide multi-functional greenspace

Strategic Semi-natural Greenspace: Sites which should be managed as semi-natural greenspace

Strategic Bridging Points: Location with strategic need to overcome barriers to movement

Parkways: Main transport routes to be widened, where there is a need for environmental enhancement

Strategic Green Links: Strategic walking/cycle routes to link communities to open spaces and other strategic assets

Riverways: Main rivers with potential for biodiversity and recreation, plus other benefits such as flood management.

Potential for Local Multi-functional Greenspace: Sites which may have potential to become open space assets

Strategic Heritage Assets: Sites with heritage value and potential for additional interpretation and promotion

Landscape Management Areas: Additional guidance on the character of future green infrastructure in Thurrock

Strategic Biodiversity Assets: Designated sites which are priorities to safeguard

Flood Management Opportunities: Opportunities for strategic flood management

Natural Systems Opportunities: Areas with potential to be managed in a sustainable way

Local Wildlife Sites: Sites identified through the Biodiversity Study to be designated as Local Wildlife Sites

Strategic Views: These are identified opportunities to promote, enhance and protect existing views



“Successful, thriving and prosperous communities are characterised by streets parks and open spaces that are clean, safe and attractive – areas that local people are proud of and want to spend their time in” - Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott in *‘Living Places: Greener, safer, cleaner’* ODPM, 2002





GREENGRID PRINCIPLES

All the Greengrid principles have been developed to ensure best practice is followed in implementation of the Greengrid and other similar work within Thurrock. These principles have been developed through:

- identification of local priorities through the review of key local plans and strategies;
- review of national green infrastructure guidance to ensure best practice is followed;¹
- consultation with experts to help identify the key issues within Thurrock.

Overarching principles

Creation and enhancement of the Greengrid should:

- Promote, enhance and celebrate the special character of Thurrock through conservation and enhancement of its biodiversity, townscape, landscape and historic character.
- Deliver multi-functional enhancements to the Greengrid network through new development in areas of opportunity and need.
- Create new greenspace that links to other community facilities, reflects local character and heritage, and incorporates urban green infrastructure.
- Seek to adapt to or mitigate the impacts of climate change and increased flood risk
- Protect the integrity and functioning of natural systems (hydrology, soils, bio and geo-diversity) and seek to improve it wherever possible through both development and sustainable management systems.
- Deliver naturalistic strategic flood management elements, such as SuDS, water storage or other features wherever possible.
- Provide opportunities for skills development, education and life-long learning.
- Involve the community in the design and management of Greengrid to encourage sense of place and pride.
- Seek to deliver sustainable development objectives.
- Contribute to an accessible and vibrant river frontage.
- Enhance access to existing open space where needed.

These principles should be applied in all planning, design and management of green infrastructure, for the opportunities suggested in this document, and for other green infrastructure and open space management in the borough. The principles should be referred to by council officers, organisations and developers and others working with green infrastructure in Thurrock. The anticipated Thurrock Developer Guidelines for Green Infrastructure will provide advice on application of these principles in development and green infrastructure management in Thurrock. **Figure 4** provides an example of the application of the Thurrock Greengrid principles at a local level.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR THE GREENGRID

Thurrock Greengrid is not an isolated approach, and the proposed Thurrock Greengrid overlaps and connects with other sub-regional green infrastructure frameworks, primarily the South Essex Greengrid. The Greengrid within Thurrock also overlaps with the Thames Chase Community Forest in the north and west of the borough, and the Green Arc which extends out from London and encompasses the north western area of the borough. Thurrock Greengrid gives expression to the aspirations of these partners programmes, and of the community strategy for Thurrock.

