



# **WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain**

**Draft Supplementary Planning Document**  
**February 2026**



**WORTHING BOROUGH**  
**COUNCIL**

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# 1 Introduction, purpose and status

## 1A Introduction and purpose

- 1.01 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides detailed guidance on the implementation of adopted development plan policies relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, trees and green streets, and sustainable drainage systems within the Worthing Local Plan area. It has been prepared to support the delivery of development that is environmentally responsible, resilient to climate change, and capable of delivering long-term benefits for people and nature in a compact and tightly constrained urban environment.
- 1.02 The purpose of this SPD is not simply to restate adopted policy, but to explain how and why those policies should be applied in practice. It sets out the reasoning that underpins the council's expectations, the local circumstances that justify them, and the way in which different policy requirements are intended to work together. In doing so, it provides clarity to applicants at an early stage, supports consistent decision-making, and enables the council to demonstrate a clear and transparent basis for its approach.
- 1.03 This SPD does not introduce new planning policy. All of the expectations it describes flow from policies that have already been tested through the statutory local plan process, or from statutory requirements introduced through national legislation. The role of this document is to guide interpretation and delivery, ensuring that policy objectives are translated into outcomes that are meaningful, proportionate and achievable in the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 1.04 For clarity, where this SPD uses the term "urban greening", it is describing a range of measures and outcomes already required by adopted Worthing Local Plan policies, particularly those relating to design quality, green infrastructure, biodiversity, trees and sustainable drainage. While the term "urban greening" is not used explicitly in the adopted local plan, the underlying principles and requirements are well established in policy. This SPD uses the term as a contemporary and descriptive shorthand, without introducing new policy requirements.

## 1B Why this SPD is necessary

- 1.05 National planning policy and legislation increasingly require development to deliver a wide range of environmental outcomes alongside more traditional land-use objectives. These include measurable biodiversity enhancement, climate change adaptation, improved surface water management, urban cooling, healthier environments and access to high-quality green space. In many cases, these requirements are expressed in outcome-based terms rather than fixed standards, placing greater emphasis on design quality and professional judgement.

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- 1.06 Adopted development plan policies necessarily operate at a strategic level. While they establish clear objectives and requirements, they cannot reasonably anticipate the full range of site conditions, constraints and development typologies that arise in practice. Nor can they provide detailed guidance on how competing policy objectives should be balanced on individual sites.
- 1.07 This SPD has been prepared in response to commitments in the adopted Worthing Local Plan to provide further guidance on green infrastructure, biodiversity and related matters. It draws on locally endorsed evidence, including the Adur and Worthing Vision for Nature, which helps to articulate strategic priorities for ecological networks, green infrastructure connectivity and nature recovery within the local context.
- 1.08 In the absence of supplementary guidance, there is a risk that environmental requirements are addressed inconsistently, interpreted narrowly, or treated as secondary considerations to be resolved late in the design process. This can lead to fragmented delivery, missed opportunities for multifunctional design, and outcomes that technically comply with policy but fail to deliver the intended benefits on the ground.
- 1.09 This SPD is therefore necessary to bridge the gap between strategic policy intent and practical delivery. It explains how environmental policies are expected to be addressed from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design, how different requirements interact, and how applicants can demonstrate that proposals respond appropriately to both local circumstances and national expectations.
- 1.10 In the absence of clear supplementary guidance, experience locally and nationally has shown that expectations relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity and environmental design can be interpreted inconsistently, addressed too late in the design process, or reduced to minimum compliance exercises. This can result in avoidable delay, late-stage redesign, disagreement over what policy requires, and outcomes that meet formal requirements but fail to deliver lasting environmental or placemaking benefits. This SPD is intended to address those issues by providing a clear, shared understanding of expectations at an early stage, supporting more efficient decision-making and reducing the risk of dispute at application and appeal.
- 1.11 Where national planning policy, legislation or statutory guidance is amended following the adoption of this Supplementary Planning Document, the council will apply this guidance insofar as it remains consistent with the most up-to-date national policy and statutory requirements. In such circumstances, the principles set out in this SPD will continue to inform proportionate, design-led decision-making unless and until they are superseded by national policy or legislation.

## 1C Worthing Local Plan area context and justification

- 1.12 The Worthing Local Plan area is characterised by a compact and tightly constrained urban form, a coastal setting, proximity to the South Downs National Park, areas of surface water and coastal flood risk, and limited opportunities for large-scale new green space. Much of the borough is already developed, and many development sites are small, previously developed or located within established urban areas where competing demands for land are acute.
- 1.13 These characteristics mean that the environmental impacts of development, and the potential for mitigation and enhancement, must be considered with particular care. In such a context, the effectiveness of green infrastructure, biodiversity measures and drainage systems depends not only on their presence, but on their quality, integration and long-term management.
- 1.14 The council considers that a purely quantitative or tick-box approach to environmental requirements is unlikely to deliver meaningful outcomes in the Worthing Local Plan area. Instead, there is a strong need for guidance that emphasises early integration, multifunctional design and long-term performance. This SPD responds to that need by setting out clear expectations that reflect local constraints and opportunities, while remaining proportionate and flexible.
- 1.15 By articulating these expectations explicitly, the SPD also seeks to provide certainty to applicants and landowners, reducing the risk of late-stage redesign, delay or dispute, and supporting more efficient and effective development outcomes.
- 1.16 Through this SPD, the council is seeking to secure outcomes that go beyond the presence of individual features and instead contribute to a coherent and functional environmental network across the Worthing Local Plan area. In practical terms, this means development that integrates green infrastructure as essential infrastructure rather than residual space; biodiversity measures that function over time and contribute to wider nature recovery objectives; streets and public spaces that support climate resilience, comfort and health; and drainage systems that are visible, multifunctional and maintainable. These outcomes provide the unifying rationale for the guidance that follows and inform how the council will assess the quality and effectiveness of proposals in planning terms.

## 1D Policy and legislative drivers

- 1.17 This SPD supports the implementation of adopted policies in the Worthing Local Plan, as they apply within the Worthing Local Plan area. These policies address matters including green infrastructure provision, biodiversity protection and enhancement, flood risk management, water quality, design quality, health and wellbeing, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

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- 1.18 At the national level, the SPD has been prepared having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and associated Planning Practice Guidance. These emphasise the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural environment, achieving measurable biodiversity net gain, addressing climate change, and delivering well-designed places that support health and wellbeing.
- 1.19 The SPD also reflects statutory duties and requirements arising from legislation, including the Environment Act 2021, which introduced mandatory biodiversity net gain, and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, which places a duty on public authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.
- 1.20 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides an important strategic evidence base for this SPD by identifying priorities and opportunities for nature recovery and ecological connectivity at a county and sub-regional scale. While the Local Nature Recovery Strategy does not form part of the statutory development plan, it is a material consideration and helps to set the strategic framework for green infrastructure, biodiversity and biodiversity net gain delivery addressed in later sections of this SPD.
- 1.21 By clearly explaining how adopted local policies and statutory requirements are intended to be applied together in the Worthing Local Plan area, this SPD provides a transparent policy lineage that can be relied upon in decision-making and at appeal. It demonstrates that the council's expectations are grounded in policy and law, rather than being arbitrary or ad hoc.

### 1E Scope, proportionality and the role of planning judgement

- 1.22 This SPD applies to development proposals within the Worthing Local Plan area where policies or statutory requirements relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, trees, green streets or sustainable drainage systems are engaged. Not all elements of the SPD will be relevant to all proposals.
- 1.23 The council recognises that sites vary widely in size, context, constraints and viability. The guidance in this SPD is therefore intended to be applied proportionately, with the level of detail and supporting evidence expected reflecting the scale and nature of development and the environmental outcomes being secured.
- 1.24 This Supplementary Planning Document is intended to support the exercise of planning judgement, not to replace it. The guidance set out in this SPD should be applied proportionately, having regard to the scale and nature of development, site context, constraints and opportunities, and the objectives of adopted development plan policy.

- 1.25 References elsewhere in this SPD to proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement should be read in the context of this overarching principle. The SPD does not prescribe uniform solutions or standards for all development, and decision-making will continue to rely on professional judgement informed by policy, evidence and local context.

## 1F Status, weight and supporting technical guidance

- 1.26 This SPD has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations and will be subject to public consultation. Once adopted, it forms a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 1.27 The weight to be given to this SPD in decision-making will depend on its consistency with adopted development plan policies, national planning policy and statutory requirements, and on the circumstances of individual cases. Where there is any conflict between the guidance in this SPD and adopted policy or statute, the latter will prevail.
- 1.28 Detailed technical guidance supporting the implementation of this SPD is provided through a suite of Technical Advice Notes. These documents set out methodologies, definitions and procedural detail that may need to be updated over time in response to changes in national policy, legislation or best practice. They support, but do not override, this SPD and are intended to ensure that its guidance can be applied consistently and effectively over time.

## 1G Relationship to evolving national policy and guidance

- 1.29 This Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared to align with current national planning policy, statutory requirements and recognised best practice. Where national planning policy, statutory guidance or technical frameworks evolve over time — including updates to the National Planning Policy Framework — this SPD should be read and applied in a manner that remains consistent with those changes, particularly where they strengthen expectations for multifunctional green infrastructure, biodiversity recovery and climate resilience.

*Box 1: What this SPD does (and does not do)*

This supplementary planning document:

- explains how adopted local plan policies relating to green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain are to be interpreted and applied in practice
- provides guidance to support consistent, transparent and proportionate decision-making
- helps applicants understand what information is required and how proposals will be assessed
- supports the exercise of planning judgement having regard to site context and circumstances

This supplementary planning document does not:

- introduce new planning policy or change the meaning of adopted local plan policies
- override statutory requirements, national planning policy or legislation
- set fixed thresholds or technical standards where these are defined nationally
- remove the need for planning judgement in the determination of planning applications.

*Table 1: Relationship between legislation, policy and guidance*

Document	Purpose and status
<b>Legislation and national planning policy</b>	Establish the statutory framework for biodiversity, biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure, including mandatory requirements that apply to qualifying development
<b>Local plans</b>	Set the adopted planning policy requirements for green infrastructure, biodiversity protection and enhancement within the local plan area.
<b>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (this document)</b>	Provides guidance on how adopted local plan policies are to be interpreted and applied in practice. The SPD is a material consideration in planning decision-making but does not introduce new policy.
<b>Technical Advice Notes (TANs)</b>	Provide technical and procedural guidance to support the implementation of statutory biodiversity net gain and adopted planning policies. TANs do not form part of the development plan.

Planning applications will be assessed against the statutory development plan and relevant national policy, taking this Supplementary Planning Document and the associated Technical Advice Notes into account as material considerations.

## 2 Policy and legislative context

### 2A Purpose and role of this section

- 2.01 This section explains the policy and legislative framework within which this SPD operates, and how the guidance set out in later sections is grounded in, and supports the delivery of, adopted development plan policies and statutory requirements within the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 2.02 The purpose of this section is not simply to list relevant policies, but to explain their intent, how they relate to one another, and why supplementary guidance is necessary to support their consistent and effective application in practice. This section therefore provides essential context for understanding the expectations set out elsewhere in this SPD and the reasoning that underpins them.

### 2B The statutory development plan context

- 2.03 The statutory development plan for the Worthing Local Plan area comprises the Worthing Local Plan. This document establishes the framework for managing development and sets out the council's spatial strategy, development requirements and environmental objectives.
- 2.04 A consistent theme across the development plan is the recognition that environmental considerations are fundamental to achieving sustainable development. Policies relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity, flood risk, water quality, design quality, health and wellbeing, and climate change adaptation are not treated as secondary matters, but as integral components of place-making and long-term resilience.
- 2.05 However, by their nature, development plan policies operate at a strategic level. While they establish clear objectives and requirements, they cannot provide detailed guidance on how those requirements should be addressed across the wide range of sites, scales and development types that arise in practice. This SPD therefore plays a critical role in supporting their implementation.

### 2C Green infrastructure policy framework

- 2.06 Green infrastructure is a core component of the spatial strategy for the Worthing Local Plan area and is addressed through multiple adopted development plan policies. These policies recognise green infrastructure as essential infrastructure that supports biodiversity, climate resilience, health and wellbeing, placemaking and environmental quality, rather than as an optional or residual element of development.

- 2.07 Policy DM19 of the Worthing Local Plan (Green Infrastructure) provides the strategic policy framework for the planning, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure across the Worthing Local Plan area. The policy recognises green infrastructure as a multifunctional network that supports biodiversity, sustainable drainage, climate resilience, health and wellbeing and the quality of the public realm, and requires development to contribute positively to that network.

### National policy context

- 2.08 National planning policy strongly supports this policy direction. Paragraph 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires strategic policies to make sufficient provision for conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Paragraphs 174 and 176 require planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural environment, including by recognising the wider benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services, and by developing and enhancing green infrastructure networks.
- 2.09 Planning Practice Guidance further emphasises that green infrastructure should be planned and delivered as an integral part of development, with early consideration given to how it can deliver multiple benefits, including biodiversity enhancement, climate adaptation and improved quality of place.

### National Green Infrastructure Framework

- 2.10 The approach to green infrastructure set out in this Supplementary Planning Document is informed by and aligned with the Green Infrastructure Framework published by Natural England. The Framework provides a nationally recognised approach to planning, designing and delivering multifunctional green infrastructure, emphasising connectivity, accessibility, resilience and multiple benefits for biodiversity, climate adaptation and human health.
- 2.11 The principles of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework are reflected throughout this Supplementary Planning Document, including the emphasis on strategic networks, multifunctionality, early integration with site design, and long-term management and maintenance.

### Local context and importance in the Worthing Local Plan area

- 2.12 The emphasis placed on green infrastructure within adopted policy reflects both national objectives and local circumstances. The Worthing Local Plan area is characterised by a constrained urban form, limited availability of undeveloped land, flood risk, and a sensitive coastal environment. In this context, opportunities to deliver new green infrastructure are often limited and must be carefully integrated into development proposals if they are to be effective.

- 2.13 Experience locally and nationally has demonstrated that, without clear guidance, green infrastructure requirements can be interpreted narrowly, resulting in fragmented or tokenistic provision that fails to function as part of a wider network. This risk is particularly acute on smaller sites and in urban locations, where competing demands for land are intense and green infrastructure is often relegated to residual space.
- 2.14 This SPD therefore provides guidance on how green infrastructure policies should be interpreted and applied in practice within the Worthing Local Plan area. It explains the council's expectations for early integration of green infrastructure into site appraisal, layout and design, the importance of connectivity and multifunctionality, and the need to consider long-term functionality and management rather than focusing solely on initial provision.
- 2.15 In practical terms, successful delivery of green infrastructure within the Worthing Local Plan area is expected to result in development that contributes to a connected and functional network rather than isolated or incidental features. This includes green infrastructure that supports ecological connectivity, integrates with sustainable drainage and public realm design, and delivers benefits for climate resilience, health and wellbeing and the character of places. These outcomes provide the basis on which the effectiveness of proposals will be assessed, rather than the mere presence of individual elements.
- 2.16 The council recognises that opportunities to deliver green infrastructure will vary depending on site size, context, constraints and the nature of development. The expectations set out in this SPD will therefore be applied proportionately, having regard to what is reasonable and achievable in each case, while still seeking to secure meaningful contributions to the wider green infrastructure network where opportunities exist.
- 2.17 The principles and policy context set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including the strategic green infrastructure framework, the approach to biodiversity net gain and its integration with green infrastructure, and guidance on sustainable drainage, trees and green streets. These sections should be read together when assessing development proposals, as they collectively explain how green infrastructure policy objectives are expected to be delivered in practice.

