

Management Plan

# Leighton-Linslade

Parish Green Infrastructure Plan

## Summary Document



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE  
TOWN COUNCIL



# Contents

## Acknowledgements

### 1.0 What is Green Infrastructure and What is Green Infrastructure Planning?

- 1.1 Green Infrastructure Definition
- 1.2 Green Infrastructure Planning
- 1.3 Aim of this Green Infrastructure Plan
- 1.4 How this Green Infrastructure Plan can be used

### 2.0 Context

- 2.1 Geographical Context
- 2.2 Social Context
- 2.3 Strategic Context - Environmental
- 2.4 Strategic Context - Development

### 3.0 Methodology - The Plan Preparation Process

### 4.0 The Integration and the Leighton-Linslade Green Infrastructure Network

- 4.1 Integration
- 4.2 The Green Infrastructure Network

### 5.0 Delivery of the Green Infrastructure Network

- 5.1 Projects and Action Plan
- 5.2 Resourcing the development of the Green Infrastructure Network

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

---

This Plan has been produced by the **Greensand Trust** thanks to funding from the **Leighton-Linslade Joint Partnership**.



Mapping and GIS support for the Integration process was provided by the **Bedfordshire Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre**.



Additionally, the following are acknowledged for contributions and support:

- Central Bedfordshire Council – Jonathan Woods, Steve Lakin, Paul Burgess, Alison Myers, Julia Scott, Laura Kitson, Martin Oake
- Sustrans – Peter Bate
- Leighton-Linslade Town Council – Sarah Sandiford, Ian Haynes
- CPRE Bedfordshire
- Greensand Trust – Alexe Rose
- Mr M Moran – Friends of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park
- Mr J Coad – for use of historic photographs

**Jon Balaam**  
**Director of Development**  
**The Greensand Trust**  
**April 2015**

## 1.0 What is Green Infrastructure (GI) and what is GI Planning?

### 1.1 Green Infrastructure Definition:

Green Infrastructure (GI) has been defined within the Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan (2007) as: “A strategically planned and managed network of green spaces, access routes, wildlife habitats, landscapes and historic features which meet the needs of existing and new communities by providing:

- an essential environmental foundation and support system
- a healthy and diverse environment
- attractive places to live and visit and a good quality of life □ a sustainable future

The GI network will be protected, conserved, enhanced, developed, and widely known and valued. It will be of high quality and an example of best practice and innovation. The network will be multi-functional and meet a wide range of social, environmental and economic needs. It will connect urban and rural settlements and the countryside and provide a spatial planning framework to guide and promote sustainable development”. GI assets can be publicly or privately owned, and include country parks, urban parks, historic landscapes, waterways, allotments, play spaces, cemeteries, habitats and linking corridors.

### 1.2 Green Infrastructure Planning:

GI planning is the process by which a GI ‘Network’ is identified through a process involving analysis of existing assets and potential opportunities, guided by stakeholder and community involvement. This network is a strategic vision for the area being considered, identifying how a joined up, multi-functional network of spaces, routes and corridors can be created, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

Bedfordshire has led the way in terms of GI planning, and this has resulted in the development of a range of GI plans at different levels - from the Strategic GI Plan through ‘district’ level GI plans to a raft of parish and town level GI plans.

Each has an important role to play in guiding development, identifying key assets and opportunities, creating a basis for funding projects and expressing the desires and views of local people. This GI Plan will sit alongside other town/parish level GI Plans, illustrating a combination of professional judgement and community engagement.

### 1.3 Aim of this GI Plan

The Leighton-Linslade GI Plan aims to produce a spatial vision for the future environment of the parish which when delivered will help support healthy, happy and vibrant communities with good access to green spaces and routes for all of the population, enabling them to enjoy the environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits they bring. It will identify this network through a process of analysing existing information, consulting with a range of stakeholders including residents of the parish and capturing a range of ideas and views. It will also help clarify what can be a confusing range of environment-related plans, strategies, partnerships and initiatives in the area, and begin the process of identifying and helping to secure the resources required to deliver the GI network through a range of mechanisms.

This document is a summary document, all technical detail and supporting information, including full details of work on the five GI ‘themes’, can be found in the accompanying **Technical Supporting Document**.

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

---

### 1.4 How the GI Plan can be used

The GI Plan can be used in a variety of ways to help shape the future of the town and its environment. The following are examples, but these are by no means exclusive:

#### *a. By the community*

The plan identifies what is important to the community, and what they would like to see improved to enhance the green infrastructure network. The plan can be used to support funding bids, to help communities make important improvements to their local environment. They can also provide a snapshot of the local environment.

