



ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Urban Greening

Technical Advice Note

June 2026



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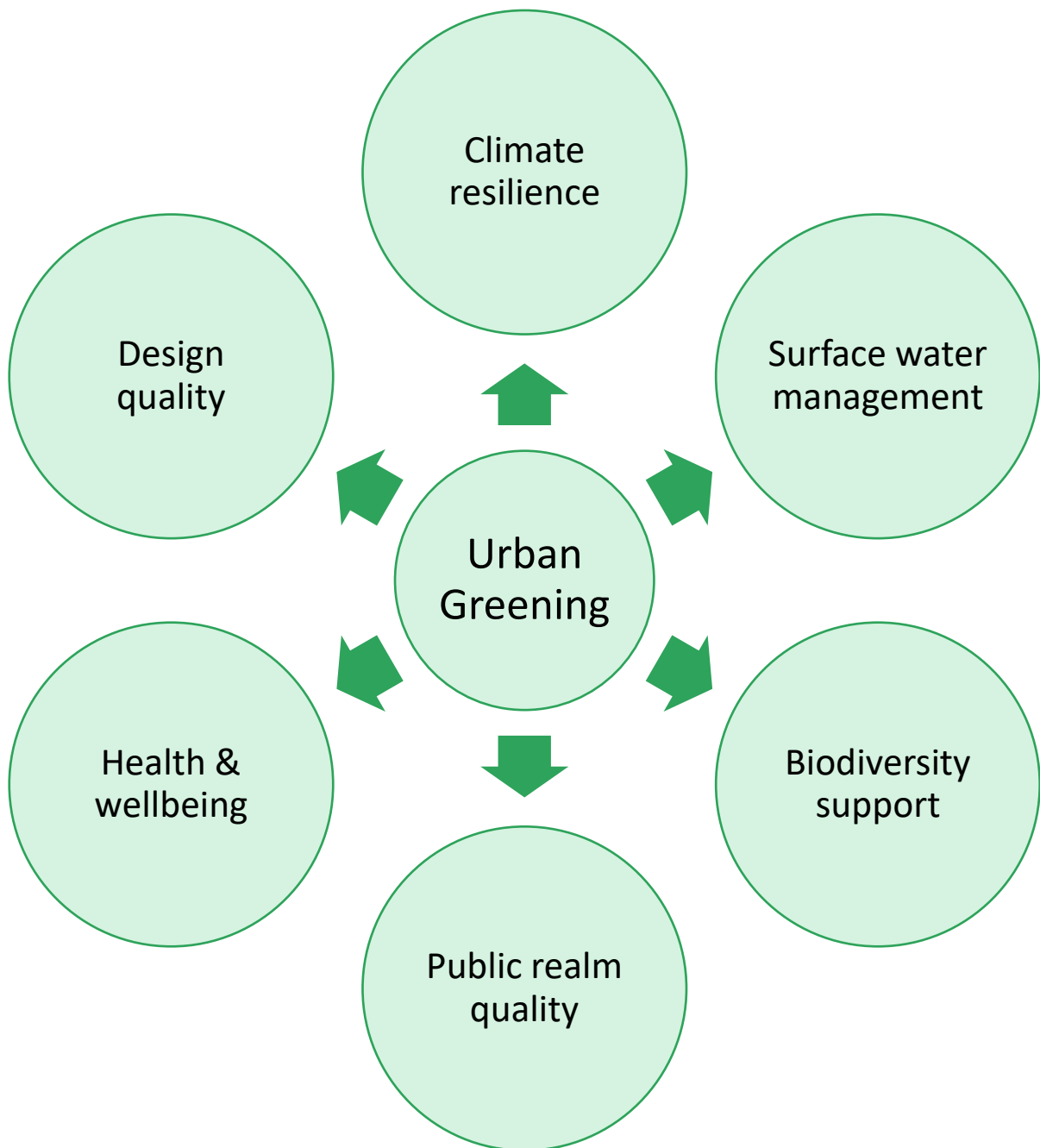
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1 Purpose, status and relationship to policy