## 2D Biodiversity and biodiversity net gain policy framework

- 2.18 Biodiversity protection and enhancement is a central objective of the planning framework for the Worthing Local Plan area and is addressed through a combination of adopted development plan policies, national planning policy and statutory requirements. Together, these establish a clear expectation that development should not only avoid harm to biodiversity but should contribute positively to nature recovery.

- 2.19 Policy DM18 of the Worthing Local Plan (Biodiversity) requires all development to ensure the protection, conservation and, where possible, enhancement of biodiversity, including designated and non-designated sites, wildlife corridors, priority habitats and protected and priority species. The policy establishes a clear hierarchy of avoiding harm where possible, mitigating impacts where avoidance is not achievable, and compensating for residual impacts only as a last resort, with refusal required where unacceptable harm cannot be addressed.
- 2.20 Biodiversity objectives within the Worthing Local Plan area are also supported through wider design and placemaking policies. Policy DM5 of the Worthing Local Plan (Quality of the Built Environment) requires development to respect existing natural features of a site, including landform, trees and biodiversity, and to contribute positively to biodiversity through layout, landscaping and detailed design.
- 2.21 In the Worthing Local Plan area, biodiversity considerations are further shaped by the presence of a sensitive coastal environment and adjacent marine habitats. Policy DM18 requires development, where relevant, to demonstrate how impacts on these environments are addressed, including issues such as coastal squeeze. This SPD reflects that context by emphasising early consideration of site location, layout and design in order to avoid or minimise adverse effects on coastal biodiversity.

### Relationship to other sections

- 2.22 The principles and policy context set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including the strategic green infrastructure framework, guidance on biodiversity net gain and its integration with green infrastructure, and detailed advice on sustainable drainage, trees and green streets. These sections should be read together when preparing and assessing development proposals, as they collectively explain how green infrastructure policy objectives are expected to be delivered in practice.

## 2E Statutory biodiversity net gain

- 2.23 At the national level, the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain through the Environment Act 2021 represents a significant change in the planning framework. The statutory requirement, set out in Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, requires most development to deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of at least 10 per cent, calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric and secured for a minimum period of 30 years.
- 2.24 The statutory framework is supported by secondary legislation and national guidance, which establish how biodiversity value is to be measured, how gains and losses are calculated, and how long-term delivery and management are to be secured. These requirements apply nationally and are not subject to variation through local planning policy or supplementary guidance.

- 2.25 National planning policy reinforces this statutory position. Paragraphs 174 and 179 of the National Planning Policy Framework require planning policies and decisions to minimise impacts on biodiversity, promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks, and provide net gains for biodiversity.

### Relationship between local policy and statutory BNG

- 2.26 The introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain does not replace or override existing local plan policies relating to biodiversity. Rather, it provides a statutory mechanism through which one aspect of biodiversity enhancement is delivered. Local plan policies continue to play an essential role in addressing matters that sit alongside, and interact with, biodiversity net gain, including site selection, layout, protection of existing assets, habitat connectivity and long-term management.
- 2.27 Policy DM18 reflects the established planning hierarchy of avoiding harm to biodiversity where possible, mitigating impacts where avoidance is not achievable, and compensating for residual impacts only as a last resort. The statutory biodiversity net gain framework operates within this policy context and does not displace the need to apply this hierarchy through site selection, layout and design.
- 2.28 In applying biodiversity policies, the council will also have regard to the strategic green infrastructure framework established by Policy DM19 of the Worthing Local Plan. Biodiversity enhancement and statutory biodiversity net gain are therefore expected, where appropriate, to contribute to the wider green infrastructure network rather than being delivered in isolation. This reflects the complementary roles of Policies DM18 and DM19 in securing coherent, connected and resilient environmental outcomes.

### Local policy expectations for biodiversity net gain on previously developed land

- 2.29 Policy DM18 of the Worthing Local Plan includes a locally specific requirement for development on previously developed land to deliver biodiversity net gain of at least 20 per cent, reflecting the opportunities and priorities for biodiversity enhancement within the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 2.30 This local policy requirement operates alongside the statutory biodiversity net gain framework, which sets a national minimum requirement of 10 per cent. Where statutory biodiversity net gain applies, proposals on previously developed land will therefore be assessed against both the statutory requirement and the relevant local plan policy expectations.
- 2.31 The achievement of biodiversity net gain above the statutory minimum will be considered in the context of the scale, nature and constraints of the development, the availability of on-site and off-site opportunities, and other relevant planning considerations, applying planning judgement in accordance with adopted policy.

### National policy alignment, LNRS and wider statutory duties

- 2.32 In addition to the Environment Act 2021, biodiversity policy and guidance are underpinned by the duty set out in section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, which requires public authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.
- 2.33 The Environment Act 2021 also provides for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which identify priorities and opportunities for nature recovery at a strategic scale. While Local Nature Recovery Strategies do not form part of the statutory development plan, national policy and guidance indicate that they are capable of being material considerations in planning decision-making.
- 2.34 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy relevant to the Worthing Local Plan area provides a strategic spatial framework for nature recovery priorities, habitat enhancement and ecological connectivity at a county and sub-regional scale. While it does not form part of the statutory development plan, it identifies areas of existing ecological importance and opportunity areas for restoration and connection.
- 2.35 This SPD has been prepared having regard to that framework and expects development proposals, where relevant and proportionate, to demonstrate awareness of how sites relate to identified nature recovery priorities and opportunities.
- 2.36 The Adur & Worthing Councils Vision for Nature also informs the strategic context for this SPD. The Vision articulates locally endorsed priorities for strengthening ecological networks, enhancing green infrastructure connectivity and improving access to nature across the area. While not a development plan document, it provides locally specific evidence and strategic direction that supports the application of adopted policies relating to green infrastructure and biodiversity.

### Need for supplementary guidance, proportionality and judgement

- 2.37 The combination of long-standing biodiversity policies and the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain has increased the complexity of biodiversity considerations in development management. In practice, proposals often need to address multiple, overlapping requirements, including avoidance of harm, statutory net gain delivery, integration with green infrastructure and public realm design, and long-term management.
- 2.38 Without clear supplementary guidance, there is a risk that biodiversity net gain is treated as a standalone technical exercise, disconnected from wider site design and green infrastructure considerations. This can lead to outcomes that meet statutory requirements in numerical terms but fail to deliver coherent or lasting ecological benefits.

- 2.39 This SPD therefore provides guidance on how biodiversity considerations should be integrated into development proposals from the earliest stages, how statutory biodiversity net gain should align with local policy objectives, and how proposals will be assessed in terms of their overall contribution to biodiversity and nature recovery within the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 2.40 The overarching principles relating to proportionality, flexibility and the exercise of planning judgement are set out in Section 1 of this SPD and apply throughout this document. In this section, those principles are applied specifically to biodiversity and green infrastructure considerations.
- 2.41 The principles and policy context set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including detailed guidance on biodiversity net gain delivery, integration with green infrastructure, and long-term management and monitoring. These sections should be read together when preparing and assessing development proposals.

### Relationship to other sections

- 2.42 The policy context and principles set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including detailed guidance on biodiversity net gain delivery, the role of green infrastructure and urban greening in supporting biodiversity outcomes, and requirements for long-term management and monitoring. These sections should be read together to understand how biodiversity policy objectives are expected to be applied in practice.

## 2F Urban greening and design quality policy framework

- 2.43 Urban greening and design quality are central to the delivery of sustainable, resilient and high-quality places within the Worthing Local Plan area. Adopted development plan policies recognise that the design of buildings, streets and spaces has a direct influence on environmental performance, biodiversity outcomes, climate resilience, health and wellbeing, and the overall quality and functionality of the public realm.
- 2.44 Policy DM5 of the Worthing Local Plan (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm) provides the primary local policy framework for assessing design quality. The policy requires development to respect and enhance the character of its surroundings, incorporate high-quality landscaping, respond positively to existing natural features including trees and biodiversity, and make a positive contribution to the public realm. These requirements establish a clear expectation that environmental considerations are integral to design, layout and appearance, rather than matters to be addressed separately or retrospectively.

- 2.45 Policy DM5 explicitly requires development to respect existing natural features of a site and to contribute positively to biodiversity. This creates a strong policy link between design quality and environmental outcomes and provides a clear basis for expecting urban greening measures to be embedded within the design of development rather than confined to peripheral or residual spaces.
- 2.46 The term “urban greening” is used in this SPD as a descriptive phrase to capture a range of measures supported by adopted development plan policies, including high-quality landscaping, integration of trees and planting, use of green roofs and walls, and the design of attractive and functional public realm. While the Worthing Local Plan does not use the specific term “urban greening”, the underlying concepts are clearly embedded within Policy DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm) and Policy DM19 (Green Infrastructure). In this SPD, “urban greening” is therefore used as shorthand for these policy-supported design and environmental objectives, rather than as a new or separate policy requirement.

### National policy context

- 2.47 National planning policy strongly supports this integrated approach. The National Planning Policy Framework identifies the creation of well-designed places as a core objective of the planning system and emphasises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It recognises the role of urban greening in mitigating and adapting to climate change, improving health and wellbeing, and enhancing biodiversity.
- 2.48 Relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework include paragraph 20, which requires strategic policies to make sufficient provision for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and paragraph 174, which supports planning positively for the natural environment and recognises the wider benefits of green infrastructure and urban greening. These national policy objectives reinforce the expectation that urban greening should be considered as an integral part of site design.
- 2.49 Planning Practice Guidance further supports this approach by encouraging early consideration of green and blue infrastructure, urban greening and nature-based solutions as part of placemaking and design processes. This SPD reflects that guidance by explaining how urban greening is expected to be incorporated into development proposals in a locally appropriate and proportionate manner.

### Role of urban greening in the Worthing Local Plan area

- 2.50 The Worthing Local Plan area is characterised by a constrained urban form, limited opportunities for large new areas of open space, and increasing pressures associated with climate change, including urban heat, surface water flooding and reduced environmental comfort. In this context, the quality and effectiveness of urban greening measures within development sites are particularly important.

- 2.51 Urban greening measures can play a significant role in addressing these challenges by contributing to urban cooling, improving air quality, supporting biodiversity, enhancing visual amenity and making streets and spaces more comfortable and attractive for people. When integrated effectively, such measures can also support sustainable drainage, active travel and wider green infrastructure objectives.
- 2.52 In addition, parts of the Worthing Local Plan area are vulnerable to increased urban heat risk as a result of dense development, limited tree cover, extensive areas of hard surfacing and the effects of climate change. Urban greening measures, including trees, planting, green roofs and other nature-based solutions, can play an important role in reducing local temperatures, providing shade, improving thermal comfort and supporting public health. The integration of urban greening into the design of buildings, streets and spaces is therefore an important component of climate change adaptation and resilience in the local context.
- 2.53 Without clear guidance, however, urban greening requirements can be interpreted narrowly or addressed late in the design process, resulting in tokenistic provision or measures that are poorly integrated and difficult to maintain. This SPD therefore provides guidance on how urban greening should be approached in practice, building on the expectations set out in adopted policy.

#### Relationship to other policy themes

- 2.54 Urban greening does not operate in isolation. It is closely linked to policies and guidance relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity, trees, sustainable drainage and streetscape design. Effective urban greening often involves combining these elements to deliver multiple benefits through a single, coherent design approach.
- 2.55 This SPD therefore promotes an integrated approach in which urban greening is considered alongside green infrastructure networks, biodiversity enhancement, tree planting and sustainable drainage from the earliest stages of site appraisal and layout design. This reflects the intention of adopted policy and supports more efficient use of land in constrained environments.

#### Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 2.56 The council recognises that the scope and form of urban greening will vary depending on site size, context, constraints and the nature of development. Not all measures will be appropriate or feasible in all locations.
- 2.57 The overarching approach to proportionality and planning judgement is set out in Section 1. In applying this section, the council will assess proposals having regard to site-specific circumstances and opportunities, while ensuring that adopted policy objectives are meaningfully addressed.
- 2.58 Where applicants propose alternative approaches to meeting urban greening objectives, they will be expected to demonstrate clearly how those approaches achieve equivalent or improved outcomes consistent with adopted policy.

### Relationship to other sections

- 2.59 The policy context and principles set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including detailed guidance on trees and green streets, sustainable drainage as green infrastructure, and long-term management and maintenance. These sections should be read together when preparing and assessing development proposals.

## 2G Trees and green streets policy framework

- 2.60 Trees and green streets are a critical component of high-quality design, green infrastructure and climate resilience within the Worthing Local Plan area. Adopted development plan policies recognise the important role that trees, planting and green streetscape design play in shaping the character of places, supporting biodiversity, improving environmental quality and contributing to health and wellbeing.
- 2.61 Policy DM5 of the Worthing Local Plan (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm) provides a clear policy basis for the protection of existing trees and landscape features and for the integration of new planting within development. The policy requires development to respect existing natural features of a site, including trees and biodiversity, and to contribute positively to the quality and functionality of streets and public spaces through design and landscaping.
- 2.62 Policy DM19 of the Worthing Local Plan (Green Infrastructure) does not use the specific terminology of “green streets”, but it establishes a clear expectation that development contributes to a multifunctional green infrastructure network. In practice, street trees, planted verges and other forms of linear greening can assist in delivering those objectives by enhancing connectivity, environmental quality and climate resilience. References to “green streets” in this SPD describe how these policy objectives may be delivered through street and public realm design, rather than introducing a new policy concept.

### National policy context

- 2.63 National planning policy supports the role of trees and green streets in delivering well-designed, sustainable places. The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of good design, the creation of healthy and safe places, and the contribution that green infrastructure and urban greening make to climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity enhancement and quality of life.
- 2.64 Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework supports planning positively for the natural environment and recognises the wider benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services. Street trees and green streets contribute directly to these objectives by providing shading, cooling, air quality benefits, habitat value and visual amenity within built-up areas.

- 2.65 Planning Practice Guidance further encourages the use of trees and planting as part of streetscape and public realm design, particularly in urban areas where opportunities for larger green spaces are limited. This SPD reflects that guidance by explaining how trees and green streets are expected to be considered as an integral part of development proposals.

### Local context and importance in the Worthing Local Plan area

- 2.66 The Worthing Local Plan area is characterised by a constrained urban environment, limited space for new green infrastructure, and increasing pressures associated with climate change. In this context, trees and green streets are particularly valuable, as they can deliver multiple environmental and social benefits within the public realm and along transport corridors.
- 2.67 Street trees and associated planting can play a significant role in reducing urban heat risk, providing shade, improving thermal comfort and supporting public health. They can also assist in managing surface water through interception and infiltration, support biodiversity by providing habitat and foraging opportunities, and enhance the visual quality and character of streets.
- 2.68 Experience locally and nationally demonstrates that, without clear guidance, trees and planting within streets can be treated as secondary or optional elements, leading to missed opportunities or designs that are difficult to sustain over time. Poor integration with underground services, highways requirements or long-term management arrangements can undermine intended outcomes.

### Integration with design, movement and other policy themes

- 2.69 This SPD promotes an integrated approach in which trees and green streets are considered alongside site layout, movement networks, sustainable drainage and public realm design from the earliest stages of development. This reflects the intention of adopted policies to secure high-quality, functional streets and spaces rather than treating planting as an afterthought.
- 2.70 Trees and green streets also have an important relationship with other policy themes addressed in this SPD, including biodiversity net gain, urban greening, sustainable drainage and green infrastructure networks. Where appropriately designed and managed, street trees and planted streets can contribute to multiple objectives simultaneously.
- 2.71 The council recognises that constraints such as limited space, utilities, highways safety requirements and ground conditions can affect the feasibility and form of tree planting within streets. These factors will be taken into account when assessing proposals, but they do not remove the expectation that opportunities for meaningful greening are explored and incorporated where reasonably achievable.