#### *b. By the Local Planning Authorities*

The plan is not a tool to prevent development, but it can inform planning decisions. The plan identifies what the community values in the local environment, and how it can be improved. This information can be used in pre-application discussions with developers, and to help evaluate submitted planning applications. The plan can also identify where financial benefits from development could be directed. The draft Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy (2014) advocates the use of parish and town GI plans in this way. It will also be a useful tool for neighbouring Aylesbury Vale District Council in evaluating applications in the area adjacent or close to Leighton-Linslade.

#### *c. By developers*

The plan identifies what is important in the local environment, and aspirations that the community has to improve the environment. Developers can use this information to identify important assets and aspirations for improvement, and consider how these could be integrated with, and delivered through, development proposals. Such proposals will be stronger for including these aspirations.

## 2.0 Context

### 2.1 Geographical Context

The parish of Leighton-Linslade is located in the south-west of Central Bedfordshire, in the Ouzel Valley where the River Ouzel has carved a gap through the Greensand Ridge (see **Figure 1**). It consists of the towns of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade, located to the east and west of the river respectively, and which were united in an administrative sense in 1965 (Linslade having been formerly within Buckinghamshire). It is well-connected, with a mainline rail line and station, and is close to the M1 motorway. It is 12 miles north-west of Luton, 9 miles south of Milton Keynes and 39 miles north of London.

The population of the parish is 37,470 (2011 Census), with a notable increase of over 4,000 or 14% in the period 2001-2011. It is still growing today, with further development in the pipeline to the east of the town in particular.

The towns have a rich historic and industrial heritage, with the Grand Union Canal and the Narrow Gauge Railway now both forming key elements of the towns' growing tourist economy.

### 2.2 Social context

Deprivation is not considered to be a major issue in Leighton-Linslade (Central Bedfordshire Ward Profile 2013) but there are pockets of deprivation as illustrated by the fact that 4 of the parish's 22 "Lower Super Output Areas" are within the 50% most deprived in England, one of which is the 5th most deprived in Central Bedfordshire (DCLG, Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010).

Over 90% of the population is described as being of "white British" ethnic origin, close to the Central Bedfordshire average. Unemployment, health and car ownership are all close to the Central Bedfordshire average.

### 2.3 Strategic Context - Environmental

The planning context of this Plan is described in **Section 2.4** below. However, it needs to perform another critical role, as identified in the aim (**Section 1.3** above) – helping to clarify how the range of existing plans, strategies and initiatives that exist locally all fit together into a bigger picture. These are described in the Technical Supporting Document, and are listed below:

- Ouzel Valley Park – a multi-partner initiative focused on the green corridor around the River Ouzel, Clipstone Brook and Grand Union Canal which has expanded its focus to the wider 'Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel', overseen by the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group
- Leighton-Linslade Big Plan II (2011) – the updated Town Plan
- The Sandpit Strategy – focused on the extensive areas of quarrying around Leighton-Linslade and Heath and Reach, guided by the Sandpit Steering Group
- Site-based Masterplans: Central Bedfordshire Council have published masterplans for both Linslade Wood and Tiddenfoot Waterside Park, the Riverside Walk management Plan is due to be published in 2015, while the Greensand Trust published the Rushmere Country Park 'Framework for the Future'.
- Development Masterplans

