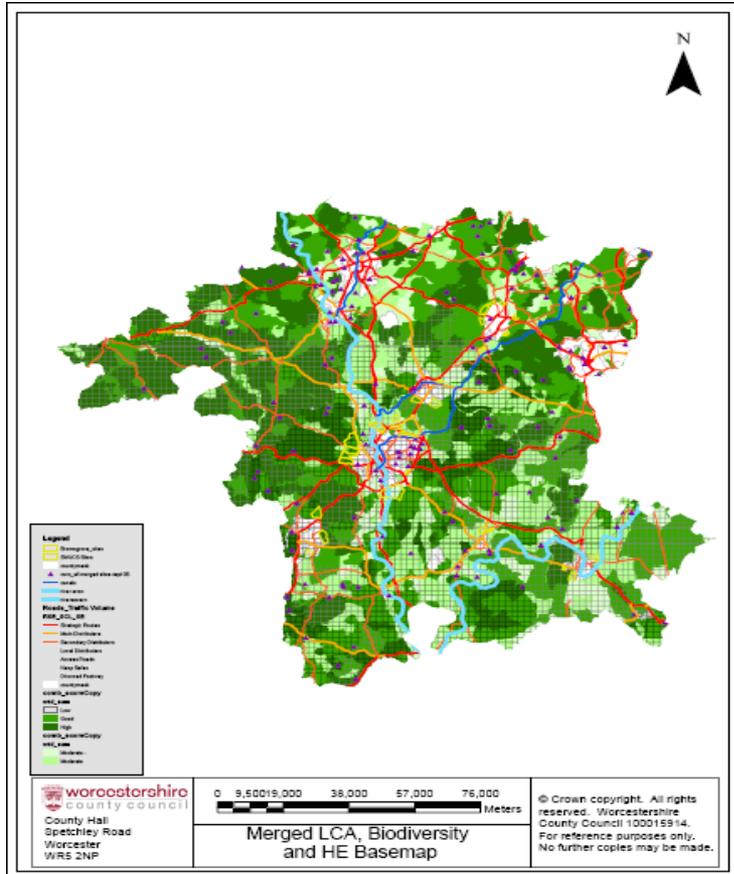# Draft Environmental Character Areas for GI

Dale Bristow

Strategic Planning and Environmental Policy Manager,

Worcestershire County Council

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county council

Composite map of the environmental assets

Regional and local planning authorities should work together to ensure that they have up-to-date information, at the appropriate scale, about the characteristics of the natural environment in their areas to inform plan-making. PPS17 consultation

Use of GIS in analysis of data allows for differing scales of approach:

- Sub regional - elements which enhance the area as a whole e.g. country parks and river corridors

- District - rights of way and informal green space

- Site – street, garden and allotments

But is it green infrastructure?

- *A slab of tarmac isn't infrastructure, but a road is. Give tarmac a purpose, some users, a public benefit and a place in a wider network – and it becomes essential infrastructure.*

- *In the same way just because a piece of land is open doesn't make it 'green infrastructure'.*

- *Our green and blue spaces need to have a function and serve the needs of society, the economy and the environment before we consider it as being Green Infrastructure.*

Source: North West Green Infrastructure Guide

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Environmental character areas for GI planning