- 2.72 The effectiveness of trees and green streets in delivering design, environmental and climate resilience benefits depends not only on their initial design and installation, but also on their long-term protection, management and maintenance. The council will therefore expect proposals to demonstrate that trees and planted streets are designed in a way that is compatible with realistic management arrangements and that avoids foreseeable conflicts with servicing, highways operation and future maintenance.

### Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 2.73 The scale and form of tree planting and green street measures will vary depending on site context, development type and constraints. Not all streets or developments will be capable of accommodating large trees or extensive planting.
- 2.74 The principles of proportionality and planning judgement described in Section 1 apply equally to trees and green streets. Proposals will be assessed in context, having regard to site constraints and opportunities, while ensuring that adopted policy objectives are not undermined.
- 2.75 Where applicants propose innovative or alternative solutions to deliver the functions of trees and green streets, they will be expected to demonstrate how those solutions contribute to design quality, environmental performance and long-term sustainability.

### Relationship to other sections

- 2.76 The principles and policy context set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including detailed guidance on sustainable drainage as green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain delivery and long-term management and maintenance. These sections should be read together when preparing and assessing development proposals, as they collectively explain how trees and green streets contribute to wider green infrastructure and placemaking objectives.

## 2H Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as green infrastructure – policy framework

- 2.77 Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are a critical component of the approach to flood risk management, climate resilience and environmental quality within the Worthing Local Plan area. Adopted development plan policies recognise that surface water management is not solely an engineering matter, but one that is closely linked to site design, green infrastructure, biodiversity, public realm quality and long-term sustainability.

### Development plan policy framework

- 2.78 Policy DM20 of the Worthing Local Plan (Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage) provides the primary local policy framework for managing flood risk and surface water runoff. The policy requires development to manage surface water in a way that does not increase flood risk elsewhere and to incorporate sustainable drainage measures where appropriate. This establishes a clear expectation that drainage is considered as an integral part of development design rather than as a residual technical solution.
- 2.79 Policy DM19 of the Worthing Local Plan (Green Infrastructure) does not explicitly define sustainable drainage systems as a component of green infrastructure. However, the supporting text to the policy (including paragraph 4.88 of the Local Plan) recognises the importance of water management and multifunctional environmental infrastructure. Where SuDS are designed to deliver wider environmental benefits alongside hydraulic performance — including biodiversity enhancement, urban cooling, landscape quality and placemaking — they can contribute to green infrastructure objectives. This SPD therefore recognises that SuDS may function as green infrastructure when designed and located to deliver these multifunctional outcomes, consistent with adopted policy.

### National policy and guidance

- 2.80 National planning policy supports the use of sustainable drainage systems as part of a comprehensive approach to flood risk management and climate change adaptation. The National Planning Policy Framework requires development to be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding where possible, and to ensure that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere. It also supports the use of nature-based solutions, including measures that reduce runoff, improve water quality and deliver wider environmental benefits.
- 2.81 Planning Practice Guidance on flood risk and drainage promotes the use of SuDS to manage surface water close to its source and to deliver multiple benefits, including improvements to water quality, biodiversity and amenity. This SPD reflects that guidance by explaining how SuDS are expected to be integrated with green infrastructure, biodiversity objectives and design quality outcomes in the local context.

### Local context and importance in the Worthing Local Plan area

- 2.82 The Worthing Local Plan area includes extensive areas at risk from tidal, fluvial and surface water flooding, as well as a sensitive coastal environment. Climate change is expected to increase rainfall intensity and exacerbate flood risk over time. In this context, the effective design and long-term performance of sustainable drainage systems are of particular importance.

- 2.83 In dense and constrained urban environments, opportunities for large-scale flood storage are often limited. Well-designed SuDS integrated into streets, public spaces and development layouts can therefore play a crucial role in managing surface water while also contributing to urban cooling, biodiversity enhancement and the quality of the public realm.
- 2.84 Experience locally and nationally has shown that SuDS designed solely to meet minimum drainage standards can fail to deliver wider benefits and may be more difficult to maintain over time. Conversely, SuDS that are integrated into landscape and public realm design are more likely to be valued, understood and properly managed over the lifetime of development.

### Integration with other policy themes

- 2.85 This SPD promotes an integrated approach in which SuDS are considered alongside green infrastructure networks, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, trees and green streets from the earliest stages of site appraisal and layout design. This reflects the intention of adopted policies to secure multifunctional outcomes and to make efficient use of land in constrained environments.
- 2.86 Where appropriately designed, SuDS features such as swales, rain gardens, basins and permeable surfaces can contribute to biodiversity objectives, support ecological connectivity and enhance the character and usability of streets and spaces. These wider benefits will be taken into account when assessing proposals, alongside hydraulic performance and flood risk considerations.

### Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 2.87 The council recognises that the form and extent of sustainable drainage measures will vary depending on site context, flood risk, ground conditions, development type and constraints. Not all SuDS features will be appropriate in all locations.
- 2.88 This SPD does not replace or duplicate the roles of the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Environment Agency or other consenting regimes. Technical approval processes, flood risk assessments and drainage strategies remain essential and will continue to be required where relevant.
- 2.89 The principles relating to proportionality and planning judgement set out in Section 1 apply equally to sustainable drainage proposals. Assessment will focus on whether drainage is integrated with site design in a manner consistent with adopted policy objectives and site context.

### Relationship to other sections

- 2.90 The policy context and principles set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including detailed guidance on sustainable drainage as green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain delivery and long-term management, monitoring and enforcement. These sections should be read together when preparing and assessing development proposals.



## 3 Strategic green infrastructure network

### 3A Purpose of this section

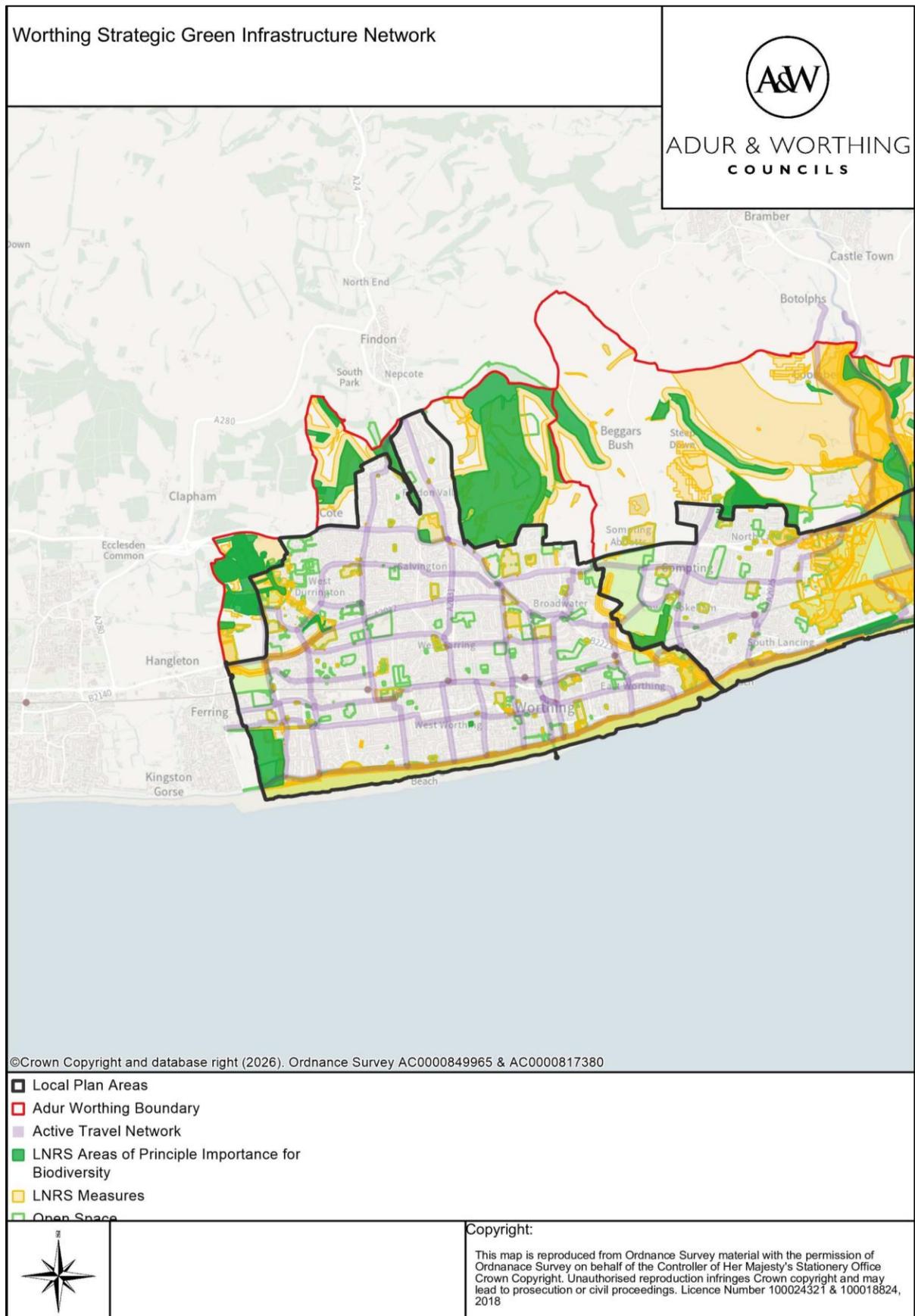
- 3.01 This section explains how the council identifies, understands and applies the concept of strategic green infrastructure within the Worthing Local Plan area, and how strategic significance is assessed when considering development proposals. It provides clarity on the role of green infrastructure networks, corridors and assets that perform functions beyond individual sites, and how these are reflected in planning decision-making.
- 3.02 The purpose of this section is to support consistent and transparent application of adopted policy by explaining how strategic green infrastructure is defined in practice, how it relates to biodiversity, climate resilience, access and placemaking objectives, and how it informs the assessment of impacts, mitigation and enhancement.
- 3.03 This section does not introduce new policy designations or requirements. It explains how existing adopted policies and statutory frameworks are expected to be interpreted and applied, particularly in a constrained and sensitive local context where the cumulative effects of development can be significant.

### 3B Strategic Green Infrastructure Network

- 3.04 The council has identified a Strategic Green Infrastructure Network to provide a spatial framework for understanding where green and blue infrastructure performs, or has the potential to perform, functions of strategic importance within the Worthing Local Plan area. A simplified version of the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map is included within this SPD for illustrative purposes. The full map is published separately as a standalone PDF and is also available through the council's interactive online mapping, which should be used where a more detailed understanding of spatial relationships and site context is required.
- 3.05 Map 1: Worthing Strategic Green Infrastructure Network **Error! Reference source not found.** illustrates this network and shows how green infrastructure assets, corridors and opportunity areas function as a connected system across the area. The map draws together a range of evidence sources, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, active travel networks and locally identified green infrastructure corridors, and provides a spatial context for applying adopted development plan policies.

- 3.06 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network draws upon evidence including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Adur & Worthing Vision for Nature. It is not identical to those frameworks, nor does it replace them. Rather, it brings together relevant spatial evidence into a planning-focused framework to support the application of adopted development plan policies within the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 3.07 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map is intended to support understanding of strategic function and connectivity and to inform early site appraisal, design development and the assessment of impacts, mitigation and enhancement. It does not introduce new policy designations, allocate land, or pre-determine the acceptability of development proposals.
- 3.08 The map illustrates green infrastructure as a connected system of corridors, nodes and links, rather than as a series of individual or isolated assets, reflecting the emphasis on networks that function across multiple spatial scales.
- 3.09 The map includes sites and areas of importance for biodiversity identified through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including nationally and locally designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites, as well as areas identified as priorities or opportunities for habitat creation, enhancement and connectivity. It also shows green infrastructure elements that perform wider strategic functions, including active travel routes and associated buffers, river and coastal corridors, and other multifunctional open spaces such as playing fields, school grounds and allotments.

Map 1: Worthing Strategic Green Infrastructure Network



3.10

*Box 2: How the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network should be used*

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network provides a spatial framework to inform the planning and design of development proposals. It should be used at an early stage to understand how a site relates to wider green infrastructure and ecological networks, and to identify opportunities to avoid harm, strengthen connectivity and deliver enhancement.

Applicants should use the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network to:

- inform site appraisal, constraints analysis and concept design
- understand whether existing green infrastructure assets or corridors may perform a strategic function beyond the site
- identify opportunities to retain, reinforce or enhance green infrastructure through layout and design.

Planning officers and decision-makers will use the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network to:

- inform the assessment of strategic significance and the application of adopted policies
- consider whether development proposals respond appropriately to the strategic role and function of green infrastructure
- exercise planning judgement on matters of avoidance, mitigation, enhancement and network integrity.

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network does not allocate land or determine planning outcomes. Its purpose is to support proportionate, evidence-based decision-making in accordance with adopted policy.

### 3C Policy framework for strategic green infrastructure

- 3.11 Policy DM19 of the Worthing Local Plan (Green Infrastructure) provides the primary local policy basis for strategic green infrastructure. The policy recognises green infrastructure as a multifunctional network of green and blue spaces, corridors and features that provide environmental, social and economic benefits. It requires development to protect, enhance and, where appropriate, contribute to this network.
- 3.12 Policy DM19 places particular emphasis on the connectivity, functionality and resilience of green infrastructure. This reflects an understanding that the value of green infrastructure lies not only in individual sites or features, but in how they operate as part of a wider network across administrative boundaries and landscapes.
- 3.13 Policy DM18 of the Worthing Local Plan (Biodiversity) complements this approach by requiring the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, including wildlife corridors and habitats that form part of wider ecological networks. Together, Policies 30 and 31 establish a clear policy expectation that development should respond positively to green infrastructure and ecological connectivity at both site and strategic scales.

### 3D National policy and statutory context

- 3.14 National planning policy supports a strategic approach to green infrastructure. The National Planning Policy Framework requires planning to take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure, and to plan positively for the creation, protection and management of such networks.
- 3.15 National policy also recognises that green infrastructure performs multiple functions, including climate change adaptation, flood risk management, biodiversity enhancement, health and wellbeing and access to nature. These objectives are particularly relevant in areas where development pressures are high and opportunities for large-scale new green space are limited.
- 3.16 The statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides an additional layer of strategic evidence by identifying priorities for nature recovery and ecological connectivity at a county and sub-regional scale. While the Local Nature Recovery Strategy does not form part of the statutory development plan, it is a material consideration and provides an important evidence base for understanding strategic ecological priorities within and beyond the Worthing Local Plan area.

### 3E Why a strategic approach is necessary in the Worthing Local Plan area

- 3.17 The Worthing Local Plan area is characterised by tightly constrained urban settlements, a sensitive coastal environment, significant flood risk, and limited opportunities for the creation of large new areas of open space. In this context, the strategic value of existing green and blue infrastructure is particularly high.
- 3.18 Green infrastructure assets and corridors within the area perform functions that extend beyond individual sites. These include ecological connectivity along river corridors and the coast, surface water management, urban cooling, access routes for walking and cycling, and the provision of informal open space within densely developed neighbourhoods. Green infrastructure is treated as essential infrastructure that should be planned, designed and delivered as a connected system, rather than as residual or incidental green space.
- 3.19 Incremental development that fails to recognise the strategic role of such assets can result in cumulative harm, even where individual impacts appear limited in isolation. A strategic approach is therefore essential to ensure that development does not undermine the integrity, functionality or resilience of the green infrastructure network as a whole.
- 3.20 This is particularly important in the context of climate change, where pressures on green infrastructure are expected to increase over time. Strategic green infrastructure plays a key role in adapting to increased flood risk, higher temperatures and changing patterns of use, and must therefore be protected and enhanced in a planned and coordinated way.

