

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (STRATEGIC CHALLENGES)

Green infrastructure
Green wedges
Countryside
Sustainable drainage and surface water
Flood risk



*Oadby and Wigston
Borough Council
Leicestershire*

Green Infrastructure

What the government says:

- 4.1 NPPF defines Green Infrastructure as *'a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity'*.
- 4.2 NPPF states that *'strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and make sufficient provision for... conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation'*.
- 4.3 Further, NPPF suggests that *'planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which...enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling'*.
- 4.4 Also, NPPF suggest that *'Plans should...take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries'*.

What the Council says:

- 4.5 The Borough Council's aim is to continually improve the quality of its natural green assets as well as to ensure a net gain in its quantity. All new development should maximise existing Green Infrastructure and create new areas of green space that contribute towards the overall network of Green Infrastructure.
- 4.6 Green Infrastructure also plays an important role in terms of climate change mitigation (e.g. through carbon storage) and climate change adaptation (e.g. through moderating urban temperature extremes).
- 4.7 Throughout the Borough there is a network of existing areas of strategic Green Infrastructure falling into different categories which are important to the character of both the urban and rural areas; and provide valuable spaces for formal and informal recreational activities in our communities, as well as spaces and networks from a biodiversity and ecology point of view. These strategic areas include, but are not limited to; the countryside around the Leicester PUA, the green wedges, river corridors (and their riparian habitats), canals (and their riparian habitats), railway lines, sports field, cemeteries and burial grounds, country parks, golf courses, hedgerows and woodland.
- 4.8 Green infrastructure should contribute to and enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents and visitors to the Borough. Opportunities to achieve this include;
 - providing improvements that respect existing landscape character, that will assist in attracting and retaining inward investment;
 - protecting and enhancing existing biodiversity, creating new areas for biodiversity and reversing the fragmentation of habitats by restoring the connectivity between them;
 - providing continued, new and enhanced links to the countryside; and,



- coordinating the use of green space to optimise its use for leisure, biodiversity, drainage, flood management and other socio economic activities.

4.9 The provision of accessible Green Infrastructure is seen as increasingly important to regeneration and creating places that are based upon local distinctiveness. Quality environments also attract quality investment in terms of housing, jobs, skills and visiting attractions.

4.10 Green Infrastructure can contribute to the high quality natural and built environment that fosters sustainable communities. Biodiversity is preserved and enhanced by ensuring Green Infrastructure is networked through corridors of green space. As well as biodiversity, Green Infrastructure includes sites of ecological, geological and historical interest.

4.11 The Council's current Local Plan Policy 8 Green Infrastructure seeks a net gain in Green Infrastructure through the preservation and enhancement of open spaces and assets that comprise the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its network. It is expected that the Council will continue to maintain the current policy position in relation to Green Infrastructure in the new Local Plan.

Potential options:

- Maintain the current Local Plan policy position relating to Green Infrastructure with minor wording amendments to ensure that it is up-to-date with current national planning policy and guidance.

Questions:

- Do you think that the Council should maintain the current Local Plan policy position relating to Green Infrastructure, in the new Local Plan, with minor wording amendments to ensure that it is up-to-date with current national planning policy and guidance?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



Green wedges

What the government says:

- 4.12 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that *'Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision ... d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation'*.
- 4.13 Green wedge policies were first introduced in the County of Leicestershire in the Leicestershire Structure Plan of 1987, and ever since have been supported through Regional, Sub-regional and Local Plans.

What the Council says:

- 4.14 Green wedge designations, in short, are locally designated strategic areas of undeveloped land between the urban areas that prevent the merging of settlements, provide 'green' access into the countryside from the urban areas, and, are locations for open space and recreational facilities.
- 4.15 As well as guiding development form and effecting residents positively, Green Wedges are key green areas within the Borough's Green Infrastructure network and support the Borough's biodiversity. The Green Wedges within the Borough act as important strategic green infrastructure corridors linking green areas within the urban area to the countryside as well as other key strategic green infrastructure corridors such as the Grand Union Canal and railway corridors.
- 4.16 There are currently two Green Wedges situated within the Borough, both of which cross administrative boundaries into neighbouring Local Authority areas. To ensure that the green wedge designations remain up-to-date the Council undertook a Green Wedge Review for the current Local Plan, that assessed both of the Borough's green wedges in their entirety against a Leicester and Leicestershire wide agreed methodology.
- 4.17 The Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge spans the administrative boundary with Leicester City to the north west. The green wedge in its entirety is just shy of 210 hectares, with the Borough's designation being circa 168 hectares in size and separating the urban settlement areas of Oadby and Wigston entirely. The green wedge runs north west to south east from Leicester City out towards the open countryside to the south of Oadby and east of Wigston. As well as farm land and open countryside the green wedge comprises of many appropriate leisure activity uses including sports grounds and training facilities, a racecourse, a golf course and a country park.
- 4.18 The Oadby, Thurnby and Stoughton Green Wedge is situated to the north east of Oadby and crosses administrative boundaries with Leicester City and Harborough District. The overall area of the green wedge is circa 467 hectares. The Borough's designation makes up approximately 93 hectares of the total designation size. The area of green wedge that lies within the Borough runs from a north west to south easterly direction and begins at the Borough boundary close to the B582 Gartree Road and extends out towards the countryside to the north of Manor High School in Oadby. Land uses currently situated within the Borough's green wedge area include sports pitches, open fields and a private hospital.
- 4.19 With the Borough being relatively compact and urban in nature, Green Wedges are extremely important; they play major roles in shaping the character of the environment and help stimulate leisure and tourism whilst improving residents and visitors quality of life.



