

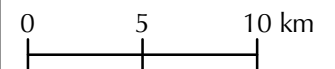
KEY



- Existing Natural Greenspace
(see Figure A3.1)
- Existing Strategic Accessible Natural Greenspace
(see Figure A3.2a)
- Existing Strategic Countryside Access Routes
(see Figure A3.2a)
- Historic Environment Assets
(see Figure A3.3)
- Watercourses, Waterbodies and Natural Floodplains
(see Figure A3.4)
- Indicative GI Network Areas

- Major Settlements
- County Boundaries

The information presented on this figure is intended for Geographic Information Systems and is for presentational purposes only, as part of the Baseline Information Audit of sub-regional GI resources in the 6Cs Growth Point. The information is indicative of GI Provision in the Growth Point and is not exhaustive.



This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. OS PGA Licence No. 100025498 - 2009

S:\projects\11109001 6Cs GI Strategy\GIS\Projects\11109001 - General\11109001_FigA3-5_Strat-GI-Ass_A3.mxd



4.0 GI FUNCTIONALITY AND NEEDS

4.1 General

4.1.1 The following assessment considers GI functionality and needs within the 6Cs Growth Point in relation to:

- the connectivity of the natural greenspace network for wildlife;
- the accessibility of the natural greenspace network for people;
- the distinctiveness of the natural greenspace network.
- target areas for environmental benefits; and
- target areas for public benefits.

4.2 Connectivity of Natural Greenspace Network for Wildlife

Functionality of Natural/Semi-Natural Habitats

4.2.1 A methodology for biodiversity opportunity network mapping, developed by Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts⁵⁰, has recently been piloted in the 6Cs Growth Point by CBA⁵¹. It is intended that the pilot study will provide a consistent evidence base for underpinning the biodiversity aspects of the GI Strategy. The study assessed the functionality of existing natural greenspace networks and identifies opportunities to restore characteristic habitats in the context of relevant BAP targets for the 6Cs Growth Point. The principles of the pilot methodology have been applied to develop the following strategic overview of biodiversity functionality and needs within the Growth Point. The relevant findings of the pilot study are being incorporated as appropriate into the mapping of Strategic GI Networks for the Three Cities in Stage 2 (see Section 5.2 for details).

4.2.2 The connectivity of the natural greenspace network for wildlife from a sub-regional perspective is illustrated in **Figure A4.1a**. This shows that the **network of natural/semi-natural greenspaces** (as represented by broad groupings of priority habitat types) within the 6Cs Growth Point is highly fragmented, with generally limited extensive areas of continuous habitat of high biodiversity value.

Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Areas

4.2.3 Notwithstanding the above, there are a number of broad areas within the 6Cs Growth Point that support relatively high concentrations of natural/semi-natural habitats. For example, the

⁵⁰ Green Infrastructure for the Three Cities: A Methodology for Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping. Unpublished report prepared for and on behalf of Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts (Murray, G, 2008)

⁵¹6Cs Growth Point Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Pilot Study (CBA, 2009)

relic woodlands associated with Leighfield Forest, or the remnants of open acidic grassland/heathland and woodland habitats associated with Charnwood Forest. The land depicted on **Figure A4.1a** as **Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Areas** represents core areas with strategic needs for protecting, buffering, linking and restoring characteristic priority habitats to enhance connectivity of the natural greenspace network for wildlife. These Areas have been defined principally based on their having a relatively higher degree of associative value than other areas within the 6Cs Growth Point, with a corresponding greater potential for providing 'functional habitat networks' for the dispersal of wildlife species. They are based on by the 'Regional Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancement Areas' identified in Diagram 6 of the East Midlands Regional Plan, as amended to reflect sub-regional circumstances and opportunities. The approach to conservation and enhancement of biodiversity within the six Areas should seek to:

- Safeguard existing assets;
- Optimise the condition of existing habitats through positive management, increasing their size and/or buffering;
- Extend, develop and strengthen 'functional habitat networks' and links by targeted habitat restoration or creation; and
- Modify agricultural/cropping systems in the wider countryside to increase resources for wildlife species and to make the farmed landscape more 'permeable' for dispersal of wildlife.

