



WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Supplementary Planning Document: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

June 2026



**WORTHING BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

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1 Introduction, purpose and status

1A Introduction and purpose

- 1.01 This Supplementary Planning Document provides guidance to support the implementation of adopted development plan policies relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, trees, green streets and sustainable drainage systems within the Worthing Local Plan area¹. It is intended to assist applicants, officers and decision-makers in considering how development proposals can incorporate multifunctional green infrastructure in a manner proportionate to the scale, nature and context of the proposal.
- 1.02 This SPD does not form part of the statutory development plan, does not allocate land, does not introduce new policy requirements and does not create additional development management tests beyond adopted policy and relevant legislation. It provides guidance on how adopted policies and statutory requirements may be applied in practice.
- 1.03 The guidance should be applied proportionately having regard to site-specific circumstances, adopted policy, technical evidence, viability considerations where relevant and the wider planning balance. Not all parts of the SPD will be relevant to all proposals. It should be applied proportionately and how planning judgement should be exercised when applying the guidance to individual proposals.
- 1.04 For clarity, where this SPD uses the term “urban greening”, it is describing a range of measures and outcomes already supported by adopted Worthing Local Plan policies, particularly those relating to design quality, green infrastructure, biodiversity, trees and sustainable drainage. The term is used as contemporary descriptive shorthand and does not introduce new policy requirements.

1B Why this SPD is necessary

- 1.05 The Worthing Local Plan establishes policy requirements relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity, design quality, flood risk, sustainable drainage, climate resilience and the public realm. These policies operate at a strategic level and require practical guidance to support consistent implementation across different sites, scales and development types.
- 1.06 This SPD helps bridge the gap between adopted policy and practical delivery. It explains how green infrastructure, biodiversity, urban greening, trees and sustainable drainage can be considered from the earliest stages of site appraisal, layout and design, rather than being treated as late-stage mitigation.

¹ The Worthing Local Plan Area does not include parts of the borough in the South Downs National Park

- 1.07 Worthing is characterised by a compact and tightly constrained urban form, a coastal setting, surface water and coastal flood risk, limited opportunities for large-scale new green space, and significant redevelopment and intensification pressures. In this context, green infrastructure must be planned carefully so that it is multifunctional, deliverable and capable of long-term management.
- 1.08 The SPD is intended to support consistent and proportionate decision-making. It should be read alongside adopted policy, national policy and guidance, statutory requirements and the Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN and Adur & Worthing Urban Greening TAN where relevant

1C Worthing Local Plan area context and justification

- 1.09 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.
- 1.10 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.
- 1.11 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.
- 1.12 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.
- 1.13 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.

- 1.14 Worthing contains constrained urban areas, redevelopment and intensification pressures, coastal plain landscapes and opportunities for urban greening, tree canopy enhancement, multifunctional public realm improvements and ecological connectivity where relevant and proportionate. These opportunities should be assessed in the context of site-specific constraints, adopted policy and the wider planning balance

1D Policy and legislative drivers

- 1.15 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.
- 1.16 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.
- 1.17 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.
- 1.18 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.
- 1.19 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 approach 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.
- 1.20 This SPD should be applied in a manner which supports the integrated delivery of adopted development plan objectives including environmental enhancement, climate resilience, sustainable growth, infrastructure provision and housing delivery. The guidance should not be interpreted in isolation from the wider development plan strategy

1E Scope, proportionality and the role of planning judgement

- 1.21 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.
- 1.22 The council recognises that sites vary in size, context, constraints, opportunities and viability. The guidance in this SPD should therefore be applied proportionately, with the level of detail and supporting evidence reflecting the scale and nature of development and the environmental outcomes being sought.
- 1.23 This SPD supports the exercise of planning judgement; it does not replace it. The application of this SPD requires proportionate planning judgement having regard to site-specific circumstances, adopted policy, technical evidence, viability considerations where relevant and the wider planning balance.
- 1.24 The SPD does not prescribe uniform solutions or standards for all development. References elsewhere in this SPD to proportionality, flexibility and planning judgement should be read in the context of this overarching principle.