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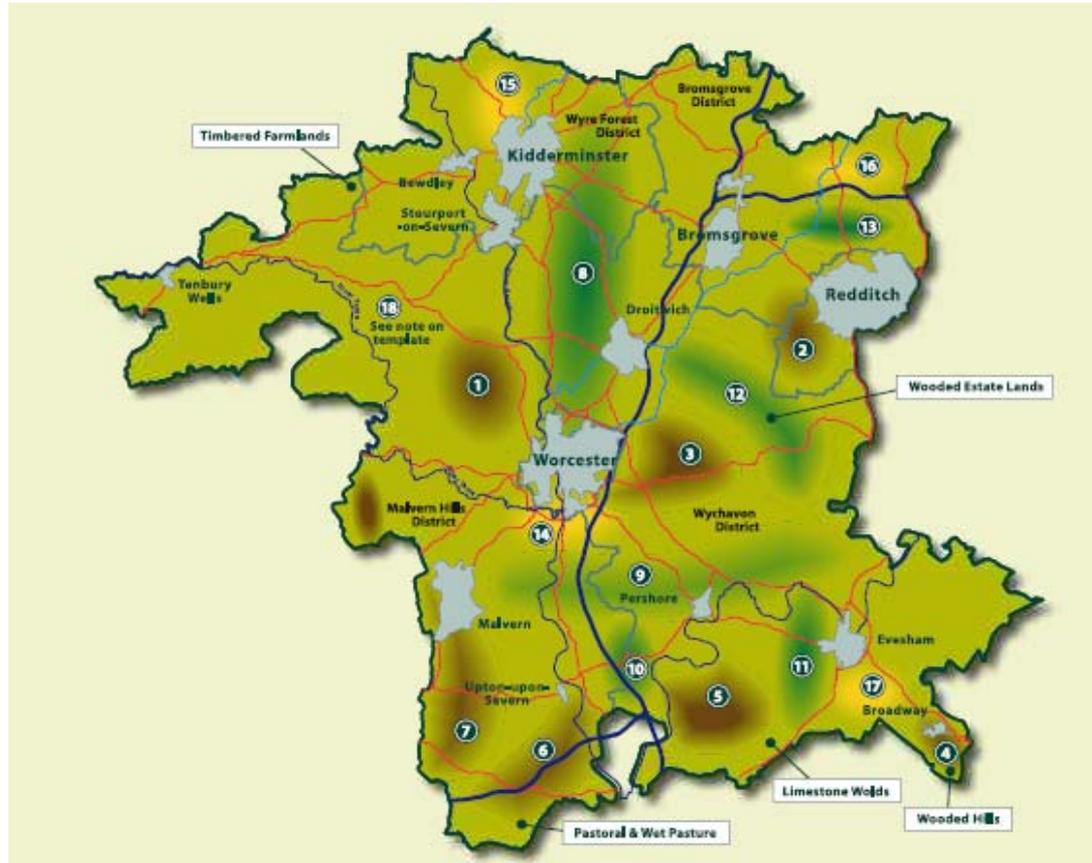
Next steps…

1. Agree character area names
2. Draft GI multifunctional objectives for each character area (acknowledge competing demands)
3. Undertake functional assessment (incl. health/climate change/economic considerations)
3. Identify movement networks (human and ecological), destination hubs and the locations of change : needs assessment (human and ecological)
4. Prioritise spatial locations for intervention

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Function and needs assessment

Functional assessment

Consider the way a parcel of land is used and the functions it performs

Needs assessment

Currently meets the need of the community (human and ecological), future changes and how this can be improved.

Source: North West Green Infrastructure Guide

SITE 1: Urban fringe farmland, used for low-key equestrianism. Near road and rail corridors into commercial side of town. Adjacent river and in floodplain. Few trees, no public rights of way.		Green Infrastructure Function or Benefit	SITE 2: Urban park surrounded by housing of various ages. Pockets of multiple deprivation and several schools within walking distance. Originally a designed landscape, now rather faded.	
EXISTING	POTENTIAL		EXISTING	POTENTIAL
	✔	Create setting for economic growth/regeneration		✔
✔	✔	Job creation & social enterprise	✔	✔
✔	✔	Skills & training		✔
		Community cohesion	✔	✔
		Community safety		✔
✔	✔	Sport		
	✔	Physical health	✔	✔
		Mental health and wellbeing	✔	✔
	✔	Access to natural greenspace	✔	✔
	✔	Land and property value uplift	✔	✔
	✔	Flood management		
	✔	Climate change adaptation and mitigation		✔
	✔	Air & water quality		
		Natural tourism		✔
	✔	Biodiversity in situ	✔	✔
	✔	Environmental connectivity		
		Culture	✔	✔
	✔	Quality of place	✔	✔

Create new green infrastructure with emphasis on economic and environmental functions. To be achieved by environmental improvements near key economic corridors. Creation of riverside trails and new wetland and woodland habitats; in conjunction with operators of existing enterprise.

Green Infrastructure Strategy
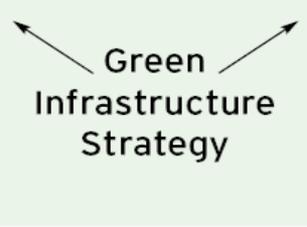
Conserve as greenspace and Enhance functions through greater community engagement and links to nearby education, employment and cultural initiatives.