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

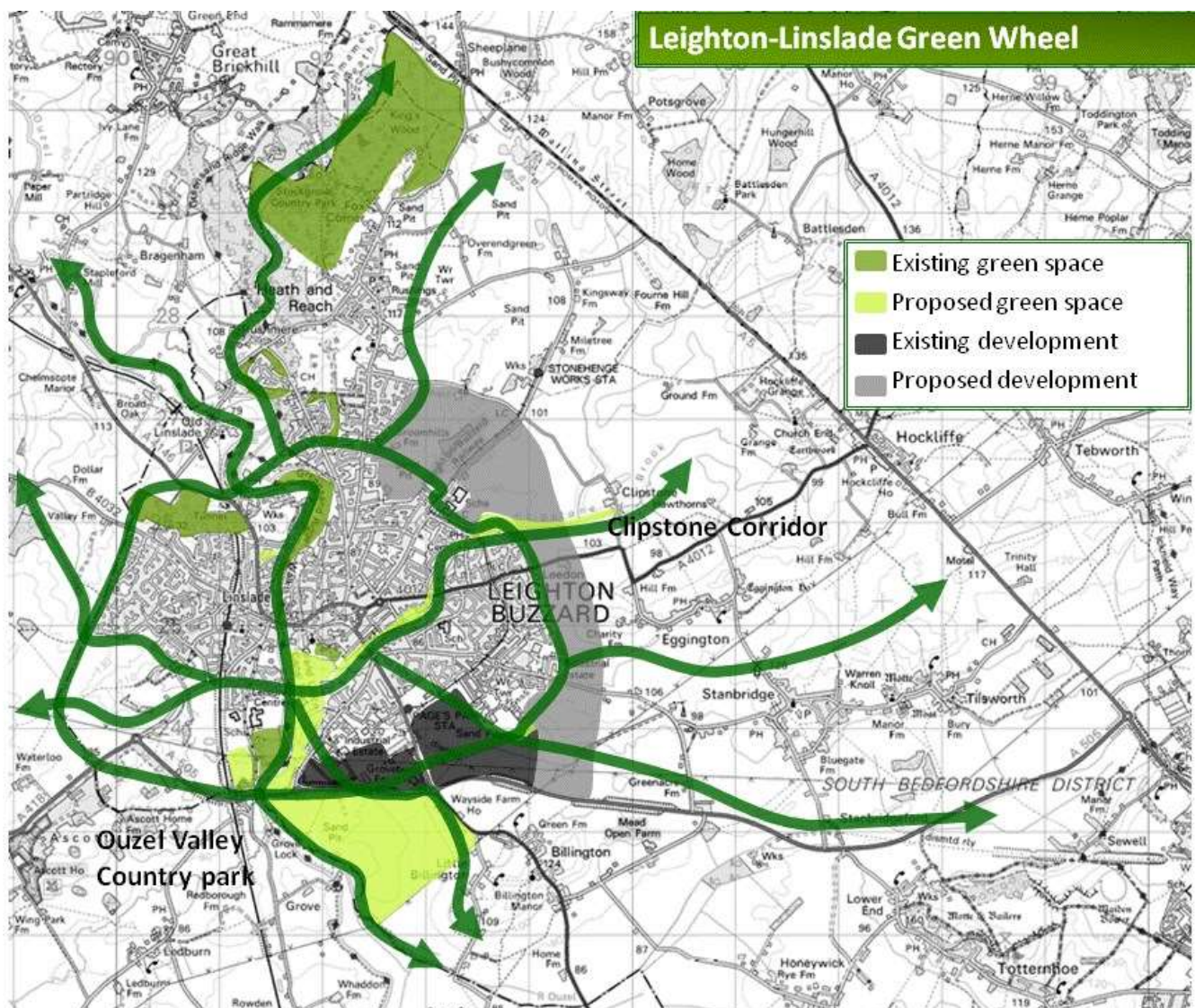
- Bedfordshire Ouzel Catchment Plan – published in 2014 and subsequently subsumed into the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Plan, focused on improving the environment in and around the Ouzel and its tributaries.
- Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area (NIA) - designated in 2012, and covers the whole of the Greensand Ridge (including parts of Leighton-Linslade parish) and aims to achieve landscape-scale habitat enhancements.

Figure 1 – Context Map



Of the previous work identified above, the Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel has been the main focus for planning and delivery, and is illustrated in **Figure 2** below.



**Figure 2 – The Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel**


## 2.4 Strategic Context - Development

As mentioned above, Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan is not intended to be a barrier to development. Development is often required as the tool to unlock improvements to the GI network. It is important that developers and planners take GI into consideration at the very beginning of any development, to ensure it is at the core and provides safe, healthy and attractive places for people to live and work – and is not just an ‘after-thought’.

The key strategies relating to development in and around Leighton-Linslade are the “Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire” (a revised pre-submission version was produced in June 2014 with expected adoption in 2015) and the emerging “Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan” (expected adoption 2017). The latter is important because the administrative boundary to the immediate west of Leighton-Linslade coincides with the Central Bedfordshire/Aylesbury Vale boundary.

The Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire recognises the existence of parish level GI plans as an important part of the GI planning hierarchy, and states that the Council will use them to “work with local communities to help identify and protect local GI”.