1. National Forest Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Area

4.2.4 This includes the land broadly between Leicester and Burton-upon-Trent. It includes Charnwood Forest in the south east and the Melbourne Parklands in the north, and takes in part of the historic coalfield area around Coalville and Swadlincote in the south and south west. Woodland is relatively abundant throughout this area with Charnwood Forest having a particular concentration of ancient semi-natural woodland, In addition, Charnwood Forest also has concentrations of open acidic habitats, particularly acidic grassland and heathland. Reservoirs in both Charnwood Forest and the Melbourne Parklands provide important freshwater habitats, such as at Calke Abbey for example. Less abundant within this area, but locally important, are small areas of neutral grassland. As part of the National Forest, substantial amounts of planting of new woodland and other habitat creation has taken place and is ongoing within much of the area. For example, former mining activity, including subsidence flashes, has provided grassland and heathland habitat creation opportunities.

2. Derbyshire Peak Fringe, Lower Derwent and The Coalfields Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Area

4.2.5 This includes much of the area to the north of Derby on either side of the Lower Derwent valley extending to include the Derbyshire Peak Fringes and the Coalfields area to the west of the Erewash valley. Woodland is the most abundant habitat in this area, especially associated

with the Derwent valley itself; however there are also smaller areas of acid (associated with sandstone ridges) and neutral grassland.

3. Greenwood Community Forest Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Area

- 4.2.6 This area lies to the north of Nottingham and includes substantial areas of woodland and smaller areas of open acidic habitats, both acid grassland and heath associated with the southern extent of Sherwood Forest. Other habitats present within the area include mosaics of grassland, scrub and wetland associated with previously developed land, such as mining. Historically, heathland was characteristic of much of this area but much of this has been converted to agricultural use or coniferous plantations. Remnant areas or species of heathland are still present in some of the coniferous plantations within the area and there may be opportunities for restoring and expanding this habitat in such circumstances. Many former coalfield sites have been planted as community woodlands and there are also opportunities for further expanding native woodland cover.

4. Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Area

- 4.2.7 The Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds Area comprise much of the land between the valleys of the Trent, Soar and Wreake, with the Vale of Belvoir to the north east. Woodland is the most abundant habitat in this area, and although most woodlands are relatively small they occur at relatively high frequency throughout the area, and there are local concentrations for example near Keyworth and in the Belvoir and Croxton Park area in the east. Smaller areas of grassland, both neutral and acidic are also present. Parts of the area are also important for supporting relatively large populations of great crested newt.

5. Leighfield Forest Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Area

- 4.2.8 This area lies to the east of Leicester and extends into Rutland. Woodland is the most abundant habitat type within the area and this is mostly quite scattered in distribution, although there is a particular concentration in the Loddington, Owston and Halstead area in what was historically Leighfield Forest. Leighfield Forest is characterised by concentrations of ancient semi-natural woodland. There are also smaller areas of neutral grassland, for example in the Burrough on the Hill area.

6. Strategic River Corridors/Floodplains Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Area

4.2.9 These comprise the valleys of the rivers Trent, Soar, Derwent, Wreake and Welland represented by their floodplains. A range of wetland and aquatic habitats are present, including the river corridors themselves and floodplain grazing marsh. Eutrophic standing water is especially associated with disused gravel workings in the Trent valley, for example at Attenborough Nature Reserve to the south west of Nottingham. Smaller areas of other habitats, such as reedbed are also present.