1F Status, weight and supporting technical guidance

- 1.25 This SPD has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations and has been subject to public consultation. It forms a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 1.26 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.
- 1.27 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

- 1.28 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
Legislation and national planning policy	Establish the statutory framework for biodiversity, biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure, including mandatory requirements that apply to qualifying development
Local plans	Set the adopted planning policy requirements for green infrastructure, biodiversity protection and enhancement within the local plan area.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (this document)	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.
Technical Advice Notes (TANs)	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.

Box 2: Related guidance documents

This SPD forms part of a complementary suite of planning guidance documents comprising:

- Adur Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD
- Worthing Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD
- Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN
- Adur & Worthing Urban Greening TAN

The SPDs provide strategic and place-based green infrastructure and biodiversity guidance. The Technical Advice Notes provide more detailed operational and technical guidance relating to biodiversity net gain implementation and urban greening measures.

Applicants should consider the relevance of each document having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposal.

2 Policy and legislative context

2A Purpose and role of this section

- 2.01 This section summarises the policy and legislative context within which this SPD operates. It identifies the principal adopted policy and statutory requirements relevant to green infrastructure, biodiversity, biodiversity net gain, urban greening, trees, green streets and sustainable drainage in the Worthing Local Plan area.
- 2.02 The section is intended to provide context only. It should be read alongside the adopted development plan, national policy and guidance, legislation and the associated Technical Advice Notes where relevant

2B The statutory development plan context

- 2.03 The statutory development plan for the Worthing Local Plan area comprises the Worthing Local Plan (2023), West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (2018) and Waste Local Plan (2019). 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 National planning policy and Planning Practice Guidance support the planning, protection and enhancement of multifunctional green infrastructure as part of sustainable development, climate resilience, biodiversity recovery, health and wellbeing and high-quality place-making.
- 2.10 Applicants and decision-makers may also find it helpful to refer to the UK Green Infrastructure Framework and associated best practice guidance relevant to multifunctional green infrastructure planning and delivery.
- 2.11 Where relevant to the proposal, applicants should also have regard to potential impacts on the Strategic Road Network and engage with the appropriate highway authority and associated guidance where necessary, including DfT Circular 01/2022, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and relevant National Highways environmental guidance applicable at the relevant time.
- 2.12 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.

2D Biodiversity and biodiversity net gain policy framework

- 2.13 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.

- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 Relevant development proposals within coastal areas should also have regard to the South Marine Plan and associated marine planning considerations where applicable, including policies relating to biodiversity, climate resilience, coastal change and water quality. Certain forms of coastal and waterfront development may also require marine licences or other consents. Applicants should have regard to relevant marine consenting processes and associated guidance, including the Coastal Concordat where applicable.

Relationship to other sections

- 2.18 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

- 2.19 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.
- 2.20 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.
- 2.21 The introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain does not replace or override adopted local plan policies relating to biodiversity. Local plan policies continue to play an important 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.
- 2.22 Where statutory biodiversity net gain requirements apply, the statutory framework establishes the minimum biodiversity net gain requirement subject to exemptions, thresholds and transitional arrangements. In the Worthing Local Plan area, Policy DM18 establishes a local policy requirement for 20% biodiversity net gain on previously developed land where applicable.
- 2.23 The SPD does not introduce any additional biodiversity net gain requirement beyond legislation or adopted development plan policy. Any requirement for biodiversity net gain above the statutory minimum must be established through adopted development plan policy and supported by the relevant evidence base.
- 2.24 Biodiversity net gain should not be treated as a standalone technical exercise disconnected from site design, green infrastructure, ecological connectivity or the mitigation hierarchy. Where statutory biodiversity net gain requirements apply, they should be considered alongside adopted policy, site-specific ecological evidence and the wider green infrastructure context.

National policy alignment, LNRS and wider statutory duties

- 2.25 In applying biodiversity policies, the council will have regard to relevant statutory duties, national policy and guidance, and strategic environmental evidence applicable at the relevant time.