4.20 It is expected that the Council will continue to maintain the green wedge designations within the Borough area through retaining related planning policy set out in the new Local Plan. Current planning policy relating to green wedges is contained within the Local Plan Policy 42 Green Wedges.

Potential options:

- Continue with the existing policy approach and retain the Green Wedge designations, as set out in the Council's current Local Plan and its evidence base.
- Consider whether or not to undertake a Green Wedge Review in order to establish whether or not to retain, create new or amend the boundaries of the existing Green Wedges in order to take account of the new Local Plan proposed site allocations and any other factual updates.

Questions:

- Should the Council 'roll forward' the current Local Plan policy relating to Green Wedges with minor wording amendments to ensure that it is up-to-date with current national planning policy and guidance?
- Should the Council consider whether or not to undertake a Green Wedge Review in order to establish whether or not to retain, create new or amend the boundaries of the existing Green Wedges in order to take account of the new Local Plan proposed site allocations and any other factual updates?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



Countryside

What the government says:

- 4.21 The NPPF is clear that Local Plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. Further, the NPPF suggests that where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify and set out their special characteristics.
- 4.22 The NPPF goes on to suggest that, in specific circumstances, sustainable growth of business and growth associated to sustainable tourism and leisure developments would be acceptable along as the development proposed respects the character of the countryside.
- 4.23 Further it suggests that planning policies should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless in exceptional circumstances, however the cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.

What the Council says:

- 4.24 The Council's current Local Plan seeks to protect the designated countryside areas of the Borough from inappropriate and unsustainable growth and development. The Plan sets out that, although the Borough area is predominately urban, countryside areas play an important role in providing residents of the Borough open access to open and undeveloped landscape areas, that benefits local communities everyday life, health and wellbeing. Further, the countryside areas can play an important role in stimulating leisure and tourism.
- 4.25 It is paramount that the Council continues to protect the countryside areas of the Borough, for the local communities and biodiversity and geodiversity, however the Council is aware that some forms of development may be required within countryside locations.
- 4.26 The current Local Plan, sets out a criteria based approach (based on need and requirement) to development proposals that are proposed within countryside locations. The current Local Plan also makes reference to policy principles set out within the NPPF.
- 4.27 In terms of moving forward, the Council is proposing to role forward the current planning policy (Policy 43 – Countryside) set out in the Local Plan, as it has effectively managed growth within countryside areas over the past few years.

Potential options:

- Continue with the existing criteria based policy approach set out within the current Local Plan.
- Expand the policy approach to allow more forms of development within countryside locations, however being specific to what other forms of development is allowed.



Questions:

- Should the Council 'roll forward' the current policy approach set out in current Local Plan Policy 43 – Countryside, ensuring that it is up to date with current national planning policy and guidance?
- Are any of the other options set out above appropriate?
- What forms of development do you consider should be allowed in countryside locations of the Borough?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



Sustainable drainage and surface water

What the government says:

4.28 The NPPF suggests that Local Plans should seek to identify likely developer contributions expected to mitigate the impact of development over the Plan period to deliver necessary infrastructure, including water and sustainable drainage systems. It goes on to suggest that policies developed should not undermine the viability of the Plan, but should seek to proactively mitigate and adapt to possible climate change factors and events that could arise over the Plan period.

4.29 According to the PPG:

‘Sustainable drainage systems are designed to control surface water run-off close to where it falls and mimic natural drainage as closely as possible. They provide opportunities to:

- *Reduce the causes and impacts of flooding;*
- *Remove pollutants from urban run-off at source; and,*
- *Combine water management with green space with benefits for amenity, recreation and wildlife’.*

What the Council says:

4.30 The theory that sits behind Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) is that they seek to replicate the natural movement of water from a development by reducing flood risk, improving water quality and often create desirable features that can make towns and cities more attractive places to live in by enhancing the quality of life.