The challenge is to enhance the existing green infrastructure and create 'Green Grids' of locally distinct open spaces connected by footpaths and cycleways - *'A summary of Valuing the Gateway's Greenspace seminar'*, Greening the Gateway Partnership, 2005

"85% of people feel that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and on the way they feel." *'Streets of shame. Summary findings from 'Public attitudes to architecture and the built environment'* CABE, 2002



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GREENGRID IN THURROCK

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK PLAN

Approach

- The broad aims of the Thurrock Green Infrastructure Framework Plan (GIFP) were to identify and map the sites and features that make up green infrastructure within Thurrock, and to identify potential for new and enhanced assets in order to improve the functionality of the Thurrock Greengrid.
- The proposed green infrastructure network is designed to complement the open spaces identified in the Thurrock Open Space Strategy through connecting sites and enhancing existing assets.
- A combination of desk-based research and field work were used.
- A consultation workshop with stakeholders was undertaken to gather feedback on the opportunities.

Outcomes

The main outcome of the green infrastructure work was a set of opportunities for the creation and enhancement of green infrastructure features within Thurrock. Alongside these specific opportunities, a set of principles were developed, the purpose of which is to guide the planning, design and management of green infrastructure in Thurrock, and should be referred to by planners and developers, as well as council officers and managers of green space. The Green Infrastructure Framework plan also provides some outline guidance on key issues to be considered when prioritising open spaces and green infrastructure schemes for investment and management. The green infrastructure opportunities identified across the borough can be seen in Figure 1. The figure shows opportunities for creation and enhancement of open space and green infrastructure assets as identified through the study. The Greengrid Partnership should also be aware of any new opportunities which may arise.

The green infrastructure principles were developed under the following broad headings:

- Recreation and access
- Biodiversity
- Landscape, townscape and 'sense of place'
- Heritage, archaeology and cultural assets
- Flood and water management
- Community cohesion
- Natural systems
- Urban greenspaces
- New development and infrastructure



*"For a borough rich in business and industrial activity, Thurrock has a surprising wealth of natural resources. 70% of the borough is designated as green belt land."
The Blue Book, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation.*



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GREENGRID PROCESS

IMPROVING THURROCK'S OPEN SPACES

- The Thurrock Open Space Strategy was carried out by Thurrock Council in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 17 on Planning for open space, sport and recreation.
- The Strategy assesses deficiency in open space in the area, identifies priorities for the creation of high quality open space for the current and future population of Thurrock.
- The Open Space Strategy research consisted of two broad areas of work, the community consultation and the audit of provision.

Community Needs Assessment

- The community needs assessment was undertaken in order to determine the distance residents would be willing or able to travel to visit open space. The findings of the research were translated into distance thresholds to act as an accessibility standard. The distance thresholds identified and applied in Thurrock are shown in **Table 1**.
- The residents of Purfleet, Grays and West Thurrock were those who voiced least satisfaction with the current open space provision, whilst residents of Aveley, South Ockendon and rural area were the most satisfied.
- A third of the population visit their park at least once a week, but 25% of the community never visit any parks.
- 73% of people who use parks and gardens feel that the open space contributes positively towards the community.
- The open space thresholds demonstrate that all urban areas of Thurrock are deficient in some type of park, and most of Thurrock is deficient in natural and semi-natural open space.

Audit of provision

- An audit of all open spaces within Thurrock was undertaken in order to determine the quality and value of every existing open space. This was assessed in order to prioritise restoration and management work in the borough. In accordance with CABI best practice guidance, the open spaces which were of high value but low quality were prioritised for investment and management.
- Through undertaking open space research in line with the PPG17, Thurrock Council was able to develop robust open space standards on quality, quantity and accessibility, as set out in Table 1. The Open Space Strategy includes further details on each of these, and also includes standards for each open space category.

ENHANCING THURROCK'S BIODIVERSITY

Approach

- Thurrock's existing and potential biodiversity resource has been researched through the Thurrock Biodiversity Study.
- The aim of the Biodiversity Study was to evaluate the existing network of local wildlife sites as part of the review process for the LDF.
- In 1992 a survey was undertaken to identify Thurrock's most important wildlife sites for designation as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). This study has reviewed the previous sites and assessed other sites in the borough for biodiversity importance.
- In addition to the site assessment, consideration has been given to the existing and potential wildlife corridors within Thurrock, and features which may act as barriers to movement of species around the borough.