### 3F What is meant by strategic green infrastructure

- 3.21 For the purposes of this SPD, strategic green infrastructure refers to green and blue spaces, corridors and features that perform functions of significance beyond an individual development site. This may include assets that are physically extensive, that form part of a wider network, or that deliver critical environmental or social functions at a neighbourhood, settlement or landscape scale.
- 3.22 Strategic green infrastructure is not limited to designated sites. It may include river corridors, coastal margins, connected open spaces, key habitat links, strategic SuDS features, major street tree corridors, active travel routes with a green infrastructure function, and other elements that contribute to network connectivity and multifunctionality.

- 3.23 Whether a particular asset or corridor is considered strategic will depend on its role and function rather than its ownership, designation or size alone. Planning judgement will be exercised, informed by policy, evidence and local context. This functional understanding of green infrastructure is consistent with national best practice and informs the application of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework, as set out below.

### 3G Alignment with the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

- 3.24 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network has been developed in accordance with the principles set out in the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework, which provides a nationally recognised approach to planning and delivering green infrastructure as a connected, multifunctional system.
- 3.25 In particular, the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network reflects the Framework's emphasis on:
- connectivity, by identifying strategic corridors, nodes and links that support ecological networks and movement
  - multifunctionality, by recognising the role of green infrastructure in delivering biodiversity, climate resilience, flood risk management, health and wellbeing and placemaking benefits
  - accessibility and inclusion, by promoting green infrastructure that is accessible to communities and integrated with development
  - long-term resilience, through the expectation that green infrastructure is designed, delivered and managed to function over the lifetime of development.
- 3.26 The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework emphasises that green infrastructure operates as a connected system across multiple spatial scales, from strategic networks through to individual sites. Understanding how green infrastructure functions at different scales is important in applying adopted policies consistently and proportionately.
- 3.27 Table 2: Green infrastructure at different spatial scales explains the role of green infrastructure at strategic, neighbourhood and site scales, and how this Supplementary Planning Document applies those principles in practice. It is intended to help applicants and decision-makers understand how strategic objectives translate into expectations for site design and layout.

- 3.28 Green infrastructure is valued not only for its biodiversity function, but for the multiple outcomes it delivers for climate resilience, health and wellbeing, placemaking and long-term environmental quality. These outcomes are a core element of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework and underpin the council's approach to strategic green infrastructure.
- 3.29 Table 3: Green infrastructure outcomes summarises the key outcomes that green infrastructure is expected to contribute to and explains how this Supplementary Planning Document supports their delivery through the application of adopted policies. The outcomes should be considered together, recognising the importance of multifunctional green infrastructure.
- 3.30 Taken together, these principles reinforce the importance of planning and delivering green infrastructure as an integrated system that informs site design, layout and long-term management, rather than as a series of isolated features or mitigation measures.

*Table 2: Green infrastructure at different spatial scales*

<b>Spatial scale</b>	<b>Role of green infrastructure</b>	<b>How this SPD applies</b>
<b>Strategic</b>	Connects habitats, landscapes and communities across and beyond the local plan area	Strategic GI Network identifies corridors, nodes and links
<b>Neighbourhood / place</b>	Shapes character, accessibility and multifunctional spaces	SPD guides integration of GI within layouts and public realm
<b>Site</b>	Delivers on-site biodiversity, climate resilience and amenity	Applicants expected to embed GI early in site design

*Table 3: Green infrastructure outcomes*

<b>Outcome area</b>	<b>Contribution of green infrastructure</b>	<b>How this SPD supports delivery</b>
Biodiversity and nature recovery	Habitat creation, enhancement and connectivity	Strategic GI Network and BNG guidance
Climate resilience	Cooling, shading, water management	Integrated GI, trees and SuDS
Health and wellbeing	Access to green space and recreation	Accessible GI embedded in development
Placemaking	Sense of place and environmental quality	GI treated as essential infrastructure
Long-term resilience	Durable, adaptable green spaces	Long-term management expectations

*Table 4: When strategic green infrastructure significance is likely to be a material consideration*

Situation	Why strategic significance may be relevant
Development affects land within or adjacent to the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network	The location may perform a wider connectivity, access or multifunctional role beyond the site itself
Existing green infrastructure corridors, links or nodes are present on or near the site	These may contribute to ecological networks, movement routes or climate resilience at a wider scale
Habitats or features connect designated sites, priority habitats or LNRS opportunity areas	Loss or fragmentation could undermine network integrity even where individual impacts appear limited
Green infrastructure supports multiple functions (e.g. biodiversity, active travel, flood management, access to open space)	Multifunctional assets are more likely to have strategic value and warrant careful consideration
Development is incremental or forms part of wider growth or regeneration	Cumulative effects may arise where strategic functions are not recognised or protected
Biodiversity net gain relies heavily on off-site delivery or metric optimisation	This may indicate that opportunities to retain or enhance strategically important on-site assets have not been fully explored

### 3H Strategic significance and planning assessment

- 3.31 When assessing development proposals, the council will consider whether green infrastructure assets or features affected by a proposal have strategic significance. This assessment will have regard to factors such as connectivity, function, scale, irreplaceability, and contribution to wider policy objectives. Table 4: When strategic green infrastructure significance is likely to be a material consideration highlights circumstances in which green infrastructure may be of strategic significance and therefore warrant particular consideration. It is intended to guide planning judgement rather than to operate as a checklist.
- 3.32 Where development would affect green infrastructure of strategic significance, the council will expect a clear understanding of that role to be demonstrated as part of the proposal. This may include explaining how impacts have been avoided, minimised or mitigated, and how opportunities for enhancement have been taken where appropriate.
- 3.33 The identification of strategic significance does not introduce an additional policy test. It informs the application of existing adopted policies by clarifying the weight to be given to particular assets or networks in decision-making.

### 3I Local indicators of strategic significance in the Worthing Local Plan area

- 3.34 In the Worthing Local Plan area, the assessment of whether green infrastructure assets or corridors have strategic significance is informed by a range of locally relevant evidence and spatial frameworks. These sources help to identify where green infrastructure performs, or has the potential to perform, functions of importance beyond an individual site.
- 3.35 In particular, the council will have regard to areas and corridors identified through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including mapped areas of existing ecological importance and areas identified as priorities or opportunities for habitat creation, enhancement and connectivity. Assets and features that contribute to, or have the potential to contribute to, these areas may be considered to have strategic significance even where they are not designated or of high biodiversity value in isolation.
- 3.36 Strategic significance may also arise where green infrastructure forms part of, or supports, the active travel network, including walking and cycling routes and their associated green corridors and buffers. In the Worthing Local Plan area, such routes often perform multiple strategic functions, including ecological connectivity, sustainable movement, urban cooling and access to nature within constrained urban environments.

- 3.37 The council will also have regard to other locally identified green infrastructure corridors and priorities, including those identified through programmes such as Vision for Nature and other adopted or endorsed evidence relating to ecological networks, river and coastal corridors and urban green links.
- 3.38 These evidence sources do not operate as policy designations. They inform planning judgement by helping to identify where green infrastructure assets, corridors or opportunities have strategic significance, and therefore where greater weight may be given to their protection, integration or enhancement when applying adopted development plan policies.

### 3J Relationship to biodiversity net gain and mitigation

- 3.39 The concept of strategic green infrastructure is closely linked to biodiversity policy and the statutory biodiversity net gain framework. However, strategic significance is not determined solely by the biodiversity metric score of a site or feature.
- 3.40 Some green infrastructure assets may have high strategic importance due to their connectivity, location or multifunctional role, even where their biodiversity value as measured by the statutory metric is modest. Conversely, high-value habitats may form part of a broader strategic network that requires protection beyond simple metric replacement.
- 3.41 This SPD therefore treats biodiversity net gain as one component of a wider strategic assessment, consistent with the approach set out in Section 2. The statutory metric does not override the need to consider strategic function, avoidance of harm and long-term network integrity.

### 3K Evidence, flexibility and planning judgement

- 3.42 The assessment of strategic green infrastructure will be informed by a range of evidence sources, including adopted policy, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, green infrastructure studies, open space assessments, flood risk evidence, and active travel strategies. No single document will determine strategic significance in isolation.
- 3.43 The overarching principles relating to proportionality and the exercise of planning judgement are set out in Section 1 and apply equally to the assessment of strategic green infrastructure.
- 3.44 Early engagement with the council is encouraged where proposals may affect green infrastructure of potential strategic significance, to ensure that issues are identified and addressed at an appropriate stage.

### 3L Relationship to other sections

- 3.45 The principles set out in this section are developed further in later sections of this SPD, including guidance on biodiversity net gain delivery, urban greening, trees and green streets, sustainable drainage and long-term management and monitoring. These sections should be read together to understand how strategic green infrastructure objectives are expected to be delivered in practice.

### 3M How this section should be used

- 3.46 Applicants should use this section to understand the council's approach to strategic green infrastructure and to inform early site appraisal, layout and design. In particular, applicants should consider how development proposals relate to the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network, whether green infrastructure assets or features may have strategic significance, and how opportunities to avoid harm and deliver enhancement have been addressed through design.
- 3.47 Planning officers and decision-makers will use this section to assess the strategic role and function of green infrastructure affected by development proposals, to inform the application of adopted development plan policies, and to exercise planning judgement on matters of strategic significance, mitigation and enhancement.
- 3.48 This section forms part of the Supplementary Planning Document and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications insofar as it is consistent with adopted development plan policy and national planning policy

*Box 3: Key messages for applicants and decision-makers*

Strategic green infrastructure should be understood and applied as a connected system that performs important functions beyond individual development sites. The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network provides a spatial framework to help identify where green infrastructure assets, corridors and opportunities play a strategic role in supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, access and placemaking.

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map is evidence-led and indicative. It does not introduce new designations or pre-determine development outcomes, but it is a material consideration in understanding strategic function, informing early design and applying adopted development plan policies.

Whether green infrastructure is of strategic significance in any particular case depends on its function, connectivity and role within the wider network, rather than its designation or size alone. Planning judgement will be exercised, informed by local evidence, national guidance and site-specific context.

Early engagement and integration of green infrastructure into site appraisal, layout and design is essential to avoid cumulative harm and to maximise opportunities for enhancement in a constrained environment.

## 4 Biodiversity Net Gain

### 4A Purpose and scope of this section

- 4.01 This section explains how statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements will be applied in practice within the Worthing Local Plan area, alongside adopted development plan policies relating to biodiversity and green infrastructure. It provides clarity on how BNG interacts with policy requirements for avoidance, mitigation and enhancement, and how proposals will be assessed in a locally appropriate and legally compliant manner.
- 4.02 The purpose of this section is to support consistent decision-making by explaining the relationship between statutory BNG, the biodiversity policies of the development plan and the strategic green infrastructure framework set out in Section 3. It does not introduce new policy requirements or alter the statutory framework for BNG.
- 4.03 This section applies to development proposals subject to the statutory biodiversity net gain regime, as well as to other proposals where biodiversity impacts and enhancements are a material consideration under adopted policy.
- 4.04 This section explains how statutory biodiversity net gain requirements are expected to be applied and assessed within the planning process, including their relationship to adopted policy and the strategic framework set out in this SPD. It does not provide technical guidance on the operation of the statutory biodiversity metric, habitat condition assessment, legal mechanisms for securing delivery, or the detailed design and management of habitats.
- 4.05 Further technical guidance on these matters is provided in the council's Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note, which should be read alongside this SPD where relevant. The Technical Advice Note does not introduce new policy and does not alter the statutory or development plan requirements applicable to biodiversity net gain.

*Table 5: How green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain inform planning decisions*

The relationship between green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain should be considered throughout the planning process, from site selection and early design through to long-term delivery and management.

**1. Strategic context and site appraisal**

Development proposals should begin with an understanding of the site’s strategic context, including its relationship to the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant evidence. Existing green infrastructure assets, habitats, trees, corridors and connections should be identified at an early stage.

**2. Avoidance and early design**

Green infrastructure and biodiversity considerations should inform site selection, layout and design from the outset. Avoidance of harm to existing habitats and strategically important green infrastructure should be prioritised, with opportunities to retain and reinforce networks embedded within the scheme design.

**3. Mitigation and on-site enhancement**

Where impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation should be addressed through design-led solutions, including on-site habitat enhancement, green infrastructure integration and multifunctional use of space. On-site biodiversity net gain should be maximised wherever reasonably achievable.

**4. Biodiversity net gain calculation and delivery**

The statutory biodiversity metric is used to calculate biodiversity net gain and to identify any residual requirement after on-site measures have been taken. Off-site delivery or statutory biodiversity credits may be considered where on-site provision is constrained and justified.

**5. Assessment of strategic significance and policy compliance**

In determining applications, the council will consider whether habitats or green infrastructure affected by the proposal have strategic significance, and whether the mitigation hierarchy has been applied appropriately. Compliance with the minimum statutory biodiversity net gain requirement does not, in itself, demonstrate compliance with adopted development plan policies.

**6. Long-term management and monitoring**

Approved proposals must secure biodiversity and green infrastructure outcomes for the required period through appropriate legal mechanisms, with clear arrangements for long-term management, monitoring and adaptation over time.

*Box 4: Biodiversity net gain compliance and policy compliance - common misconceptions*

Meeting the minimum statutory biodiversity net gain requirement is a legal obligation for most qualifying development. However, compliance with the statutory biodiversity metric does not, on its own, demonstrate compliance with adopted development plan policies relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure or design.

In particular:

- Achieving the minimum biodiversity net gain percentage does not justify avoidable harm to existing habitats, trees or green infrastructure where reasonable alternatives exist through site selection, layout or design.
- Optimising biodiversity metric scores does not replace the need to apply the mitigation hierarchy, including prioritising avoidance and on-site retention of habitats, particularly where assets have strategic significance.
- Off-site biodiversity net gain delivery or the use of statutory biodiversity credits is not a substitute for good site design and will require justification where on-site opportunities have not been fully explored.
- Habitats or features may be of strategic importance due to their location, function, or contribution to wider ecological or green infrastructure networks, even where their biodiversity metric value is modest.

Planning judgement will be exercised in considering whether development proposals comply with adopted policies alongside statutory biodiversity net gain requirements, having regard to site context, strategic considerations, and long-term outcomes.

## 4B Green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain – how they work together

- 4.06 Table 5: How green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain inform planning decisions  
Table 5 provides an overview of how green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain considerations influence decision-making at different stages of the planning process. Green infrastructure provides the spatial and design framework through which biodiversity, climate resilience and placemaking benefits are delivered. Biodiversity net gain provides a statutory mechanism for measuring and securing biodiversity outcomes.
- 4.07 High-quality green infrastructure supports early avoidance and mitigation of biodiversity impacts, helps deliver well-located and connected on-site biodiversity net gain, and contributes to wider ecological networks. Biodiversity net gain should not be treated as a substitute for good green infrastructure design. The statutory biodiversity metric measures biodiversity value but does not determine site layout, multifunctionality or place quality. Box 4 highlights some common misconceptions about the relationship between statutory biodiversity net gain compliance and compliance with adopted planning policy.