Strategic Needs for Linking Habitat Corridors

4.2.10 **Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors** are identified on **Figure A4.1a**. These corridors are indicative and have been defined principally on the basis of their potential, from a sub-regional perspective, to establish strategic linkages between habitats. Key criteria for determining these corridors include:

- Potential for linking small areas of similar habitats to reduce isolation;
- Potential for linking areas of similar habitats to reduce fragmentation;
- Potential for linking areas of habitats to create and enhance mosaics of semi-natural vegetation;
- Potential for providing linkages between larger mosaics of semi natural habitat at the landscape scale (e.g. The National Forest with the River Trent corridor) to strengthen the overall integrity and distribution of habitats throughout the 6Cs Growth Point; and
- Potential for strengthening links between habitats associated with urban and suburban areas to the wider countryside.

4.2.11 The corridors illustrate the strategic need to provide functional linkages within or between Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Areas to aid the dispersal of wildlife through the landscape within and beyond the 6Cs Growth Point. The corridors may incorporate 'stepping stones' - existing biodiversity assets located within or along such links that could increase the effectiveness for wildlife dispersal. Some of the corridors are located between existing urban areas, for example those within and adjoining the Erewash Valley on the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire border, and these may be particularly vulnerable to disruption through expansion of urban land use development. The approach to conservation and enhancement of functional linking habitat corridors should seek to:

- Safeguard links from land use changes that would be a barrier to their function as dispersal corridors; and
- Improve the permeability of links through targeted habitat restoration or creation, and the modification of agricultural/cropping subsystems to increase resources for wildlife species and to make the farmed landscape more 'permeable' for dispersal of wildlife.

4.2.12 The linking habitat corridors are highlighted below in context of the Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Areas:

1. National Forest - Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors

- West beyond to the National Forest outside of the 6Cs Growth Point (including Needwood Forest)
- Southwest to assets within the wider coalfield area (for example to the north west of Hinckley)
- North and east to valleys of the Trent and Soar.

Important internal links include those between:

- Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and East Midlands Airport area (between Charnwood Forest and Melbourne Parklands)
- Swadlincote and Ashby de la Zouch.

2. Derbyshire Peak Fringe, Lower Derwent and The Coalfields - Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors

- North and west to the Peak District
- South along the Derwent valley through Derby to the Trent Valley
- Eastwards to the Erewash valley and South Sherwood Forest Area.

Important internal links include:

- Derwent valley running north-south through the area and beyond
- East-west links to the west of Ilkeston and the north of Ripley.

3. Greenwood Community Forest - Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors

- Northwards to the rest of Sherwood Forest
- Westwards to the Derbyshire Peak Fringe, Lower Derwent and The Coalfields Area
- Along the north and northwest edge of Nottingham.

4. Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds - Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors

- North, west and south to the valleys of the Trent, Soar and Wreake
- Northeast to the Vale of Belvoir
- East-west links within the area associated with ridges and scarps.

5. Leighfield Forest - Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors

- North and south to the Wreake and Welland Valleys
- East towards Rutland Water.

6. Strategic River Corridors/Floodplains - Strategic Needs for Linking Habitats Corridors

- The Strategic River Corridors/Floodplains form a continuous existing network linking with biodiversity assets in the other 5 Areas and areas beyond the 6Cs Growth Point, to form a sub-regional scale functional linking habitat corridor.

Other Areas

4.2.13 In parts of the 6Cs Growth Point outside of the **Sub-Regional Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement Areas** shown on **Figure A4.1a**, such as south and southwest Leicestershire, biodiversity assets are relatively sparsely distributed and are less likely to form ‘functional habitat networks’. Such areas also present greater challenges in terms of the ease with which such networks could be developed or created. However, such areas do support patches of valuable biodiversity assets at a local scale, which offer opportunities for enhancement of the wider countryside for wildlife benefits.

Biodiversity Action Plan Needs

4.2.14 The Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) within the 6Cs Growth Point (see **Figure A2.1d**) identify the need for action to conserve and enhance priority habitats and species. Each BAP sets out a series of action plans that provide a rationale for prioritising the conservation of particular habitats or species. The action plans provide an audit of the existing biodiversity resource, the threats these resources face and targets for the delivery of actions and initiatives to aid the conservation of these habitats and species.

