



Darlington's Green Infrastructure Strategy

A Guide to Darlington's Green Infrastructure

2013-2026



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A Guide to Darlington's Green Infrastructure provides detailed information on the different priorities for those promoting green infrastructure in each part of the Borough as well as for those who will manage and maintain them. This Guide will be reviewed and updated annually.

Strategic Green Corridors

1. River Tees
3. River Skerne
4. River Skerne – Faverdale
5. Darlington, Middleton St George, A66/A67 to Stockton

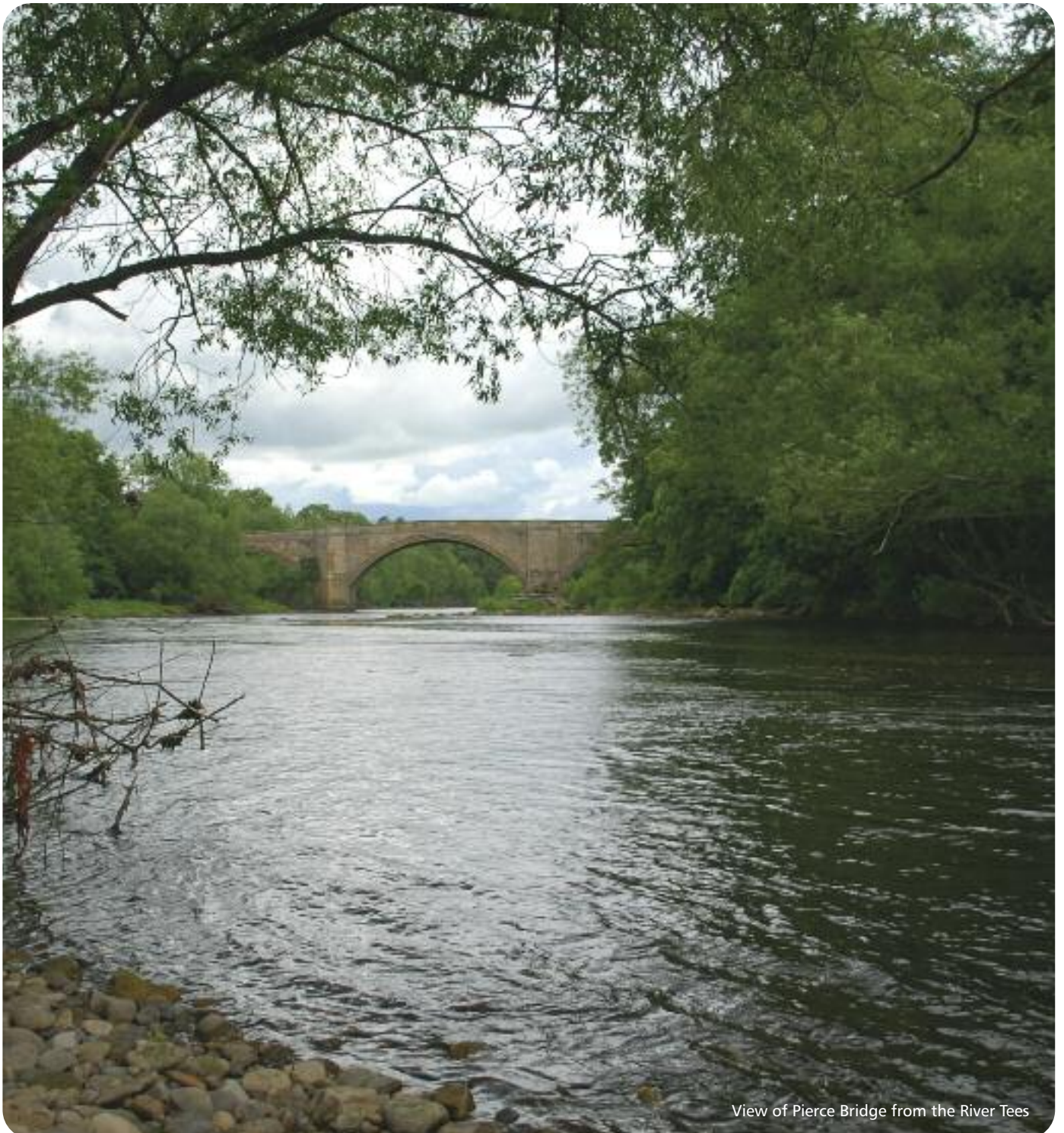
Local Green Corridors

- A. Former Barnard Castle Trackbed
- B. Cocker Beck
- C. West Beck
- D. Baydale Beck
- E. Salters Lane
- F. Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane
- G. Central Park
- H. A66

Rural Area

I. River Tees

Will provide an increasingly connected biodiversity and heritage rich high value landscape for wildlife and people to visit



View of Pierce Bridge from the River Tees



In 2026 the Tees will have reinforced its status as the Borough's most significant wildlife corridor; ancient and mature semi natural woodland will be increasingly connected with extensive areas of wildflowers and native plants, including the rare Globeflower, bluebells and Ramsom which will fill the air with their distinctive scents and vibrant colours. Healthy natural ecosystems will be established for a greater variety of wildlife to inhabit, disperse and breed; sightings of specialist river birds like the Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and the Dipper will be more common, while the increasing presence of the otter and the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker will help protect the status of the river banks as a premier habitat. With wildlife being able to move easily, the connecting River Skerne and Baydale Beck corridors will benefit from the richness in biodiversity that the Tees corridor has to offer.

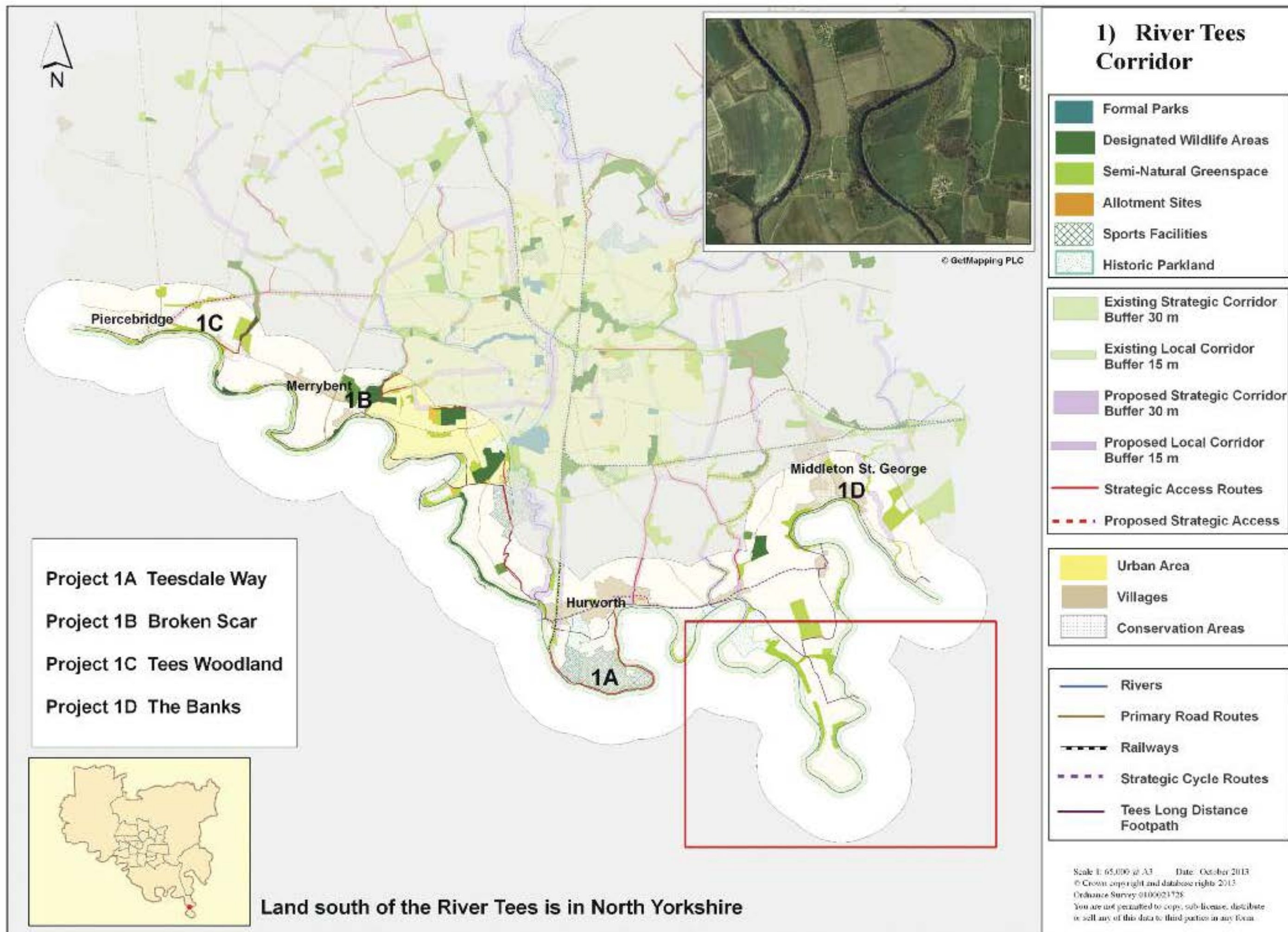
Residents and visitors alike will be able to easily enjoy walking along a much improved rights of way network, particularly along the Teesdale Way, the long distance footpath that runs along Darlington's southern boundary, while enjoying impressive wide, open views of the North York Moors and the upland dales. People of all ages and abilities will be able to move safely and comfortably between Blackwell and Piercebridge and along The Banks at Middleton One Row, while a series of shorter loop walks at Newbus and Sockburn will encourage people to discover cherished natural and heritage assets hidden alongside the river. Better signage and interpretation will encourage people to move away from the river to explore the popular Broken Scar recreation area, local green venues, and use the shops and services in the picturesque villages of High Coniscliffe, Piercebridge, Middleton One Row and Hurworth. Maintaining the openness between villages and the river will help deliver flood management, drainage and water quality benefits alongside a highly productive farming landscape.

What is there?

- A well established strategic green and wildlife corridor;
- A Local Wildlife Site;
- Broken Scar - popular play area, with car parking and access to the river;
- An extensive Public Rights of Way network, the Teesdale Way Long Distance Footpath and the Regional Cycle Route 52 connect the Tees to the surrounding areas;
- Many heritage assets e.g. Sockburn Church (Scheduled Monument), Neasham and Middleton One Row (Conservation Areas) and many listed buildings.

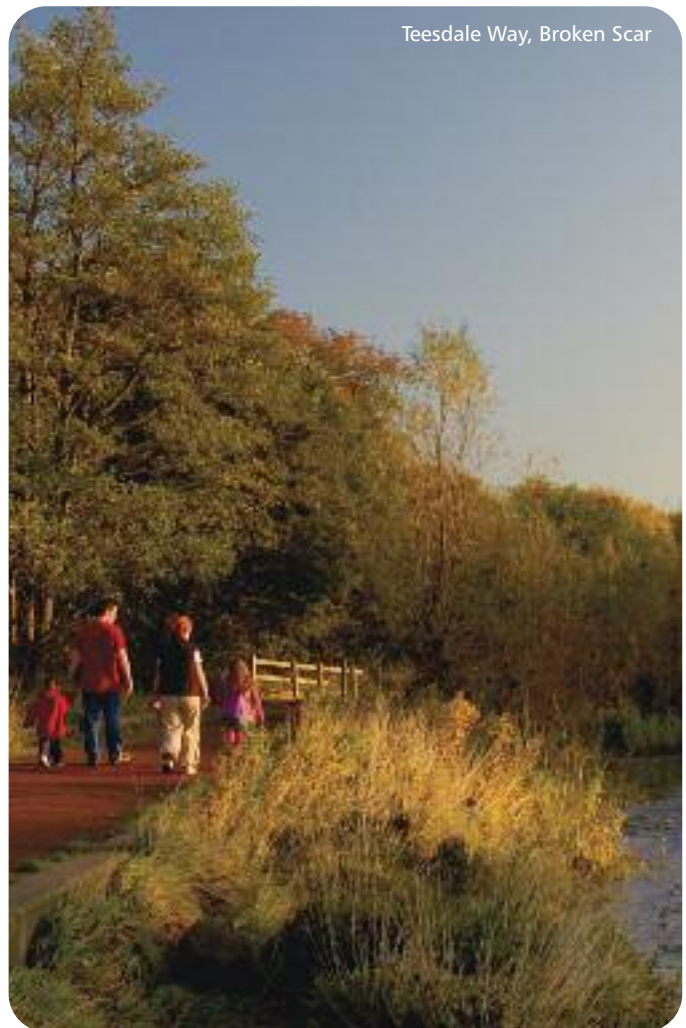
What could be improved?

- Access along local paths to the Tees to promote more even use;
- Path quality in popular places e.g. from Blackwell to Broken Scar, for older people and people with disabilities;
- Targeting of agri-environment schemes to improve the biodiversity of riverbanks;
- Land management to help farming sit comfortably with access and biodiversity;
- Links to Darlington's unique heritage;
- Local wildlife groups involvement in wildlife surveys to inform management priorities.