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Consultation paper on a
new Planning Policy Statement:
Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment

Policy NE4: Local planning approach for green infrastructure

NE4.1 Local development frameworks should set out a strategic approach for the creation, protection and management of networks of green infrastructure. In doing so, local planning authorities should build on work undertaken at the regional and subregional level. Policies should:

(i)   provide for green infrastructure, particularly in locations where it will assist in reducing the impacts of climate change by providing flood water storage areas, sustainable drainage systems, urban cooling and local access to shady outdoor space

(ii)   avoid development being located in areas which result in the fragmentation or isolation of natural habitats

(iii) identify opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and the natural habitats within it, by retaining, enhancing or creating green corridors linking rural and urban fringe areas and urban green spaces; and

(iv)   identify opportunities to enhance the functions urban green spaces can perform.

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Worcestershire sub regional GI steering group

Mark July - Senior Specialist Government and Communities, Green Infrastructure

Contents

Planning for Landscape, Biodiversity and the Historic Environment in the development of Green Infrastructure Strategies in Worcestershire

TECHNICAL RESEARCH PAPER

Note: Throughout this paper the term Green Infrastructure (GI) refers to a strategically planned and managed network of green spaces and related environmental features

Version 1

November 2008

worcestershire county council Forestry Commission England NATURAL ENGLAND
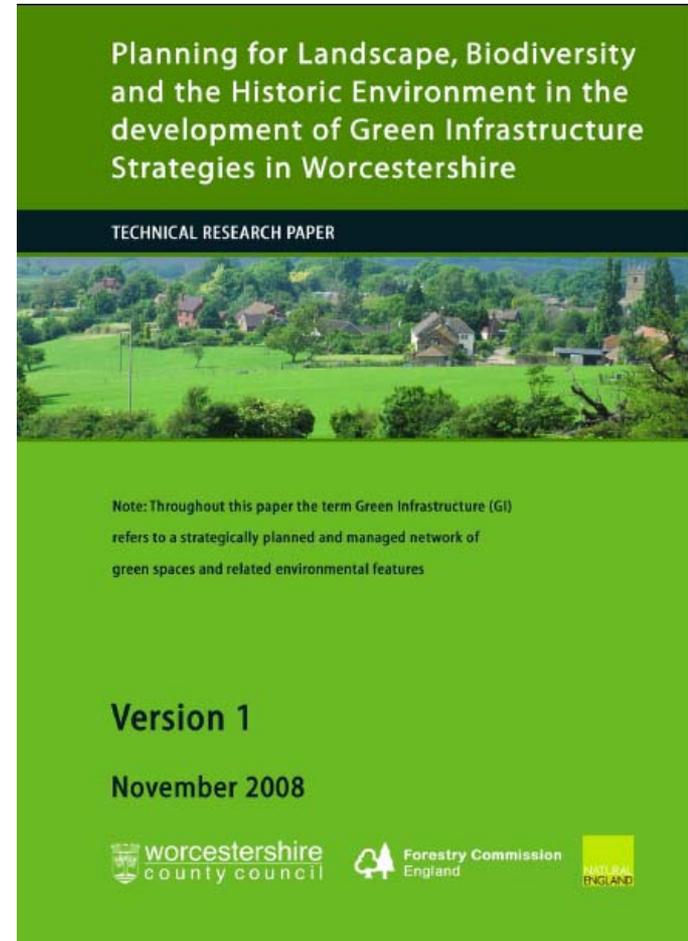
Green Infrastructure……

- is the network of green spaces and natural elements that intersperse and connect our cities, towns and villages.

- provides multiple benefits for the economy, the environment and society.

- spans administrative and political boundaries; it is both publicly and privately owned.

- in urban situations complements and balances the built environment; in rural settings it provides a framework fir sustainable economies and biodiversity; in between it links town and county and interconnects wider environmental processes.

- **is an influence not a constraint**!

Moving from Grey to Green

Traditional infrastructure considerations:

- Transport
- Water
- Energy
- Waste
- And now Green which also:
- Covers the county
- Has its connectivity
- Hierarchy
- Exists so needs to be managed

Benefits of GI

- Cleaner air
- Climate change adaptability -better flood protection & cooler cities
- Local food
- Sustainable waste management and renewable energy
- Improved mental and physical health / social inclusion
- Critical support for biodiversity
- Sustainable economy – image/investment/land & property values/tourism
- Well designed public places – sense of place

NATURAL ENGLAND

GI NOT JUST A GOOD IDEA…

- **GI policy at national level** (PPS 1, PPS 12 and PPS natural environment)
- **World Class Places, May 2009**
- **RSS policy**
- **Sustainable Community Strategy**
- **Good practice documents – e.g. CABE /North West RDA**
- **5 steps to the GI planning process:**
1) Partnership and priorities
2) Data audit and resource mapping
3) Functional assessment
4) Needs assessment
5) Intervention plan

GI planning in Worcestershire

GI from sub regional scale to site level

Use of GIS in analysis of data allows for differing scales of approach.