4.31 In addition, the European Water Framework Directive requires careful management of water resources through sustainable protection of water quality. Development proposals that are likely to impact surface or groundwater should consider the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. SuDS offer an interesting and cost effective solution in delivering the Directive’s requirements.

4.32 For all developments of 10 or more residential units or 1,000+ square metres of floor area, as well as the provision of SuDS, the creation of new habitats, the planting of appropriate trees, and the creation of new woodland are all currently considered as mitigation options by the Council as they can also help to reduce the danger of both fluvial and surface water flooding.

4.33 However, all proposals for systems and solutions are sought in accordance with the latest National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems and in agreement with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Leicestershire.

4.34 In terms of moving forward, the Council is expecting to role forward the current planning policy wording (relevant parts of Policy 39 – Sustainable Drainage and Surface Water) set out in the current Local Plan, as it has been effective in managing growth within areas at risk of surface water flooding over the past few years, as well as implementing sustainable drainage solutions.

Potential options:

- Continue with the existing policy approach set out within current Local Plan Policy 39 Sustainable drainage and surface water.



- Only apply the policy principles and guidance set at a national level through the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance.

Questions:

- Should the Council 'roll forward' the current policy approach set out in Local Plan (relevant parts of) Policy 39 – Sustainable Drainage and Surface Water, ensuring that it is up to date with current national planning policy and guidance?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



Flood risk

What the government says:

- 4.35 The NPPF sets out fundamental tests to protect local communities and property from the risk of flooding. It states that when the tests are not met, it is quite clear that development should not be allowed.
- 4.36 The NPPF states that *‘the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change’*. It goes on to state that *‘inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere’*.
- 4.37 NPPF suggests that *‘strategic policies should be informed by a strategic flood risk assessment, and should manage flood risk from all sources. They should consider cumulative impacts in, or affecting, local areas susceptible to flooding, and take account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management authorities, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards’*. Further, NPPF states that all Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk based approach to the location of all forms of development.

What the Council says:

- 4.38 Within the Borough there are two main occurrences of Flood Zone 2 and 3; one along the River Sence corridor (which is a tributary of the River Soar), adjacent to the Grand Union Canal to the south of the Borough; and, one along The Wash Brook corridor which flows west to east between north Wigston and Oadby. There is one further lesser occurrence along the Evington Brook corridor north of Oadby and Stoughton Grange.
- 4.39 Land that is at risk of significant flooding is not appropriate for most forms of development. The Council is committed in providing new development that is not located within areas of significant flood risk, unless it cannot be avoided (and fully mitigated). The Council’s current policy stance set out within the Local Plan, suggests that development should not be located within areas at risk of flooding, unless certain policy criteria can be met. The policy goes on to state that development proposals within areas of flood risk must submit a detailed Flood Risk Assessment.
- 4.40 The Council’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2014) was prepared in liaison with the Environment Agency and has the aim of providing sufficient information for the application of the Sequential Test and to identify whether application of the Exception Test is likely to be necessary. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment involves a broad scale assessment of areas at risk of flooding within the Borough, be it fluvial or other forms of flooding and includes advice on sustainable drainage techniques and other flood risk solutions. The study also predicts likely increased flooding risk in these areas due to climate change.
- 4.41 The Council is currently in the process of deliberating whether to update the existing Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in its entirety or review and only up-date the existing study as and where necessary.
- 4.42 In terms of moving forward, the Council is proposing to role forward the current planning policy wording (relevant parts of Policy 38 – Climate Change, Flood Risk and Renewable Low Carbon Energy) set out in the Local Plan, as it has been effective in managing growth within areas at risk of flooding over the past few years.



Potential options:

- Continue with the existing criteria based policy approach set out within the current Local Plan (relevant parts of Policy 38 – Climate Change, Flood Risk and Renewable Low Carbon Energy).
- Remove the policy approach and only apply the policy principles and guidance set at a national level through the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance.

Questions:

- Should the Council ‘roll forward’ the current policy approach set out in Local Plan (relevant parts of) Policy 38 – Climate Change, Flood Risk and Renewable Low Carbon Energy, ensuring that it is up to date with current national planning policy and guidance?
- Remove the policy approach and only apply the policy principles and guidance set at a national level through the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance?
- Do you consider that the Council should be undertaking a full review of the existing Strategic Flood Risk Assessment or review and only up-date the existing study as and where necessary?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.