- 1.01 This Technical Advice Note (TAN) provides guidance on the interpretation and implementation of adopted planning policy relating to urban greening within the Adur Local Plan Area and the Worthing Local Plan Area. It is intended to support applicants, agents, designers and planning officers in understanding how urban greening can be integrated into development proposals and assessed through the planning process.
- 1.02 This TAN should be read alongside the Adur Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD, the Worthing Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD, relevant development plan policies and national planning policy and guidance. It does not introduce new planning policy, new standards or new quantitative requirements, and does not alter or override statutory or development plan obligations.
- 1.03 The TAN provides technical guidance on design-led approaches to urban greening, evidence expectations, delivery and long-term management. It is intended to support consistent interpretation and application of adopted policy while allowing for site-specific design responses and planning judgement.
- 1.04 Urban greening is used in this TAN as a collective term for measures that integrate vegetation and nature-based features into development. This includes, where appropriate, trees, planting, green roofs, brown roofs, green walls, sustainable drainage features, biodiversity-supporting planting, public realm greening and other multifunctional green infrastructure.
- 1.05 The TAN adopts an outcome-led approach. Unlike statutory biodiversity net gain, there is no nationally prescribed metric for measuring urban greening. Proposals are assessed through their quality, functionality, integration, deliverability and long-term performance in supporting adopted development plan objectives.
- 1.06 The guidance in this TAN is intended to support, not fetter, the exercise of planning judgement. It recognises that sites vary in size, context, constraints and opportunities, and that appropriate urban greening solutions will differ accordingly.
- 1.07 Applicants and decision-makers may also find it helpful to refer to relevant best practice guidance including the UK Green Infrastructure Framework, Building with Nature, Urban Greening Factor approaches and other relevant urban greening guidance. Illustrative diagrams, photographs and worked examples may be used within the TAN to support understanding of how urban greening measures can be integrated into development proposals.
- 1.08 References in this TAN to legislation, national policy, guidance and technical standards should be read as references to the versions applicable to the proposal at the relevant time, including any subsequent updates or replacement guidance where relevant.

Figure 1: Urban greening as integrated infrastructure



2 When urban greening guidance applies

2A Purpose of this section

- 2.01 This section explains when urban greening guidance is likely to be relevant and how a proportionate approach will be taken in practice.
- 2.02 Urban greening is relevant to a wide range of development types and scales, but the level of detail expected will vary depending on the nature, scale, location and potential impacts of the proposal. This TAN should not be read as applying the same expectations to all development.

2B Development where urban greening is most relevant

- 2.03 Urban greening guidance is most likely to be relevant where development proposals have the potential to affect the quality, function or character of the urban environment, or where greening plays an important role in mitigating impacts or delivering adopted policy objectives.
- 2.04 The guidance will normally be most relevant to:
- major residential, commercial and mixed-use development
 - dense urban environments or constrained sites
 - proposals involving significant areas of hard surfacing, building coverage or public realm
 - schemes that include or affect streets, squares, courtyards or shared spaces
 - development in locations affected by heat risk, surface water flooding, coastal exposure or water quality pressures
 - regeneration, intensification or redevelopment schemes where urban greening is integral to placemaking and environmental quality.

2C Smaller-scale development and proportionality

- 2.05 For smaller-scale development, including minor development and changes of use, urban greening guidance will be applied proportionately. Not all applications will require detailed greening strategies or extensive supporting information.
- 2.06 For smaller proposals, urban greening considerations may be addressed through simpler measures such as retaining existing vegetation, modest planting or design choices that avoid unnecessary loss of greening opportunities. The absence of large-scale greening interventions will not in itself indicate non-compliance where opportunities have been reasonably considered and explained.

- 2.07 Householder development will generally fall outside the scope of this TAN, except where it forms part of a wider scheme or has implications for shared spaces, street environments or cumulative impacts.

2D Site constraints and planning judgement

- 2.08 The councils recognise that site constraints such as land ownership, underground services, contamination, flood risk, coastal exposure, access requirements, operational requirements and viability considerations can affect the extent and form of urban greening that can be delivered.
- 2.09 Where constraints limit greening opportunities, applicants should explain how those constraints have influenced design decisions and how reasonable opportunities for greening have been explored and maximised within those constraints.
- 2.10 Urban greening opportunities should be considered proportionately having regard to site-specific constraints, technical feasibility, operational requirements, building characteristics, viability considerations and design considerations applicable to the proposal.
- 2.11 The application of this TAN relies on planning judgement. The councils will assess urban greening proposals having regard to site context, adopted policy objectives, proportionality and deliverability, rather than against predetermined numerical standards.

2E 2E Key messages for applicants and decision-makers

- 2.12 Urban greening guidance should be applied proportionately having regard to the nature, scale, location and constraints of the proposal.
- 2.13 Not all forms of development will require the same level of urban greening detail or supporting information.
- 2.14 Urban greening should support adopted policy objectives and should not be interpreted as introducing new policy requirements or fixed quantitative standards.
- 2.15 Planning judgement remains essential.