- 2.26 The West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy forms part of the wider environmental evidence base relevant to biodiversity and ecological network planning. The LNRS does not form part of the statutory development plan and should be considered proportionately alongside adopted policy, site-specific evidence and other material considerations.
- 2.27 Where available, digital versions of this SPD may include links to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy website, mapping resources and associated guidance in order to support accessibility and early-stage understanding of nature recovery opportunities.
- 2.28 The Adur & Worthing Vision for Nature (adopted 2025) also informs the strategic context for this SPD by identifying locally endorsed priorities for strengthening ecological networks, enhancing green infrastructure connectivity and improving access to nature. It is not a development plan document but provides locally specific evidence and strategic context that may support the application of adopted policies where relevant.

Relationship to other sections

- 2.29 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

- 2.30 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.
- 2.31 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.

- 2.32 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.
- 2.33 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

- 2.34 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.
- 2.35 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.
- 2.36 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

- 2.37 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.

- 2.38 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.
- 2.39 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.
- 2.40 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

- 2.41 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.
- 2.42 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.

Relationship to other sections

- 2.43 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

- 2.44 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.
- 2.45 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.
- 2.46 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

- 2.47 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.
- 2.48 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.
- 2.49 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

- 2.50 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.
- 2.51 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.
- 2.52 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

- 2.53 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.
- 2.54 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.
- 2.55 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.
- 2.56 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.

Relationship to other sections

- 2.57 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

- 2.58 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

- 2.59 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.
- 2.60 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

- 2.61 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.
- 2.62 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

- 2.63 The Worthing Local Plan area includes extensive areas at risk from tidal 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.
- 2.64 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.
- 2.65 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

- 2.66 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.

- 2.67 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.

Relationship to other sections

- 2.68 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

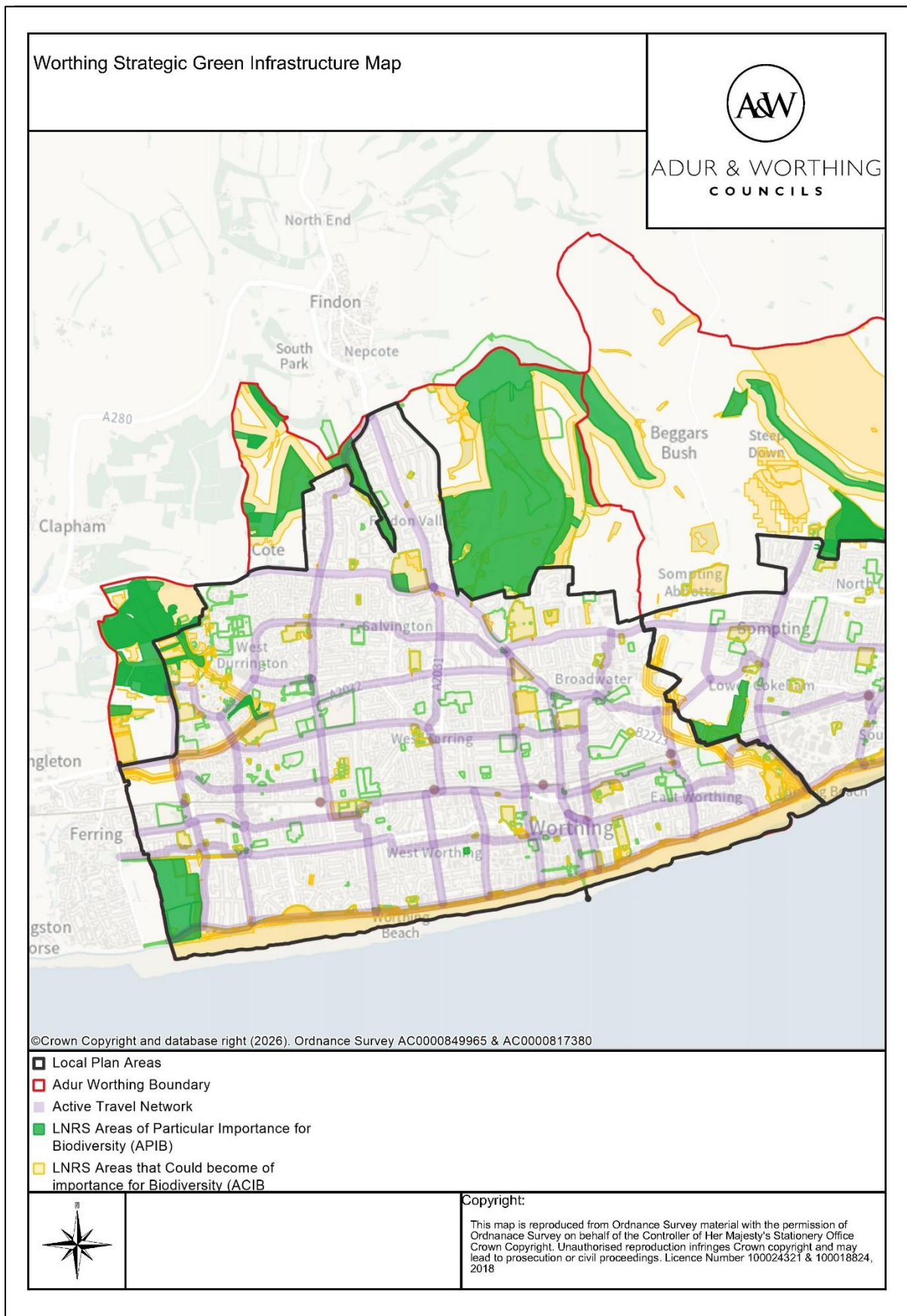
- 3.01 This section explains how the council identifies, understands and applies the concept of strategic green infrastructure within the Worthing Local Plan area, and how strategic significance is assessed when considering development proposals. It provides clarity on the role of green infrastructure 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 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.
- 3.10 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network combines a range of evidence layers, environmental information and adopted policy considerations to support understanding of the wider green infrastructure context affecting a site. The Network is evidence-led and non-determinative. It does not allocate land, create a new policy designation, operate as a constraint map, create a presumption for or against development or predetermine planning outcomes