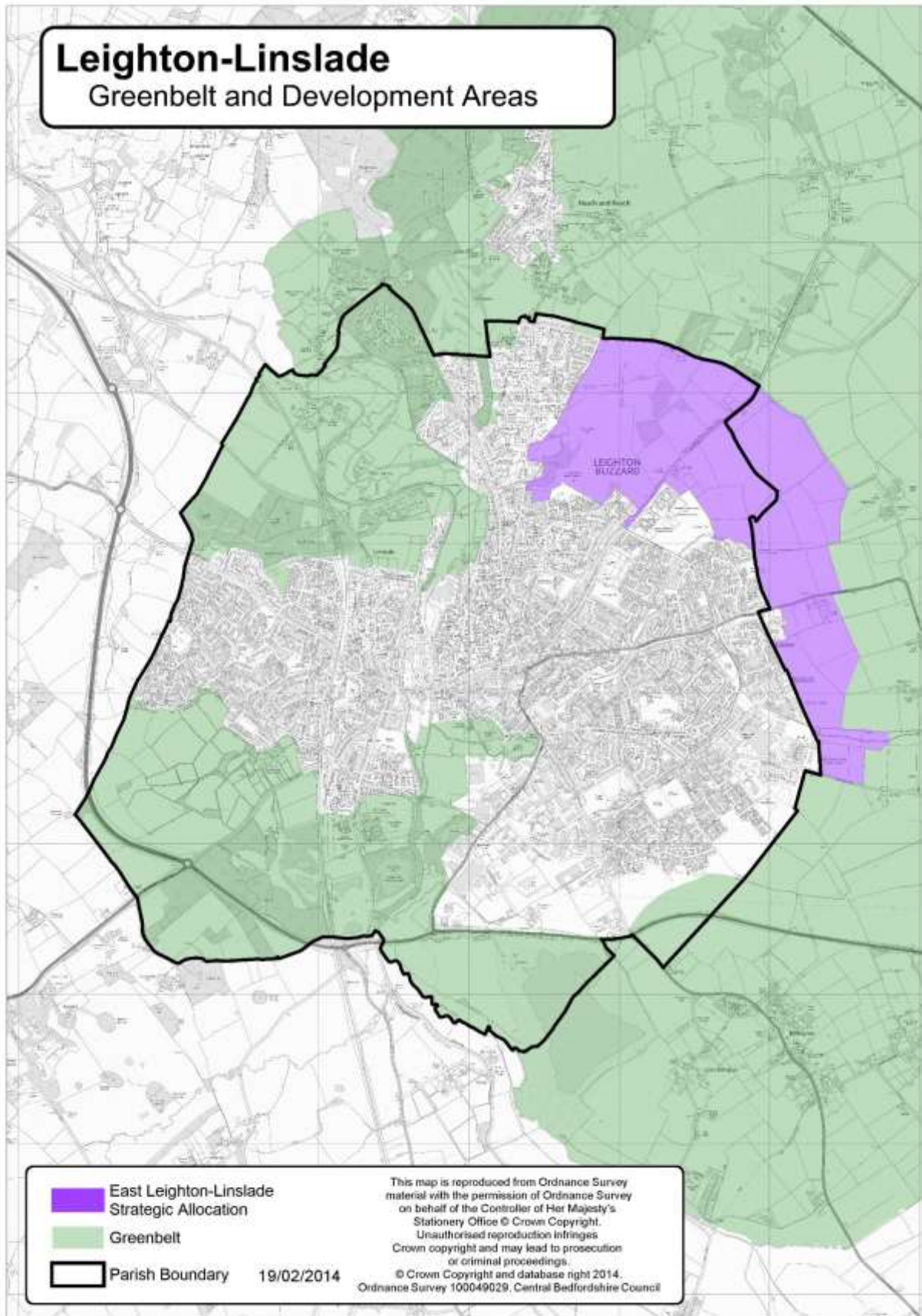
## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

---

In Leighton-Linslade there has been significant growth over the last decade, not just in terms of population (as outlined above) but also in terms of the physical footprint of the town, with further significant urban growth is in the pipeline. **Figure 3** shows the Strategic Allocation identified in the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire. This is expected to provide up to 2,500 new homes, 16 hectares of employment land, and new community facilities including green spaces. As Figure 3 illustrates, it covers an area currently identified as Green Belt, and therefore the decision-making process requires the involvement of the Secretary of State, which has lengthened the timescale of the normal development control process and at the time of writing this report a final decision had not been made. However, to ensure that any future development takes account of current and potential green infrastructure needs (and vice versa), the assumption has been made that development will take place in this area at some stage.

The methodology used to produce this plan (described in **Chapter 3** below), including the range of consultation activities, is consistent with the requirements of Central Bedfordshire Council for their 'Green Wheel Strategies' (such as exist for Biggleswade and Sandy) and the endorsement as such means that this GI plan has equal weight, which will support the development of the Leighton-Linslade GI network, using the Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel as a key tool for doing this.