## 4C Statutory framework for biodiversity net gain

- 4.08 Biodiversity net gain is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 and associated secondary legislation. The statutory framework requires most qualifying development to deliver a minimum net gain in biodiversity, calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric published by Natural England and secured for a minimum period of 30 years.
- 4.09 The statutory framework establishes a clear sequence for delivering BNG, with priority given to on-site habitat retention and enhancement, followed by off-site delivery where necessary, and the use of statutory biodiversity credits as a last resort. These requirements operate independently of local planning policy and must be complied with where applicable.
- 4.10 Habitat classification, condition assessment and biodiversity calculations for the purposes of statutory BNG must be undertaken using the statutory biodiversity metric and its associated guidance. Site-specific or outcome-led interpretations cannot be substituted for the statutory approach when calculating BNG.
- 4.11 The statutory scope, exemptions, thresholds and procedural requirements for biodiversity net gain are defined by legislation and associated national guidance and may change over time. This SPD does not seek to replicate or fix those provisions. Where the statutory biodiversity net gain framework is amended, including changes to the categories of development to which it applies or the availability of exemptions, the council will apply the biodiversity net gain regime in force at the time of determination, informed by the principles set out in this section.

## 4D Relationship between statutory BNG and adopted policy

- 4.12 Worthing Local Plan Policy DM18 (Biodiversity) requires development to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance biodiversity, applying the avoid–mitigate–compensate hierarchy. In addition, Policy DM18 requires development on previously developed land to deliver a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain.
- 4.13 The introduction of statutory biodiversity net gain does not remove or replace the requirement to avoid significant harm to biodiversity in the first instance. Compliance with the statutory minimum biodiversity net gain requirement does not, of itself, demonstrate compliance with Policy DM18 where avoidable harm has occurred.
- 4.14 The statutory biodiversity net gain framework establishes a national minimum requirement (currently 10%). Where development on previously developed land is proposed in Worthing, the development plan requirement of 20% biodiversity net gain will apply alongside the statutory framework.
- 4.15 The statutory biodiversity net gain regime operates alongside adopted development plan policies. It does not diminish the requirement to apply the mitigation hierarchy, nor does it override local policy requirements where these are lawful and clearly expressed.
- 4.16 In applying Policy DM18, the council will therefore consider both:
- whether the statutory biodiversity net gain requirement has been met; and
  - whether the proposal complies with the development plan requirement for 20% biodiversity net gain on previously developed land, together with the wider requirements of Policy DM18 relating to avoidance, mitigation and ecological enhancement.

### Significant habitat gains and losses

- 4.17 In the context of biodiversity net gain and the application of adopted biodiversity policies, the council considers that habitat gains or losses are significant where they involve:
- habitats of **medium or higher distinctiveness**, as defined by the statutory biodiversity metric  
and/or
  - habitats of **low distinctiveness** where the scale of habitat affected results in a material change in biodiversity value.
- 4.18 The distinctiveness category of a habitat is determined by its habitat type in accordance with the statutory biodiversity metric and is not a matter of user discretion.

- 4.19 Whether habitat gains or losses are significant in any particular case will depend on the scale and nature of the change, the proportion of on-site biodiversity value affected, and the role of the habitat within the site or wider ecological network, applying planning judgement in accordance with statute and adopted policy.
- 4.20 Further technical detail on the application of these principles, including the operation of the statutory biodiversity metric and biodiversity gain plans, is provided in Technical Advice Note A.

#### 4E Strategic significance and BNG

- 4.21 As set out in Section 3, some habitats, features or areas may have strategic significance due to their role within wider green infrastructure and ecological networks. Strategic significance is informed by local evidence, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, mapped strategic green infrastructure corridors and other locally endorsed evidence.
- 4.22 The assessment of strategic significance is separate from, but complementary to, the statutory biodiversity metric. A habitat or feature may be strategically significant even where its biodiversity value, as measured by the statutory metric, is modest. This assessment should be informed by the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map and supporting evidence described in Section 3.
- 4.23 Where development proposals affect habitats or features of strategic significance, the council will expect particular emphasis to be placed on avoidance and on-site retention through design and layout. The use of off-site BNG to compensate for the loss of strategically significant habitats will generally require robust justification.
- 4.24 This approach explains how existing policy requirements relating to avoidance, mitigation and network integrity are expected to be applied in the context of statutory BNG.

#### Strategic significance of habitats

- 4.25 In applying adopted biodiversity and green infrastructure policies, the ecological importance of habitats will not be assessed solely by reference to their numerical score within the statutory biodiversity metric. Strategic significance may arise from a habitat's location, connectivity, function or contribution to wider ecological or green infrastructure networks, as described in Section 3.
- 4.26 Where habitats are identified as strategically significant, particular emphasis will be placed on avoidance and on-site retention through design and layout. Reliance on biodiversity metric optimisation or off-site compensation to justify their loss is unlikely to be supported where reasonable alternatives exist.

### Use of the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network in biodiversity assessment

- 4.27 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network may be capable of constituting a “local strategy” for the purposes of the statutory biodiversity metric, where it meets the relevant criteria set out in national guidance. Where habitats affected by development proposals are located within, or form part of, this network, the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map and supporting evidence may be used to inform the application of strategic significance within the metric, subject to compliance with statutory guidance and evidence requirements.
- 4.28 The presence of a habitat within the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network does not automatically confer strategic significance for metric purposes. The application of strategic significance remains subject to the criteria and evidence requirements set out in the statutory biodiversity metric and its guidance and must be justified on a case-by-case basis.

### Decision-making considerations

- 4.29 In determining planning applications that engage biodiversity policies and statutory biodiversity net gain requirements, the council will consider whether:
- a. **Early integration and avoidance**
    - biodiversity considerations have informed site selection, layout and design from the earliest stages, rather than being addressed solely through late-stage mitigation or metric optimisation
    - reasonable opportunities to avoid or reduce harm to existing habitats, trees and green infrastructure have been taken through design and layout.
  - b. **Application of the mitigation hierarchy**
    - the mitigation hierarchy has been applied in a clear and transparent manner, with avoidance and on-site retention prioritised wherever reasonably achievable
    - any reliance on off-site delivery or statutory biodiversity credits is justified in accordance with statutory guidance and reflects genuine site constraints rather than design choice.
  - c. **Strategic significance and functional value**
    - habitats of strategic significance have been identified and their function, connectivity and contribution to wider ecological or green infrastructure networks have been appropriately considered
    - the loss or degradation of such habitats has been avoided or minimised where reasonable alternatives exist.

d. **Relationship between BNG and policy compliance**

- the achievement of the minimum statutory biodiversity net gain percentage has been used as a baseline requirement rather than as a justification for avoidable harm
- the proposal complies with adopted development plan policies relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure and design quality in addition to meeting statutory BNG requirements.

e. **Deliverability and long-term outcomes**

- proposed biodiversity gains are realistic, deliverable and capable of being secured for the required period
- arrangements for long-term management and monitoring are clear, proportionate and enforceable.

**4F** Proposals that meet the minimum statutory biodiversity net gain requirement may nevertheless fail to comply with adopted development plan policies where avoidable harm to biodiversity or green infrastructure has not been adequately addressed, or where outcomes rely disproportionately on metric optimisation or compensation rather than design-led avoidance and integration. These considerations will be applied proportionately, having regard to site context, scale of development and the nature of impacts.

## **4G On-site, off-site and metric considerations**

- 4.30 The statutory BNG framework prioritises on-site delivery of biodiversity net gain where possible. On-site habitat retention and enhancement can deliver additional benefits, including ecological connectivity, green infrastructure functionality and integration with place-making and climate resilience objectives.
- 4.31 Off-site BNG delivery may be appropriate where on-site opportunities are limited or constrained. Where off-site delivery is proposed, applicants should demonstrate how it aligns with strategic priorities, including those identified through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the strategic green infrastructure framework set out in Section 3.
- 4.32 While the statutory biodiversity metric is a required tool for demonstrating statutory compliance, it does not capture all aspects of ecological function, connectivity or place-based value. Planning judgement will therefore be exercised alongside metric outputs, having regard to the strategic context set out in Section 3.

## 4H Design, layout and early consideration

- 4.33 Effective delivery of biodiversity net gain is closely linked to early site appraisal and design development. Decisions made at the outset of a scheme regarding site layout, access, landscape structure and the retention of existing features can have a significant influence on biodiversity outcomes.
- 4.34 Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider biodiversity and green infrastructure at the earliest stages of design, including opportunities to retain existing habitats, incorporate new habitats within the public realm, and integrate biodiversity enhancements with sustainable drainage, trees and urban greening measures.
- 4.35 Late-stage reliance on off-site BNG or statutory credits where on-site opportunities have not been adequately explored may indicate that biodiversity considerations have not been properly integrated into the design process.

## 4I Long-term delivery, management and monitoring

- 4.36 Statutory biodiversity net gain must be secured and managed for a minimum period of 30 years. Proposals must therefore include clear and deliverable arrangements for long-term habitat management and monitoring, consistent with statutory requirements.
- 4.37 Management arrangements should be appropriate to the type of habitats being created or enhanced and should prioritise ecological function over appearance alone. Over-intensive management that undermines biodiversity outcomes will not be acceptable.
- 4.38 Further guidance on management, monitoring and enforcement is set out in Section 8 of this SPD and in associated technical advice notes. These should be read alongside this section when preparing and assessing proposals.

## 4J Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 4.39 The council recognises that sites vary in size, context, constraints and opportunities. The application of statutory BNG and related policy requirements will therefore be proportionate and context specific.
- 4.40 Nothing in this section alters the mandatory nature of the statutory biodiversity net gain requirement. Where statutory BNG applies and no exemption is engaged, the minimum 10% net gain calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric must be achieved and secured in accordance with legislation. Planning judgement does not extend to disapplying, reducing or balancing away this statutory requirement, but applies to matters of delivery, integration and compliance with adopted policy alongside the statutory framework.

- 4.41 Where applicants propose alternative approaches to achieving biodiversity outcomes, they will be expected to demonstrate how equivalent or improved outcomes will be achieved in a manner consistent with statutory requirements and adopted policy.
- 4.42 Planning judgement will be exercised having regard to the statutory biodiversity net gain framework, adopted development plan policy, the strategic context set out in Section 3 and site-specific circumstances.

#### 4K Relationship to other sections

- 4.43 This section should be read alongside Section 3 (Strategic green infrastructure and strategic significance) and later sections of this SPD, including guidance on urban greening, trees and green streets, sustainable drainage and long-term management and enforcement. Together, these sections explain how biodiversity net gain is expected to be delivered as part of an integrated approach to sustainable development in the Worthing Local Plan area.

#### 4L How this section should be used

- 4.44 Applicants should use this section to understand the council's expectations for biodiversity net gain and to inform site design from the earliest stages of scheme development.
- 4.45 Planning officers and decision-makers will use this section to assess whether proposals deliver appropriate, functional and durable urban biodiversity outcomes in line with statutory biodiversity net gain requirements, adopted development plan policy and national planning policy.
- 4.46 This section forms part of the SPD and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications insofar as it is consistent with adopted development plan policy and national planning policy.

*Table 6: What applicants should submit and when*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Typical information expected</b>
<b>Early engagement / pre-application</b>	To identify strategic context, constraints and opportunities at an early stage	Initial site appraisal identifying existing habitats, trees and green infrastructure; relationship to the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network; high-level consideration of biodiversity net gain approach
<b>Application submission</b>	To demonstrate compliance with statutory biodiversity net gain and adopted policy	Biodiversity gain plan (where required); statutory biodiversity metric calculations; plans showing retained and proposed habitats; explanation of how the mitigation hierarchy has been applied; assessment of any habitats or features of strategic significance
<b>Post-permission / pre-commencement (where applicable)</b>	To secure delivery and long-term outcomes	Finalised biodiversity gain plan; legal mechanisms securing delivery and management; monitoring proposals consistent with statutory requirements
<b>Implementation and monitoring</b>	To ensure outcomes are delivered and maintained	Monitoring reports and evidence of habitat establishment and management in accordance with approved plans and legal agreements

The scope and level of detail of information required will depend on the nature, scale and potential impacts of the proposal and should be proportionate. Further technical detail on biodiversity metric calculations, habitat condition assessment and biodiversity gain plans is provided in the council’s Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note.

### *Box 5: Relationship between this Supplementary Planning Document and the Technical Advice Notes*

This Supplementary Planning Document sets out the council's policy interpretation and expectations for the delivery of green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain, and how adopted development plan policies and statutory requirements will be applied in decision-making.

The accompanying Technical Advice Notes provide detailed technical guidance to support the implementation of this SPD, including matters such as:

- application of the statutory biodiversity metric
- preparation and content of biodiversity gain plans
- habitat classification and condition assessment
- delivery, management and monitoring of biodiversity net gain.

The Technical Advice Notes do not introduce new policy and do not alter statutory or development plan requirements. They are intended to assist applicants, agents and decision-makers in understanding how technical requirements can be met in practice and should be read alongside this SPD where relevant.

Where there is any inconsistency between this SPD and a Technical Advice Note, the provisions of the development plan, legislation and this SPD will take precedence.

### *Box 6: Key messages for applicants and decision-makers*

Statutory biodiversity net gain provides a minimum, legally defined requirement for most qualifying development. Compliance with the statutory biodiversity metric is necessary but does not, on its own, demonstrate compliance with adopted biodiversity or green infrastructure policies.

Biodiversity considerations should inform site selection, layout and design from the earliest stages. Avoidance and on-site retention of habitats, particularly those of strategic significance, should be prioritised wherever reasonably achievable, with off-site delivery or statutory credits used only where justified.

Habitats may be of strategic significance due to their location, function or contribution to wider ecological and green infrastructure networks, even where their biodiversity metric value is modest. Strategic significance is informed by local evidence, including the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and is assessed separately from the metric calculation.

Planning judgement will be exercised in considering how biodiversity net gain is delivered in practice, having regard to statutory requirements, adopted policy, the strategic context and the long-term integrity and functionality of ecological and green infrastructure networks.

*Box 7: Future changes to biodiversity net gain and application of this SPD*

Statutory biodiversity net gain requirements are defined by legislation, secondary regulations and national guidance, which may change over time. This includes potential changes to the scope of development subject to biodiversity net gain, calculation methodologies, exemptions, thresholds or procedural requirements.

Where the statutory biodiversity net gain framework is amended, the council will apply the biodiversity net gain regime in force at the time of determination. Nothing in this Supplementary Planning Document seeks to fix, pre-empt or override future legislative or national policy changes.

The principles set out in this SPD, including the emphasis on early design integration, application of the mitigation hierarchy, strategic green infrastructure, and long-term network integrity, are intended to remain relevant regardless of changes to the statutory biodiversity net gain regime. These principles reflect adopted development plan policy and national best practice and will continue to inform planning judgement alongside the statutory framework.

Where future changes to legislation or national policy give rise to material inconsistency with this SPD, the statutory framework and development plan policies will take precedence. The council will keep the need for review or update of this SPD under consideration where significant changes occur.

## 5 Urban greening

### 5A Purpose and scope of this section

- 5.01 This section sets out the council's approach to urban greening within the Worthing Local Plan area. It explains how development proposals are expected to deliver high-quality, functional greening as an integral part of design, placemaking and environmental performance, in accordance with adopted local plan policies and national planning policy.
- 5.02 Urban greening plays a critical role in addressing a range of interrelated objectives in Worthing, including climate resilience, surface water management, biodiversity support, health and wellbeing, and the quality of the built environment. These matters are particularly acute in tightly constrained urban locations, where opportunities for conventional open space provision are limited and where environmental pressures are concentrated.
- 5.03 The purpose of this section is to clarify how existing policy requirements for greening and environmental quality are expected to be interpreted and implemented in practice. It does not introduce new planning policy, new quantitative standards or additional development plan requirements. Instead, it provides guidance on how compliance with adopted policy and national planning policy will be assessed through planning judgement. While Section 6 addresses trees and greening specifically within streets and movement corridors, this section focuses more broadly on urban greening as a site-wide design principle influencing layout, built form, levels and public realm across development proposals.
- 5.04 This section explains the council's policy interpretation and decision-making expectations in relation to urban greening. Detailed technical guidance on design specifications, typologies, soil volumes, planting approaches, evidential requirements and performance considerations is set out in the accompanying Urban Greening Technical Advice Note. The Technical Advice Note provides practical and technical support to applicants and should be read alongside this section, but it does not introduce new policy requirements. Detailed matters such as planting typologies, soil specifications, substrate depths, irrigation strategies and technical performance standards are addressed in the Urban Greening Technical Advice Note and are not duplicated in this SPD.