Map 1: Worthing Strategic Green Infrastructure Network



3.11

Box 3: How the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network should be used

The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network should be used as an evidence-led framework to support early site appraisal, environmental understanding and design evolution.

The Network should be interpreted alongside site-specific technical evidence, ecological assessment, adopted policy and other material planning considerations.

The Network does not:

- allocate land
- create a new policy designation
- operate as a constraint map
- create a presumption for or against development
- predetermine planning outcomes
- prescribe fixed site layouts or internal development boundaries
- replace the need for detailed site assessment or professional planning judgement.

Where environmental, movement and green infrastructure layers overlap, the SPD should not be interpreted as creating cumulative mandatory requirements. Relevant considerations should be assessed proportionately having regard to the scale, nature and context of the proposal, adopted policy and site-specific evidence.

Within adopted site allocations, the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network should be used to inform site analysis, environmental assessment and opportunities for integrated green infrastructure delivery. The mapped framework does not alter the principle of development established through adopted allocation policies.

3C Policy framework for strategic green infrastructure

- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 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.
- 3.14 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

- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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.
- 3.17 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

- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 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.
- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 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

- 3.22 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.
- 3.23 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.

- 3.24 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

- 3.25 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.
- 3.26 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.
- 3.27 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.
- 3.28 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.

- 3.29 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.
- 3.30 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.
- 3.31 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

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

Table 3: Green infrastructure outcomes

Outcome area	Contribution of green infrastructure	How this SPD supports delivery
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

- 3.32 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.
- 3.33 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.
- 3.34 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

- 3.35 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.
- 3.36 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.
- 3.37 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.

- 3.38 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.
- 3.39 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.
- 3.40 Environmental opportunity mapping layers, including Areas that Could become of particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB) mapping where relevant, identify strategic opportunities which may be relevant to site planning and environmental assessment. Mapping layers should be interpreted proportionately alongside detailed site evidence, adopted policy and other material planning considerations. Inclusion within a mapped layer does not automatically indicate that a particular intervention or outcome is required.