Figure 3 – Green Belt and Development Areas



### 3.0 Methodology – The Plan Preparation Process

The GI Network has been developed through the following stages:

1. Baseline review
2. Stakeholder and community consultation
3. Integration Process
4. Identification of GI Network and Project Plan

As with all GI planning in Bedfordshire, the following five themes underpin this GI Plan:

- Accessible Greenspace
- Access Routes
- Biodiversity
- Historic Environment
- Landscape

GI has been considered across these five themes, with **existing assets**, **current deficits** and **future opportunities** mapped. The existing asset information has been extracted from information held by the Bedfordshire Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC) utilising GIS (Geographical Information System) technology, and was also used to identify key deficits. All thematic mapping is contained within the **Technical Supporting Document**.

The mapped 'opportunity' information has been obtained through a variety of sources throughout the consultation process carried out in 2014:

- GI workshops involving professional stakeholders, local groups and organisations
- Events organised by other stakeholders where information and input could be provided
- Drop-in events plus opportunities at large public events
- Surveys – promoted across the town
- Consultation with professionals specialising in the various themes
- Information provided through stakeholder meetings
- Information provided through relevant previous consultations

In total 190 people had a direct input into the process, while many more were made aware of it. A summary of the consultation process is available in the **Technical Supporting Document**.

The key difference between this GI Plan and other town/parish level GI plans is that an 'integration' led approach has been used to identify a GI network similar to that used in 'higher level' GI planning. Existing assets and key opportunities have been mapped across the GI themes, and these have been overlain (using GIS) to produce an 'integration' map with multiple layers. The 'core' GI network is then based on the areas with the highest level of overlap. This approach is more scientific and much more effective at highlighting specific priority areas and key links within a GI network.

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

---

This Plan therefore enjoys the ‘best of both worlds’, with true community level input but also a scientific approach combining multiple layers of information.

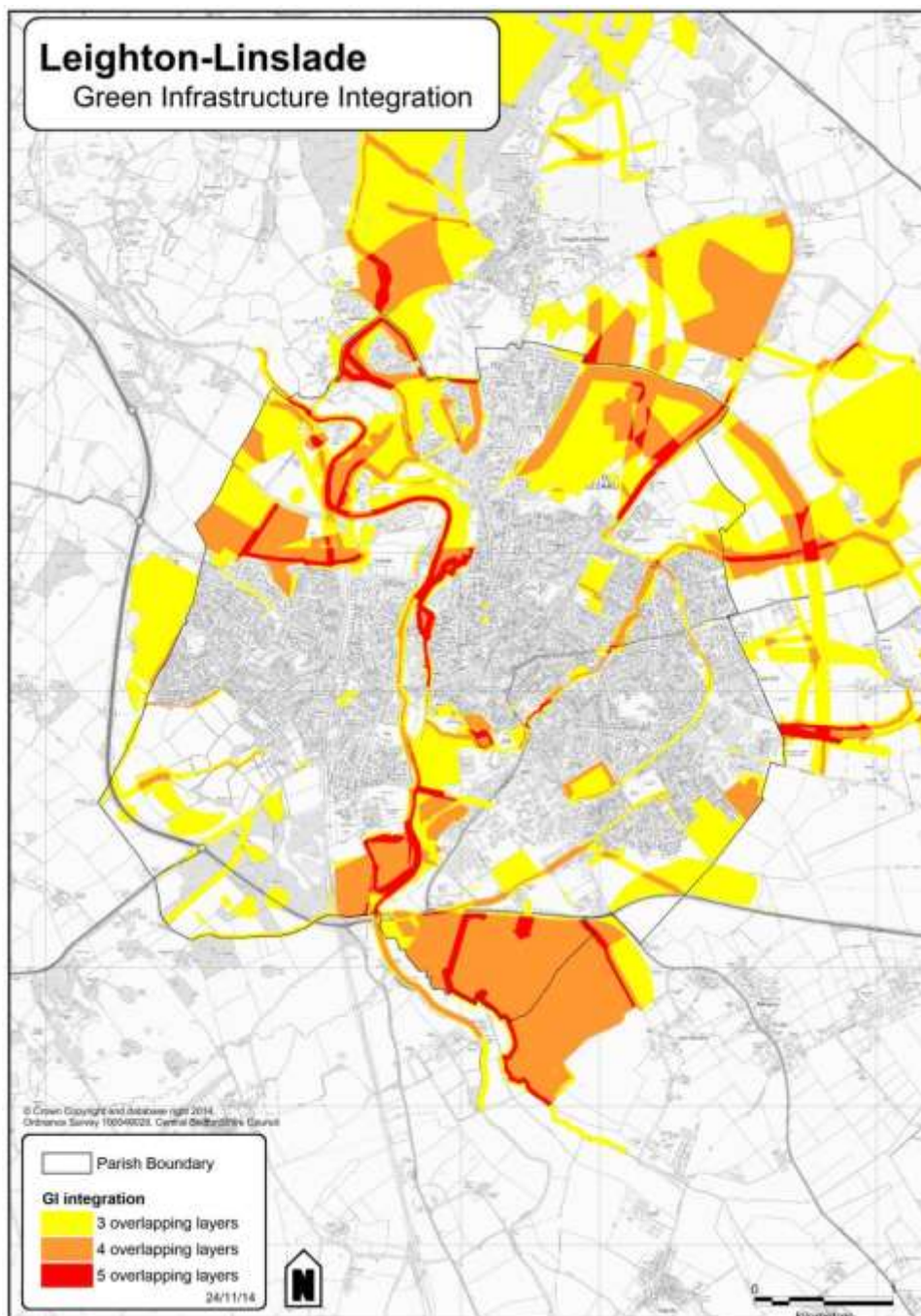
The integration process is described next in **Chapter 4** below. The thematic information used to create the layers feeding into the integration process is detailed in the **Technical Supporting Document**.