Outcomes

- The location of all Local Wildlife Sites, as identified through the Biodiversity Study, are shown in Figure 2. This document also provides some recommendations on the future management of Local Wildlife Sites to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Detailed description of important habitats and species within the borough can be found in the Thurrock Biodiversity Action Plan and the Thurrock Biodiversity Study.
- Mapped information on habitat clusters within the borough and barriers to movement of species around the borough can also be found in the Thurrock Biodiversity Study.

"Extraction of chalk, clay, sand and gravel and brick-making has played a significant role in re-shaping the natural landscape. Many attractive wildlife habitats today are the result of nature reclaiming abandoned sites". *The Blue Book, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation*.

OPEN SPACE

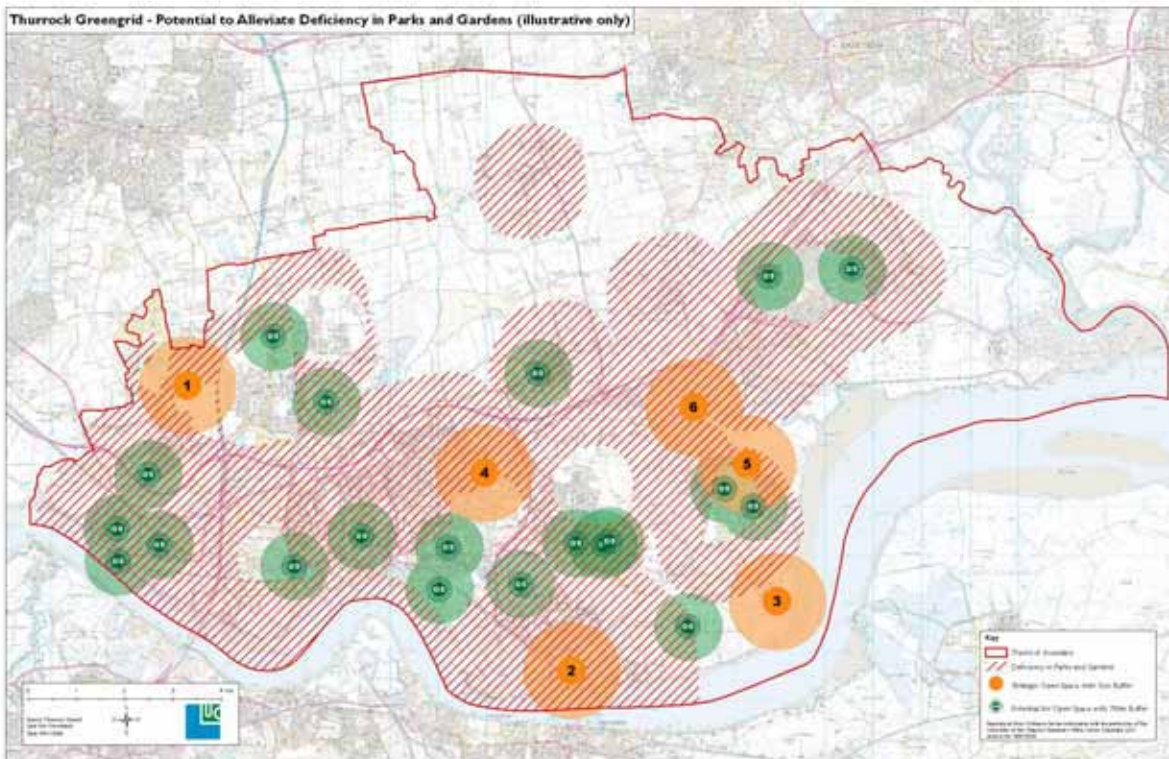


Figure 2 shows the potential to alleviate deficiency in the ‘parks and gardens’ open space category within Thurrock. This map is meant to be illustrative only.

The areas shaded in red indicate the areas across Thurrock that are deficient in one or more types of park. The areas shaded orange and green indicate the areas where deficiency could be alleviated through the creation and extension of new parks at a number of sites identified as having potential for open space creation.