3J Relationship to biodiversity net gain and mitigation

- 3.41 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. Where green corridors and open spaces are intended to provide recreational access, consideration should be given to the needs of a range of users, including walkers, cyclists and equestrians where appropriate having regard to site context, safety, design and management considerations.
- 3.42 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.
- 3.43 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

- 3.44 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.

- 3.45 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.
- 3.46 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

- 3.47 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

- 3.48 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.
- 3.49 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.
- 3.50 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 4: 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 biodiversity net gain relates to green infrastructure, Worthing Local Plan Policy DM18 and adopted policy in the Worthing Local Plan area. It provides strategic and place-based context only. Detailed technical guidance on statutory biodiversity net gain is provided in the Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN.
- 4.02 Statutory biodiversity net gain requirements apply only where required by legislation and regulations applicable to the proposal at the relevant time and remain subject to exemptions, thresholds and transitional arrangements established through legislation and national guidance.
- 4.03 This SPD does not introduce new biodiversity net gain percentage requirements. Any requirement for biodiversity net gain above the statutory minimum must be established through adopted development plan policy and supported by the relevant evidence base.
- 4.04 In the Worthing Local Plan area, Policy DM18 establishes a local policy requirement for 20% biodiversity net gain on previously developed land where applicable. The relationship between statutory biodiversity net gain and Policy DM18 is addressed in more detail in the Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN.

4B 4B Relationship with green infrastructure

- 4.05 Biodiversity net gain should be considered alongside the wider green infrastructure, ecological connectivity, design and placemaking objectives of adopted policy. Where statutory biodiversity net gain requirements apply, applicants should consider how biodiversity measures can contribute to multifunctional green infrastructure and wider nature recovery objectives where relevant and proportionate.
- 4.06 Biodiversity net gain does not replace the need to apply the mitigation hierarchy. Development proposals should avoid, minimise and mitigate ecological harm where applicable before considering compensation or net gain delivery.

4C Technical guidance

- 4.07 Applicants should refer to the Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN for detailed guidance on:
- when statutory biodiversity net gain applies and when it does not
 - exemptions, thresholds and transitional arrangements
 - the relationship between statutory biodiversity net gain and Worthing Policy DM18

- use of the statutory biodiversity metric
 - evidence and validation expectations
 - the mitigation hierarchy
 - on-site and off-site biodiversity net gain delivery
 - securing, management, monitoring and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans
- 4.08 Detailed evidence, validation and delivery expectations for statutory biodiversity net gain, including the relationship between statutory biodiversity net gain and Worthing Local Plan Policy DM18, are addressed in the Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN. The general principles on proportionality and planning judgement in Section 1E apply to the use of this SPD.

Box 5: 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 Urban greening refers to the integration of trees, planting, green roofs, green walls, sustainable drainage features, biodiversity measures and other green infrastructure into the design of buildings, streets, spaces and development layouts.
- 5.02 In Worthing borough, urban greening is particularly important because many sites are constrained, previously developed or located within established urban areas where opportunities for new green space are limited. Urban greening can support biodiversity, ecological connectivity, climate resilience, surface water management, urban cooling, public realm quality, health and wellbeing.
- 5.03 Urban greening should be considered from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design. It should be integrated with layout, access, public realm, drainage, biodiversity and long-term management considerations, rather than treated as a residual or decorative measure.

5B Relationship with the Urban Greening TAN

- 5.04 This SPD provides the strategic and place-based context for urban greening. Detailed guidance on how urban greening should be considered through the design process, what types of measures may be appropriate, what evidence may be required and how long-term management should be addressed is provided in the Adur & Worthing Urban Greening TAN.
- 5.05 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.
- 5.06 The SPD does not introduce a fixed urban greening metric or new quantitative standard. Urban greening measures should be assessed through adopted policy, site-specific evidence and planning judgement.