## 4.0 The Integration and the Leighton-Linslade GI Network

### 4.1 Integration

As suggested above the integration process involves over-laying separate layers from each theme. The individual layers have been created by combining the existing assets and the opportunities into one layer. These five layers were then combined utilising GIS software that was able to highlight where the greatest number of layers corresponded. This is essentially the 'core' of the GI network, and is illustrated in **Figure 4** below, with yellow areas indicating a minimum of three thematic layers combining, orange indicating four layers and red all five layers.

**Figure 4 – The Integration Map**



## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

It is evident from the Integration Map that the core areas for the GI network are distributed around the periphery of the town, but also include the Ouzel and Clipstone corridors running through it. The close correlation with the Green Wheel is also evident.

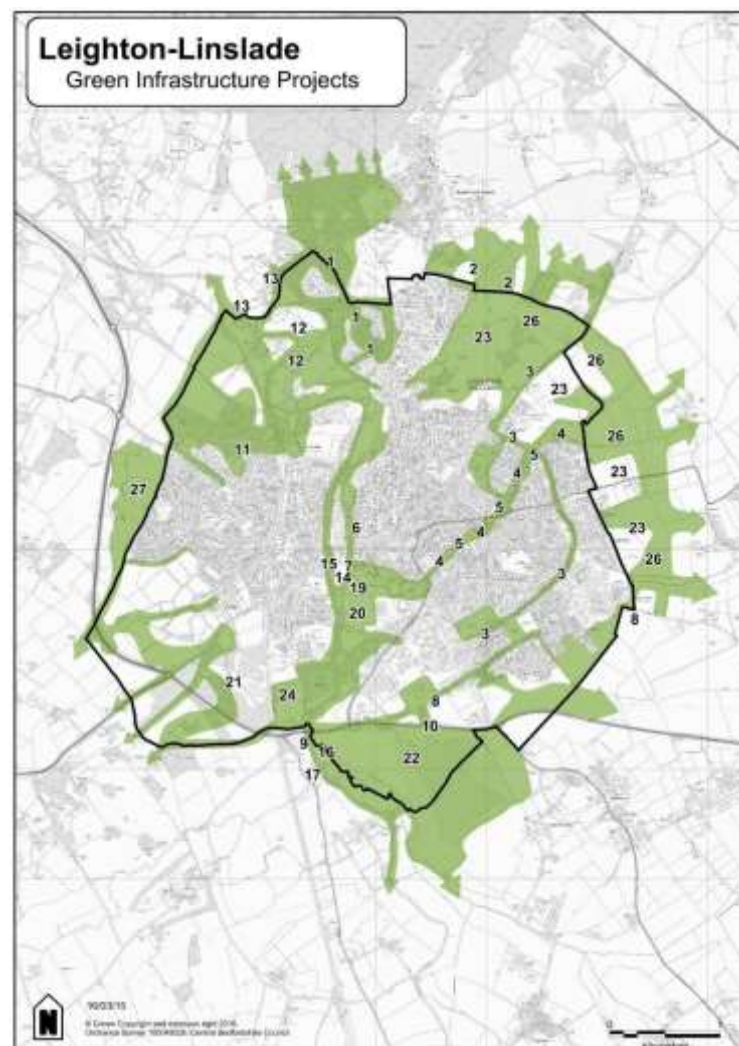
These areas were used to form the basis of the Green Infrastructure Network for Leighton-Linslade, which is illustrated in the next section.

