

## **Green corridors, beaches and coastal areas**

### **Definition**

- 13.1 The green corridor typology includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. Their primary purpose is to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding (for leisure purposes and travel) and opportunities for wildlife migration.
- 13.2 Due to the District's coastline a separate category of 'beaches and coastal areas' was included for this study. Coastal areas offer a whole host of benefits from recreational purposes (for residents and tourists during summer months) to landscape, environment and biodiversity benefits.

**Picture 13.1 River Rother**



### **PPG17 – the role of green corridors and Beaches**

- 13.3 PPG17 suggests that all corridors, including those in remote rural settlements, should be considered. However, the Companion Guide suggests that unless a green corridor is used as a transport link between facilities (ie home and school, town and sports facility etc) it should not be included within an audit.
- 13.4 Although the role that all green corridors play in the provision of open space and recreation within the District is recognised, the focus of this study is on urban corridors and public rights of way, in line with the Companion Guide.

### **Strategic context and consultation**

- 13.5 The Local Plan makes specific reference to green corridors and they are broadly protected by Policy CF2 however as this typology tends to be opportunity led it is questionable whether such a facility could be suitably replaced. Beaches and coastal areas are not covered by any specific policies however key areas of the coast (such as Rye Harbour) do have specific policies to protect and enhance them.

## SECTION 13 – GREEN CORRIDORS

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- 13.6 In terms of green corridors, the household survey showed that 36% of respondents felt provision levels to be “just right” compared to 45% who felt levels were “not enough” or “nearly enough”. The situation for beaches and coastal areas was remarkably different with 28% believing provision levels to be “more than enough” and 55% “about right”.
- 13.7 Beaches and coastal areas were the most popular typology to be visited on a more than once a month basis with 72% stating this. Green corridors are also heavily used with 50% using them on a more than once a month basis.
- 13.8 The most significant quality issues for both green corridors and beaches/green corridors were dog fouling and litter problems. Anti-social behaviour, vandalism and graffiti were seen as significant minor problems.
- 13.9 There are four main green corridors in Rother that have been included in the audit. These are:
- Broomfield Creek (Site ID 27)
  - Guldeford Creek (Site ID 28)
  - River Rother (Site ID 43)
  - Sidley Wood disused railway (Site ID 197).
- 13.10 It is recognised that public access to these sites is not complete but they have been included on the PPG17 basis that all sites of a public value should be encompassed. In terms of the coastal area, the same criteria was used. Therefore the entire shoreline along the length of the District has been included, despite the lack of public access in places.

### Setting provision standards

- 13.11 In setting local standards for green corridors there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs.

### Quantity standard

- 13.12 Annex A of PPG17 – Open Space Typology states:

*“the need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas. This means that **there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard**, just as there is no way of having a standard for the proportion of land in an area which it will be desirable to allocate for roads”.*

**RECOMMENDED  
LOCAL QUANTITY  
STANDARD**

**No Local Standard Set**

- 13.13 It is therefore recommended that no quantity standard should be set for either green corridors or beaches/coastal areas. PPG17 goes on to state that:

*“Instead planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans national cycle network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities. In this sense green corridors are demand-led. However, planning authorities should also take opportunities to use established linear routes, such as disused railway lines, roads or canal and river banks, as green corridors, and supplement them by proposals to ‘plug in’ access to them from as wide an area as possible”.*

### **Quality standard**

- 13.14 The Countryside Agency has issued guidance on what the user should expect to find on green corridor sites. This includes a path provided by the protection and reinforcement of existing vegetation, ground not soft enough to allow a horse or cycle to sink into it and a path on unvegetated natural surfaces. There are currently no local standards for this typology.
- 13.15 Views on qualities for green corridors were obtained from the household survey. Identified qualities were for green corridors to be clean and litter free with clear footpaths, well-kept grass and nature features. Provision of bins and seating were also mentioned as potential improvements. These key quality factors alongside other consultations have been the basis of the recommendation for green corridors.