4.2.15 **Annex A4.1** provides a summary of the current targets relating to each of the BAPs within the 6Cs Growth Point. Most of these targets relate to a delivery horizon of 2010, and future reviews of these BAP’s will be relevant to guiding GI delivery going forward. The methodology for biodiversity opportunity network mapping, developed by Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts⁵², piloted in the 6Cs Growth Point by CBA provides a key tool for translating the quantitative targets expressed in the BAPs (what is required and when) into target areas (where it is required). There are four key principles for informing the assessment of biodiversity needs:

- *Retention* – to retain the extent of existing resource and ensure there is no further loss resulting from either direct (e.g. development activities) or indirect (e.g. intensive agricultural practices) impacts;
- *Restoration* – ensure that the existing resource is in positive conservation management in order to retain its inherent biodiversity and ecological value;

⁵² Green Infrastructure For The Three Cities: A Methodology For Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping. Unpublished report prepared for and on behalf of Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts (Murray, G, 2008)

- *Extension* – the creation of buffers, linkages or new habitats in direct association with existing habitat areas in order to protect the existing resource from influences (e.g. spray drift, water shed etc.) that could erode an existing site's biodiversity value; and
- *Creation* – the creation (including long term positive management) of new habitats to provide linkages and stepping stones for similar habitat types throughout their natural geographical range.

4.3 Accessibility of Natural Greenspace Network for People

4.3.1 The accessibility of the natural greenspace network for people from a sub-regional perspective is illustrated in **Figure A4.1b**. This shows the parts of the existing **natural greenspace network** that provide larger areas of **strategic accessible natural greenspace**, natural greenspace greater than 2ha in size, and normally available for public access on foot, providing opportunities for open access for informal recreational activities (see Figure A3.2a). It also shows the connectivity of the strategic accessible natural greenspace in relation to existing **strategic countryside access routes** within the 6Cs Growth Point (see Figure A3.2a).

Strategic Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision

4.3.2 **Figures A3.2b – A3.2f** (see Section 3.3) identify the location, distribution and catchments of strategic accessible natural greenspace in each of the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) size categories in relation to settlements proposed as the main locations for growth within the 6Cs Growth Point. It also provides a strategic view of areas deficient in the provision of strategic accessible natural greenspace measured against the Standard.

Accessible Natural Greenspace Sites >500ha

4.3.3 **Figure A3.2f** shows that there are no accessible natural greenspace sites greater than 500ha serving communities within the 6Cs Growth Point. The nearest sites in this size category are located outside the boundary of the Growth Point at Clipstone Forest, Rutland Water and Brampton East Moor. As a high proportion of the 1.9m population within the 6Cs Growth Point live in high density settlements, this is a very significant deficiency from a sub-regional perspective. There is therefore a demonstrable need for new provision of this category of accessible natural greenspace, located where it is best able to meet the needs of the 6Cs Growth Point as a whole.

Accessible Natural Greenspace Sites >100ha

4.3.4 **Figure A3.2e** shows that there is a lack of provision of sites greater than 100ha serving communities in the south and east of the Growth Point, including the City of Leicester and the

towns of Hinckley, Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray. New provision is required to meet the needs of communities for this category of site.

Accessible Natural Greenspace Sites >20ha

4.3.5 **Figure A3.2d** shows that the greatest provision of accessible natural greenspace at the sub-regional scale comprises sites of between 20 and 100ha. However, the catchment of these sites is relatively small (2km) and consequently they typically cater for only comparatively small proportions of communities in urban areas. There are clusters of sites west of Nottingham and in the Derwent Valley. Some of these sites are located close to centres of population where the potential levels of use are likely to be high. In the National Forest/Charnwood Forest and Greenwood Forest areas there are clusters of sites which, although more remote from the larger centres of population, are likely to collectively provide more diverse opportunities for recreation and access, and are therefore likely to attract visitors from further afield. Beyond the above clusters of sites, notable areas that are deficient in accessible natural greenspace sites of between 20 and 100ha include Leicester and Market Harborough.