There is potential to alleviate much of this deficiency through investment and management of the strategic and local open spaces as identified by the Thurrock Greengrid. Similar deficiency in other open space categories including natural and semi-natural greenspace and amenity greenspace can also be achieved through implementation of the Greengrid. This is a strategic analysis and a detailed site assessment would need to be completed prior to identification of these sites as suitable sites for creation of open space.

Note: Definition of Open Space also includes areas of water accessible for recreation or access.

Open space and recreation principles

The planning, design and management of green infrastructure in Thurrock should:

- Ensure the creation of new open spaces in areas of open space deficiency as a priority.
- Design and manager new open space to deliver enhanced biodiversity assets.
- Enhance access to existing open space where needed.
- Promote attractive and safe public rights of way with effective signage.
- Promote a network of recreational access routes that can be accessed from to promote healthy living and sustainable transport choices (See Local Green Links).
- Ensure that new public access routes reflect those identified in the Thurrock Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- Ensure a feasibility study is undertaken to inform routes for new public rights of way.
- Help overcome barriers such as roads or other infrastructure which limit access to strategic open spaces.
- Incorporate well-designed and appropriate visitor facilities, cultural and educational activities to increase the appeal of the site.
- Refer to Open Spaces Strategy and best practice guidance for green space for quality criteria for new and enhanced open space.

Table 1: Open Space Standards (Parks and Gardens)

Quantity	0.7 Ha per 1000 population
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be no obvious signs of graffiti & vandalism. • All parks should have signage that is specially designed • There should be no poor quality facilities provided in parks • The main landscape feature of a park to be maintained in good condition
Access	<p>Community Park – 1km (Walking time: 15 minutes)</p> <p>Local Park - 0.7km (Walking time: 10 minutes)</p> <p>Satellite Park - 0.4km (Walking time: 5 minutes)</p>