IA Teesdale Way

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



Teesdale Way, Broken Scar

IB Broken Scar

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





IC Tees Woodland

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

ID The Banks

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

Tees Woodland



3. River Skerne Corridor

Will continue to be transformed into a quality riparian environment attractive to people and wildlife



Rockwell Local Nature Reserve



In 2026 access for sustainable travel along the Skerne will be significantly improved; pedestrians and cyclists will be able to travel continuously along a new green corridor between Rockwell Local Nature Reserve through the Town Centre Fringe to South Park, while people will be able to easily reach Skerningham Countryside Park in the north and Hurworth Riverside through a well connected rights of way network. More will be made of this green river townscape; the restoration of a more natural wider river course south of Westbrook Terrace, set within greener river banks, grassland, wetlands and trees will provide a softer river edge with greater connectivity for wildlife, which will also prove attractive to developers who will recognise the benefits locating in a high quality, green urban landscape can have for future residents and employees. Opening up the river corridor will also provide flood management, sustainable drainage and water quality benefits. Value will be added to the setting of important heritage assets like the Skerne Bridge where a unique blend of interactive public art and information technology will encourage people to experience Darlington's distinctive past in an innovative way.

Local community groups will take the lead in improving the quality of Rockwell Local Nature Reserve and Beech Wood so that they continue to meet the recreation, play and educational needs of the local community. Towards the urban fringe, the new Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve will span the river, providing a mosaic of wetlands, wet woodland, meadow and grassland where a variety of protected and priority species including otters, water voles, Goosanders and wild trout can live in numbers. The well established Blackwell Meadows will become renowned as a centre for sporting excellence, while a short distance away, Blackwell Grange Golf Club will become a destination for the competitive or casual golfer. Low key improvements to Skerningham Countryside Park will ensure that this highly accessible urban fringe remains a popular destination for those wanting to enjoy informal recreation, family cycling and nature close to home.

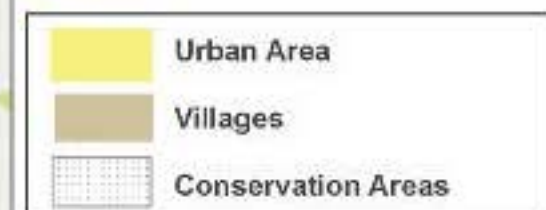
What is there?

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

What could be improved?

- Access to multi-functional green space for biodiversity, sport and recreation for residents of the new Town Centre Fringe;
- Provision of green features in new development e.g. green roofs, living walls and trees, particularly next to the river;
- Access to more playing pitches for adult and junior football at Blackwell Meadows;
- Links to railway, Quaker and Victorian heritage;
- Flood management in the Town Centre Fringe through a strategic scheme with flood storage, restoration of the natural floodplain and sustainable drainage systems.

3) River Skerne Corridor (South)

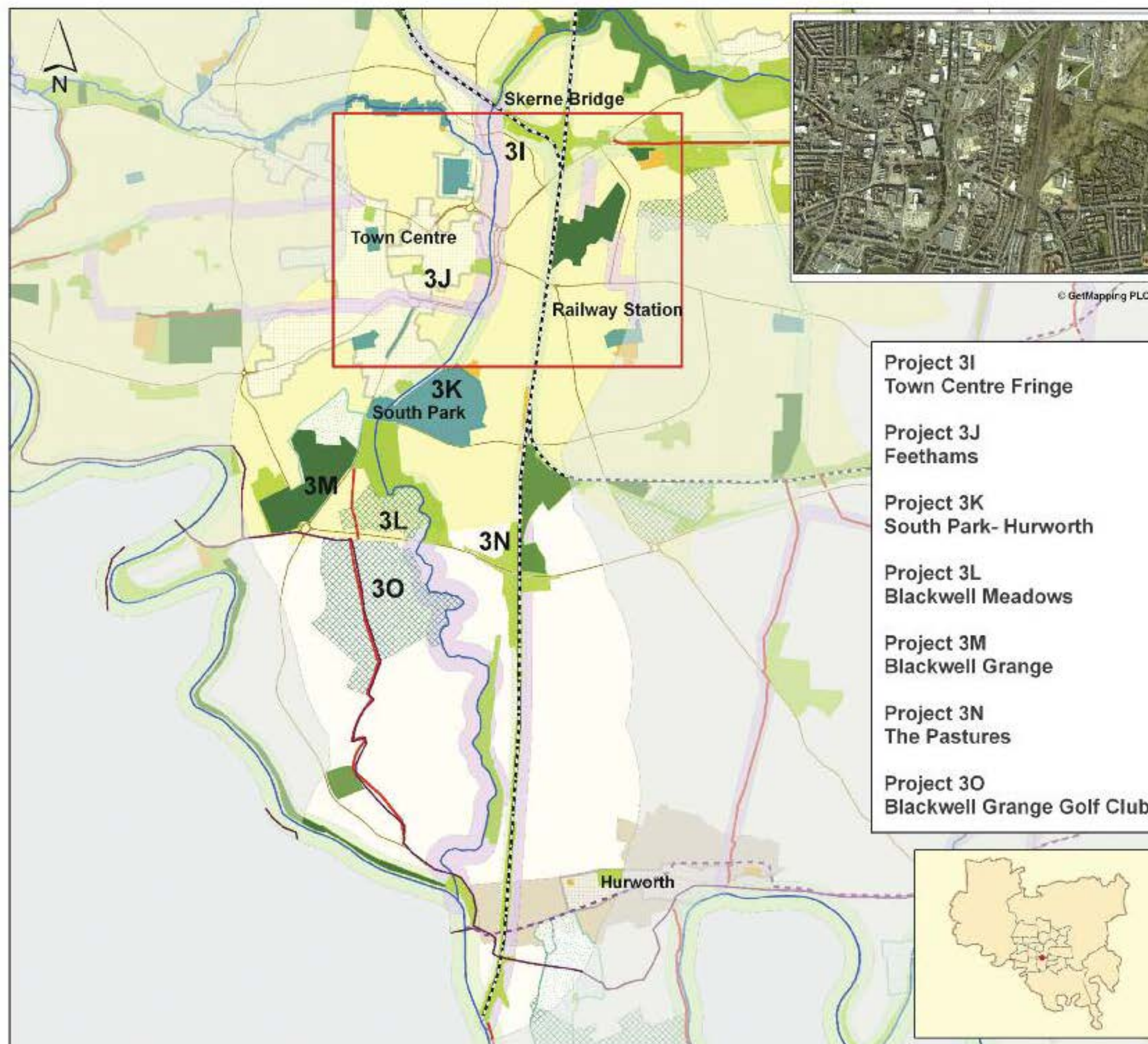


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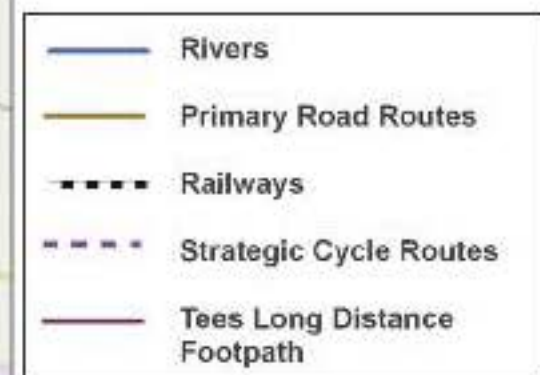
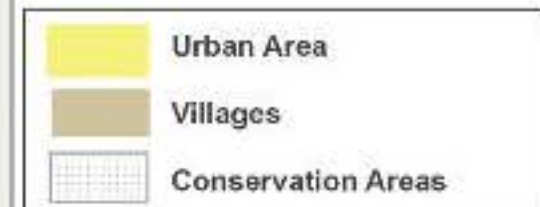


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- Project 3I
Town Centre Fringe
- Project 3J
Feethams
- Project 3K
South Park- Hurworth
- Project 3L
Blackwell Meadows
- Project 3M
Blackwell Grange
- Project 3N
The Pastures
- Project 3O
Blackwell Grange Golf Club

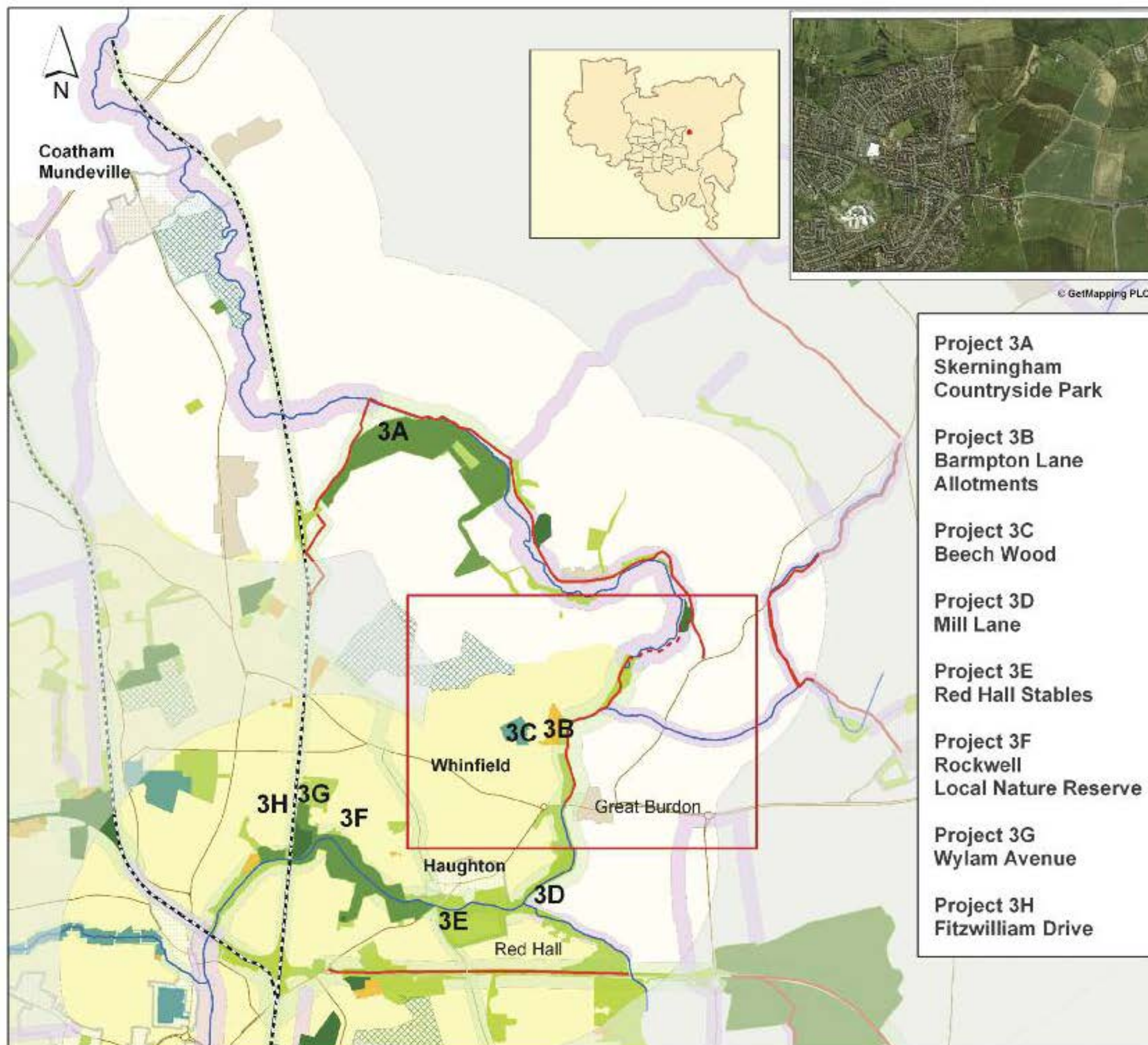


3) River Skerne Corridor (North)



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- Project 3A Skertingham Countryside Park
- Project 3B Barmpton Lane Allotments
- Project 3C Beech Wood
- Project 3D Mill Lane
- Project 3E Red Hall Stables
- Project 3F Rockwell Local Nature Reserve
- Project 3G Wylam Avenue
- Project 3H Fitzwilliam Drive





3A: Skerningham Countryside Park

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

3B Barmpton Lane Allotments

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

3C Beech Wood

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





3D Mill Lane Local Nature Reserve

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

3E Red Hall Stables

- Protect and enhance the parkland setting to create a unique mature woodland environment for new development;
- Re-design the existing open space to provide a range of creative and adventurous play facilities suitable for children and young people of all ages and abilities;
- Integrate a new foot/cycle path network to provide safe, easy access for all between home, shops, school and green spaces;
- Provide new native trees, shrubs and wildflower meadows to improve the biodiversity and landscape value of the local environment and improve connectivity for wildlife;
- Protect and improve the playing field so that it is capable of accommodating programmed matches;
- Introduce a new management regime to improve the quality of veteran trees and enhance biodiversity value.



3F Rockwell Local Nature Reserve

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

3G Wylam Avenue

- Create a distinctive lowland meadow to improve the landscape quality and biodiversity value of low quality amenity greenspace;
- Plant a species mix appropriate to the soil conditions, with additional plug planting if necessary;
- Provide and/or improve seating, bins and signage to encourage more people to visit and stay longer;
- Establish a new management plan for the space to ensure future maintenance is delivered in a cost effective way to meet the needs of the local community.