Summary of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision

4.3.6 **Figure A3.2b** shows that none of the settlements proposed as the main locations for growth within the 6Cs Growth Point currently meet the requirements of the ANGSt model in full, and that provision of strategic accessible natural greenspace at all tiers in the hierarchy is poorly distributed in relation to these settlements. Of the three cities, there is a general deficiency of larger accessible strategic natural greenspace around much of Leicester relative to Derby and Nottingham. There is also a notable deficiency of provision around Market Harborough relative to the other towns. In these areas, there is a need for the provision of new accessible natural greenspace alongside investment in the access route corridor network.

4.3.7 In common with other areas experiencing potentially high levels of growth, the available accessible natural greenspace sites within the 6Cs Growth Point are likely to be under pressure from an increasingly large number of people, as there are relatively few sites to visit. This may have consequences for the carrying capacity of environmentally sensitive sites. Excessive visitor pressure could result in potentially harmful impacts on their condition and functionality, for example in terms of biodiversity or historic environment assets.

4.3.8 It is evident from the ANGSt analysis that there is currently a substantial deficiency in the provision of accessible natural greenspace close to the main centres of populations within the 6Cs Growth Point. Without new provision, and the enhancement of existing sites, it is expected that this situation will become more pronounced as the 6Cs' population grows over

the next 20-30 years. There is therefore a clear requirement to provide new accessible natural greenspace at all tiers of the ANGSt hierarchy located in proximity to the main centres of populations to meet the current and future needs of communities in the 6Cs Growth Point.

- 4.3.9 There are currently 33 accessible natural greenspace sites with Green Flag awards in the 6Cs Growth Point, the majority of which are located in and around the cities of Leicester and Nottingham, with one in Derby. These provide an indication of the good quality of a site in relation to the national benchmark provided by the Green Flag award scheme.

Countryside Access Route Network Provision

- 4.3.10 **Figure A3.2a** (see Section 3.3) identifies the extent of the promoted recreational routes, cycle network and navigable waterways that together form the strategic countryside access route network within the 6Cs Growth Point, and highlights their relationship to the overall public rights of way network and existing strategic accessible natural greenspace. **Figure A4.1b** shows the role that the strategic countryside access route network plays in connecting the settlements proposed as the main locations for growth (identified as **Sub-Regional Countryside Access Enhancement Areas**) from a sub-regional perspective.

- 4.3.11 A high level review of gaps in the provision of strategic countryside access routes identifies the following needs and opportunities that would enhance the overall functionality of the network:

- *Sub-regional strategic connectivity* - development of a strategic network of greenways (multi-user, off-road and car-free routes) along strategic river corridors and canals, connecting the three cities and other main settlements with one another and strategic accessible natural greenspace sites;
- *Inter-urban areas connectivity* - development of a strategic network of inter-urban greenways connecting cities to the other cities and/or satellite settlements within their 'travel to work catchment areas' (such as a 'Nottingham-Derby Greenway' or a 'Leicester-Loughborough Greenway');
- *Urban-rural permeability* - creation of urban access route networks along green corridors connecting city centres and suburbs to the rights of way network/promoted recreational routes in and beyond the urban fringe;
- *Overcoming barriers to access* - provision of safe and convenient 'green bridge' crossings at major highways, rail corridors and rivers, where practical, to strengthen the connectivity and functionality of the strategic countryside access route network; and
- *Sustainable transport network integration* – promote greater use of public transport to accessible natural greenspace sites of sub-regional significance as an alternative to private cars and car travel (such as the National Forest, Charnwood Forest, Greenwood Forest and the Derwent Valley).