Benefit of sub regional GI planning:

1. Opportunity to pool resources, share services, skills, intelligence between partners and thus providing a commonality of approach across boundaries

2. Partnership working at a strategic level with a shared vision, prioritising activity

3. Comprehensive approach enhancing ability to obtain resources.

Outcomes

A comprehensive, interactive and highly flexible evidence base that:

- Provides a framework for land management

- Informs planning decisions

- Identifies role for natural environment in the economy, health and climate change agendas

- Attracts funding and inward investment

NATURAL ENGLAND

Sub regional and site examples

The result, the Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Network

- VIDEO OF THE High Line 4.45min

- http://www.thehighline.org/galleries/videos

Further inspiration

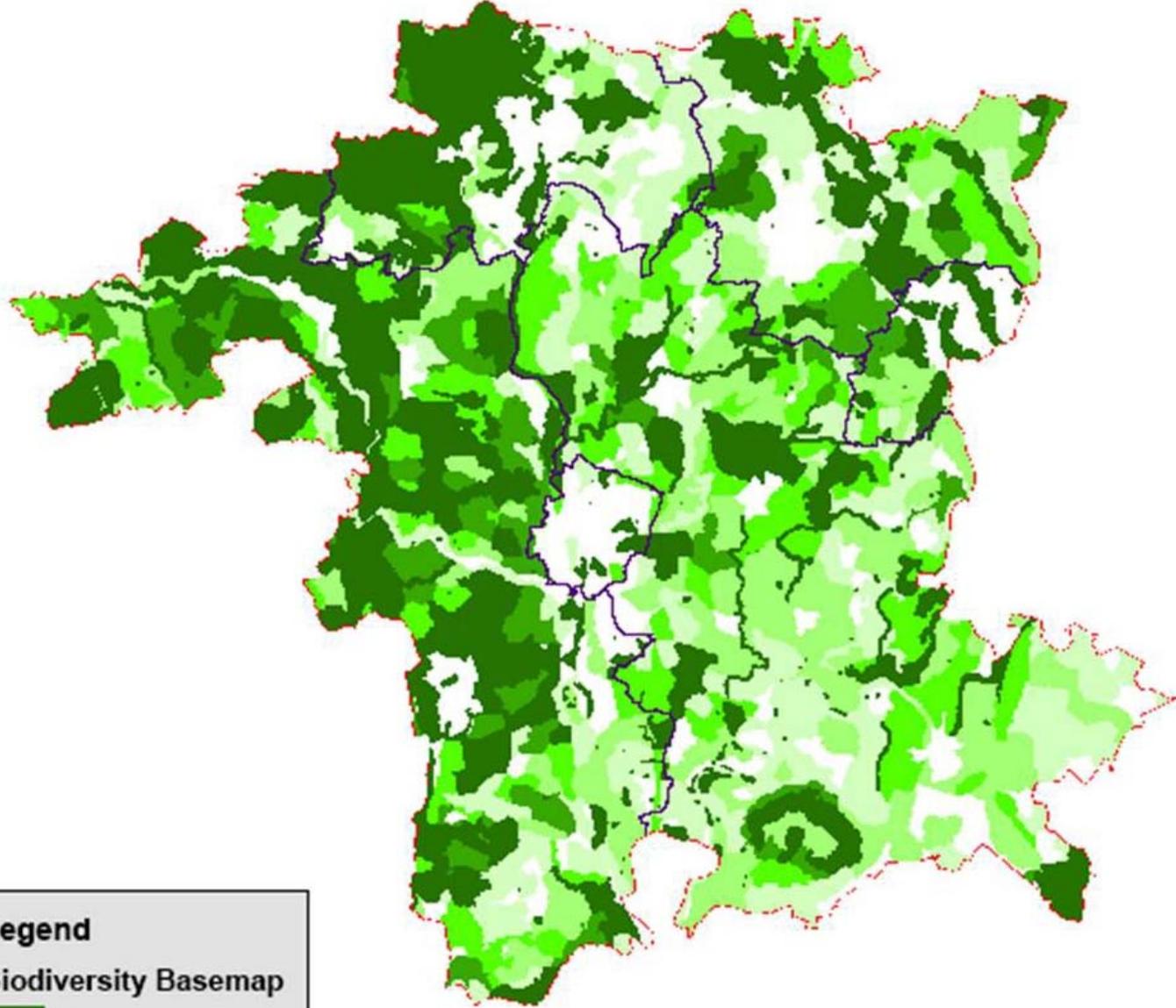http://www.gcvgreennetwork.gov.uk/video/bigger_picture.php