BIODIVERSITY

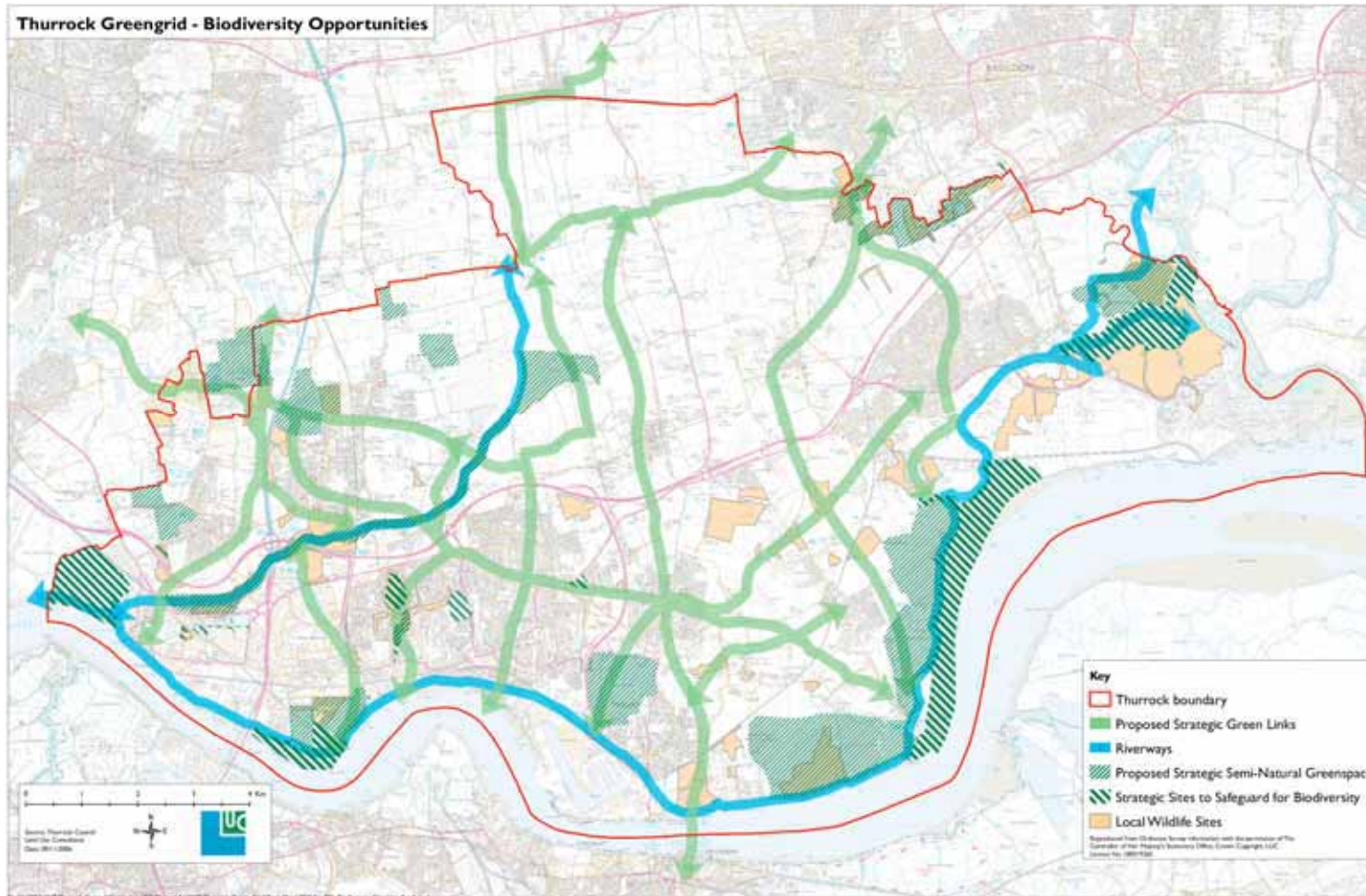


Figure 3 (above) shows biodiversity assets and opportunities identified through the Greengrid. This incorporates the proposed Local Wildlife Sites as defined through the Biodiversity Study, and the strategic sites to safeguard for biodiversity and proposed strategic semi-natural greenspace as defined through the Green Infrastructure Framework Plan. There is potential to link most of these sites through the creation and enhancement of the Strategic Green Links and Riverways network, as also shown on the map above. This maximises the potential for a network of inter-linked habitats which overlap the open space network proposed in Figure 1 above. Effective management for biodiversity should be a priority of all the sites identified in Figure 3.

Biodiversity principles

The planning, design and management of green infrastructure in Thurrock should:

- Deliver new and enhanced sites for bio-diversity through development.
- Promotion and enhancement of the special character of Thurrock through enhancement of its bio-diversity.
- Ensure the ongoing protection and management of 'Strategic sites to safeguard for biodiversity'.
- Increase robustness of biodiversity assets by creating new semi-natural greenspace around existing assets.
- Reflect and incorporate the biodiversity priorities outlined in the Thurrock Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Reflect the recommendations of the Thurrock Biodiversity Study in regard to specific sites.
- Refer to the findings of Buglife's "All of a buzz in the Gateway" survey of brownfield sites to identify and conserve the important invertebrate species on sites.
- Create new areas of biodiversity importance through the use of native species and traditional countryside management approaches.





Making it happen: Thurrock Greengrid in practice

Figure 4 (above) provides an example of how the Thurrock Greengrid principles could be applied at a local level. The example below is a theoretical case study of the application of the Greengrid principles to the area, and local level research would need to be carried out before implementing any proposals in practice. The plan is designed to provide insight into how the Greengrid principles can be applied at a more detailed level than shown in the strategic figures above. Primary functions only are indicated but all sites have the potential to be multifunctional.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GREENGRID

Current management approach

Historically, planning and management of green spaces within Thurrock has been undertaken by the council and greenspace organisations on a site by site basis. Broader environmental issues within Thurrock are now being considered by the Environment Board (of which the Greengrid forms one Action group). In addition to the council, there are a number of voluntary organisations who contribute to open space and biodiversity management within Thurrock. The most prominent organisations operating within the borough are the Essex Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and Thames Chase Community Forest. A new Groundwork South Essex has also recently been set up that is already contributing to this process.

There is a need for a strategic approach to managing and funding improvement of the greenspace resource across the borough. The Greengrid concept offers such a strategic approach through consideration of the resource at a borough-level and prioritising investment and management accordingly.