Areas with Greatest Need for Enhanced Countryside Access Provision

4.3.12 Taking into account the 6Cs Growth Point's existing demographic patterns, and the spatial pattern of changes in population arising from the future growth proposed under the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan and the East Midlands Regional Plan, the countryside in and around the following settlements has greatest demand, and therefore need, for enhanced access to natural greenspace from a sub-regional perspective:

- Leicester;
- Derby;
- Nottingham;
- Coalville;
- Hinckley;
- Hucknall;
- Ilkeston;
- Loughborough;
- Market Harborough;
- Melton Mowbray; and
- Swadlincote.

4.3.13 The above areas are depicted on **Figure A4.1b** as **Sub-Regional Countryside Access Enhancement Areas**. These are core areas with strategic needs for enhancing the provision of accessible natural greenspace and delivering countryside access route network improvements to enhance the accessibility of the natural greenspace network for people. The 'urban fringe' in these areas is widely used by urban communities as a resource for informal, and often unauthorised, recreation leading to conflicts with other land uses. Additionally, the poor permeability of some of built up areas can be a barrier to accessing the surrounding countryside. An example of where these challenges have been recognised is the Stepping Stones Project⁵³ around Leicester, which promotes a strategic approach to improving access route linkages connecting urban communities to accessible natural greenspace sites in the surrounding urban fringe countryside.

4.4 Distinctiveness of the Natural Greenspace Network

4.4.1 The great diversity of the landscapes within the 6Cs Growth Point, together with the rich evidence of the area's cultural heritage contained therein, provides a distinctive context and sense of place for the natural greenspace network. Sustaining and enhancing the condition of landscapes and historic environment assets is an important element of GI delivery.

4.4.2 At the national level, the Countryside Quality Counts (CQC) study⁵⁴ has monitored changes in the underlying condition and quality of the English landscape within the framework of National

⁵³ Stepping Stones Project: www.leics.gov.uk/stepping-stones

⁵⁴ CQC is sponsored by Natural England, in partnership with DEFRA and English Heritage: <http://countryside-quality-counts.org.uk/jca>

Character Areas. The CQC approach is based on evaluating the magnitude of change (assessed as ‘stable’ or ‘changing’) and then its direction (assessed as ‘consistent’ or ‘inconsistent’) with the vision for the National Character Area for each of the following main elements or themes that determine landscape character:

- Woodlands and trees;
- Boundary Features;
- Agricultural land cover;
- Settlement and development patterns;
- Semi-natural habitats;
- Historic features and;
- River and coastal features.

4.4.3 Each National Character Area in England was allocated to one of four categories, based upon quantitative and qualitative analysis of spatial and tabular data related to the above themes, the significance of which was judged and validated by local stakeholders. The categories are:

- **‘Maintained’** if the character of the area is already strong and largely intact, and the changes observed for the ‘key’ themes served to sustain it, or simply because the lack of change meant that the important qualities are likely to be retained in the long term.;
- **‘Enhancing’** if the changes in the ‘key’ themes tended to restore the overall character of an area, or to strengthen it;
- **‘Neglected’** if the character of an area has been weakened or degraded by past change, and the changes observed in the ‘key’ themes have not had the effect of restoring the desired qualities that made the area distinct. National Character Areas have also been described as ‘neglected’ if significant opportunities to restore or strengthen character remain; and
- **‘Diverging’** if the change in the ‘key’ themes appeared to be transforming the character of the area so that either its distinctive qualities are being lost, or significant new patterns are emerging.