3H Fitzwilliam Drive

- Create a distinctive lowland meadow to improve the landscape quality and biodiversity value of low quality amenity greenspace;

- Plant a species mix appropriate to the soil conditions, with additional plug planting if necessary;
- Provide and/or improve seating, bins and signage to encourage more people to visit and stay longer;
- Establish a new management plan for the space to ensure future maintenance is delivered in a cost effective way to meet the needs of the local community.

3I Town Centre Fringe

- Increase the width of the river and its storage, to reduce the flood risk to people and property;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage systems; balancing ponds, swales, reedbeds and wetlands will help reduce flood risk particularly at the Cocker Beck-Skerne confluence;
- Create a more natural river course and de-culvert the river at Victoria Bridge to create an improved greener river environment – berms and flow deflectors will improve water flow and quality helping species live, breed and disperse;
- Improve the mix of priority habitats along the river banks; native broadleaved trees, orchards, grassland and wetlands will reinforce the corridor's capacity to accommodate a range of protected and priority species including otters, water voles, salmonids and coarse fish, particularly for spawning and fry;
- Create a greener riverbank; planting up concrete ledges, cutting small niches in the riverwall for plants to cascade, replacing invasive species with native and aquatic plants like common sedge, rush and reed communities (e.g. branched bur reed, flowering rush and crowfoot) to provide an attractive biodiverse corridor;
- Provide safe, sustainable access for pedestrians and cyclists between the Skerne Bridge and Victoria Embankment, to the river edge and to adjoining neighbourhoods;





- Incorporate new multifunctional greenspaces for recreation, exercise and play to promote healthy lifestyles;
- Incorporate green features e.g. green roofs and green walls in new development to create a natural, flexible and positive urban river edge;
- Improve the setting of listed heritage assets (e.g. Russell Street, Chesnut Street and John Street bridges) and the Skerne Bridge Scheduled Monument to create an attractive environment;
- Interweave public art and interpretation including Smart applications to promote the importance of the river in the foundation and growth of the town;
- Promote community interaction and management of the river.

3J Feethams

- Create a more natural river course, with more natural flood storage next to the river to reduce the flood risk to people and property;
- Provide safe, sustainable access for pedestrians and cyclists between and along the new Feethams development, to the river edge and to the existing sustainable transport network;
- Provide a multifunctional greenspace incorporating seating areas, boardwalks, a wireless park and play to encourage more people to use and explore the river;
- Improve the mix of priority habitats along the river banks; native broadleaved trees and wetlands will accommodate a range of protected and priority species e.g. salmonids and coarse fish;
- Manage invasive species e.g. the Giant Hogweed, to improve the health of trees and wildflowers. Risk of injury to the public will be removed;
- Interweave public art and interpretation of the Bishops Palace.

3K South Park-Hurworth

- Extend the rights of way network to improve access to the Teesdale Way and the southern urban fringe near Hurworth;
- Add traditional planting along the route; native hedgerows, broad leaved semi natural woodland and meadows will improve landscape quality south of the A66 and connectivity for wildlife;
- Restore the wetland landscape next to the Skerne; shelves, scrapes and wet woodland will improve biodiversity and provide a micro climate to mitigate climate change;
- Provide more signs and interpretation to help orientation and understanding of heritage and natural assets like Rockcliffe Hall, South Park and Hell Kettles SSSI and the area's links to Lewis Carroll;
- Explore opportunities to create a new community woodland.

3L Blackwell Meadows

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



River Skerne



Snipe Lane ponds

3M Blackwell Grange

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

3O Blackwell Grange Golf Club

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

3N The Pastures

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





4. River Skerne to Faverdale

Will become an attractive multi-functional corridor within an expanding and changing landscape



Drinkfield Marsh Local Nature Reserve



In 2026 this corridor will connect the reinvigorated River Skerne, the Darlington-Stockton corridor, the Barnard Castle trackbed and the significant new neighbourhoods near Faverdale for people and wildlife. Landscape and biodiversity quality along its route will be maximised; substantial areas of early successional brownfield land will be integrated into the highly successful Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve, while a distinctive new tree lined green corridor will improve connectivity to the increasingly popular Faverdale Whin Local Wildlife Site for species moving between the town and the urban fringe.

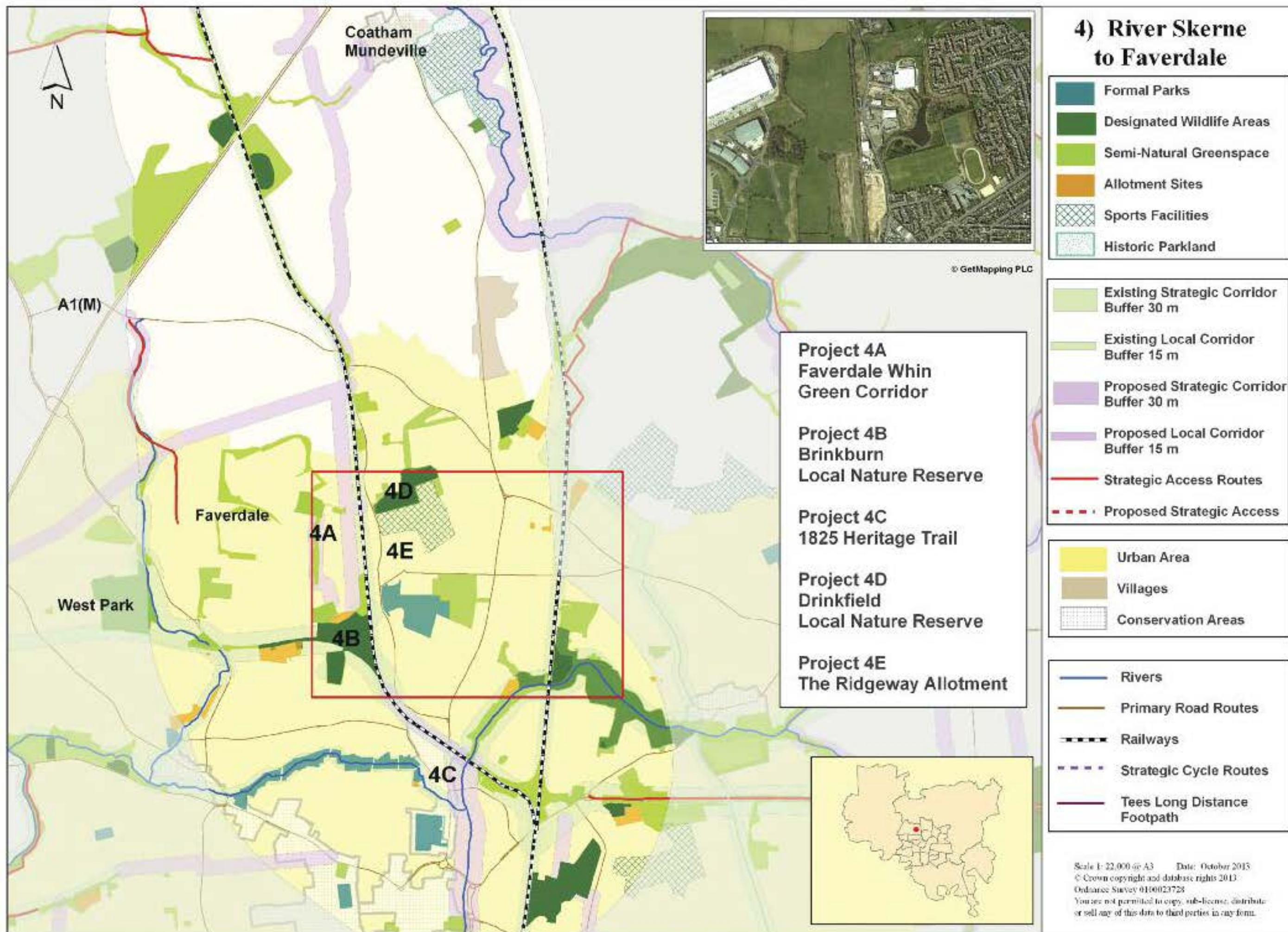
The wetland and woodland habitats of the well established Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve will continue to be enhanced to provide an exemplary outdoor classroom for everyone to learn about nature close to home. Making better use of an existing greenspace, the newly established Ridgeway Allotments will ensure residents can enjoy the benefits of home grown produce. In the inner urban area, people will be able to follow in the footsteps of the world's first passenger railway; the exciting, new 1825 Heritage Trail will take people on a unique journey through Darlington's railway heritage, passing such landmarks as the famous Skerne Bridge, one of the country's finest examples of industrial heritage.

What is there?

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

What could be improved?

- The quality of, and access to, Faverdale Whin Local Wildlife Site;
- Access to the extensive areas of wildlife friendly derelict land;
- Access from the new Faverdale Whin green corridor to other green infrastructure;
- Links with the former Darlington - Stockton railway line.



4A Faverdale Whin Green Corridor

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

4B Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve

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

- Produce a new management plan for the extended Reserve, in partnership with the Friends Group, to ensure priorities for biodiversity, recreation and access are delivered.

4C 1825 Heritage Trail

- Establish a trail from the Head of Steam to the River Skerne to link points of natural, historic and cultural heritage; the Head of Steam, North Road Railway Station, Hopetown Carriage Works and the Skerne Bridge will be linked through the use of public art, interpretation and access where appropriate;
- Ensure the trail is level and barrier-free for most of its length, to be suitable for people of all ages and abilities, for cyclists, for wheelchairs and disabled people.





- New signage should promote the Trail, links to adjoining neighbourhoods and the river to encourage more use of the walking and cycling network;
- Protect and integrate valuable protected and priority habitats on derelict land into new green infrastructure so that they can flourish. New habitats, native trees and planting should be complementary and improve the setting of heritage assets;
- Promote opportunities for imaginative and innovative learning, play and education. A teachers pack will maximise use by school and community groups.
- Carry out selective thinning of urban woodlands and plantations to provide a more varied age structure. Woodland flora will be planted to add variety and interest;
- Create a teachers park as an educational resource for schools and youth groups linked to different stages of the national curriculum;
- Provide for adventurous, natural play linked with opportunities to explore and learn about the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Provide more on site interpretation and information boards to help people learn more about the local natural environment;
- Provide and/or improve seating, picnic tables and signage to encourage more people to sit and relax and stay longer.

4D Drinkfield Local Nature Reserve

- Create a community wildlife garden to maximise the educational value of the space for local residents, school groups and visitors;
- Create microhabitats and nesting sites for specialist insects, epifauna, mammals and birds - bird and insect nesting boxes may be used where there is a shortage of natural nesting habitats;
- Restore overgrown wetland areas by selectively removing vegetation to create a range of successional habitats and planting with local native provenance water plants;

4E The Ridgeway Allotments

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



Fishing at Brinkburn Local Nature Reserve

5. Darlington Middleton St George, A66/67 Corridor to Stockton

will restore cultural and historic links between
the town and country



Cycling along the Darlington to Stockton green corridor



Following in the footsteps of the Darlington to Stockton railway, in 2026 this strategic corridor will continue to be an important focus for the green infrastructure network between inner Darlington and Middleton St George. Whether using the National Cycle Network to go to Stockton or for local journeys between the Borough's neighbourhoods and green spaces, those who travel on foot or by bike will pass through a series of different, but complementary landscapes. The extensive wildflower meadows that line the Eastern Transport Corridor and the ponds, wetlands and reed communities of the established Red Hall Local Nature Reserve will bring an array of wildlife to the town, while the newly planted tree lined streets, species rich grasslands and wetlands of the growing Eastern Urban Fringe will connect spaces for sport, recreation, play and local food.

Over time this substantial new neighbourhood will integrate with the River Skerne corridor, creating a softer, accessible riparian edge while retaining its important role as a fully functioning flood plain. An extensive network of sustainable drainage ponds will provide further flood management benefits as part of a distinctive wildlife and recreation resource. Moving east, the pedestrian and cycle bridge will continue to provide easy, safe access over the A66 (T) to the mature South Burdon Community Woodland where the old and young alike can walk, cycle or ride through this distinctive woodland, enjoying the new interactive art railway heritage trail or perhaps catching a glimpse of a roe deer or sparrowhawk. Darlington's oldest Local Nature Reserve, The Whinnies in Middleton St George is an unexpected rich blend of butterflies, birds, orchids and dragonflies at the end of the Darlington journey.

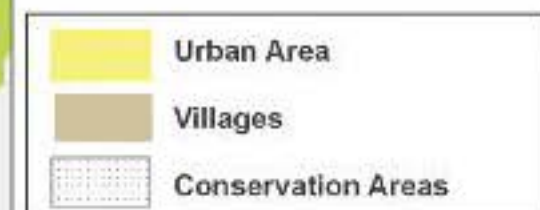
What is there?

- The Eastern Transport Corridor (and National Cycle Network 14) links the urban area to Middleton St George via a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the A66;
- Brinkburn Pond and The Whinnies are important Local Nature Reserves;
- South Burdon Community Woodland is establishing either side of the corridor;
- Red Hall ponds are a new but valuable sustainable drainage resource and wildlife habitat.