Green Infrastructure

Biodiversity Baseline and Aspirations
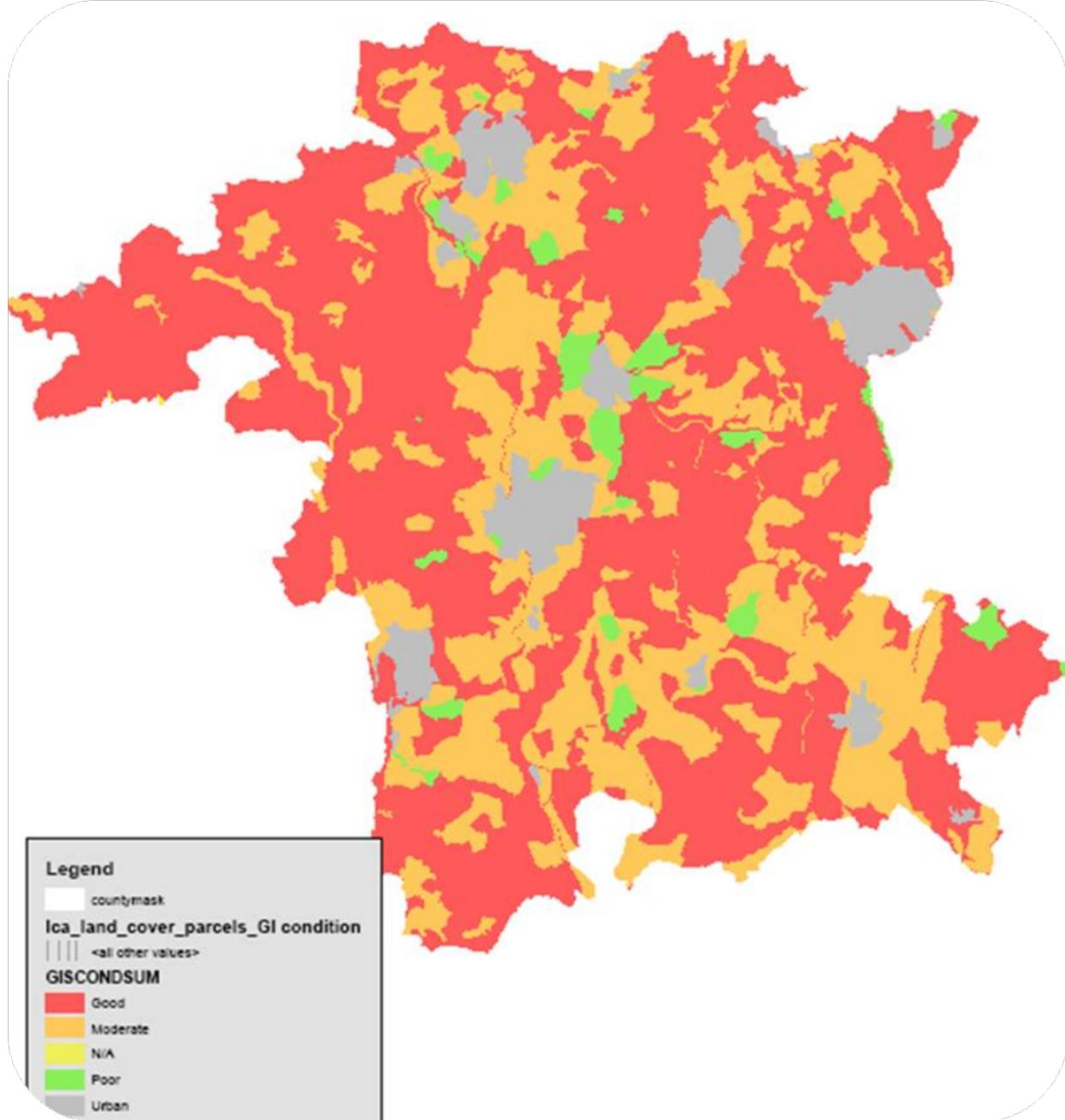