3 Urban greening as a design-led process

3A Purpose of this section

- 3.01 Urban greening should be considered as an integral, design-led component of development proposals rather than as a residual or decorative element. It should inform site appraisal, layout, massing, access, public realm, drainage and long-term management considerations.
- 3.02 The guidance in this section supports high-quality, context-responsive design. It does not prescribe specific design solutions and does not introduce quantitative requirements.

3B Early site appraisal and layout

- 3.03 Effective urban greening begins at the earliest stages of site appraisal and concept design. Applicants should consider greening opportunities alongside decisions relating to site capacity, access, layout, massing, drainage and public realm.
- 3.04 Early consideration should include an understanding of the site's existing environmental characteristics, including microclimate, exposure, topography, soil conditions, flood risk, existing vegetation, watercourses, surrounding urban form and opportunities for ecological connectivity.
- 3.05 Applicants should demonstrate how the proposed layout and massing have been informed by urban greening objectives, particularly where development intensity is high or where the site is subject to climate-related risks such as overheating or surface water flooding.

3C Ground-based greening and other measures

- 3.06 Where feasible, ground-based greening is generally the most effective and resilient form of urban greening because it can provide cooling, biodiversity support, water infiltration, usable space and public realm benefits.
- 3.07 In constrained urban locations, opportunities for ground-based greening may be limited. In such cases, applicants should demonstrate that reasonable opportunities have been explored and maximised, rather than assuming from the outset that ground-based greening is not possible.
- 3.08 Green roofs, brown roofs, green walls and similar measures can play an important role where ground-level opportunities are constrained. They should normally complement, rather than replace, ground-based greening where ground-based greening is achievable.

- 3.09 Urban greening should be integrated with other aspects of design, including sustainable drainage, street design, movement networks, public realm, biodiversity support and building performance. Multifunctional approaches are encouraged where they enhance overall outcomes and do not compromise primary functions.

3D Avoiding tokenistic or residual greening

- 3.10 Applicants should avoid treating urban greening as a residual component introduced after key design decisions have been made. Proposals that rely predominantly on narrow strips of planting, isolated planters or areas with no clear function or management strategy are unlikely to be supported unless clearly justified by site constraints.
- 3.11 Urban greening proposals should be intentional, coherent and capable of delivering meaningful benefits over time, rather than serving a purely decorative purpose.

3E Key messages for applicants and decision-makers

- 3.12 Urban greening should be considered from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design.
- 3.13 Greening should be integrated with layout, massing, access, sustainable drainage, public realm and long-term management considerations.
- 3.14 Ground-based greening should be considered where feasible, but site-specific constraints, technical feasibility and design quality remain important.
- 3.15 Urban greening should avoid tokenistic or residual measures and should be capable of delivering meaningful long-term benefits.

4 What constitutes effective urban greening in Adur and Worthing

4A Purpose of this section

4.01 This section explains the characteristics of effective urban greening within the environmental, spatial and climatic context of Adur and Worthing. It focuses on the qualities of greening that are most likely to deliver meaningful benefits and support adopted policy objectives.

4.02 Effective urban greening should be functional, well-integrated and capable of long-term management. It should be selected and designed having regard to local context, exposure, soil conditions, water management, biodiversity value, maintenance requirements and the intended use of the space.

4B Local context and challenges

4.03 Adur and Worthing are characterised by tightly constrained urban form, a strong coastal influence, proximity to the South Downs and a limited supply of undeveloped land. Much new development therefore takes place through intensification, regeneration or redevelopment rather than urban expansion.

4.04 These characteristics create challenges for urban greening, including limited space at ground level, competing demands on the public realm, exposure to wind and salt spray, surface water management pressures and increasing risks associated with overheating and climate change.

4.05 These constraints make the quality, integration and functionality of urban greening especially important. Small, fragmented or poorly designed interventions are unlikely to deliver meaningful benefits, whereas well-considered greening can make a positive contribution to environmental quality, resilience and placemaking.

4C Ground-based greening, trees and usable green space

4.06 Where feasible, ground-based greening is generally the most effective form of urban greening. It can support microclimate regulation, water infiltration, biodiversity, public realm quality and everyday use.

4.07 Trees are a particularly important component of effective urban greening in Adur and Worthing, contributing to cooling, air quality, visual amenity, biodiversity support and placemaking. The benefits delivered by trees depend heavily on their ability to establish successfully and thrive over time.

4.08 Applicants should have regard to relevant arboricultural standards and guidance applicable to the proposal at the relevant time, including BS 5837 and relevant urban tree guidance.

- 4.09 Tree planting and other greening measures should be designed with sufficient space, soil volume, rooting conditions, water availability, protection and long-term management arrangements to support healthy establishment and growth.