#### **RECOMMENDED GREEN CORRIDOR LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD**

*“Corridors should have clear pathways, linking major open spaces together and providing ancillary facilities such as bins and seating in appropriate places with appropriate signage to aid usage. The corridor should also encourage biodiversity and wildlife habitats, enabling the movement of both wildlife and people between open spaces.”*

- 13.16 For Beaches and coastal areas there are two main national quality standards. The Quality Coast Awards and the Blue Flag Awards run by Environmental Campaigners (EnCams). The Quality Coast award is a fairly recent development that recognises coastlines that are well managed for a range of different users. It is available to beaches that do not pass water quality standards. In order to be considered for this award sound management systems and targeted communication to specific user groups would be needed.
- 13.17 The Blue Flag award is an annual accreditation scheme that tests water quality of the sea, the beach and intertidal area, the information and education facilities available as well as the environmental management of the site.
- 13.18 The key aspirations from the public for beaches and coastal areas were for them to be clean and litter free, have parking facilities, toilets, seating and litter bins. Adequate lighting and staff on site were also requested. Other consultation revealed a large demand for cycleways along the beach and coastal area.

#### **RECOMMENDED BEACHES AND COASTAL AREA LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD**

*‘A beach and seafront that is clean, safe and well managed, where litter is kept to a minimum, and provision of seating and toilets are adequate. Beaches should have in place management systems to address supervision and maintenance of quality standards and make available information regarding the site. All sites should aspire to Blue Flag status and take into account biodiversity issues’.*

### Accessibility standard

- 13.19 There is no rationale for setting catchment areas for green corridors as their function is to join places rather than to provide a destination in their own right. No accessibility standard has been set for beaches/coastal area either however research showed that with the exception of the Bexhill analysis area, the majority of residents drove to beaches and coastal areas. 33% of respondents took less than 10 minutes to drive to a beach or coastal area and a further 33% took longer than 20 minutes.

#### LOCAL ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD

*No local standard set*

### Links with the health agenda

- 13.20 Green corridors represent an opportunity to link open spaces within urban areas and to promote transport by cycle and on foot. This will help keep the public active and hence potentially improve health within the local area.
- 13.21 The latest Government plan published by the Department for Transport and entitled *“Walking and Cycling: an action plan”* states:
- “Walking and cycling are good for our health, good for getting us around, good for our public spaces and good for our society. For all these reasons we need to persuade more people to choose to walk and cycle more often.”*
- 13.22 It is therefore important to address any quality problems in existing green corridors and to capitalise on opportunities to increase and enhance the existing network.
- 13.23 Beach and coastal areas tend not to have the same opportunities to link sites and promote transport by cycle or on foot due to their location. However the typology also has strong linkages with the health agenda. This is because of the large number of walking possibilities offered by this typology as well as the more limited swimming opportunities offered during summer months. In addition, there are a large number of other water sport activities occurring in the District.

### Applying provision standards

- 13.24 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards, it is also not appropriate to state areas of deficiency or need. However, the aim should be to provide an integrated network of high quality green corridors linking open spaces together and provide opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport.
- 13.25 For the green corridor sites identified, the major issues centred towards access and ancillary facilities. Where the sites passed upon urban areas (eg the River Rother in Rye Harbour) there tended to be good ancillary facilities with benches and bins provided, however this was not evident in other areas. Access for wheelchairs and pushchairs tended to be poor for all sites and should be a priority for the Council.
- 13.26 The southeast coastal area of Bexhill has already been focused upon in this study as it is one of the main providers of open space in this area and compensates for the lack of natural/semi natural and amenity green spaces. As the railway line provides a barrier to the beach, the Council should look to both increase access to this valuable resource as well as improving the quality of the area.

<b>GCBCA 1</b>	The Council to improve the accessibility to, and quality of the beach/coastal area in southeast Bexhill.
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**Summary and recommendations**

- 13.27 As green corridors are primarily opportunity-led it is difficult to target potential new areas for provision. However, the Council should ensure that new developments include green corridors to facilitate walking and to cut reliance on car travel.
- 13.28 Consultation showed that the major issues for users of green corridors were rubbish and dog fouling. Whilst it might be uneconomic for the Council to introduce additional litter patrols, it should aim to provide additional litter and dog fouling bins to help people take responsibility for their own mess.
- 13.29 A longer-term aspiration should be for the Council to increase the safety and security of green corridors. This reflects concerns about anti-social behaviour, vandalism and graffiti.
- 13.30 In terms of Beaches, the Council should concentrate upon quality and accessibility improvements whilst also giving consideration to cycling being allowed in some areas.

**Summary of recommendations for green corridors, beaches and coastal areas in Rother**

<b>GCBCA 1</b>	The Council to improve the accessibility to, and quality of the beach/coastal area in southeast Bexhill.
<b>GCBCA 2</b>	Ensure all new major developments contain green corridors to reduce dependence on cars for short journeys, particularly as part of the Bexhill urban extensions.
<b>GCBCA 3</b>	The Council should provide additional seating, litter and dog fouling bins at green corridors within their control.