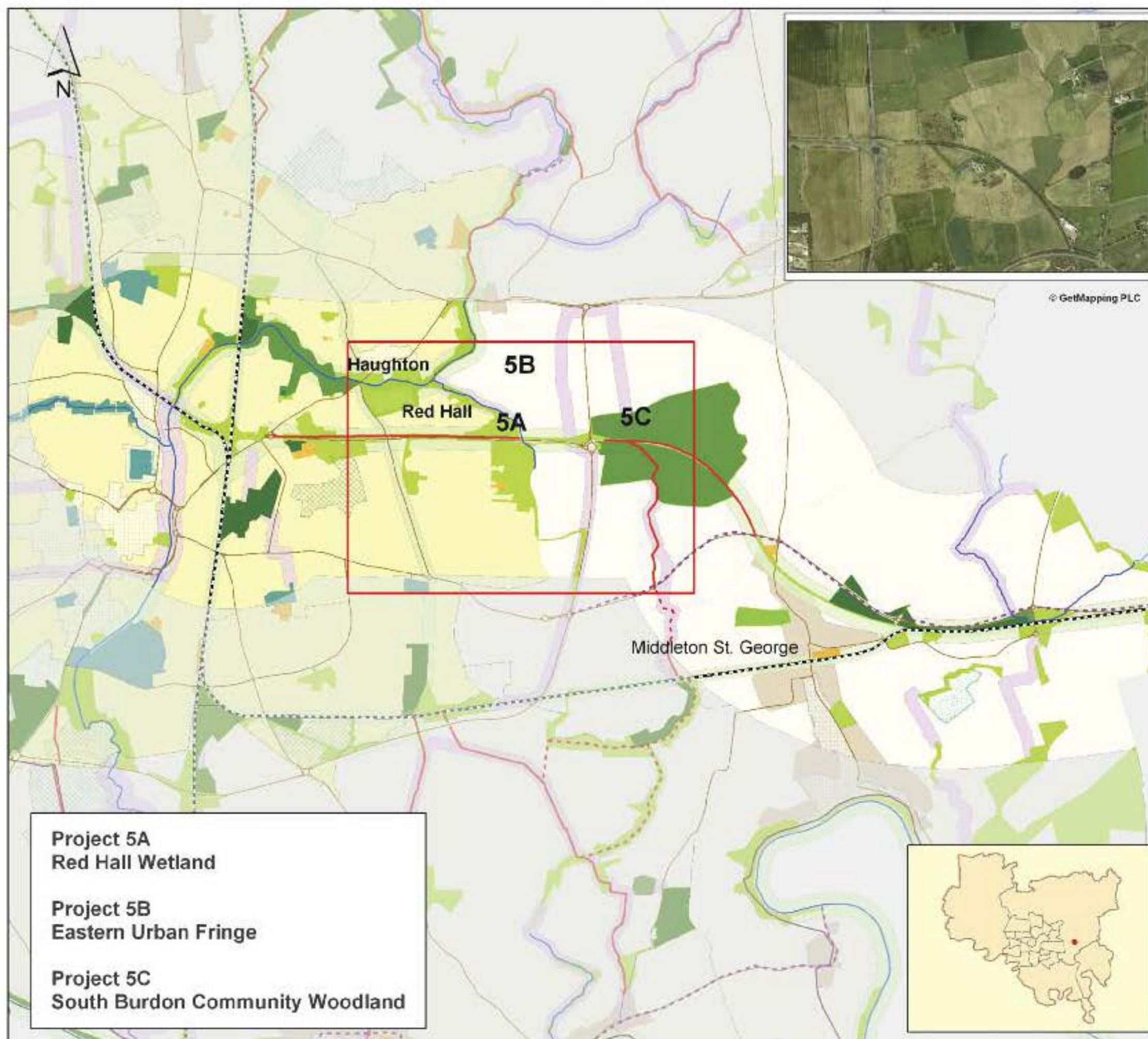
What could be improved?

- Access to greenspace for biodiversity, sport, recreation, play and local food for residents of the new Eastern Urban Fringe;
- Access to the extensive areas of wildlife friendly derelict land in the urban area;
- Links with the former Darlington to Stockton railway line;
- More appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area to stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.

5) Darlington, Middleton St George, Stockton Corridor



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Project 5A
Red Hall Wetland

Project 5B
Eastern Urban Fringe

Project 5C
South Burdon Community Woodland



Red Hall Primary School pupils visit Red Hall Wetland

5A: Red Hall Wetland Local Nature Reserve

- Designate a new wetland and woodland Local Nature Reserve for protected species like the Great Crested Newt and species rich, neutral grassland to establish;
- Improve the diversity of species; new native hedgerows, trees and species rich meadows will be added to complement the adjoining Skerne and A66 corridors;
- Provide interpretation to educate visitors on the ecological and heritage value of the area;
- Establish a new Friends Group to create a management plan to balance nature conservation and surface water management priorities with access for recreation and education.

5B: Eastern Urban Fringe

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





5C: South Burdon Community Woodland

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



South Burdon Community Woodland

A. former Barnard Castle Trackbed

Will provide opportunities for safe, sustainable travel through a diverse urban and rural landscape





In 2026 this popular former railway line will encourage people to travel, on foot, bike or horse through the quality Walworth and Tees countryside between the historic village of Piercebridge and the extensive new development in the North Western part of the town. Greater use will be made of the western urban fringe and the attractive countryside that lies beyond; whether its learning about Darlington's unique past at the Piercebridge Roman Fort, enjoying the picturesque historic churches and villages that lie alongside the River Tees, experiencing the tranquillity of the many Local Wildlife Sites or visiting one of the many green venues along the way, people will spend more time enjoying the local countryside for a day or afternoon visit. Native planting along its route will also improve connectivity for small mammals and birds.

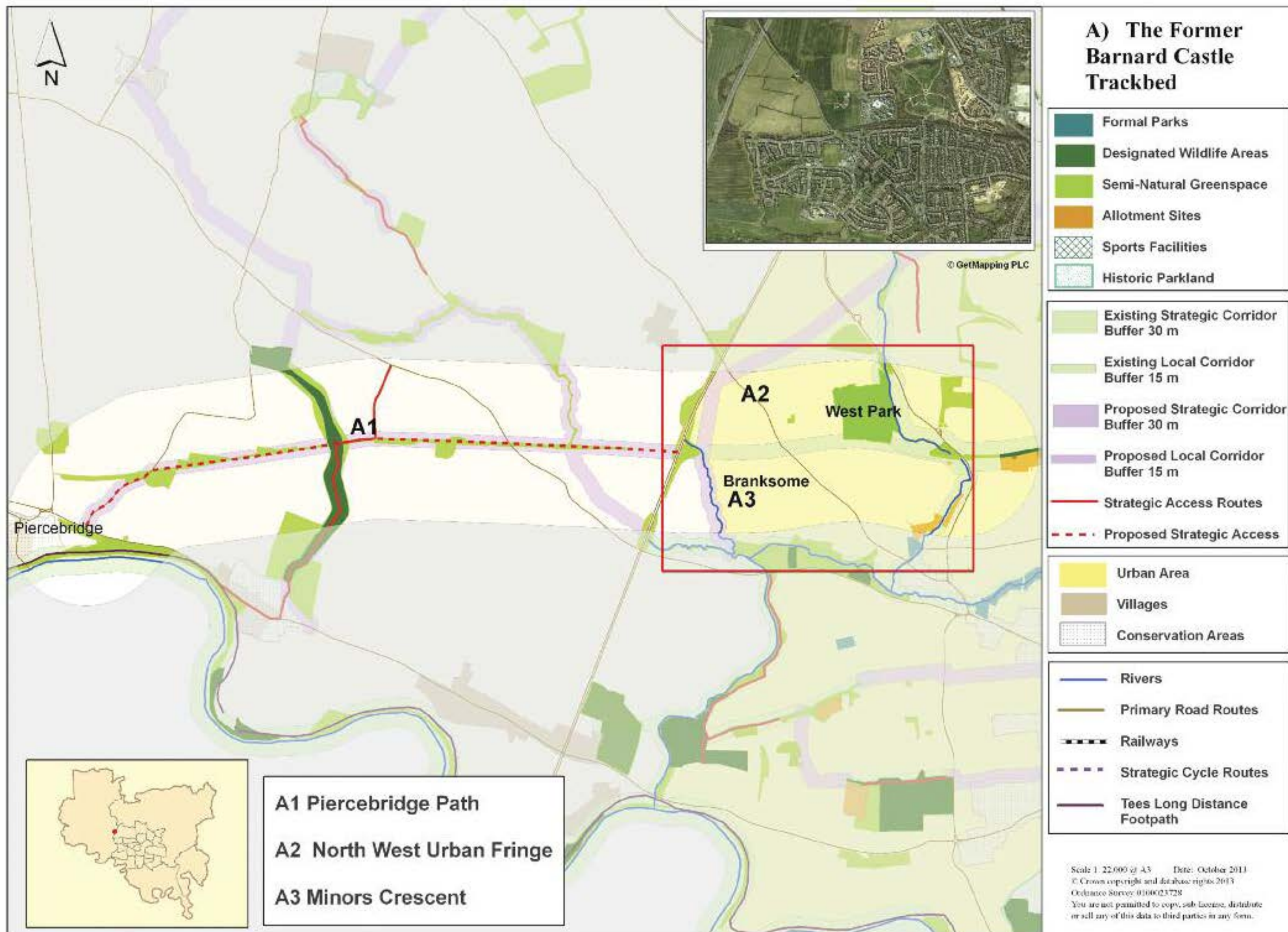
An attractive distinctive landscape will provide the setting for the significant new neighbourhood in the North West; opportunities for sport, recreation, play and growing food will be created within a highly connected, distinctive, wildlife friendly environment. Public art will feature heavily, helping to create a unique identity and sense of place for its residents, integrating well with the nearby West Park. Multifunctional sustainable drainage schemes will manage flood risk and provide ideal environments for amphibians like the Great Crested Newt and wetland birds such as the Reed Bunting to establish. More will be made of local greenspaces; recreation, play and opportunities to enjoy nature in a quality setting will be delivered through the regeneration of the built and natural environment close to Minors Crescent.

What is there?

- The former Barnard Castle trackbed is a well established and well used green corridor;
- Local Wildlife Sites e.g. Ulnaby Beck in the rural area near this corridor;
- Many heritage assets e.g. Piercebridge Roman Fort, West Hartburn Medieval village (Scheduled Monuments), Piercebridge (Conservation Area);
- Quality Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land near the River Tees and in the Walworth countryside;
- An extensive rights of way network crosses the rural area;
- Several green venues in the Walworth countryside e.g. Archers Jersey ice cream parlour and Piercebridge Farm Shop and Café;
- A highly productive, working landscape; Farmways cooperative one enterprise in the western rural area.

What could be improved?

- Access to greenspace for movement, sport, recreation, play, biodiversity and local food for residents of the new North West Urban Fringe;
- Surface water flooding through the use of sustainable drainage in all new development;
- Multi-functionality of existing greenspaces to provide recreation and play space close to homes in the wider Cockerton area;
- Links to Darlington's railway, rural and Roman heritage;
- More appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area to stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.



A1 Piercebridge Path

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

A2 North West Urban Fringe

- Create a network of permeable, safe, attractive multi user green corridors to improve connectivity with Newton Lane, the former Barnard Castle trackbed, the new Faverdale Whin Corridor, the new Piercebridge Path and local greenspaces;
- Integrate substantial mixed woodland and species rich planting along the A1(M), Newton Lane and West Auckland Road to improve landscape character and improve connectivity for wildlife between the urban area and the urban fringe;
- Integrate multi-functional greenspaces (for adventurous and natural play, recreation and local food) to address local needs;
- Create a high quality, distinctive, sustainable green townscape (coordinated landscaping, public realm, lighting and public art) as part of the setting for quality new development;
- Create a network of sustainable drainage ponds to reduce flood risk and provide a unique wetland resource;

- Incorporate a new managed playing pitch hub to provide affordable space for a range of pitch sports to meet local residents needs;
- Provide quality maintenance; a management levy will be established, with the developer to maintain new greenspace in the long term.

A3 Minors Crescent

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





B. Cocker Beck

Will become a superior quality, multi-functional landscape where wildlife can thrive and residents can relax





A superior quality riparian landscape will bring the countryside into the town in 2026; new backwaters and meanders will re-connect Baydale Beck to the River Skerne, substantially improving water flow in the Cocker Beck Valley while continuing to provide significant benefits as a natural floodplain. This tranquil, clean water course will provide the ideal environment for water vole communities to re-colonise in numbers while resident kingfishers, dragonfly species like the Banded Demoiselle and Blue Tailed Damselfly will continue to flourish. A mosaic of wetland habitats will span the river; wet woodland, floodplain grazing marsh and wet grassland will provide important habitats for small mammals and ground nesting birds to live in the new Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve. Established species rich neutral grasslands and long grass meadows will cover the idyllic expanse of the wider Cocker Beck Valley with colour and variety; flowering plants such as the Common Knapweed, Yellow Rattle, Harebells and Cuckoo Flower will provide food for Orange Tip caterpillars or habitats for Common Blue butterflies, the Burnet Companion and Cinnabar Moth to establish.

This species rich landscape will be truly multifunctional; interspersed in the wildflower meadows will be short mown grassland for informal recreation, complemented by outdoor sports facilities and play space, while its outstanding connectivity to the nearby historic Cockerton village and Branksome will ensure that local people can enjoy a range of activities in a vibrant, green river setting. Better use will be made of nearby local greenspaces; the new Bylands Way Allotments will ensure local people can grow fruit and vegetables locally. Those living nearer the Skerne confluence will benefit from having the newly restored, multifunctional Brinkburn Denes on their doorstep; sport, recreation, play and nature will be enjoyed in a natural but modern wooded landscape.