4D Green roofs, brown roofs and green walls

- 4.10 Green roofs, brown roofs and green walls can make a valuable contribution to urban greening where ground-level opportunities are constrained. They should be designed to complement ground-based greening where feasible and to deliver meaningful environmental or placemaking outcomes.
- 4.11 The suitability of green wall systems should be considered having regard to site-specific factors including structural feasibility, building safety requirements, maintenance requirements, irrigation needs, long-term management arrangements, visual impact and operational practicality. Certain systems may not be appropriate for all building types or heights, including some residential buildings above 11 metres.
- 4.12 In coastal locations, careful consideration should be given to exposure, wind, salt spray, planting selection, structural capacity and maintenance access to ensure long-term performance.

4E Sustainable drainage, climate resilience and connectivity

- 4.13 Urban greening should, where appropriate, be integrated with sustainable drainage systems in order to deliver multifunctional benefits. Greening associated with drainage features should be designed to function effectively as part of the drainage system and should not compromise the primary drainage function of SuDS features.
- 4.14 Urban greening can contribute to climate resilience by supporting cooling, shade, surface water interception, biodiversity and public realm quality. These benefits are most likely to be achieved where greening is well-integrated and designed with local conditions in mind.
- 4.15 Effective urban greening is not solely about the amount of planted area but about coherence, connectivity and relationship to how spaces are used. Greening that contributes to a connected network of streets, spaces and routes is more likely to deliver lasting benefits.

4F Avoiding tokenistic or non-functional greening

- 4.16 Urban greening proposals that rely primarily on small planters, narrow strips of planting or inaccessible areas with no clear function or management strategy are unlikely to be effective in the local context.
- 4.17 In constrained locations, applicants should demonstrate how reasonable greening opportunities have been explored and maximised. Urban greening measures should be proportionate, deliverable and capable of long-term management.”

Table 1 Forms of urban greening and their functional contribution

Form of Urban Greening	Primary Functional Contribution	Key Design Considerations and Limitations
Ground-based planting (planted directly into natural or connected soil)	Cooling through evapotranspiration; surface water infiltration; biodiversity support; soil health; contribution to townscape character	Requires adequate soil depth and volume; requires coordination with services and levels; performance depends on long-term management
Trees in connected soil volumes	Shading and urban cooling; microclimate regulation; air quality benefits; biodiversity habitat; strong placemaking role	Requires sufficient rooting volume; conflicts may arise with underground services; long-term success depends on soil quality and irrigation where necessary
Vegetated sustainable drainage features (e.g. rain gardens, swales)	Surface water attenuation and treatment; biodiversity support; urban cooling; visual amenity	Must prioritise drainage performance; requires maintenance access; planting selection must respond to hydrological conditions
Green roofs and brown roofs	Visual greening; localised microclimate benefits; contribution to design quality; potential contribution to urban cooling and biodiversity where designed and managed appropriately.	Structural feasibility, building safety requirements, irrigation, maintenance access, long-term management, visual impact and operational practicality should be considered. Certain systems may not be appropriate for all building types or heights, including some residential buildings above 11 metres
Green walls and façade greening	Visual greening; localised microclimate benefits; contribution to design quality	Limited biodiversity value compared with ground-based planting; irrigation and maintenance requirements; structural considerations
Small planters and decorative planting	Visual amenity; localised softening of built form	Limited environmental function; vulnerable to neglect or removal; should not be relied upon as primary greening strategy

5 Evidence and submission expectations

5A Purpose of this section

- 5.01 This section explains the information applicants may need to provide to demonstrate how urban greening has been considered, integrated and delivered as part of development proposals.
- 5.02 The evidence expectations in this section do not introduce new policy requirements. They explain the information typically needed to assess compliance with adopted policy and to support proportionate planning judgement.

5B Proportionate evidence

- 5.03 Urban greening evidence should be proportionate to the scale, nature and complexity of the proposal and the extent to which urban greening is relevant to the development.
- 5.04 Plans and supporting information should clearly show how urban greening has influenced the design of the proposal.
- 5.05 Where urban greening opportunities are constrained, applicants should explain the relevant constraints and how reasonable opportunities have been explored.
- 5.06 Supporting information should be clear, focused and consistent with other environmental information submitted with the application.

5C Typical information

- 5.07 Depending on the nature and scale of the proposal, relevant information may include:
- site layout plans showing existing and proposed greening
 - landscape or public realm plans identifying greening features
 - sections or details showing soil depth, levels, rooting volumes or planting zones where relevant
 - information explaining how greening integrates with drainage, biodiversity, public realm and site layout
 - details of green roofs, brown roofs, green walls or other structural greening where proposed
 - information on long-term management and maintenance where significant or complex greening measures are proposed.
- 5.08 For minor development, information may be limited to a site plan and brief explanation of the proposed greening approach where relevant.