### 4.2 The GI Network

The Leighton-Linslade GI Network is illustrated below in **Figure 5** and shows very clearly the importance of the ‘outer rim’ of the Green Wheel. The influence of the Greensand Ridge to the north is obvious, as is that of the valleys of the River Ouzel and Clipstone Brook - both key ‘spokes’ of the Green Wheel. The importance of the area to the east, identified for significant urban growth, is also highlighted. Arrows indicate where the network could potentially link into adjacent GI networks.

The projects described in **Chapter 5** below are also incorporated into this map, and are described in more detail in **Table 1**

**Figure 5 – The Leighton-Linslade GI Network  
(Including project locations)**



## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

---

The GI network represents the highest priority areas for protecting, enhancing, linking and interpreting GI. It includes urban areas as well as rural ones – this is important because GI networks exist for people and wildlife. While urban areas may constrain the creation of new GI, at least at any significant scale, there are still opportunities to develop the network through streetscape and verge enhancement/planting, green ‘treatments’ to buildings (green walls and roofs), creation of infrastructure for wildlife (e.g. underpasses) and interpretation and access initiatives.

The next chapter looks to set out how the GI network could be delivered.



## 5.0 Delivering the GI Network

### 5.1: Projects and Action Plan

It is evident from **Figure 5** above how strongly the GI Network correlates with the Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel (see **Figure 2**). There already exists an Action Plan for the Green Wheel, in the format of a projects database and most recently updated in 2012, overseen by the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group. This is included in the **Technical Supporting Document**. It is therefore recommended that this is adapted to include wider GI-related projects and used to provide project details, timescales and identify which organisations should lead and be involved. This database/action plan has the advantage of being a 'live' document, to be continuously updated and linked to a live map. This will provide the most recent and accurate information for communities, planners, developers and funders alike.

The 'priority projects' identified through the development of this plan, are included in the following table and **Figure 21**. Those that received the strongest levels of community support through the consultation are highlighted as the 'top priority projects' in yellow.

**It is recommended that the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group monitors progress and steers the delivery of the projects contributing to the GI network, with an annual review process built in.**

**Table 1 – Priority Projects**

	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
1	Access to Rushmere (1)	Multi-user access from Leighton Linslade, via Plantation Road	CBC/GST	Sustrans	Wider consultation required
2	Access to Rushmere (2)	Multi-user access from new eastern development	CBC	Sustrans, GST, LLTC	Ensure built into development proposals
3	Leighton Buzzard Railway Corridor	Enhancement / development as a green corridor with access, landscape, biodiversity and tourism benefits	NGR	GST, CBC, Sustrans, LLTC, FoE	Ensure built into eastern development proposals
4	Clipstone Corridor Access Route	Key 'spoke' of Green wheel – joining up the access gaps between countryside and town centre in terms of access	Sustrans	CBC, LLTC, GST	Sustrans currently working on Woodman close area.

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

5	Clipstone Corridor Enhancement	Enhancement of environment in and around the Clipstone Brook	CBC	GST EA FoE	Further design, feasibility and consultation work required.  Included in Ouzel Catchment Plan.
6	Ouzel Corridor Enhancement (1)	Enhancements to environment in and around the Ouzel through Riverside Walk area	CBC GST	EA FoE	Further design, feasibility and consultation work required.  Included in Ouzel Catchment Plan.
7	Ouzel Corridor Enhancement (2)	Enhancements in and around Ouzel through the area south of the town bridge including Smiths Meadow	GST	EA	Further design, feasibility and consultation work required.  Included in Ouzel Catchment Plan.
8	Thedeaway	Preservation of historic alignment where still exists, with view to creating an access corridor based on this ancient route with interpretation bringing history to life.	No lead currently identified	CBC GST LLTC Sustrans	Further research required.
9	Grovebury Link (East)	Links from southern Leighton across bypass to Grovebury	CBC		Included within quarry proposals
10	Grovebury Link (West)	Links from Southern Meadows to Grovebury	CBC		Dependent upon acquisition of S Meadows