### 5B Why urban greening matters in Worthing

Worthing is characterised by a dense and constrained urban form, a sensitive coastal, areas of flood risk and surface water pressure, and limited opportunities for large-scale new green space. In this context, the quality, functionality and integration of greening within development sites are of particular importance.

- 5.05 Urban greening contributes to climate resilience by reducing urban heat risk through shading and evapotranspiration, intercepting rainfall and slowing surface water runoff, and improving microclimatic comfort in streets and public spaces. These functions are increasingly important in the context of climate change and more frequent extreme weather events.
- 5.06 Urban greening also supports biodiversity by providing habitat, stepping stones and corridors within the urban area, complementing the statutory biodiversity net gain regime and contributing to wider ecological connectivity objectives. While urban greening is not a substitute for biodiversity net gain, it plays a distinct and complementary role in supporting everyday nature and ecological function in built-up areas.
- 5.07 In addition, well-designed urban greening contributes to placemaking, health and wellbeing, and the quality of the public realm. Trees, planting and green infrastructure help define character, soften built form, improve air quality, and create attractive and usable environments for residents, workers and visitors.

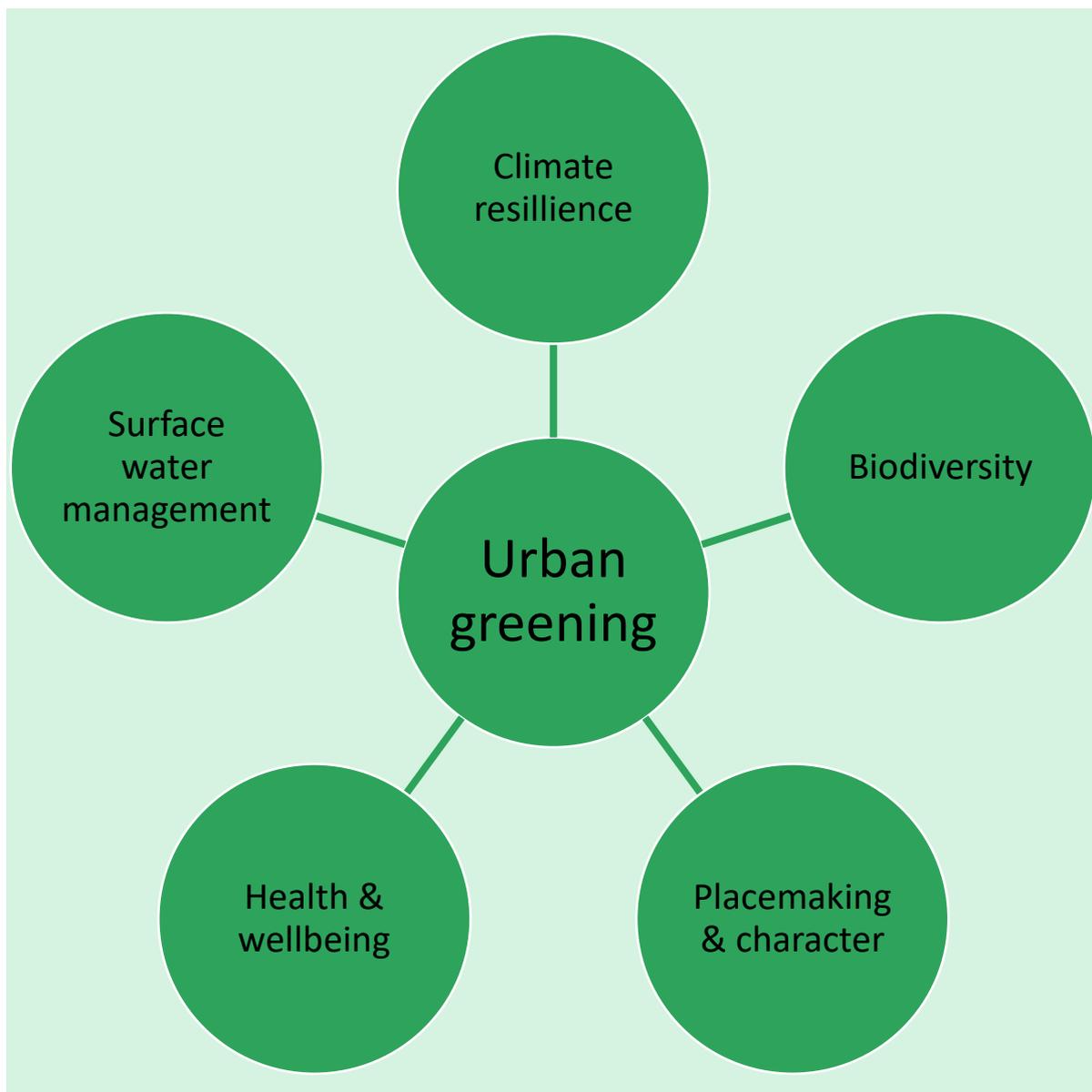
## 5C Policy context and relationship to national requirements

- 5.08 This section supports delivery of adopted Worthing Local Plan policies including Policy DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm), Policy DM19 (Green Infrastructure) and Policy DM18 (Biodiversity), alongside policies relating to flood risk, climate adaptation and healthy placemaking.
- 5.09 The term “urban greening” is used in this Supplementary Planning Document as a convenient and widely recognised expression to describe the integration of trees, planting, landscape and green infrastructure within the design of development. While the adopted Worthing Local Plan does not use this specific term, the underlying concepts are firmly embedded within Policies 15 (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm), 30 (Green Infrastructure) and 31 (Biodiversity), which require development to integrate landscaping, natural features and environmental enhancement as part of high-quality design.
- 5.10 It also reflects national planning policy objectives relating to sustainable development, climate change adaptation, green infrastructure and the natural environment. National policy places increasing emphasis on the role of development in addressing climate resilience, improving environmental quality and delivering healthy places, while allowing for flexibility and planning judgement in how these objectives are achieved.
- 5.11 The approach set out in this section is intentionally outcome-focused rather than tool-driven. This ensures that the guidance remains robust and relevant as national policy, guidance and statutory frameworks evolve over time.

## 5D What is meant by urban greening

- 5.12 For the purposes of this Supplementary Planning Document, urban greening refers to the deliberate integration of vegetation, soils and water-based features into the design of development in ways that deliver environmental, social and placemaking benefits within the urban environment. It is not limited to open space provision and includes greening embedded within buildings, streets, spaces and overall site layout.
- 5.13 Urban greening is not limited to conventional open space. It includes a wide range of interventions such as trees and planting in streets and spaces, vegetated sustainable drainage systems, green and brown roofs, green walls, courtyards, and other integrated landscape and green infrastructure features.
- 5.14 The effectiveness of urban greening depends not only on its presence, but on its design, scale, connectivity, resilience and long-term management. Proposals that treat greening as a residual or cosmetic element are unlikely to deliver the outcomes required by policy.

*Figure 1: Urban greening as multifunctional infrastructure*



Urban greening should be planned and designed as multifunctional infrastructure that delivers a range of environmental, social and placemaking benefits together. Features such as trees, planting and vegetated sustainable drainage systems can contribute simultaneously to climate resilience, surface water management, biodiversity support, health and wellbeing and the quality of the public realm.

## 5E Principles for effective urban greening

- 5.15 Effective urban greening should be considered from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design. It should shape site layout, building form, levels, access and public realm, rather than being added after key design decisions have been fixed.
- 5.16 Urban greening should prioritise features that deliver multiple functions, such as cooling, water management, biodiversity support and amenity, and that are capable of performing reliably over the lifetime of the development.
- 5.17 Fragmented, isolated or heavily constrained greening features that cannot be effectively managed, accessed or sustained over time are unlikely to represent an appropriate response to policy objectives, even where they appear generous in quantity.
- 5.18 Proposals should demonstrate, through clear and proportionate design and landscape information, how urban greening contributes to the character and legibility of the place, supports movement and activity, and responds to local context, including proximity to watercourses, the coast, existing green infrastructure and surrounding built form. This explanation should form part of the Design and Access Statement or equivalent supporting documentation.

## 5F Preferred forms of urban greening and their performance

- 5.19 Ground-based planting provides one of the most reliable and multifunctional forms of urban greening within the Worthing Local Plan area. Where planting is established directly in the ground with adequate soil depth and connectivity, it can deliver cooling, surface water management, soil health benefits and biodiversity support over the long term. Such planting is particularly valuable in dense urban areas and along streets, corridors and public spaces.
- 5.20 Trees are a critical component of urban greening, contributing significantly to shading, cooling, air quality and character. The long-term performance of trees depends on soil volume, rooting conditions and management. Trees planted in generous, connected soil volumes are far more resilient and effective than those confined to small or isolated pits, and proposals should demonstrate that sufficient space and resources are provided to support healthy growth.
- 5.21 Vegetated sustainable drainage systems play an important dual role as both water management infrastructure and greening features. In a district characterised by flood risk and surface water pressures, well-designed vegetated SuDS can attenuate runoff, improve water quality, support biodiversity and contribute to urban cooling. Their integration into public realm and landscape design is strongly encouraged.

- 5.22 Green roofs and brown roofs can provide valuable greening where ground-level opportunities are constrained. In the coastal environment of Worthing, their performance is influenced by wind exposure, salt spray and substrate depth. Proposals should demonstrate that roof-based greening is designed to be resilient and functional over time, and not relied upon as a substitute for ground-based greening where the latter is achievable.
- 5.23 Green walls and façade greening can contribute to visual greening and local microclimate benefits, particularly in dense urban locations. However, their environmental function is generally more limited than other forms of greening, and they are most effective when used as part of a broader, integrated greening strategy.
- 5.24 Small planters, pots and decorative planting may contribute to local amenity but generally provide limited environmental benefit and can be vulnerable to neglect or removal. Such features should not be relied upon as the primary means of delivering urban greening outcomes.

## 5G Local priorities and strategic context

- 5.25 The design and assessment of urban greening proposals should have regard to local priorities and strategic context, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Vision for Nature, green infrastructure corridors, active travel routes, and the presence of rivers, streams and other watercourses.
- 5.26 These strategic considerations do not operate as land-use designations and do not prevent development. They are intended to inform design emphasis, connectivity and the relative importance of different greening functions in different locations.

## 5H Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 5.27 The overarching principles of proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement set out in Section 1 apply equally to urban greening. Sites vary widely in size, context, constraints and opportunities, and proposals will be assessed having regard to whether meaningful and functional greening outcomes have been maximised within those parameters.
- 5.28 Proposals will be assessed using planning judgement, having regard to site context, policy objectives, the quality and functionality of greening proposed, and the extent to which opportunities have been maximised within reasonable constraints.
- 5.29 Where applicants propose alternative approaches or identify constraints, they should clearly explain how the proposal nonetheless delivers appropriate greening outcomes in line with policy.

- 5.30 In order to demonstrate that urban greening has been appropriately integrated into the design of development, applicants will normally be expected to provide clear and proportionate evidence as part of their planning submission. This may include landscape or public realm plans showing the location and extent of greening features, supporting sections or details where performance depends on soil depth, levels, rooting volume or drainage design, and a brief explanation of how greening proposals respond to site context, constraints and policy objectives.
- 5.31 Where urban greening measures form an integral part of policy compliance or mitigation, applicants should also demonstrate that appropriate arrangements are in place for delivery, management and longevity, consistent with the principles set out in Section 8 of this SPD.

## 5I Delivery, management and longevity

- 5.32 Urban greening features must be capable of being delivered, maintained and managed over the lifetime of the development. Proposals should demonstrate that greening is not dependent on unrealistic maintenance regimes or short-term interventions.
- 5.33 Where greening features form a critical part of policy compliance or mitigation, appropriate conditions or legal mechanisms may be used to secure delivery and long-term management.

## 5J Relationship to other sections of this SPD

- 5.34 This section should be read alongside Section 4 (Biodiversity Net Gain), Section 6 (Trees and green streets), Section 7 (SuDS as green infrastructure) and Section 8 (Long-term delivery and management). Together, these sections provide a coherent framework for delivering high-quality, resilient green infrastructure through development.

## 5K How this section should be used

- 5.35 Applicants should use this section to understand the council's expectations for urban greening and to inform site design from the earliest stages of scheme development.
- 5.36 Planning officers and decision-makers will use this section to assess whether proposals deliver appropriate, functional and durable urban greening outcomes in line with adopted policy and national planning objectives.
- 5.37 This section forms part of the SPD and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications insofar as it is consistent with adopted development plan policy and national planning policy.

*Box 8: Key messages for applicants and decision-makers*

Urban greening is expected to be an integral part of site appraisal, layout and design, not a residual or cosmetic addition applied after key design decisions have been fixed.

High-quality urban greening should prioritise multifunctional features that deliver climate resilience, surface water management, biodiversity support, health and wellbeing and placemaking benefits together, and that are capable of performing reliably over the lifetime of the development.

Ground-based greening, including trees and planting established in adequate and connected soil volumes, is generally the most robust and effective form of urban greening and should be prioritised wherever reasonably achievable. Roof-based or façade greening can provide valuable additional benefits where ground-level opportunities are constrained but should not be relied upon as a substitute for functional ground-based greening where the latter is feasible.

Small, fragmented or decorative planting that cannot be effectively managed or sustained over time is unlikely to represent an appropriate response to policy objectives, even where it appears generous in quantity.

The assessment of urban greening proposals will be proportionate and context-specific, applying planning judgement to consider site constraints, design quality, functional performance and long-term management alongside adopted policy and national planning objectives.

## 6 Trees and green streets

### 6A Purpose and scope of this section

- 6.01 This section explains the council's approach to trees and green streets within the Worthing Local Plan area. It sets out how existing national and local planning policy requirements relating to design quality, green infrastructure, biodiversity, climate resilience, public realm and health are expected to be implemented in practice through development proposals.
- 6.02 The purpose of this section is to clarify expectations for the retention, integration and provision of trees and other forms of street-based greening in new development, particularly in constrained urban environments where streets and movement corridors form a significant proportion of the public realm.
- 6.03 This section does not introduce new planning policy, new quantitative standards or additional development plan requirements. It provides guidance on how compliance with adopted policy and national planning policy will be assessed, having regard to local context, constraints and opportunities.
- 6.04 For the purposes of this Supplementary Planning Document, "green streets" refers to streets and movement corridors in which trees, planting and other green infrastructure are deliberately integrated with carriageways, footways, cycle routes and public realm design to deliver environmental, climatic and placemaking benefits alongside movement and access functions. Although the adopted Worthing Local Plan does not use the specific term "green streets", the concept is embedded within Policy DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm) and Policy DM19 (Green Infrastructure), which require high-quality public realm and the integration of landscape and natural features within development.
- 6.05 This section applies to development proposals that affect streets, movement corridors, public realm, frontages or access arrangements, including new streets, alterations to existing streets, and development adjoining or addressing the street. While Section 5 addresses urban greening as a broader site-wide design principle, this section focuses specifically on trees and greening within streets and movement corridors as critical components of public realm and environmental infrastructure.