Proposed approach to management

In order to ensure effective implementation of the Greengrid in Thurrock, the Council wishes to work in partnership with greenspace organisations and land managers. There are several management options available, including management through the Council or creation of an independent trust to oversee management.

The preferred management approach for the Thurrock Greengrid involves support of the current action group by a partnership group, comprised of representatives of relevant organisations in the borough, and stakeholders such as community representatives and land managers. In order to implement the Greengrid, this partnership group would undertake additional research and consultation towards a detailed action plan for the sub-area. This would ensure a clear approach which is backed by stakeholders, and to allow planning for long-term funding revenue to maintain green infrastructure. At project level, it is anticipated separate sub-groups may be generated based on the landscape management zones identified in the Green Infrastructure Study or around the six Masterplan areas as defined by the Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation. This would allow actions towards the Greengrid to be implemented alongside development and land management, and may also facilitate access to planning gain funding from key developers.



Funding models

CABE Space has identified eight funding models for urban green space:

- Traditional local authority funding – a stable source of income within a strategic setting but only fixed on an annual basis and hard to ring-fence.
- Multi-agency public sector funding – builds partnerships and can produce better value for money but funds often only one-off.
- Taxation initiatives - quality green space enhances property values but English local authorities have limited autonomy to impose additional tax.
- Planning and development opportunities – can be a steady funding stream that establishes public/private goals but only available as part of new development and there is competition from other infrastructure.
- Bonds and commercial finance – significant source of capital free from usual local authority restrictions but needs to generate financial return and use by English local authorities is currently restricted.
- Income-generating opportunities – through licensing, franchising, sponsorship, entry fees, charges and fines. Could include shops, cafes, sports facilities, building hire/rental, car-parking.
- Endowments – the interest gained on investments in assets such as property or the stock market.
- Voluntary and community sector involvement – brings community 'ownership' and can access funds that local authorities cannot.

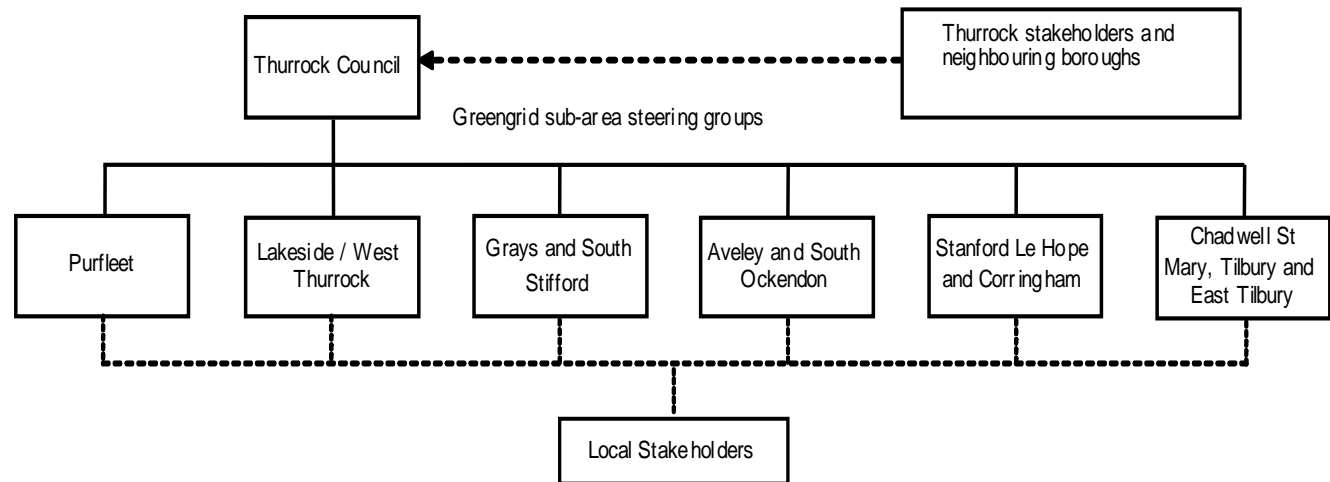
Proposed Greengrid Sub-areas:

- Purfleet;
- Lakeside/West Thurrock;
- Grays Town Centre;
- Aveley and South Ockendon;
- Shellhaven, Stanford Le Hope and Corringham
- Chadwell St Mary, Tilbury and East Tilbury

(NB. It is important to note that in combination these sub-areas will cover the whole of Thurrock.)