What is there?

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

What could be improved?

- Multi-functionality of Cocker Beck Valley to provide more opportunities for biodiversity and recreation;
- The water flow and quality of Cocker Beck;
- Sports facilities at Darlington School of Maths and Science to better meet local needs;
- More allotment space would help meet an identified local need.



Cocker Beck

B1 Cocker Beck Local Nature Reserve

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

B2 Bylands Way Allotments

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





C. West Beck

Will through good design, seamlessly connect
valuable historic and new greenspaces for
residents and wildlife





By 2026 this increasingly important local green corridor will provide an invaluable safe and tranquil off road leisure route for pedestrians and cyclists between the historic Cockerton village and Faverdale, connecting a mix of strategic and smaller local greenspaces that play an important role in meeting every day green infrastructure needs. The Green Flag winning West Park will continue to be popular with residents and visitors alike for a range of active and passive recreational activities, while its wildlife value will be steadily improved; new tree and native ground flora planting will add value to the establishing mixed native broadleaf woodland, lowland wildflower meadows, neutral grasslands, wetlands and reedbeds creating a haven for protected and priority species such as the water vole along West Beck, the White-Letter Hairstreak butterfly on nearby Wych Elm, the Banded Demoiselle dragonfly on the many vegetated and established ponds and the kingfisher feeding from purpose built balancing ponds.

Improved signage will promote greater use of Cockerton village and its wide range of shops and services, while low key interpretation will encourage visitors to explore the attractive historic terraces, cottages and churches that are found around the distinctive open, tree lined village green. The environmental quality of this riparian corridor will be significantly enhanced; sustainable drainage ponds set within wildlife rich, wetland environments will improve water quality and flood management in the beck while creating ideal habitats for the protected Great Crested Newt and water voles to live, breed and disperse. Greater use in the landscape and at boundaries of new development of native trees, particularly Darlington's well known Black Poplar, mature hedgerows and locally sourced wildflowers will encourage a greater variety of birds, including the Kingfisher, butterflies such as the White Letter Hairstreak Butterfly and insects, moths, bats and dormice to be present. Sugar Hill Park will also benefit from the increase in people passing through while its wildlife value will benefit from the enhanced biodiversity value of the adjoining beck; species like song birds, sparrows and hedgehogs will be more common. In the north a unique wetland and wet woodland environment at Faverdale will improve the biodiversity, water quality and flood management of West Beck.

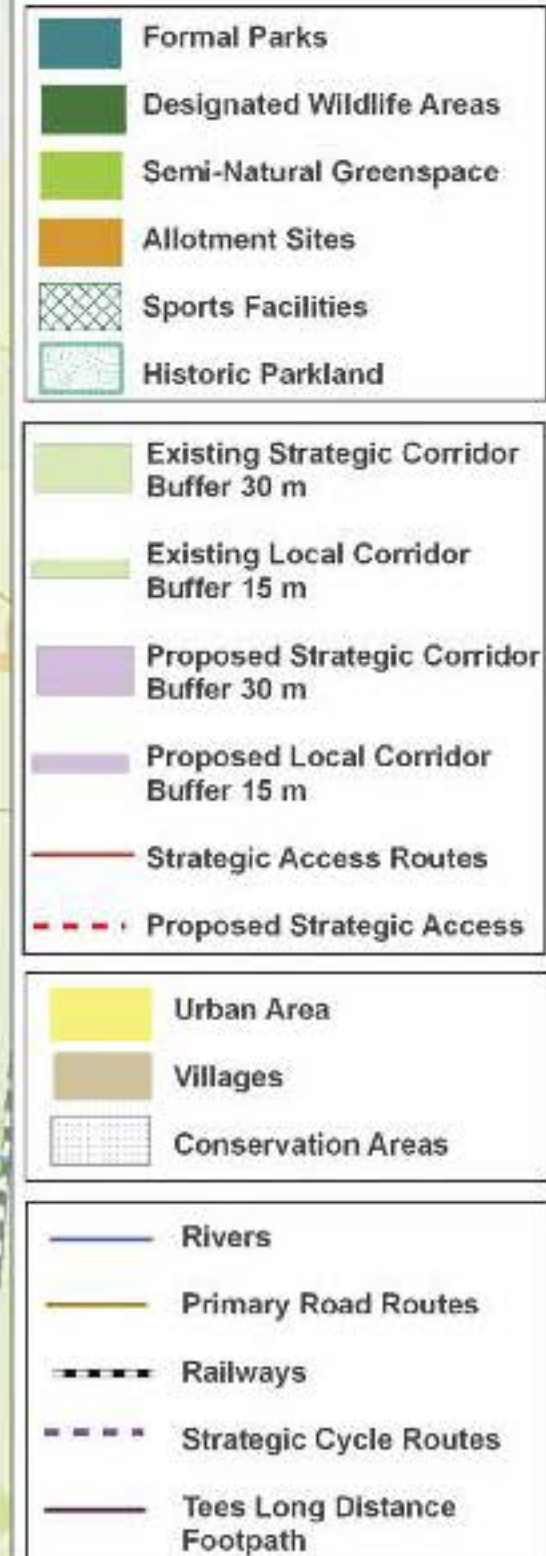
What is there?

- West Park: Darlington's newest, strategic park;
- West Beck is an important local green corridor;
- Sustainable drainage ponds at the new Park View development help mitigate flood risk and provide wetland habitats;
- Sugar Hill Park is a popular local park;
- Cockerton Allotments provide 91 full and/or half plots to help meet the demand for local food;
- Cockerton village green provides the setting for the surrounding historic listed buildings and is a key part of Cockerton Conservation Area.

What could be improved?

- Connectivity of West Beck corridor with local spaces and adjoining neighbourhoods;
- New development at Faverdale Reserve would benefit from flood management;
- Links to Darlington's medieval and Quaker heritage.

C) West Beck

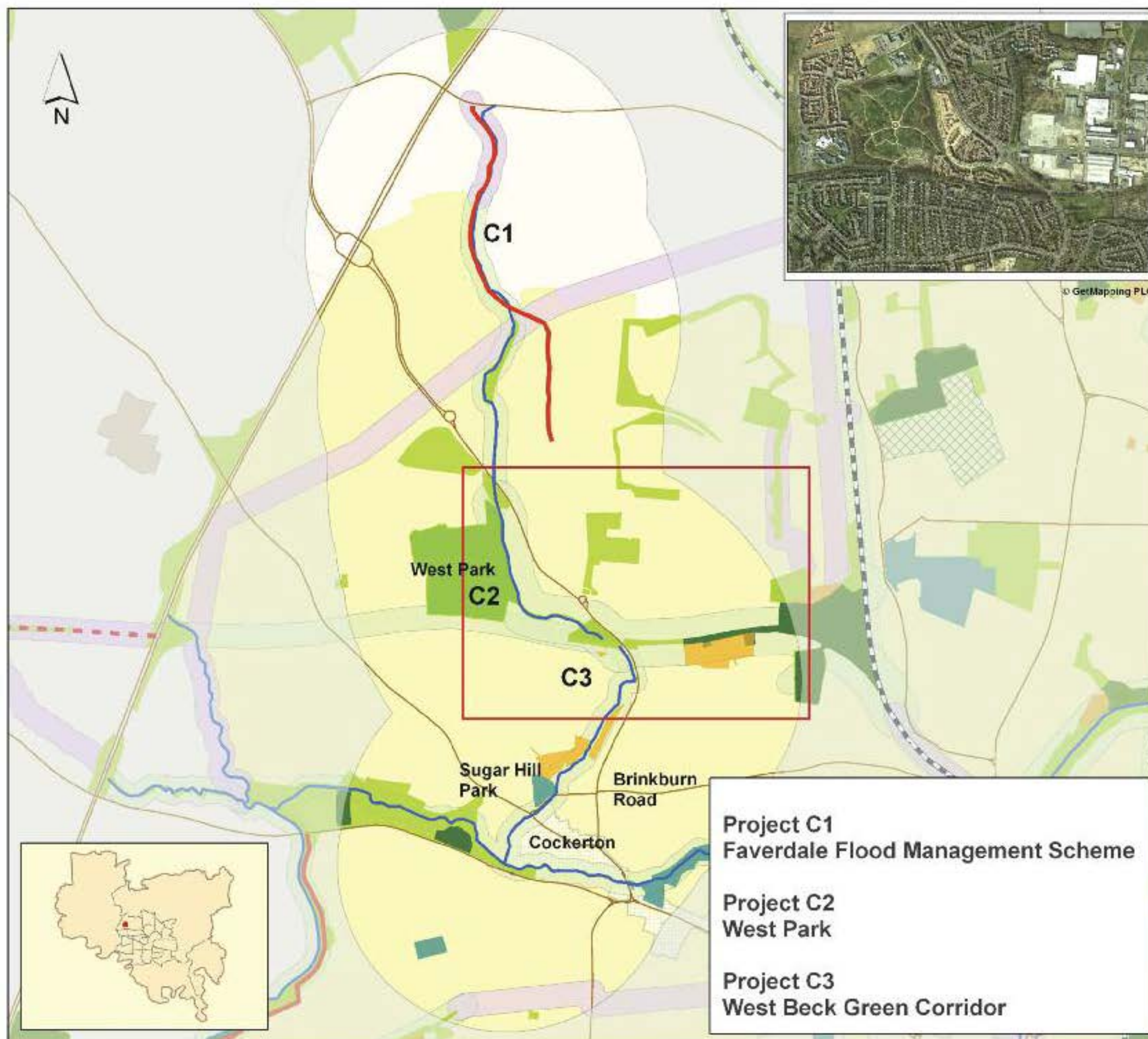


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Project C1
 Faverdale Flood Management Scheme

Project C2
 West Park

Project C3
 West Beck Green Corridor



C1 Faverdale Flood Management Scheme

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

C2 West Park

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





C3 West Beck Green Corridor

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



West Beck Green Corridor

D. Baydale Beck

Will become an exemplar green landscape where a variety of quality biodiverse and recreational spaces exist together



Baydale Beck green corridor



Meandering through wildflower meadows and shady mature woodland with its distinctive protected Black Poplar trees, Baydale Beck will seamlessly merge town and quality countryside. By 2026 this tranquil water environment will be a haven for wildlife; whether the Great Spotted Woodpecker, Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting in the native trees, the Common Reed along the beck or the protected Water Vole and Otter in the beck itself, movement and life will be all around. The adjoining extensive, vibrant wildflower meadows filled with Cuckoo Flower, Cowslip, Common Knapweed, Yellow Rattle and species rich grassland will extend this softer wildlife friendly environment into the built area, providing valuable links to the nearby Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane Local Wildlife Site.

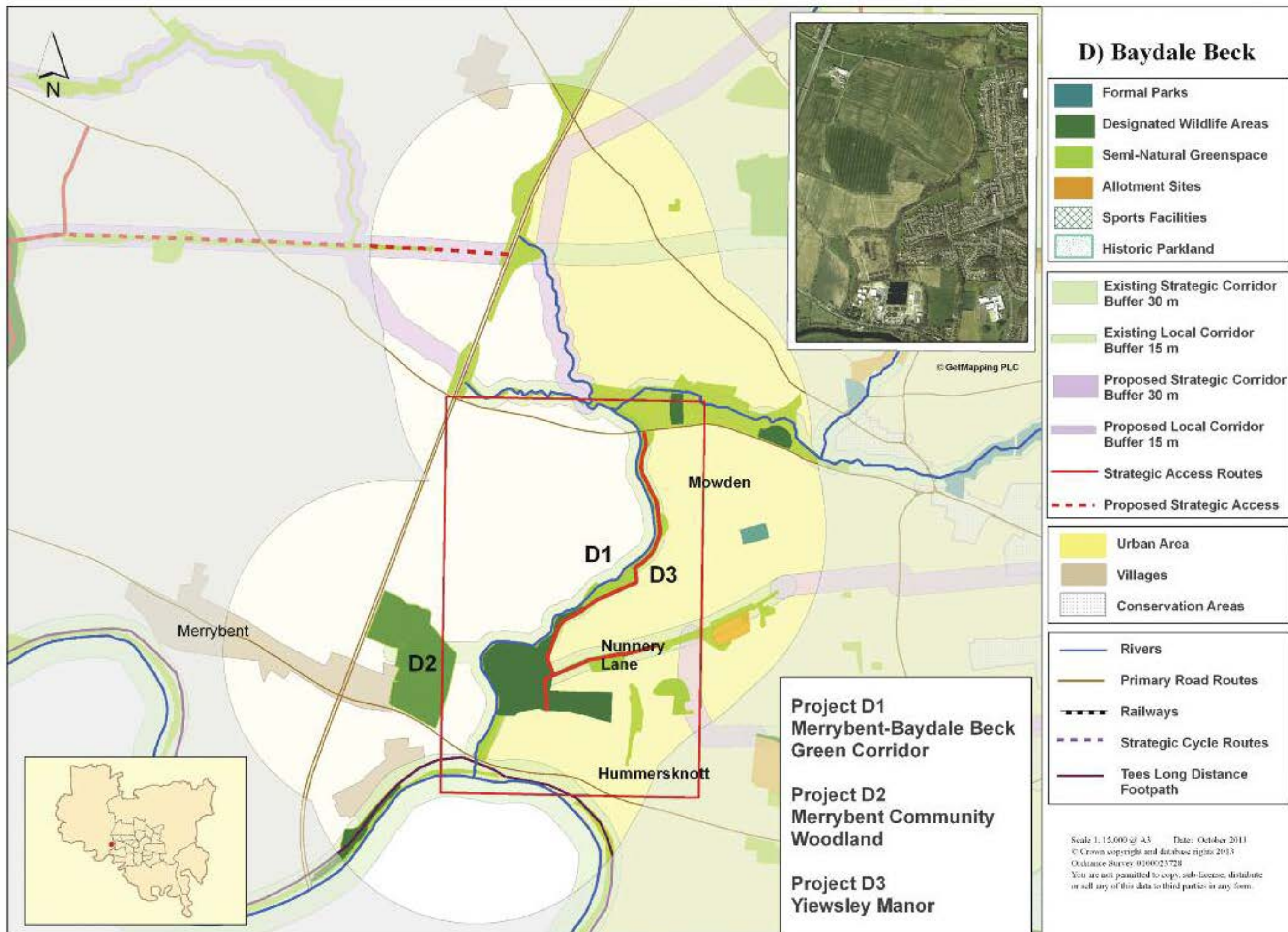
Through the mature woodland, pedestrians and cyclists will be able to travel off road between Coniscliffe Road and Staindrop Road, enjoying glimpses of the working landscape that lies beyond the beck. A bridge will provide easy access for those who are enticed to visit the establishing Merrybent Community Woodland, where increasingly the Roe Deer, Sparrowhawk and nesting species like the Tree Sparrow will be seen. New native tree and shrub planting will over time help integrate the new development at Yiewsley Manor easily into this distinctive green landscape, while significant improvements will ensure that a quality play and recreation experience can be enjoyed across Baydale Meadows by all. The Baydale Beck/Cocker Beck confluence will become an important focus for quality biodiversity; new wetlands will provide a vital stepping stone for wildlife while continuing to deliver flood management, drainage and water quality benefits.