4.4.4 The CQC study has made an assessment of countryside changes for two periods: 1990-1998 and 1999-2003. The headline indicators for the most recent monitoring period in relation to the 17 National Character Areas within the 6Cs Growth Point are set out in the table below:

National Character Areas	CQC Indicator
30: Southern Magnesian Limestone	Maintained (agriculture, river and coastal)
38: Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield	Neglected (boundary features, agriculture, semi-natural habitats, historic features)
48: Trent and Belvoir Vales	Diverging (agriculture, settlement and development)
49: Sherwood	Neglected (boundary feature, agriculture)
50: Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent	Diverging (settlement and development)
68: Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands	Maintained (agriculture, semi-natural habitats, river and coastal)
69: Trent Valley Washlands	Diverging (agriculture, settlement and development)
70: Melbourne Parklands	Enhancing (trees and woodland, agriculture)
71: Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield	Enhancing (trees and woodland)
72: Mease/Sence Lowlands	Maintained (trees and woodland, settlement and development, river and coastal)
73: Charnwood	Diverging (settlement and development)

National Character Areas	CQC Indicator
74: Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds	Maintained (trees and woodland, agriculture, settlement and development, semi-natural habitats, historic features, rivers and coastal)
75: Kesteven Uplands	Maintained (boundary features, agriculture, settlement and development, semi-natural habitats)
89: Northamptonshire Vales	Neglected (trees and woodland, boundary features, agriculture, river and coastal)
93: High Leicestershire	Maintained (boundary features, agriculture, settlement and development, semi-natural habitats, historic features, rivers and coastal)
94: Leicestershire Vales	Diverging (settlement and development)
95: Northamptonshire Uplands	Maintained (trees and woodland, boundary features, agriculture, settlement and development, semi-natural habitats, historic features, rivers and coastal).

4.4.5 These findings highlight the strategic need for interventions to sustain and enhance the condition of landscapes throughout the 6Cs Growth Point.

Landscape Strategies for the 6Cs Growth Point

4.4.6 The published Landscape Character Assessments for each County recommend guidelines for protecting the distinctiveness of the sub-region's rich and diverse landscapes, and enhancing the condition of these landscapes where necessary. For the purposes of this Study, the guidelines for each respective Landscape Character Type/Area identified within the County Landscape Character Assessments were grouped together into Consolidated Landscape Character Types identified within the Growth Point (see **Section 3.4**). These guidelines are presented in **Annex A4.2**. They provide a tool for informing the design of GI in ways that sustain the distinctiveness of the landscape.

4.5 Target Areas for Environmental Benefits

4.5.1 Within the 6Cs Growth Point Area, Natural England has defined six target areas within which applications for public funding under the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship scheme are encouraged:

- Peak District and Derwent;
- Sherwood;
- Mercaston;
- Trent;
- East Leake;
- Soar and Charnwood; and
- Stanford, Launde and Melton.

4.5.2 These target areas are shown on **Figure 4.2**. The target areas represent strategic areas, identified and agreed by relevant stakeholders, which would benefit from investment in

sustainable environmental land management to address specific needs for biodiversity, landscape character and historic environment conservation and enhancement, and for natural resource protection. A brief summary of each of the target areas is set out below⁵⁵:

Peak District and Derwent

- 4.5.3 The Peak District and Derwent Valley is important for its significant contribution to Biodiversity, Landscape, Historic Environment and Resource Protection. Within the 6C's Growth Point Area, the Lower Derwent valley provides a transition zone between the Peak District uplands and the Derbyshire lowlands, following the river through to Derby City. This area is particularly important for biodiversity and historic environment, encompassing the internationally designated Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. It also has a high coverage of ancient semi-natural woodlands and lowland meadows and is nationally important for woodland birds.

Sherwood

- 4.5.4 The Sherwood Target Area is important for its significant contribution to Biodiversity, Historic Environment and Access. This area contains nationally and internationally significant habitats, including lowland heath and semi-natural woodlands. This area is also of high importance due to the presence of nationally important assemblages of arable birds. It is of high historic importance including scheduled and undesignated historic features that are considered to be at above average risk, many of these features are associated with the historic parks and gardens of the Dukeries. There are also significant access opportunities within this area.

Mercaston

- 4.5.5 The Mercaston Target Area is important for its significant contribution to Biodiversity and the Historic Environment. This area includes a relatively high density of designated and non-designated medieval earthwork sites, particularly field systems and associated archaeological features.