### 6B Why trees and green streets matter in Worthing

- 6.06 Within much of the Worthing Local Plan area, streets represent the most consistent and publicly accessible form of open space. They play a critical role in shaping townscape character, supporting everyday movement and contributing to environmental quality.

- 6.07 Trees and green streets can deliver a wide range of benefits, including visual amenity, shading, cooling, air quality improvement, surface water management, biodiversity support and improved pedestrian comfort. These benefits are particularly important in locations with limited access to larger areas of green space.
- 6.08 Worthing's coastal location, constrained urban form, areas of flood risk and exposure to climate change impacts mean that the quality and functionality of street environments is a key component of climate resilience and placemaking. Well-designed green streets can help moderate microclimate, improve comfort during hot weather and enhance the long-term adaptability of urban areas.

## 6C Relationship to adopted policy and national guidance

- 6.09 The approach set out in this section supports delivery of adopted Worthing Local Plan policies including Policy DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment and Public Realm), Policy DM19 (Green Infrastructure) and Policy DM18 (Biodiversity), alongside policies relating to flood risk, climate change and healthy communities, and relevant national planning policy requirements for well-designed places and environmental enhancement.
- 6.10 National planning policy emphasises the importance of high-quality public realm, the integration of green infrastructure within development, and the role of trees and planting in creating attractive, resilient and healthy places. This section explains how those objectives are expected to be reflected in the design of streets and movement corridors within the local context.
- 6.11 Nothing in this section alters the statutory protection afforded to trees through legislation or existing policy. Where trees are protected or otherwise significant, those protections continue to apply independently of this guidance.

## 6D Trees as part of a design-led approach

- 6.12 Trees should be considered as an integral part of site appraisal and design, rather than as incidental features introduced late in the process. Early consideration is essential to ensure that trees can be accommodated in a way that is compatible with buildings, services, access requirements and long-term growth.
- 6.13 A design-led approach to trees requires consideration of species selection, rooting volumes, soil quality, water availability, proximity to buildings and infrastructure, and future maintenance. Proposals that do not address these factors are less likely to result in successful long-term outcomes.
- 6.14 Where existing trees are present, their retention should be considered as part of the overall design response, particularly where they contribute to local character, street enclosure, shading or ecological connectivity. Retention should be realistic and should not rely on future management arrangements that are unlikely to be deliverable.

- 6.15 The successful integration of trees and green streets depends on decisions made throughout the development process, from initial site appraisal through to long-term management. Table 7: Trees and green streets through the development process highlights key considerations at each stage and explains why early, coordinated design is critical to delivering durable and functional outcomes.

*Table 7: Trees and green streets through the development process*

<b>Stage of development</b>	<b>Key considerations for trees and green streets</b>	<b>Why this stage matters</b>
<b>Site appraisal and concept design</b>	Identify existing trees, street character, movement corridors and opportunities for integrated greening. Consider whether trees and green streets can help structure layout, frontage, access and public realm from the outset.	Early decisions on layout and access largely determine whether trees and green streets can be accommodated successfully. Late consideration often results in compromised or undeliverable outcomes.
<b>Layout and detailed design</b>	Integrate trees and greening with street widths, building lines, servicing, visibility, drainage and levels. Consider species selection, soil volumes, rooting conditions and long-term growth requirements.	Coordination at this stage helps ensure trees are compatible with buildings, services and movement, and reduces future conflicts or maintenance issues.
<b>Construction and delivery</b>	Protect retained trees and soils and ensure planting and soil installation are carried out in accordance with approved details. Avoid compaction, damage or substitution of agreed greening measures.	Poor construction practices can undermine otherwise well-designed proposals and result in early failure of trees and greening.
<b>Occupation and long-term management</b>	Ensure arrangements are in place for ongoing management, replacement and maintenance of trees and green streets, proportionate to their role in the public realm.	Trees and green streets deliver benefits over time. Long-term success depends on realistic management and stewardship, not short-term installation alone.

## 6E Green streets and the public realm

- 6.16 Green streets, as defined above, are those where trees, planting and other green elements are integrated with movement, access and public realm functions, rather than treated as separate or decorative features.
- 6.17 In street environments, greening can contribute to improved pedestrian comfort, reduced heat stress, visual interest and a sense of place. These outcomes are most likely to be achieved where greening is continuous, well-integrated and coordinated with street layout and materials.
- 6.18 Greening within streets should be designed to work alongside highway safety, accessibility, servicing and maintenance requirements. The aim is not to constrain movement or function, but to enhance the quality and usability of streets as places.

## 6F Practical considerations and constraints

- 6.19 The council recognises that opportunities for street trees and green infrastructure may be constrained by factors such as underground services, limited highway widths, flood risk, contamination or coastal conditions. This SPD does not expect a uniform approach in all circumstances.
- 6.20 Where constraints limit the ability to provide traditional street trees, applicants should consider alternative forms of greening that can deliver similar benefits, such as structural planting, rain gardens, verge greening or other integrated solutions, provided these are appropriate to the context and capable of being maintained.
- 6.21 Proposals should not rely on nominal or token greening that cannot realistically be established or sustained. The council will consider the functionality, coherence and longevity of greening proposals rather than their number or visual impact alone.

## 6G Relationship to biodiversity, drainage and climate resilience

- 6.22 Trees and green streets can support biodiversity, contribute to sustainable drainage and improve climate resilience, but these functions must be considered deliberately rather than assumed.
- 6.23 Where trees or street-based greening are proposed to perform multiple functions, such as shading, water attenuation or habitat provision, designs should demonstrate how these functions will be achieved without compromising tree health, public safety or long-term maintenance.
- 6.24 Detailed technical requirements such as arboricultural impact assessments, tree protection measures, soil specifications and construction methodologies are addressed through relevant professional standards and Technical Advice Notes and are not duplicated within this section.

## 6H Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 6.25 The overarching principles of proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement set out in Section 1 apply equally to proposals affecting trees and green streets. Proposals will be assessed having regard to site context, development scale, constraints and opportunities, and to whether meaningful and durable greening outcomes have been maximised within those parameters.
- 6.26 Where applicants propose alternative approaches to achieving policy objectives, they should clearly demonstrate how equivalent or improved outcomes will be delivered in a manner consistent with adopted development plan policy and national planning policy.

## 6I How this section should be used

- 6.27 Applicants should use this section to inform early design decisions, to understand the role of trees and green streets within the local planning context, and to prepare clear and realistic proposals.
- 6.28 Planning officers and decision-makers will use this section to assess whether proposals have taken a design-led, context-responsive and deliverable approach to trees and green streets, and whether outcomes required by adopted policy are likely to be achieved over the long term.
- 6.29 This section forms part of the council's Supplementary Planning Document and provides guidance on implementation of adopted planning policy. It does not introduce new policy requirements and does not fetter the exercise of planning judgement.

*Box 9: Key messages for applicants and decision-makers*

Trees and green streets should be considered as an integral part of site appraisal and design from the earliest stages of development, rather than as incidental or residual features introduced late in the process.

A design-led approach is essential to the successful integration of trees, requiring early consideration of species selection, soil volumes, rooting conditions, services coordination, access requirements and long-term management. Proposals that do not address these matters are unlikely to deliver durable outcomes.

Where existing trees are present, their retention should be realistically considered as part of the overall design response, particularly where they contribute to street character, shading, comfort, or ecological connectivity. Retention strategies should be deliverable and should not rely on unrealistic future management.

Green streets are those where trees, planting and other greening are integrated with movement, access, and public realm functions to enhance environmental quality, comfort and sense of place, while continuing to meet safety, accessibility and servicing requirements.

The assessment of proposals for trees and green streets will be proportionate and context-specific, applying planning judgement to consider site constraints, design quality, functional performance, and long-term deliverability alongside adopted policy and national planning objectives.

## 7 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as green infrastructure

### 7A Purpose and scope of this section

- 7.01 This section explains the council's approach to sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) within the Worthing Local Plan area. It sets out how adopted development plan policies relating to flood risk, sustainable drainage, green infrastructure and design quality are expected to be interpreted and applied in practice. It also explains how, where appropriate, SuDS may contribute to green infrastructure, biodiversity, climate resilience, placemaking and the quality of the public realm.
- 7.02 The purpose of this section is to provide guidance on how adopted national and local planning policy requirements relating to surface water management and green infrastructure will be implemented in practice, particularly in constrained urban and coastal environments.
- 7.03 This section does not introduce new planning policy, new drainage standards or additional development plan requirements. It provides guidance on how compliance with adopted policy, statutory requirements and national guidance will be assessed through the planning process.
- 7.04 This section applies to development proposals where surface water drainage, flood risk management or green infrastructure provision is relevant, including new development, redevelopment and significant alterations to existing sites.

### 7B Why SuDS matter in Worthing

- 7.05 Worthing faces particular challenges in relation to flood risk and water management, including surface water flooding, fluvial and tidal flood risk, constrained drainage networks and pressures on water quality. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of rainfall events, heightening these risks over time.
- 7.06 In addition, development in the Worthing Local Plan area can affect sensitive receiving waters, including coastal environments, where water quality objectives are particularly important and where poorly designed surface water management can have wider environmental consequences. This reinforces the importance of surface water management approaches that prioritise attenuation, treatment and control at source, in line with adopted policy and national guidance.
- 7.07 In this context, SuDS play a critical role in managing surface water runoff, reducing flood risk, improving water quality and enhancing the resilience of the built environment. Where designed as part of a green infrastructure approach, SuDS can also contribute to biodiversity, urban greening, cooling and placemaking objectives.

**7.08** Treating SuDS solely as an engineering solution risks missing opportunities to deliver wider environmental and placemaking benefits. This SPD therefore promotes an integrated approach, consistent with adopted policy, in which SuDS are considered as part of overall site design and, where feasible, as multifunctional green infrastructure.

## **7C Relationship to adopted policy and statutory requirements**

**7.09** The approach set out in this section supports delivery of adopted Worthing Local Plan policies relating to flood risk, sustainable drainage, green infrastructure, biodiversity, climate change adaptation and design quality. It explains how those policies are expected to operate together in practice within the local context.

**7.10** SuDS are required by national planning policy for major development and are strongly encouraged for other development where appropriate. This SPD does not alter those requirements but explains how SuDS are expected to be integrated with green infrastructure objectives in the local context.

**7.11** Nothing in this section overrides statutory flood risk legislation, technical drainage standards or the roles of the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Environment Agency or other statutory bodies. This SPD operates alongside those regimes and does not alter their requirements.

## **7D SuDS as part of a design-led approach**

**7.12** SuDS should be considered from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design, alongside layout, levels, access and public realm considerations. Early integration increases the likelihood that SuDS will function effectively, be safely accommodated within the site, and contribute positively to overall place quality.

**7.13** Design-led SuDS typically perform better and are more cost-effective over time than retrofitted or residual solutions. They are also more likely to deliver wider environmental and placemaking benefits.

**7.14** Where SuDS are introduced late in the design process or confined to residual spaces, they are less likely to function effectively or to be perceived as an asset by future users.

**7.15** The effectiveness of sustainable drainage systems depends on decisions made throughout the development process, from early site appraisal and layout through to construction and long-term management. Table 8 highlights key considerations at each stage and explains why early, integrated design is critical to successful outcomes.

*Table 8: SuDS through the development process*

Stage of development	Key SuDS considerations	Why this stage matters
<b>Site appraisal and concept design</b>	Identify flood risk constraints, discharge routes, receiving waters and opportunities to integrate SuDS with layout, levels, public realm and green infrastructure.	Early decisions on layout and levels strongly influence the effectiveness and visibility of SuDS. Late consideration can limit performance and multifunctionality.
<b>Layout and detailed design</b>	Integrate SuDS with streets, open spaces, buildings and landscape design. Consider exceedance routes, planting, safety, maintenance access and long-term function.	Coordinated design helps ensure SuDS operate effectively, are safe and legible, and contribute positively to place quality.
<b>Construction and delivery</b>	Ensure SuDS are constructed in accordance with approved details, with appropriate protection of soils, planting and drainage components.	Poor construction practices can undermine SuDS performance and result in long-term maintenance or flooding issues.
<b>Occupation and long-term management</b>	Establish clear responsibilities for inspection, maintenance and adaptation over time, proportionate to the scale and complexity of the system.	SuDS benefits depend on ongoing performance. Clear management arrangements are essential to long-term effectiveness and resilience.

## 7E Types of SuDS and multifunctionality

- 7.16 SuDS can take many forms, including swales, rain gardens, basins, permeable surfaces, green roofs and other vegetated features. The appropriate type will depend on site conditions, constraints and design objectives.
- 7.17 Where appropriate and feasible, SuDS may be designed to deliver multiple functions, such as water attenuation, water quality improvement, biodiversity support, urban greening and visual amenity. Multifunctionality should be purposeful and should not compromise the primary drainage function or long-term performance of the system.
- 7.18 Not all SuDS features will be suitable for public access or amenity use. Design decisions should be informed by safety, maintenance and performance considerations, rather than assumptions that all SuDS must be publicly accessible.

## 7F Relationship to biodiversity, urban greening and trees

- 7.19 SuDS can support biodiversity and urban greening objectives, but this should not be assumed automatically. Biodiversity and greening benefits depend on design, planting selection, hydrological regime and long-term management.
- 7.20 Where SuDS are relied upon to contribute to biodiversity net gain, urban greening or tree establishment, this should be clearly explained and supported by appropriate evidence, without double counting or conflating separate policy requirements.
- 7.21 This section should be read alongside SPD Sections relating to biodiversity net gain, urban greening and trees, and the associated Technical Advice Notes, to ensure a coherent and integrated approach.

## 7G Practical constraints and local considerations

- 7.22 The council recognises that SuDS design may be constrained by factors such as site size, ground conditions, contamination, existing infrastructure, flood risk designation and coastal influences. This SPD does not expect a uniform approach in all circumstances.
- 7.23 Where constraints limit the ability to deliver certain forms of SuDS, applicants should demonstrate that reasonable alternatives have been explored and that the chosen approach represents the most appropriate solution in the circumstances.
- 7.24 Reliance on underground or hard-engineered drainage solutions alone, without clear justification, is unlikely to maximise the benefits of SuDS as green infrastructure.

## 7H Long-term management, maintenance and performance

- 7.25 The effectiveness of SuDS depends on their long-term performance. Design, planting and layout should reflect maintenance requirements and management responsibilities from the outset.
- 7.26 Where SuDS are integral to flood risk management or environmental mitigation, clear arrangements for management and maintenance will be required, proportionate to the scale and complexity of the system.
- 7.27 Further guidance on securing long-term delivery, management, monitoring and enforcement is provided in SPD Section 8. This section does not introduce additional obligations but explains the importance of realistic and enforceable arrangements.
- 7.28 Long-term management and monitoring of green infrastructure should allow for adaptation over time in response to changing environmental conditions and climate impacts, consistent with the principles of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework.

## 7I Proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement

- 7.29 The approach to proportionality and planning judgement set out in Section 1 of this SPD applies to the assessment of SuDS proposals.
- 7.30 Flexibility does not remove the requirement to address adopted policy objectives. Where applicants propose alternative approaches, they should clearly demonstrate how equivalent outcomes will be achieved.

## 7J How this section should be used

- 7.31 Applicants should use this section to understand how SuDS are expected to contribute to green infrastructure and to inform early design decisions and supporting documentation.
- 7.32 Planning officers and decision-makers will use this section to assess whether SuDS proposals are integrated, functional, proportionate and capable of delivering long-term outcomes in line with adopted policy.
- 7.33 This section forms part of the Supplementary Planning Document and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications insofar as it is consistent with adopted development plan policy and national planning policy.