What is there?

- Baydale Beck greenspace is a large multi-functional space with children's play, recreation space and wildflower meadows;
- Baydale Beck is a valuable wildlife and woodland corridor;
- Merrybent Community Woodland has recently been planted to the west of the Beck;
- A new pedestrian/cycle path and bridge connects the urban area to the urban fringe and Merrybent Community Woodland.

What could be improved?

- Baydale Beck play area would benefit from replacement;
- Wildlife friendly greenspace and landscaping would help integrate the new Yiewsley Manor development with the adjoining meadows and provide connectivity between the greenspaces in the north and south;
- Links to the rural public rights of way network.





D1 Baydale Beck

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

D2 Merrybent Community Woodland

- Diversify the species mix; new grasslands and meadows will improve landscape quality and provide improved habitats for the Kestrel, Barn Owl, Skylark and migrant warblers to breed;

- Provide a variety of looped paths and trails of different distances to link the woodland with the green corridor and the rural rights of way network to encourage more use by all;
- Provide new seats and bins to encourage more use of the space and encourage people to stay longer;
- Promote rotational coppicing and use of wood waste, in partnership with landowners and farmers, to improve the availability of biofuel locally and help mitigate climate change.

D3 Yiewsley Manor

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





€. Salters Lane

Will provide easy access along a historic route to a range of quality green infrastructure venues





This important green multi user corridor will take people across the Borough from the rolling Ketton countryside in the north to the undulating Tees landscape in the south. Greater connectivity along its length will provide plentiful opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to move between existing green corridors, the new Central Park and A66 corridors and a wide range of sports facilities and local open spaces. Existing open spaces will be reinvigorated; the Salters Lane Community Garden will be popular for recreation and play with the local people that take care of it.

Opportunities to explore Darlington's unique natural and historic landscape will be numerous; Darlington's oldest church; St Andrews, the tree lined Haughton village green or the re-created Sunken Italian Garden at the new Lingfield Point can all be explored. Its tree lined streets will connect space for sport, recreation, play and local food, while a series of wildlife friendly ponds will remove barriers for wildlife, encouraging new species to inhabit the area while minimising the impact of climate change.

The newly extended Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Reserve will continue to be an exemplar of good biodiversity practice, priding itself on protecting and expanding its significant wetland and grassland value for protected species including the Great Crested Newt, to the delight of the community that manage it. An improved public rights of way network south of the A66 will make sure that people feel comfortable and safe exploring the surrounding Hurworth Moor, the unique geological environment near Neasham SSSI and the picturesque historic riverside villages of Neasham and Hurworth.

What is there?

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

What could be improved?

- Access to greenspace for recreation, sustainable movement, sport, play and biodiversity for residents of the new Lingfield Point;
- Connectivity along its route to aid movement for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Connectivity and quality in parts of the public rights of way network;
- Quality of public playing pitches to increase their carrying capacity;
- More quality greenspace in the Lingfield ward;
- Links to Darlington's heritage;
- More appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area to stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.

E) Salters Lane (South)

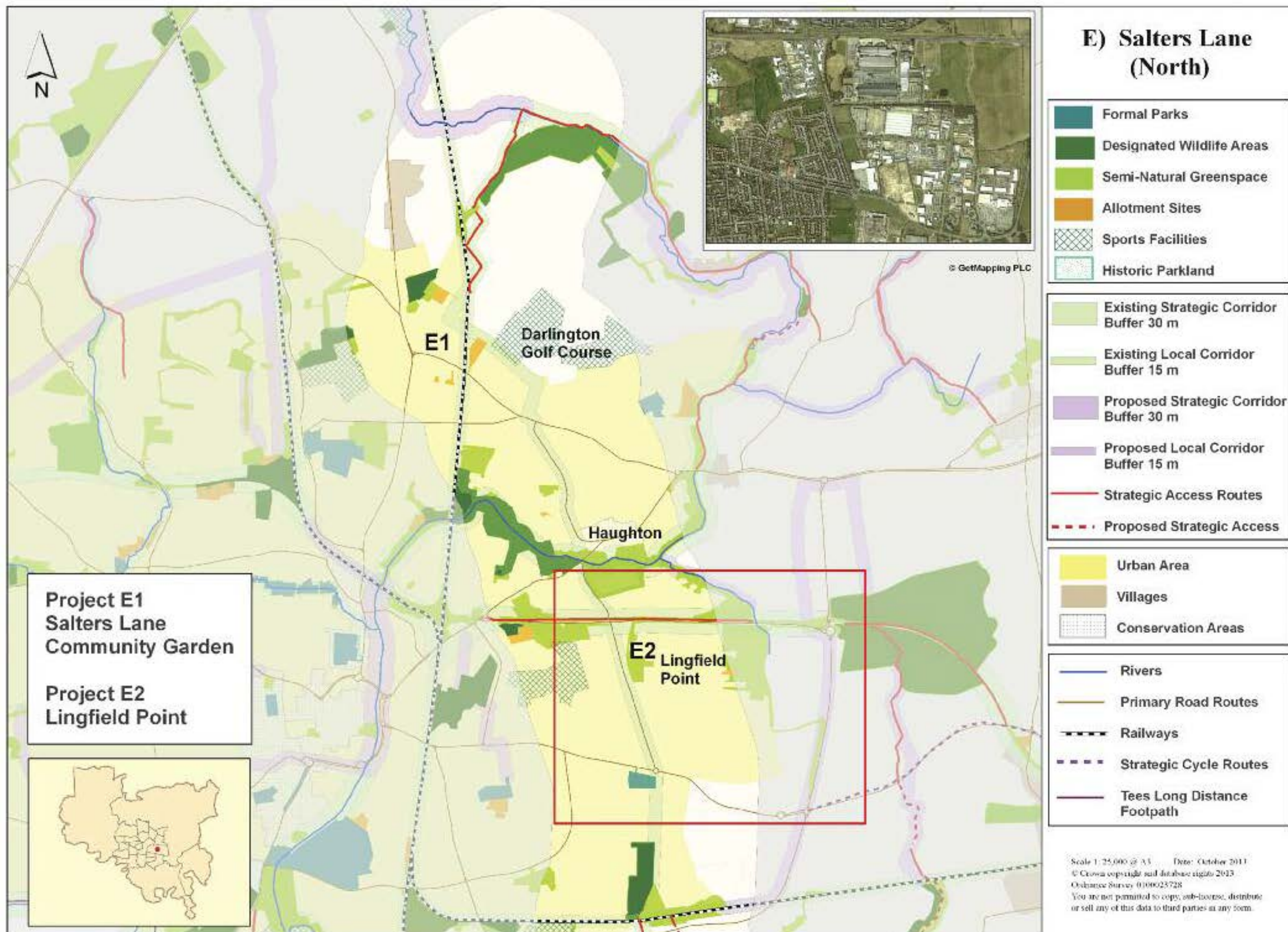


Project E3
Maidendale Local Nature
& Fishing Reserve

Project E4
Neasham Path



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€1 Salters Lane Community Garden

- Establish a community garden for recreation, community events and education to improve the multi-functionality, quality and value of a low quality amenity space;
- Plant new native trees and shrubs to improve the wildlife value of a biodiversity poor space;
- Incorporate public art to add character to the local townscape;
- Establish a management and maintenance plan in partnership with the Salters Community Garden Association to maximise the value of the space for recreation, nature conservation and education for local people.
- Incorporate a distinctive, central walled garden through the residential area to improve connectivity for people away from the roads;
- Plant a variety of native trees, hedgerows, shrubs, climbers, wildflowers, bulbs and grasslands in the new greenspaces, pocket parks and along residential streets, to add biodiversity value by attracting a mix of birds and other wildlife to the area;
- Integrate multi-functional greenspaces (for adventurous and natural play and recreation) including a new park linking the residential area in the north and employment area in the south;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage ponds with surrounding wetlands to reduce the risk of surface water flooding and provide a unique nature resource for residents to enjoy;

€2 Lingfield Point

- Provide substantial native mature tree and hedgerow planting along McMullen Road and the Eastern Transport Corridor to improve townscape character and improve connectivity for wildlife;
- Reinstate the unique 'Sunken Italian Garden' at the entrance and incorporate public art throughout to add character and focal points to aid orientation;
- Provide a new junior playing pitch to meet local needs;
- Provide quality maintenance; a management levy will be established, with the developer to maintain new greenspace in the long term.





€3 Maidendale Local Nature and Fishing Reserve

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

€4 Neasham Path

- Improve the quality and connectivity of the existing rights of way between Maidendale and Neasham, through discussions with landowners; paths will be diverted onto farm tracks, where appropriate upgraded to cycle tracks to allow for permissive cycling, to encourage greater use of the network south of the A66 (T);
- Establish a promoted circular route through the southern urban fringe connecting places of interest to encourage greater use of the urban fringe;
- Promote the use of traditional landscape features (coppicing and hedgerows) along the route to enhance landscape quality, improve habitat diversity and connectivity;
- Provide interpretation at local points of interest like Neasham Fen SSSI, Scheduled Monuments in Low Dinsdale and at the River Tees to aid understanding of local natural and heritage assets.

F. Nunnery Lane - Cemetery Lane

Will ensure that safe, sustainable travel can be enjoyed along biodiversity rich, historic lanes



Cemetery Lane Woodlands



In 2026 Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane will remain important, attractive alternatives to residential streets for those who wish to travel on foot or by bike through a desirable green urban environment between the western urban fringe and the distinctive tree lined streets of the West End.

The quality and diversity of habitats and species along Cemetery Lane will complement the historic built character of the adjoining West Cemetery, while considerable colour and vibrancy will be added to the ground flora of Nunnery Lane and its adjoining greenspaces. Together they will create a good example of a linear Local Wildlife Site where healthy ecosystems can develop naturally, essential to dispersal and population growth; woodland planting and substantial under storey planting will encourage a wider range of birds including the Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Tree Creeper as well as bats, mammals and plants. Consequently, capacity for wildlife in the nearby West End, West Cemetery, Nunnery Lane and West Cemetery allotments will be enhanced; a variety of birds such as the Robin, Song Thrush and House Sparrow will become increasingly common, while more roosting sites will enable birds and bats to live, breed and move easily between the many wildlife friendly greenspaces the area has to offer. Those growing food will also benefit from the natural pollination a greater number of birds and insects bring.

Greater use will be made of the Green Flag winning West Cemetery not only as a space for quiet reflection and contemplation but as a Local Wildlife Site where people can enjoy its significant value as a refuge for wildlife within a historic setting; numerous rare and uncommon species including the dominant, mature non native trees dating from Victorian times, the woodland belt with its valuable roosts for finches as well as its outstanding range of nationally important fungi will be protected and enhanced.