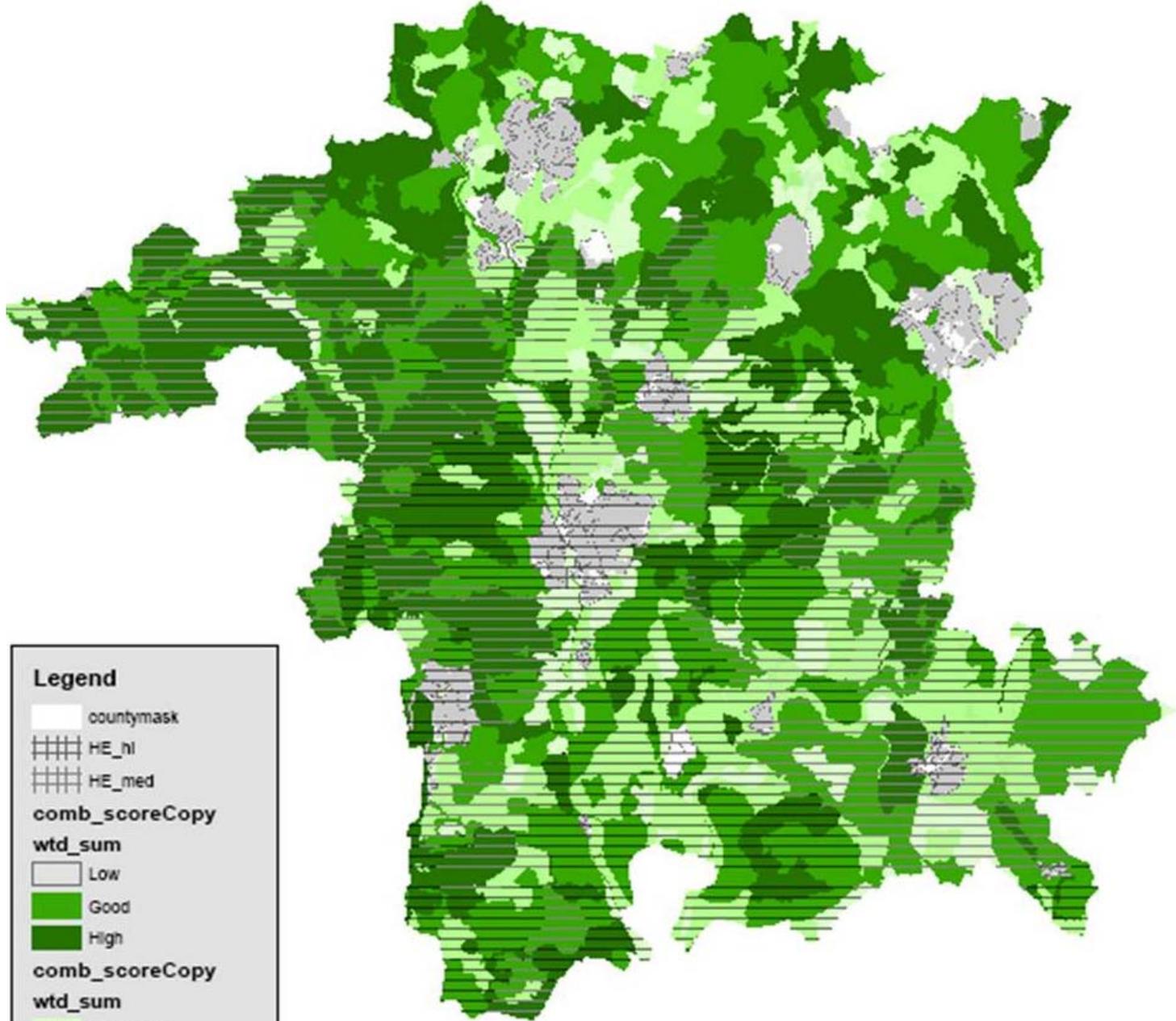**Partially digitised area with existing data overlay**

Legend

Biodiversity Basemap

- High
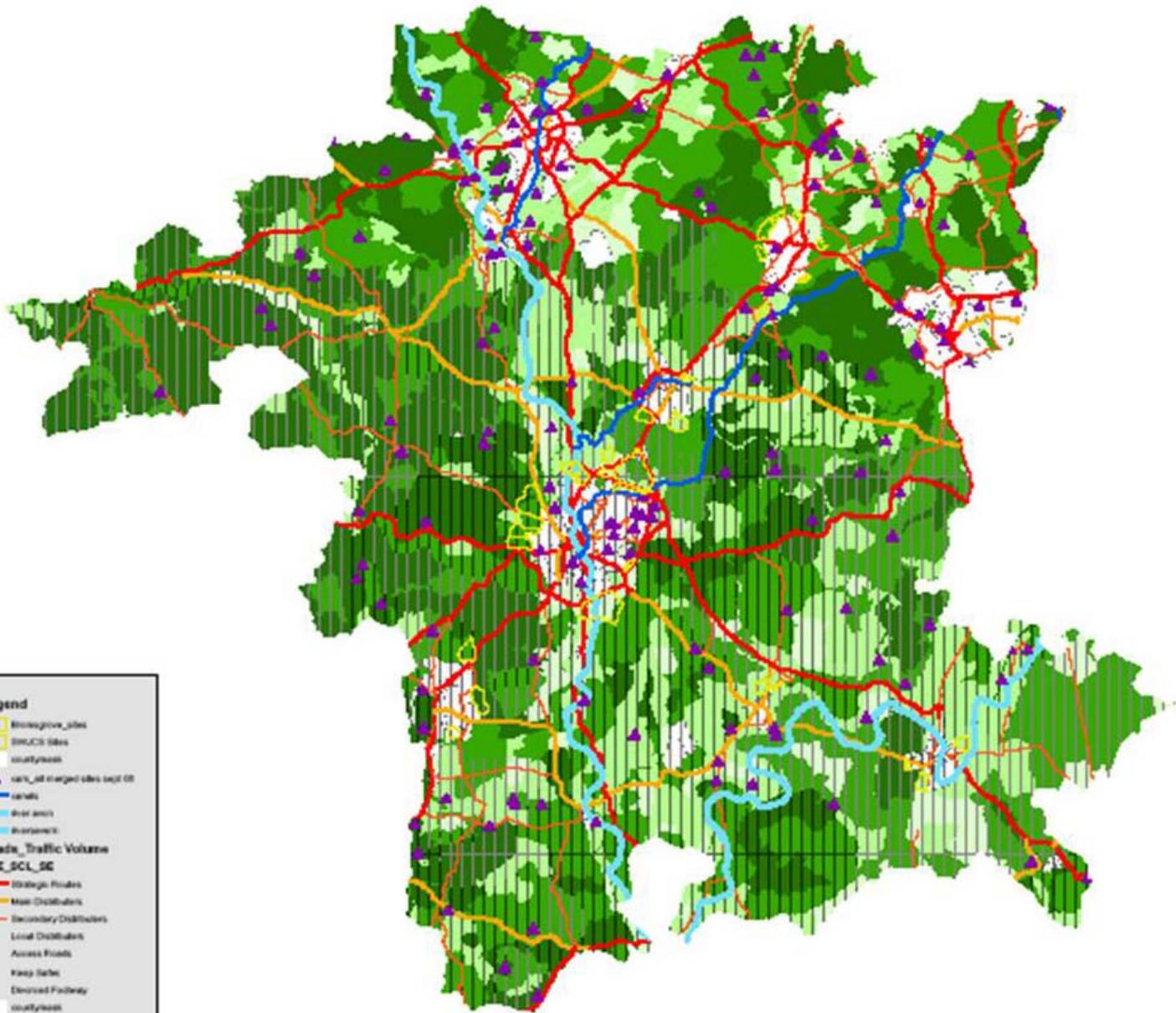- Good
- Moderate +
- Moderate
- Moderate -
- Low

Biodiversity Basemap

Landscape Character GI condition and sensitivity

Merged Biodiversity, LCA & HE Basemap

Legend
- countymask
- HE_hi
- HE_med

comb_scoreCopy
wtd_sum
- Low
- Good
- High

comb_scoreCopy
wtd_sum
- Moderate -
- Moderate
- NE Urban Settlements
- countymask

Green Infrastructure Basemap

Green Infrastructure

Biodiversity Baseline and Aspirations

- Use best and most up to date data, ensuring parity across the county.

- Integrate development and land management into natural frameworks.

- Direct efforts to protect & enhance existing features.

- Link the principle features to recreate a 'living landscape'.

- Create new features where there is opportunity and need.