6 Trees and green streets

6A Purpose and scope of this section

- 6.01 Trees and green streets form an important part of multifunctional green infrastructure. They can contribute to biodiversity, ecological connectivity, shade, cooling, air quality, surface water management, public realm quality, landscape character and health and wellbeing.
- 6.02 In Worthing, tree canopy enhancement and green streets are particularly important because of constrained urban form, redevelopment and intensification pressures, public realm improvement opportunities and the need to improve climate resilience in established urban areas.
- 6.03 Development proposals should consider existing trees, potential new tree planting and opportunities for green streets from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design. Tree and planting proposals should be appropriate to site context, available space, soil volume, exposure, drainage, long-term management and the intended function of the space.
- 6.04 The retention, protection and integration of existing trees should be considered in accordance with adopted policy and relevant arboricultural standards and guidance applicable to the proposal at the relevant time.

6B Design and delivery principles

- 6.05 Tree and green street proposals should be designed to be deliverable, maintainable and capable of long-term performance. Proposals should avoid tokenistic planting where there is insufficient space, soil volume or management provision to support healthy growth.
- 6.06 Applicants should have regard to relevant arboricultural standards and guidance, including BS 5837 and other relevant urban tree guidance applicable to the proposal at the relevant time.
- 6.07 Tree and green street measures should be considered alongside the wider green infrastructure, urban greening, sustainable drainage and public realm strategy for the proposal.

7 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as green infrastructure

7A Purpose and scope of this section

- 7.01 Sustainable drainage systems can form an important part of multifunctional green infrastructure where they are designed to manage surface water, support biodiversity, contribute to landscape quality and provide long-term climate resilience.
- 7.02 In Worthing, SuDS are particularly important because of surface water management pressures, coastal flood risk, water quality considerations and the need to integrate drainage with constrained urban development and public realm design.

7B Design and policy principles

- 7.03 SuDS should be considered from the earliest stages of site appraisal and design. Proposals should seek to manage surface water sustainably and avoid unnecessary discharge to foul-only sewer systems where feasible and appropriate having regard to site-specific circumstances and infrastructure constraints.
- 7.04 Sustainable drainage proposals should be designed having regard to relevant national standards and guidance applicable at the relevant time, including the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems where relevant.
- 7.05 Green infrastructure and drainage proposals should have regard to water quality considerations and the capacity and operation of wastewater infrastructure where relevant.
- 7.06 Coastal green infrastructure proposals should have regard to marine biodiversity, ecological connectivity, climate resilience and water quality considerations where relevant.

7C Long-term management

- 7.07 SuDS and associated green infrastructure should be designed to be maintainable over the lifetime of the development. Where relevant, proposals should demonstrate that appropriate arrangements are in place for the long-term management and maintenance of green infrastructure and sustainable drainage features.
- 7.08 Detailed technical drainage requirements will be considered through relevant flood risk, drainage, building control, statutory consultee and validation processes. This SPD provides planning guidance on how SuDS can contribute to multifunctional green infrastructure and place-making.

8 Long-term delivery, management, monitoring and enforcement

8A Purpose and scope of this section

- 8.01 Green infrastructure, biodiversity, urban greening, trees and sustainable drainage measures must be capable of long-term delivery, management and maintenance if they are to provide lasting benefits.
- 8.02 The level of information required to demonstrate delivery and management should be proportionate to the nature, scale and complexity of the proposal and the measures being secured.

8B Securing and managing measures

- 8.03 Where environmental measures are necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms, they may be secured through planning conditions, planning obligations, legal agreements or other appropriate mechanisms having regard to the nature of the proposal, adopted policy and statutory requirements.
- 8.04 Management and maintenance arrangements should be clear, realistic and capable of implementation. They should identify the measures to be managed, the responsible parties, the expected management period where relevant, and how long-term performance will be maintained.
- 8.05 Biodiversity net gain delivery, Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans and statutory monitoring requirements are addressed in more detail in the Adur & Worthing Biodiversity Net Gain TAN. Urban greening delivery and management considerations are addressed in more detail in the Adur & Worthing Urban Greening TAN.

8C Planning judgement

- 8.06 The council will consider long-term delivery and management arrangements proportionately, having regard to the scale, nature and context of the proposal, the significance of the measures proposed and the need to ensure that secured environmental outcomes are deliverable and enforceable

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.