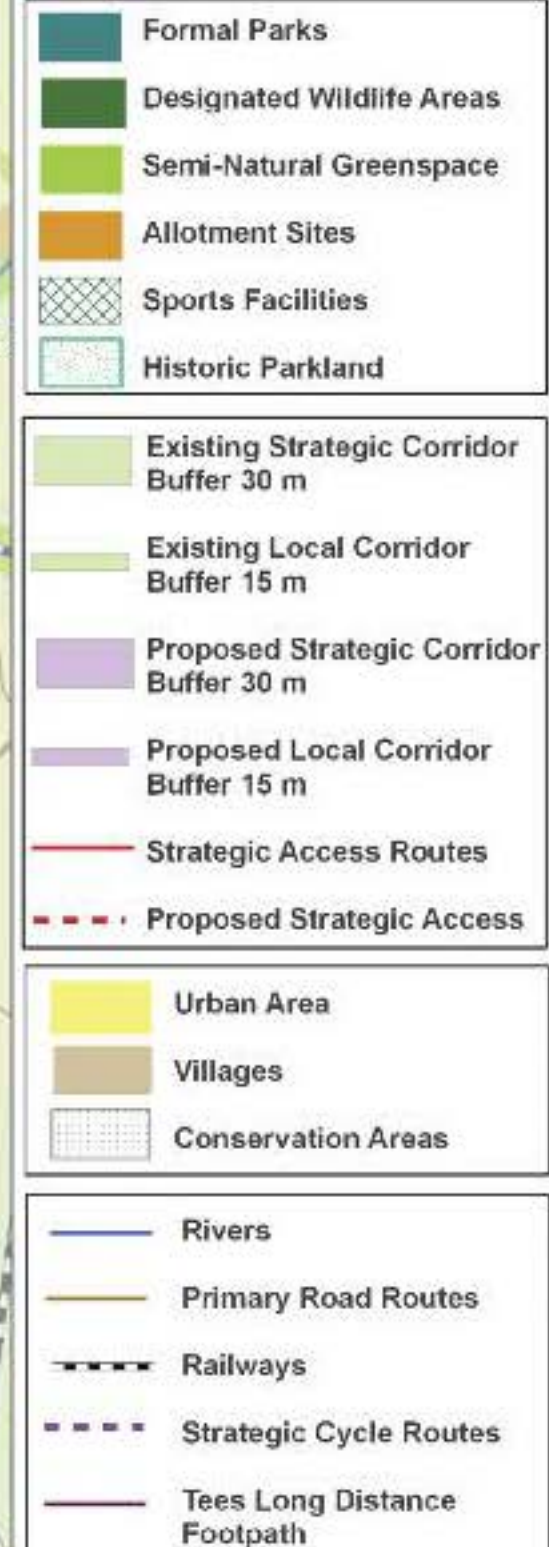
What is there?

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

What could be improved?

- Access to greenspace for recreation and biodiversity for residents of new development;
- More space for children's play and informal recreation in the Hummersknott area;
- The multi-functionality and biodiversity value of many smaller local greenspaces to improve the fragmented network in this part of town.

F) Nunnery Lane to Cemetery Lane



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F1 Nunnery Lane - Cemetery Lane
 F2 West Cemetery



F1 Nunnery Lane-Cemetery Lane Local Wildlife Site

- Designate a new Local Wildlife Site to protect the valuable woodland environment and improve biodiversity; new lowland broadleaf woodland, under storey managed woodland planting, grassland and native ground flora including the Snowdrop, Bluebell, Wood Anemone, Daffodil and Primrose will attract small mammals including hedgehogs and Wood Mice, helping to provide a vital corridor for dispersal, ensuring mixed gene pools and population health;

- Promote more use of Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane for recreational access to encourage greater use of Baydale Beck and West Cemetery, other local corridors and greenspaces;
- Improve resting places and the quality of the footpath surface to encourage a more people of all abilities to use the corridors for walking and cycling particularly for local journeys;
- Incorporate interpretation and/or public art to educate users on the ecological value of area and the historic associations with the former trade routes.

F2 West Cemetery

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





G: Central Park Link

Will become an important new urban green corridor where biodiversity, recreation and quality sports facilities are at the heart of urban life



Central Park landscape scheme



The ecologically based design of this extensive derelict, urban brownfield site will, by 2026, create a unique multi-functional urban park where biodiversity and sustainability is at the heart of regeneration. As a central unifying feature, the linear park will bring the north and south together while providing safe, sustainable access for new residents and employees throughout Central Park as well as to adjoining neighbourhoods, the Town Centre Fringe, Teesside University, Darlington College and the Railway Station. By seamlessly integrating a series of contrasting multi-functional green spaces, informal recreation, natural play and nature will sit side by side. Unique civic spaces with distinctive hard and soft landscaping and tree lined streets will create a visually pleasing, attractive backdrop for new development, particularly for new businesses in the establishing commercial quarter.

A large biodiverse pond surrounded by a mix of woodland, grasslands, scrublands and wetlands will ensure that protected and priority species including Great Crested Newts, the Dingy Skipper butterfly and the Common Birdsfoot Trefoil are enjoyed by urban residents as part of their everyday lives. Sustainable drainage will also be delivered in a practical but attractive way. Public art will feature prominently along its length and at gateways depicting the ecological and railway heritage of the area while encouraging people to explore the establishing environment.

The nearby Eastbourne Sports Complex will be significantly enhanced; the quality of the playing fields and facilities for track and field will be first class, while facilities for participants and spectators will be exceptional ensuring that this strategic sports facility not only becomes the destination for local sport but the venue of choice for sub regional and regional competitions.

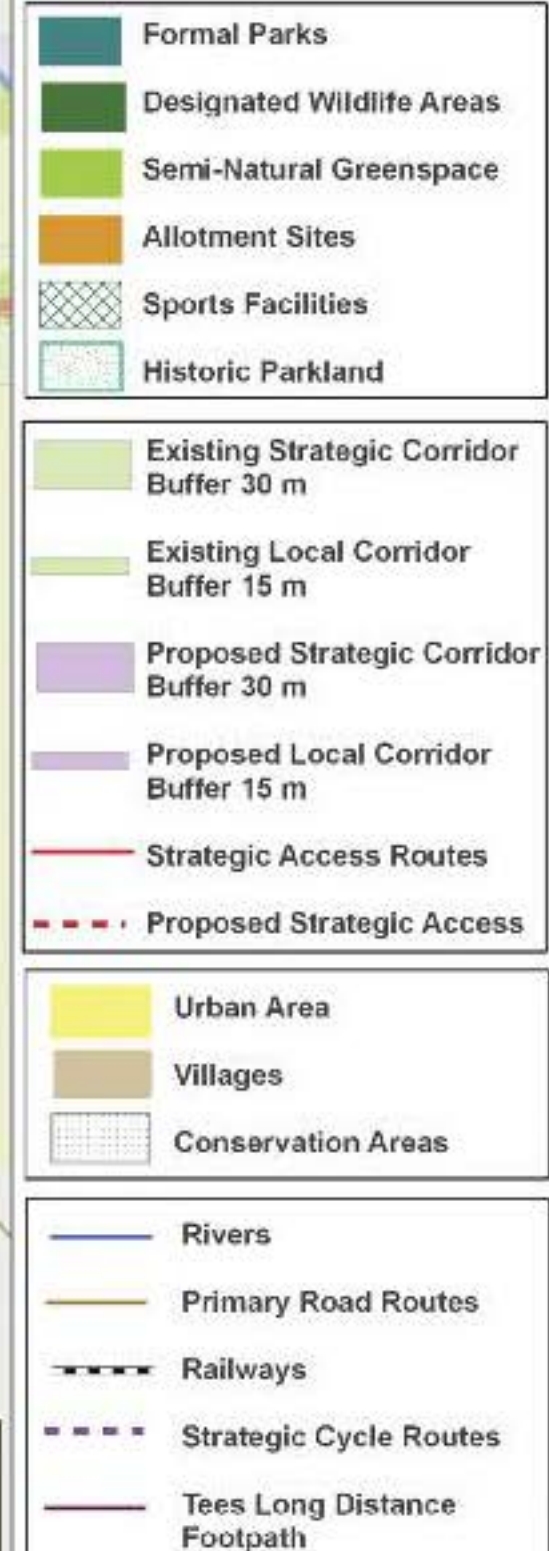
What is there?

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

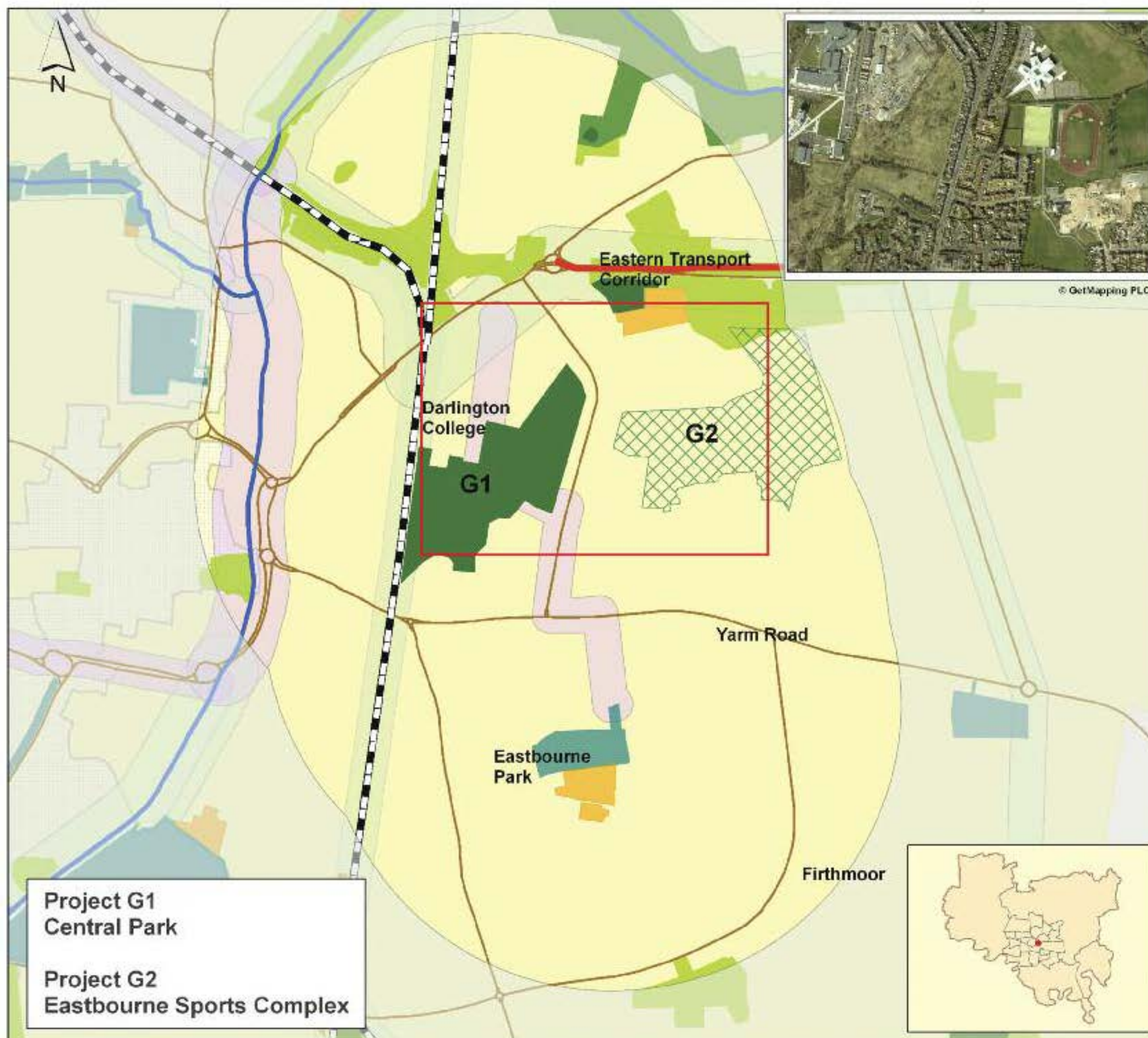
What could be improved?

- Access to more green space in the Bank Top and Lingfield wards;
- Access to greenspace for recreation, green movement, biodiversity and sustainable drainage for residents of the new Central Park;
- The quality and variety of sports facilities and ancillary accommodation at Eastbourne Sports Complex to attract more local and sub regional competitions.

G) Central Park Link



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G1 Central Park

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



Athletics, Eastbourne Sports Complex

G2 Eastbourne Sports Complex

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





H. A66 Corridor

Will be transformed into a quality green woodland gateway attractive to people, investment and a greater variety of wildlife

Darlington Train





By 2026 a substantial native tree and woodland belt along the A66 (T) will create a softer townscape edge, ensuring that mammals, insects and woodland birds will be able to move easily between the established Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve and South Burdon Community Woodland, the biodiverse setting of the Darlington Train and the many newer local greenspaces scattered along its route. Improved management of established woodland along the corridor will encourage the natural regeneration of trees while the addition of woodland ground flora will provide important habitats for classic brownfield species like the Burnet Companion Moth, Dingy Skipper Butterfly and Common Blue Butterfly and an increasing invertebrate population. Between the woodland and the A66, roadside hedgerows and verges will provide food and shelter for invertebrates and small mammals, while carpets of wildflowers including the Ox Eye Daisy, Red Clover and Yellow Rattle will provide an attractive gateway to the built area for residents and investors.

For people, a sustainable movement corridor will enable everyone to move safely off road throughout the eastern urban fringe, between growing and established neighbourhoods, other green corridors and the National Cycle Network. The new Darlington Arena complex will be a destination for sport; adult and junior rugby union will be enjoyed within a quality wildlife rich setting, while maximising the space available at existing greenspaces, including Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve will significantly improve the opportunities available for recreation, play and education in this part of the Borough.