*Box 10: Key messages for applicants and decision-makers*

Sustainable drainage systems should be considered as an integral part of site appraisal, layout and design from the earliest stages of development, rather than as residual or purely engineering solutions introduced late in the process.

Where feasible, SuDS should be designed as multifunctional green infrastructure, delivering flood risk management and water quality benefits alongside wider outcomes such as biodiversity support, urban greening, climate resilience and placemaking.

The primary function of SuDS is the effective management of surface water. Multifunctionality should be purposeful and should not compromise drainage performance, safety or long-term maintenance.

The assessment of SuDS proposals will be proportionate and context-specific, having regard to site constraints, flood risk, ground conditions and viability. Reliance on underground or hard-engineered solutions without clear justification is unlikely to maximise the benefits of SuDS as green infrastructure.

Long-term performance, management and adaptability are critical to the success of SuDS. Proposals should demonstrate that systems can be maintained and managed effectively over the lifetime of the development.

## 8 Long-term delivery, management, monitoring and enforcement

### 8A Purpose and scope of this section

- 8.01 This section explains how green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, trees and sustainable drainage measures will be secured, managed and monitored over time within the Worthing Local Plan area. It sets out how adopted development plan policies and statutory requirements relating to these matters are expected to be implemented and maintained for the lifetime of development.
- 8.02 The purpose of this section is to clarify expectations around long-term delivery, governance and accountability, recognising that many environmental benefits depend on successful establishment, ongoing management and monitoring rather than initial installation alone.
- 8.03 This section does not introduce new planning policy or additional development plan requirements. It explains how existing policy and statutory obligations may be secured and supported through established planning mechanisms.
- 8.04 This section applies to development proposals where green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, SuDS, tree planting or habitat creation or enhancement is required by policy, statute or as mitigation. The approach to proportionality and planning judgement set out in Section 1 of this SPD applies to the assessment of management and monitoring arrangements.

### 8B Why long-term delivery matters in Worthing

- 8.05 The Worthing Local Plan area is characterised by constrained urban environments, a sensitive coastal setting, areas of flood risk, pressures on water quality and limited opportunities for large-scale new green space. In this context, the long-term performance of green infrastructure and environmental measures is critical.
- 8.06 Experience locally and nationally demonstrates that environmental benefits can be lost where delivery is not properly secured, where management responsibilities are unclear, or where long-term funding and governance arrangements are not in place. This is particularly relevant to biodiversity net gain habitats, SuDS features, street trees and other greening measures integrated into development.
- 8.07 National legislation now explicitly requires biodiversity net gain to be secured and managed for a minimum period of 30 years. Adopted local plan policies similarly rely on green infrastructure and SuDS continuing to function over the lifetime of development to deliver climate resilience, placemaking, health and environmental quality objectives.

- 8.08 This SPD therefore treats long-term delivery, management and monitoring as integral components of policy compliance, not as optional or secondary considerations.

## 8C Relationship to adopted policy and statutory duties

- 8.09 The approach set out in this section supports delivery of adopted Worthing Local Plan policies relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity, flood risk, water quality, climate change adaptation, design quality and healthy communities. It explains how long-term delivery and management are expected to underpin those policy objectives in practice.
- 8.10 It also reflects statutory duties and requirements, including those arising from the Environment Act 2021 (in relation to biodiversity net gain), the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and associated regulations and guidance.
- 8.11 Nothing in this section alters statutory responsibilities or replaces the role of other consenting regimes. It clarifies how the planning system may be used to secure and support long-term outcomes required by adopted policy and legislation.

## 8D Securing delivery through planning mechanisms

- 8.12 Where environmental measures are required to mitigate impacts or deliver policy objectives, the council will use appropriate planning mechanisms to secure their delivery and long-term management.
- 8.13 The choice of mechanism will depend on the nature of what is being secured, its location, its complexity and the length of time for which it must be maintained. Mechanisms may include planning conditions, section 106 agreements and, where relevant, conservation covenants.
- 8.14 Planning conditions may be appropriate for straightforward matters of implementation, such as requiring submission and approval of detailed planting schemes, landscape details or management plans prior to occupation.
- 8.15 Section 106 agreements may be used where obligations need to bind the land, extend beyond the applicant, involve long-term management or monitoring (including statutory biodiversity net gain requirements), or require financial contributions, access rights or enforceable obligations.
- 8.16 The council will expect applicants to identify, at an early stage, the likely mechanisms required and to factor these into programme, design and viability considerations.
- 8.17 Table 9 provides an overview of the planning mechanisms commonly used to secure delivery, management and monitoring of environmental measures, and highlights key considerations associated with each.

*Table 9: Securing and managing environmental measures through planning*

<b>Type of measure</b>	<b>Typical planning mechanism</b>	<b>Key considerations</b>
<b>Biodiversity net gain habitats</b>	Section 106 agreement and/or conservation covenant	Long-term management and monitoring (minimum 30 years), clear responsibilities, reporting requirements and enforcement provisions.
<b>Green infrastructure and public realm greening</b>	Planning conditions and/or section 106 agreement	Phasing, long-term maintenance arrangements, adoption or management responsibilities and funding.
<b>SuDS features</b>	Planning conditions and/or section 106 agreement	Ongoing maintenance, access for inspection, performance monitoring where required and clarity on ownership and responsibility.
<b>Trees and street planting</b>	Planning conditions and/or section 106 agreement	Protection during construction, establishment, replacement and long-term management arrangements.
<b>Other mitigation or enhancement measures</b>	Planning conditions or legal agreement, as appropriate	Proportionality, deliverability and clarity on how outcomes will be secured and enforced.

## 8E Management responsibilities and arrangements

- 8.18 All green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain habitats, SuDS features, trees and urban greening measures must be supported by clear and deliverable management arrangements that reflect their intended function.
- 8.19 Management responsibilities must be clearly identified, whether these rest with a private management company, residents' management organisation, commercial operator, public body or other responsible party.
- 8.20 Management arrangements must be realistic, adequately resourced and appropriate to the type of feature being managed. Biodiverse SuDS, habitat areas and street trees require different approaches to ornamental landscaping or hard-engineered infrastructure.
- 8.21 Where features are intended to deliver biodiversity or climate resilience outcomes, management should prioritise ecological function and long-term performance rather than appearance alone.

## 8F Monitoring and reporting

- 8.22 Monitoring is essential to ensure that approved environmental measures are delivered as designed and continue to function as intended.
- 8.23 For biodiversity net gain, monitoring is a statutory requirement. Monitoring reports must be submitted at agreed intervals in accordance with approved biodiversity gain plans and management arrangements.
- 8.24 Monitoring may also be required for other measures where long-term performance is critical, such as SuDS designed to improve water quality or tree planting in constrained urban environments.
- 8.25 Monitoring reports should be prepared by suitably qualified professionals and should clearly demonstrate performance against approved objectives and identify any issues requiring remedial action.

## 8G Monitoring fees and resourcing

- 8.26 Where monitoring obligations are secured through section 106 agreements, the council will require payment of monitoring fees to cover the reasonable costs of administration, review and enforcement.
- 8.27 Monitoring fees will be calculated using published methodologies maintained outside this SPD and will reflect the scale and complexity of what is being monitored.
- 8.28 Fees are intended to ensure effective oversight and are not punitive. They support the council's ability to fulfil its statutory and policy responsibilities over the long term.

## 8H Enforcement and remedial action

- 8.29 Where approved environmental measures are not delivered, not maintained, or are allowed to deteriorate, the council may take enforcement action in accordance with planning legislation and the terms of any legal agreements.
- 8.30 Enforcement may include requiring remedial works, replacement planting, habitat restoration or other corrective measures necessary to achieve approved outcomes.
- 8.31 The council will take a proportionate approach, recognising genuine management challenges, but will act where outcomes secured as part of planning permission are at risk.

## 8I Flexibility, viability and planning judgement

- 8.32 The approach to proportionality and planning judgement set out in Section 1 of this SPD applies to the assessment of management and monitoring proposals.
- 8.33 However, flexibility does not remove the requirement to secure outcomes required by policy and statute. Where applicants propose alternative approaches, they must clearly demonstrate how equivalent outcomes will be achieved and maintained.

## 8J How this section should be used

- 8.34 Applicants should use this section to understand the long-term implications of environmental requirements and to plan delivery, governance and resourcing from the earliest stages of development.
- 8.35 Planning officers and decision-makers will use this section to assess whether proposals include realistic, secure and enforceable arrangements for long-term delivery and to ensure that outcomes required by adopted policy are not undermined over time.
- 8.36 This section forms part of the Supplementary Planning Document and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications insofar as it is consistent with adopted development plan policy and national planning policy.

*Box 11: Key messages for applicants and decision-makers*

Environmental measures required by adopted policy or statute must be capable of being delivered, managed and maintained over the long term. Initial installation alone is not sufficient to demonstrate compliance.

Arrangements for long-term management, monitoring and funding should be considered from the earliest stages of development and reflected in design, programme and viability considerations.

Where biodiversity net gain, SuDS, trees or other green infrastructure are integral to policy compliance or mitigation, clear and enforceable mechanisms will be used to secure their delivery and long-term performance.

Monitoring and reporting are essential to ensuring that approved outcomes are achieved and maintained over time. Monitoring requirements will be proportionate to the scale and complexity of what is being secured.

The council will apply a proportionate and pragmatic approach to enforcement but will act where approved environmental outcomes are at risk or are not being delivered as agreed.

## Appendix 1: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain Submission Requirements

The following information will normally be required to enable the local planning authority to assess compliance with statutory biodiversity net gain requirements and adopted planning policies. The level of detail required will be proportionate to the scale and nature of development.

### **Baseline information**

- Habitat survey and mapping identifying existing habitats within the affected area
- Baseline biodiversity metric calculation using the statutory metric (or Small Sites Metric where applicable)
- Evidence of baseline conditions where sites have been altered since the relevant statutory baseline date.

### **Impact assessment and mitigation**

- Explanation of how the mitigation hierarchy has been applied, including avoidance through layout and design
- Identification of habitats of potential strategic significance and how impacts have been addressed.

### **Biodiversity net gain delivery**

- Completed statutory biodiversity metric showing proposed losses and gains
- Details of on-site habitat retention, enhancement and creation
- Where off-site delivery is proposed, details of the biodiversity gain site, registration status and legal mechanism
- Where statutory biodiversity credits are proposed, justification in accordance with statutory guidance.

### **Long-term management and security**

- Outline habitat management and monitoring proposals
- Confirmation of the legal mechanism to secure delivery for the required period (e.g. condition, legal agreement or conservation covenant).

### **Exemptions (where claimed)**

- Clear identification of the statutory exemption relied upon
- Supporting evidence sufficient to demonstrate that the exemption applies.

Failure to provide sufficient information may result in delay or refusal where the local planning authority is unable to conclude that statutory requirements and adopted policy expectations have been met.

## Appendix 2: Glossary

This glossary is provided to assist interpretation of this Supplementary Planning Document. It does not introduce new planning policy or override statutory definitions. Where a term is defined in legislation or national planning guidance, the statutory definition will prevail.

### Biodiversity gain plan

A plan required under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where mandatory biodiversity net gain applies, and significant habitat gains or losses are involved. The biodiversity gain plan sets out how statutory biodiversity net gain will be delivered, secured, managed and monitored in accordance with statutory requirements.

### Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

A statutory requirement introduced by the Environment Act 2021, requiring most development to deliver a minimum increase of at least 10 per cent in biodiversity value, calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric and secured for a minimum period of 30 years, unless a statutory exemption applies.

### Biodiversity unit value / biodiversity units

A numerical representation of biodiversity value produced by the statutory biodiversity metric, reflecting habitat type, distinctiveness, condition, area and, where applicable, strategic significance. Biodiversity units are used to calculate losses and gains for the purposes of statutory biodiversity net gain.

### Distinctiveness (habitat distinctiveness)

A classification applied to habitats within the statutory biodiversity metric, reflecting the relative ecological importance of different habitat types. Habitats are categorised as very low, low, medium, high or very high distinctiveness in accordance with metric guidance. The distinctiveness category of a habitat is determined by its habitat type and **cannot be altered by user input**.

### Green infrastructure (GI)

A strategically planned, multifunctional network of green and blue spaces and environmental features that supports biodiversity, climate resilience, flood risk management, health and wellbeing, placemaking and environmental quality. Green infrastructure is treated as essential infrastructure rather than residual open space.

The approach to green infrastructure in this Supplementary Planning Document is aligned with the principles set out in the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework.

### Habitat (for biodiversity net gain purposes)

An area of land or water identified, mapped and classified in accordance with the habitat categories and definitions set out in the statutory biodiversity metric and its accompanying

guidance, based on observed physical and ecological characteristics at the time of assessment.

### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**

A strategic document prepared under the Environment Act 2021 identifying priorities and opportunities for nature recovery at a local or regional scale. Local Nature Recovery Strategies do not form part of the statutory development plan but may be material considerations in planning decision-making.

### **Material consideration**

A matter that is relevant to the determination of a planning application and to which decision-makers must have regard, alongside the statutory development plan and national planning policy, when exercising planning judgement.

### **Metric optimisation**

The practice of adjusting habitat classifications, condition assessments, delivery assumptions or gain calculations primarily to achieve a numerical biodiversity net gain outcome, rather than to reflect genuine ecological function, site context or design-led outcomes. Metric optimisation does not replace the application of the mitigation hierarchy or good site design.

### **Mitigation hierarchy**

The established sequence for addressing impacts on biodiversity and the environment, requiring harm to be avoided where possible, mitigated where avoidance is not achievable, and compensated only as a last resort. The mitigation hierarchy operates alongside, and is not replaced by, statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

### **On-site biodiversity net gain**

Biodiversity enhancement delivered within the red line boundary of the development site, including through habitat retention, enhancement or creation integrated with site layout, landscaping, green infrastructure or sustainable drainage features.

### **Off-site biodiversity net gain**

Biodiversity enhancement delivered outside the development site boundary, secured through registered biodiversity gain sites or other lawful mechanisms in accordance with statutory requirements. Off-site delivery is generally expected to follow consideration of on-site opportunities.

### **Planning judgement**

The exercise of professional and decision-making judgement by the local planning authority, having regard to statute, the development plan, national planning policy, material considerations, site context and proportionality. Planning judgement is not replaced by numerical tools or technical metrics.

### Significant habitat gains and losses

For the purposes of this Supplementary Planning Document, significant habitat gains or losses are those that:

- involve habitats of **medium or higher distinctiveness**, as defined by the statutory biodiversity metric; and/or
- involve habitats of **low distinctiveness** where the scale of habitat affected results in a **material change in biodiversity unit value**.

Whether habitat gains or losses are significant in any particular case will depend on the scale and nature of the change, the proportion of on-site biodiversity value affected, and the role of the habitat within the site or wider ecological network, applying planning judgement in accordance with statute and adopted policy.

### Strategic significance (for biodiversity metric purposes)

A classification applied within the statutory biodiversity metric to certain habitat parcels where they meet the criteria set out in metric guidance. Strategic significance is entered by the user as part of the metric calculation and affects the numerical biodiversity value outcome.

Strategic significance for metric purposes does **not** in itself determine the planning acceptability of habitat loss.

### Statutory biodiversity credits

Credits purchased from the Government as a last-resort mechanism for delivering statutory biodiversity net gain where on-site and off-site delivery options are not available or feasible, in accordance with national arrangements.

### Viability

The economic feasibility of a development proposal, taking into account development costs, values and reasonable developer returns. Viability is a material consideration in planning decision-making but does not in itself override statutory requirements or adopted planning policies.