- 5.09 For small to medium development, information may include a landscape or public realm plan, indicative planting schedule and explanation of how greening integrates with site layout and drainage.
- 5.10 For major, strategic or complex development, information may include a more comprehensive landscape, public realm or green infrastructure strategy with proportionate detail on design, delivery and long-term management.

5D 5D Validation and decision-making

- 5.11 The local planning authority will apply a proportionate approach to validation and assessment, having regard to the scale of development and the relevance of urban greening to the proposal.
- 5.12 Applications should provide sufficient information to enable the local planning authority to understand the proposed approach and assess whether urban greening has been integrated in a meaningful and realistic way.

6 Delivery, management and long-term considerations

6A Purpose of this section

- 6.01 Urban greening measures must be capable of delivery, management and maintenance over time if they are to provide lasting benefits.
- 6.02 The level of detail required to demonstrate delivery and management should be proportionate to the nature, scale and complexity of the proposal and the greening measures proposed.

6B Delivery and implementation

- 6.03 Urban greening should be considered early in the design process so that proposed measures are realistic, coordinated with other technical requirements and capable of implementation.
- 6.04 Proposals should avoid relying on greening measures that cannot reasonably be delivered because of inadequate space, soil volume, structural capacity, maintenance access, irrigation, drainage arrangements or management responsibility.

6C Management and maintenance

- 6.05 Where significant or complex urban greening measures are proposed, applicants should provide sufficient information to demonstrate that they can be maintained and managed appropriately.
- 6.06 This may include, where proportionate:
- identification of management responsibilities
 - indicative maintenance approaches
 - confirmation that access for maintenance has been considered
 - arrangements for replacement planting or remedial action where necessary.
- 6.07 Where greening measures serve multiple functions, such as drainage, cooling, biodiversity support and visual amenity, management approaches should reflect this multifunctionality and avoid undermining primary functions.

6D Securing long-term outcomes

- 6.08 Where long-term management arrangements are required to secure policy outcomes, these matters may be addressed through planning conditions, planning obligations, legal agreements or other appropriate mechanisms in accordance with the relevant SPD and adopted policy.

- 6.09 The councils will consider delivery and management arrangements proportionately, having regard to the scale, nature and context of the proposal, the significance of the greening measures proposed and the need to ensure that secured outcomes are realistic and enforceable.
- 6.10 This TAN does not introduce new policy requirements. It explains how delivery, management and long-term considerations may be addressed in practice to support the implementation of adopted policy.”

7 Common issues and clarifications

7A Purpose of this section

- 7.01 This section addresses common issues and misunderstandings that can arise in relation to urban greening. It is intended to support clearer submissions and proportionate decision-making.
- 7.02 Nothing in this section introduces new policy requirements or standards. It explains how existing policy and the guidance in this TAN may be interpreted and applied in practice.

7B Urban greening should not be residual

- 7.03 Urban greening should not be treated as an optional add-on or residual element introduced after key design decisions have been made. Where greening is relevant to adopted policy objectives, it should inform site appraisal, layout and design from an early stage.

7C Urban greening and biodiversity net gain are different

- 7.04 Urban greening and statutory biodiversity net gain serve different functions within the planning system. Urban greening is a design-led, place-based consideration, while statutory biodiversity net gain is governed by legislation, regulations and metric-based assessment.
- 7.05 Applicants should not assume that delivery of statutory biodiversity net gain, whether on-site or off-site, removes the need to consider urban greening as part of site design. Conversely, urban greening measures do not in themselves demonstrate compliance with statutory biodiversity net gain requirements unless they are specifically designed and secured for that purpose.

7D Roof-based and decorative greening

- 7.06 Green roofs, brown roofs, green walls and decorative planting can make a valuable contribution to urban greening, particularly in constrained locations. However, such measures should not be relied upon as a substitute for ground-based greening where reasonable ground-based opportunities exist.
- 7.07 Decorative or tokenistic greening with limited function, poor integration or unclear management is unlikely to be sufficient where urban greening is relevant to adopted policy objectives.

7E Constraints and proportionality

- 7.08 The councils recognise that site constraints may affect the extent and type of urban greening that can be delivered. Applicants should explain relevant constraints and demonstrate how reasonable opportunities have been explored.

- 7.09 The assessment of urban greening will remain proportionate to the scale, nature, context and constraints of the proposal and will rely on planning judgement.”