Away from the urban environment, new woodland planting and improved grassland management along the southern railway sidings and at field margins will provide important ecological corridors connecting otherwise isolated habitats to the benefit of farmland birds including the Grey Partridge and Corn Bunting, as well as a diverse range of insects, butterflies and small mammals including Dormice and hedgehogs. New wetlands along these routes will mitigate the effects of climate change while also providing valuable habitats for a range of amphibians and ground nesting birds.

What is there?

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




What could be improved?

- Access to new wildlife friendly spaces, sustainable movement corridors and sustainable drainage systems would benefit the residents of new development and provide climate control;
- More use of public art, quality landscaping and tree planting at key locations along the A66 will provide unique gateways and a distinctive setting for new development;
- Access to playing pitches particularly through the re-location of Mowden Rugby Union Club at Darlington Arena;
- More appropriate uses should be promoted in the rural area that will stimulate the economy in an environmentally friendly landscape.

H) A66 Corridor

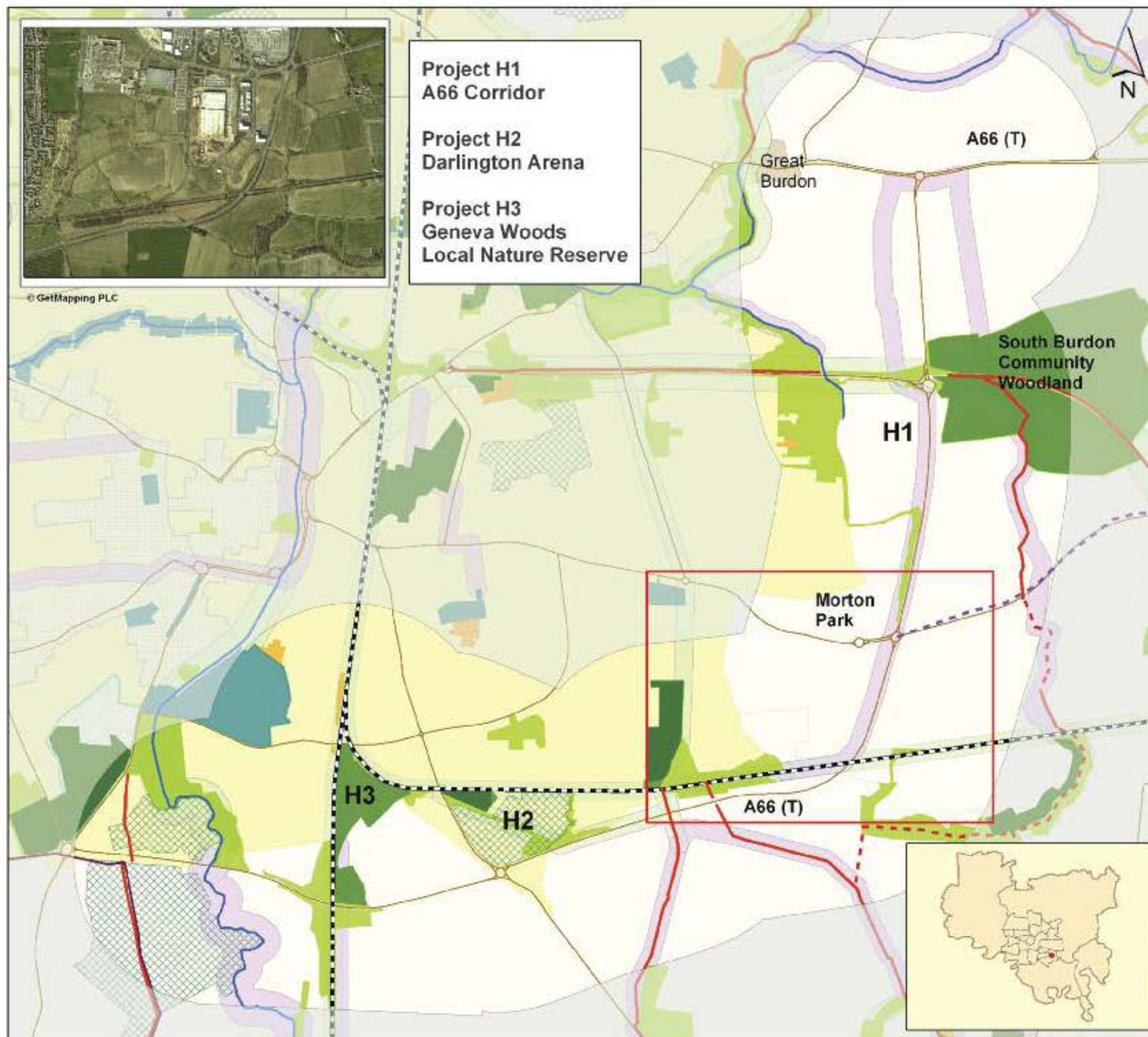
-  Formal Parks
-  Designated Wildlife Areas
-  Semi-Natural Greenspace
-  Allotment Sites
-  Sports Facilities
-  Historic Parkland

-  Existing Strategic Corridor Buffer 30 m
-  Existing Local Corridor Buffer 15 m
-  Proposed Strategic Corridor Buffer 30 m
-  Proposed Local Corridor Buffer 15 m
-  Strategic Access Routes
-  Proposed Strategic Access

-  Urban Area
-  Villages
-  Conservation Areas

-  Rivers
-  Primary Road Routes
-  Railways
-  Strategic Cycle Routes
-  Tees Long Distance Footpath

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Geneva Woods Local Nature Reserve

H1 A66 Corridor

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

H2 Darlington Arena

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

H3 Geneva Wood Local Nature Reserve

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





I. Rural Area

Will continue to be an extensive resource where access, productivity, recreation and biodiversity sit comfortably side by side





Covering 80% of the Borough, this extensive area of green infrastructure is predominantly private Grade 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land with a Rights of Way Network throughout. Traditional food production will sit comfortably alongside other initiatives that promote the sustainable use of land, particularly renewable energy, flood management and green venues. A greater proportion of Darlington's land will be involved in Entry Land or Organic Level agri-environment schemes or will benefit from environmentally farming; new wildlife corridors, improved watercourses and enhanced field margins with hedgerows and hedgerow trees will enhance connectivity for wildlife and provide important feeding habitats for farmland birds including the Yellow Hammer, Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Linnet and Meadow Pipit, invertebrates like Ground Beetles and Hoverflies and provide nectar sources for bumblebees and butterflies. Notable improvements in landscape, water and soil quality will be seen as a result.

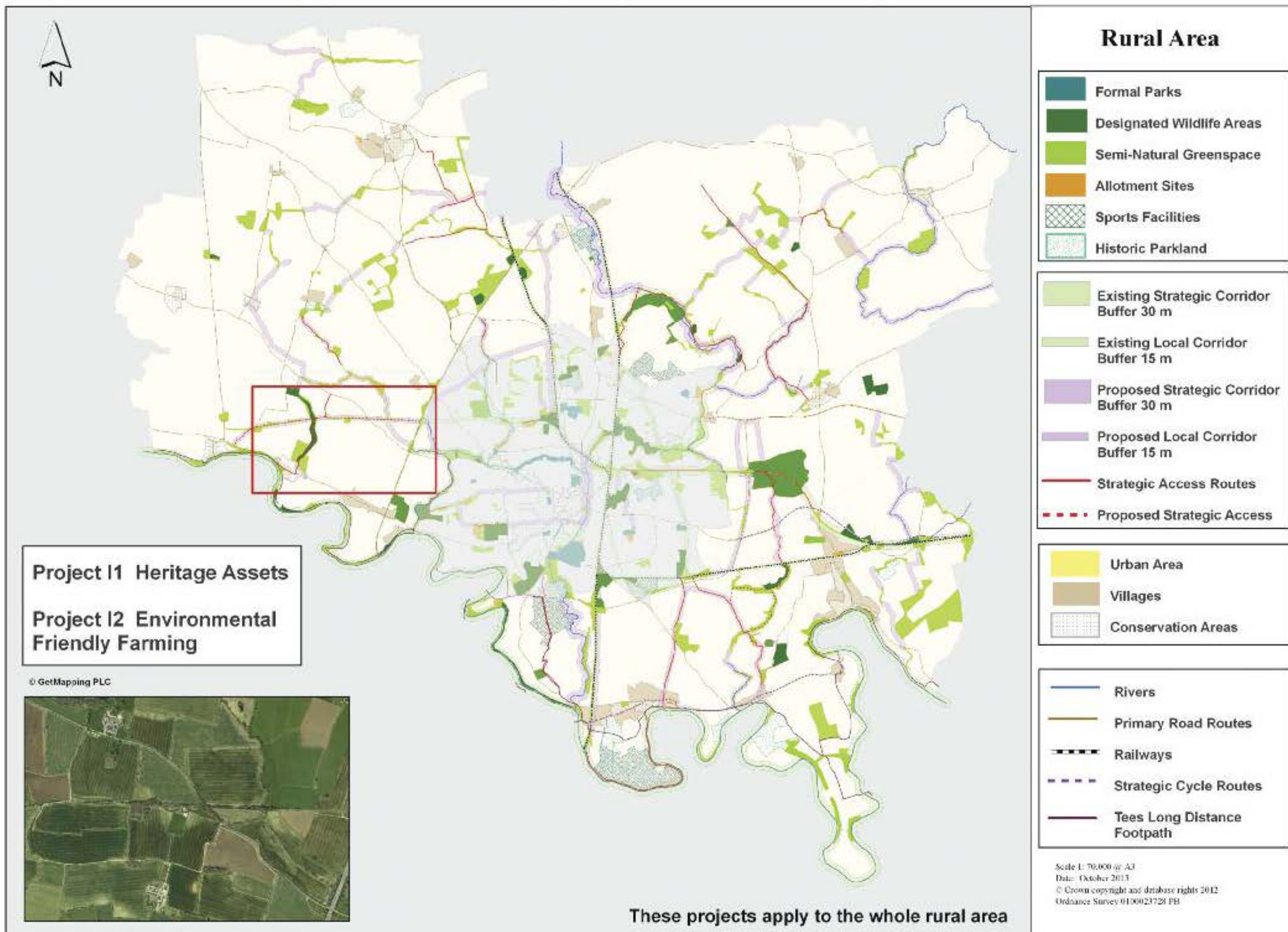
Improved public rights of way will mean that access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders to the wider rural area is improved; people of all abilities will be able to enjoy many of Darlington's hidden historic gems including Sockburn Hall or Piercebridge Roman Fort. Subtle interpretation will promote greater understanding and encourage people to visit the countryside more often. The strategically important Skerningham, South Burdon, Merrybent and Broken Scar will continue to provide the base from which the local people and visitors can explore Darlington's urban fringe and wider countryside.

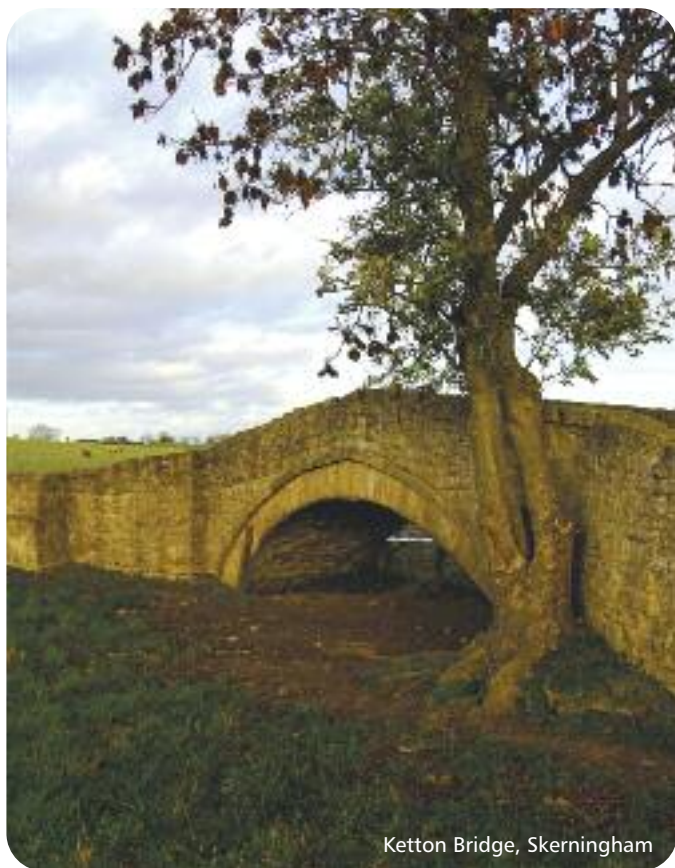
What is there?

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

What could be improved?

- Connectivity within the landscape through the development of green corridors;
- The quality and connectivity of the rural rights of way network to spread the load of users more evenly;
- Access and interpretation of the Borough's Scheduled Monuments and other heritage features where these adjoin public rights of way to generate more use;
- The amount of land involved in Entry and Organic Level Environmental Stewardship schemes as part of promoting more biodiversity friendly cultivation;
- A more co-ordinated approach to supporting the farming sector, rural businesses and enterprises to help them diversify and grow.





Ketton Bridge, Skerningham

II Heritage Assets

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

I2 Environmental Friendly Farming

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