Implementation Framework for Thurrock Greengrid



“We need to think more strategically about the mosaic of greenspaces – to take account of quality, and to recognise the need to rebuild the landscape by joining individual open spaces back together.” Chris Baines, President of the Essex Wildlife Trust and The Thames Estuary Partnership, in *A summary of 'Valuing the Gateway's Greenspace' seminar*, Greening the Gateway Partnership, 2005.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE GREENGRID

Role of Greengrid strategy

The strategy is intended to inform decision-making across a wide range of partners activities including spatial planning of new infrastructure, as a development control tool, to prioritise funding for new and enhanced greenspace, and to inform community cohesion, cultural and educational activity

Local Development Framework

The Greengrid strategy will be used to inform policy within the upcoming Local Development Framework. In order to give weight to the proposals and principles which make up the Greengrid, the Council should push for the Plan to be adopted through the Local Development Framework process. Once the detailed implementation plan has been developed, this should be proposed for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document in the LDF. In order to be approved as an SPD, the implementation plan will have to meet various criteria, and these should be identified prior to defining the implementation plan.

Greengrid guidelines

It is proposed that the Greengrid strategy should be taken forward as a detailed guidance tool for developers and land managers. This guidance should be an easy to use tool that is not overly prescriptive but draws on Best Practice examples from many sources to inform enhancements of the Greengrid network in a locally distinctive way.

Greengrid action and partners group

A Greengrid partners group should be established as part of the Environment Board and Action group structure, with relevant stakeholders invited to take forward key actions. A consultation workshop could provide an opportunity to make links with other stakeholders and key organisations in the area. Those with whom links should be sought include farmers and landowners, adjacent local authorities, water companies and the Highways Agency.

Action-planning and funding

Once the Greengrid concept and broad proposals as part of Greengrid are approved, the action and partnership groups should seek to develop a detailed implementation plan for the work. This would set out detailed proposals to be implemented as part of the Greengrid, prioritise these proposals, and develop a five-year action plan setting out the financial and resource requirements, and the approximate timescales for the work.

Promotion

In order to implement the Greengrid successfully, there is a need for public awareness-raising and education on the value of open space and the importance of outdoor recreation, as well as on-going promotion at member, developer and funding agency level. Investment in Thurrock's green resource should be undertaken alongside a campaign to encourage the local community to make better use of green space. This could be through development of local community-led action groups, educational and sporting activities or cultural and heritage events.



Key documents for reference

- Countryside Agency and Groundwork, (2005) *The Countryside in and around towns*
- DEFRA/ODPM (2005) *Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway - A greenspace strategy for the Thames Gateway*
- ODPM (2002) *Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation*
- Shaping Thurrock (2003) *Aspire: Thurrock Community Strategy*
- Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (2004) *Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy*
- Thurrock Biodiversity Action Group (2006) *Thurrock Biodiversity Action Plan 2006 – 2012: An action plan for the conservation of priority species and habitats in Thurrock*
- Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation (2006) *Thurrock Spatial Plan Preferred Option*
- Town and Country Planning Association (2004) *Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities*
- Thurrock Council/CBA (2005) *Thurrock Landscape Capacity Study*,
- English Heritage/CBA (2004) *Thames Gateway Historic Environment Characterisation Project*

Thurrock Council would like to thank Thames Chase for their assistance on the steering group.

Partners

CABE Space

Environment Agency

Essex Wildlife Trust

Forestry Commission

Groundwork South Essex

Natural England

RSPB

SUSTRANS

Thames Chase Community Forest

Thames Estuary Partnership

Thames Gateway South Essex,

Thurrock Biodiversity Action Group

Thurrock Play Network

Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation

