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SDCC Green Infrastructure Pre Planning Guidance

Green Infrastructure (GI) can be defined as strategically planned networks of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to both deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in rural and urban settings.

An advantage of the GI is a spatial structure providing benefits from nature to people that enhances nature's ability to deliver multiple valuable ecosystem goods and services, such as clean air or water. It provides positive synergies between several functions in the environment. In contrast to a single functional objective, the GI approach advances a multifunctional and spatially connected land use perspective. This "win–win" combination delivers mutual benefits to both nature and society. For example, a conventional approach may seek to designate an area simply as a floodplain. However, a GI approach would seek to explore the positive synergies that such a designation may have with other land uses. It may be discovered that a suitably designed programme of deciduous tree planting and relatively inexpensive unsealed pathway provision could provide riparian bank stabilisation, enhance the area's aesthetic appearance, supply habitat connectivity between Natura sites, improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity, while a series of robust sunken play spaces designed for use outside flood periods could be employed to improve flood alleviation by providing water detention areas during times of heavy rainfall.

The four core principles that underlie the GI approach;

1. **Respect Context**
   Understanding, emulating and enhancing local ecological, topographical and cultural distinctiveness is the starting point for a GI approach to a planning application.

2. **GI Assets are Fundamental Infrastructure**
   Planning for the conservation and enhancement of valuable GI assets and functions should precede identification of land for development. GI assets include, but are not limited to, woodlands, open green spaces, riparian corridors, hedgerows, conservation areas, non-motorised transport routes, and sustainable urban drainage systems.

3. **Spatial Connectivity**
   Facilitating spatial connectivity aids nature conservation by connecting habitats thus enabling species mobility. Spatial connectivity also involves identifying and planning for the interrelated roles played by different types of spaces connected across different spatial scales. For example, the different, yet interrelated, roles played by spatially connected suburban hedgerows, parks, and woodlands located on an urban periphery.

4. **Multifunctionality**
   A focus on how planning applications enhance mutually beneficial social-ecological links by orientating planning applications towards an emphasis on improving positive synergies between physical, ecological and social systems. By emphasising positive multifunctional synergies, a central value of the GI approach is that it supplies a resource-efficient means to effectively respond to the increasing scope, volume and complexity of issues and policy pressures that must be addressed in spatial planning, design and development management.

Planning applications should clearly demonstrate how GI assets are fundamental infrastructure in the proposal rather than an ancillary design issue by providing for development that is fully integrated with parkland, sustainable urban drainage schemes, non-motorised transport routes and spaces for "urban farming". Spatial connectivity underpins the layout of the plans such that permeability is maximised for pedestrians, cyclists and a range of species, as well as motorists.

Full details of the Council's Strategy, Policies and Objectives regarding Green Infrastructure is available in Section 8 of the South Dublin County Council Development Plan 2016 - 2022.