Trent

- 4.5.6 The Trent Target Area is important for its significant contribution to Biodiversity, Historic Environment and Access. It covers a significant proportion of the region's existing grazing marsh habitat and provides important habitats for several species of important farmland bird, including lapwing, snipe and redshank. Lagoons created by the aggregates industry from sand

⁵⁵For further information see: East Midlands: Higher Level Stewardship Theme Statement – www.naturalengland.org.uk

and gravel extraction provide regionally important habitats for over wintering wildfowl and breeding bird populations and parts of the area have been identified as being priority areas for provision of permissive access. The Trent area is particularly rich in important historic features, associated with human use and occupation of the Trent and its floodplain over several millennia.

East Leake

- 4.5.7 The East Leake Target Area is important for its significant contribution to Biodiversity and the Historic Environment. It includes a relatively high density of designated and non-designated medieval earthwork sites, particularly field systems and associated archaeological features. This area also includes important areas for biodiversity, particularly old meadows and pastures.

Soar and Charnwood

- 4.5.8 The Soar and Charnwood Target Area is important for its significant contribution to Biodiversity, Resource Protection and Access. Within this area an important mosaic of habitats (most notably acid grassland, lowland heathland, grazing marsh and fen) occur that support nationally important assemblages of farmland birds. The Area connects directly with Loughborough, Coalville and Leicester, thus offering excellent recreational opportunities for targeted permissive linear and educational access.

Stanford, Loddington and Melton

- 4.5.9 The Stanford, Loddington and Melton Target Area is important for its significant contribution to the Historic Environment, Resource Protection and Biodiversity. This area captures a number of nationally important medieval earthworks, a significant battlefield, deserted villages, field systems and associated archaeological features. In addition this area also provides significant opportunities to improve the water quality and the condition of vulnerable wetland habitats by addressing sources of diffuse agricultural pollution adjacent to the Grand Union Canal.

4.6 Target Areas for Public Benefits

- 4.6.1 It is increasingly recognised that investment in GI such as accessible natural greenspace networks and other 'green assets' can provide a wide range of multiple public benefits for both rural and urban communities. For example:

- Improved health as a result of increased physical activity, such as walking;
- Improved sense of community and more cohesive communities;
- Reduced crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour;
- Opportunities for exercise, sport, active recreation, spiritual well-being/quiet contemplation;
- Community resources for learning and training and social interaction;

- Opportunities for community involvement;
- Leisure facilities and visitor attractions;
- Sense of place and distinctive local identity;
- Improved environmental quality (air/water quality, local climate control, noise attenuation);
- Sustainable drainage and flood migration;
- Opportunities to protect, recreate and rehabilitate damaged landscapes/habitats;
- Enhanced biodiversity;
- The protection, management and enhancement of historic and natural sites and areas;
- Improved and sustained land values;
- Reduced land management costs;
- Support regeneration potential, and
- Economic benefits (workforce recruitment/retention, attract businesses/inward investment).

4.6.2 Derived from the East Midlands Public Benefit Mapping Project⁵⁶, **Figure A4.3**⁵⁷ provides a strategic view of where it is potentially important to prioritise delivery of GI within the 6Cs Growth Point in the context of the sub-region's existing demographic characteristics. The map indicates broadly defined areas where demand for GI is greatest, and investment in GI is likely to deliver most multiple public benefits from a sub-regional perspective. The mapping provides part of the evidence base to help in determining where investment in strategic GI provision and enhancement may be most effective in delivering social and economic objectives/priorities for the sub-region. This analysis will be used alongside the mapping of environmental assets and opportunities to identify priorities for the GI Strategy.

⁵⁶ Green infrastructure for the East Midlands – A Public Benefit Mapping Project (East Midlands Regional Assembly, 2006)

⁵⁷ Reproduced with the permission of the East Midland Regional Assembly