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

11	Linslade Wood E-W links	E-W link from Stoke Road entrance to western end – multi- user standard	CBC	GST, Friends of Linslade Wood	Ensure route and design are acceptable in landscape/biodiversity terms
12	Towpath Access enhancements – north of Leighton	Improvements to GUC towpath between Globe pub and Old Linslade Road – improvements to surfacing and width to bring to multiuser standard	CRT	Sustrans	Project designed and costed, funding required.
13	Access to Rushmere (3)	Multi-user access from GUC towpath	CBC	Sustrans	Route needs to be identified
14	Smiths Land	Creation of N-S and E-W links, habitat and access enhancements	GST	CBC	Dependent upon development creating access opportunities – could be long-term.
15	GUC Crossing (2)	Crossing of canal at the basin, link to The Wharf	CBC	Sustrans	Design required
16	Ouzel Crossing	Link between GUC towpath and Grovebury including bridge over the Ouzel.	CBC	Sustrans	Design required
17	GUC crossing (3)	Improvements to crossing at lock gates (Grove)	CRT	Sustrans, GST	Some feasibility work done
18	Putting the Buzz Back into Leighton Buzzard	Encouragement of planting of native wildflower species to improve attractiveness and encourage wildlife across a range of sites.	FoE LLTC CBC	GST WT	Further continuation of current project.  Ensure principles built into all projects where appropriate.

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

19	Protect and enhance the landscape setting of All Saints Church and the Southern Meadows	Monitor and feed into any development proposals.	CBC LLTC	GST	Liaise with developers as appropriate.  Seek opportunities to secure meadows in perpetuity.
20	Access to Southern Meadows	Secure access through Southern Meadows as a minimum, including the linking of Canal towpath and Tiddenfoot to new southern development across Grovebury Road.	CBC	GST, LLTC, Church Commissioners, BE Aerospace	Seek to secure ASAP  Continue to pursue opportunities for acquisition of wider area, and manage for benefit of people and wildlife.
21	Reducing Greenspace Deficit in the South-West (Southcott) and Enhancement	Protect and enhance the landscape around Southcott, improving access in area and to wider countryside.	OVPSG		Further design and consultation required.
22	Grovebury Quarry Restoration	Create an accessible strategic GI asset with accessible greenspace, landscape, biodiversity and historic environment benefits	CBC	Sandpit Steering Group	Part of ongoing restoration proposals

## Leighton -Linslade Parish Green Infrastructure Plan (2015)

23	Eastern Greenspaces	Ensure eastern development provides appropriate levels of linked greenspace to help reduce deficits, enhance urban fringe landscape and provide access to the historic environment	CBC GST	Developers	Continue to seek to influence development proposals – currently provide good, relatively well designed GI contribution – ensure remains this way.
24	Ledburn Quarry Restoration	Ensure northern part of quarry is restored appropriately and brought into management of GST, in line with Tiddenfoot Masterplan proposals and GST objectives.	GST	Cemex CBC	Discussions ongoing.
25	Improve access network connectivity for all users	Ensure all opportunities are taken to fill missing links and create effective access networks	CBC Countryside Access/Rights of Way	GST, Sustrans, User Groups, Developers	Use GI Plan Access routes theme and Green Wheel as basis for input and discussions.
26	Habitat Improvements East of Leighton	Ensure development proposals and quarry restorations develop biodiversity	CBC GST	WT Developers SPSG	Ensure feed into planning proposals
		network			
27	Access to landscape west of Linslade	Creation of greenspace in Valley Farm area, managing and enhancing meadow and wetland habitats.	GST	AVDC WT Developers	Seek to secure land as opportunities arise, including if development proposals come forward in future

**Key:**

CBC	=	Central Bedfordshire Council	FoE	=	Friends of the Earth
LLTC	=	Leighton-Linslade Town Council	OVP SG	=	Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group
GST	=	Greensand Trust			
SPSG	=	Sandpit Steering Group	AVDC	=	Aylesbury Vale District Council
WT	=	Wildlife Trust			

### 5.2 Resourcing the development of the GI Network

To include a full Funding Strategy for the projects identified to deliver the GI network would risk this GI Plan becoming dated quite quickly. However, it is important to identify potential sources of funding currently available. The most important at the time of producing this plan are:

- **Development** – either through mitigation or other contributions, including the Central Bedfordshire Planning Obligations Strategy (2015 only) and Community Infrastructure Levy (2016 onwards).
- The **Greensand Ridge Landscape Partnership** – funding potentially available mid-2016 onwards, pending successful second stage Lottery bid.
- The **Greensand Ridge Rural Development Programme** – again dependent upon a significant bid being successful, but if so will potentially fund rural/heritage projects 2015-2021
- Other **Rural Development Programme** funding, including the new **Countryside Stewardship** scheme (2015 onwards).
- **European** funding, including opportunities through schemes administered by the **South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership**.

