

Hinckley & Bosworth **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

Addendum
July 2026



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Green Infrastructure Strategy Addendum is a companion document to the Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (LUC, July 2020) (hereafter 'the GI Strategy'). It has been prepared to form part of the evidence base supporting the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan 2024-2045 (the 'Local Plan') at Regulation 19 submission stage.
- 1.2 The GI Strategy was prepared between 2019 and 2020 to align with an earlier iteration of the Local Plan covering the period of 2016-2036. Since its publication, a number of significant changes to national planning policy and environmental legislation have occurred. The purpose of this Addendum is to:
 - Confirm the continued validity of the GI Strategy's spatial analysis, assessment of GI assets, identification of GI zones, and priority opportunities;
 - Update the policy and legislative context within which the GI Strategy was prepared;
 - Identify any aspects of the GI Strategy that may require qualification or supplementation in light of those changes;
 - Demonstrate how the Regulation 19 Local Plan on Green Infrastructure and Blue Infrastructure respond to the current policy and legislative context; and
 - Confirm the continued relevance of the GI Strategy as evidence for the plan period 2024–2045.
- 1.3 This Addendum does not replace the GI Strategy. It should be read alongside it. The GI Strategy remains the primary spatial evidence base for GI in the borough and its findings on GI assets, deficiencies, zones and priority opportunities remain valid and directly relevant to the Local Plan policies it supports.

2. Background and Context

Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

- 2.1 The GI Strategy was prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC) on behalf of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and published in July 2020. It replaced a previous strategy dating from 2008. Its primary aims were to:
 - Review the extent to which GI assets (both green and blue) are functioning well across the borough;
 - Identify where there are existing and anticipated future gaps in GI provision; and
 - Set out what actions and interventions could enhance current provision.
- 2.2 The Strategy identified three GI zones (Southern, Western, and North-Eastern), assessed GI assets across six thematic areas (Landscape, Townscape and Historic Environment; Biodiversity; Active Travel; Open Space, Play and Recreation; Carbon Sequestration; and Water Resources), and identified 11 Priority Opportunities and 6 'Big Picture' Opportunities for GI enhancement across the borough.

Why an Addendum is required

- 2.3 The GI Strategy was written to align with and support the Council's then-emerging Local Plan covering 2016–2036. The current Local Plan covers the period 2024-2045 which extends the plan period by a number of years. More significantly, the period since July 2020

has seen substantial change in the national planning policy and legislative framework for green infrastructure, biodiversity and environmental management. These changes include:

- Enactment of the Environment Act 2021;
- Introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in 2024;
- Publication of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (January 2023);
- Updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024);
- Establishment of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) under the Environment Act 2021;
- New Environmental Land Management Schemes replacing EU Common Agricultural Policy arrangements; and
- The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitats) Regulations 2024.

- 2.4 The Borough Council has therefore prepared this Addendum to demonstrate that the 2020 Green Infrastructure Strategy remains robust and relevant, and to supplement it where necessary to reflect the substantial legislative and policy changes that have occurred since its publication. The Addendum ensures that the Strategy continues to provide a sound, up-to-date evidence base for the Local Plan by incorporating the latest requirements relating to biodiversity, green and blue infrastructure, and environmental management.

3. Continued Validity of the GI Strategy's Core Findings

- 3.1 Before addressing changes to the policy context, it is important to confirm the aspects of the GI Strategy that remain wholly valid and that do not require qualification.

GI Zones

- 3.2 The GI Strategy's three-zone spatial framework (Southern GI Zone, Western GI Zone, North-Eastern GI Zone) was based on an analysis of the borough's physical, demographic and environmental characteristics. These characteristics remain broadly unchanged. The three zones continue to provide a relevant and robust basis for understanding where several types of GI provision and enhancement are most needed across the borough.

Asset Baseline

- 3.3 The GI Strategy's baseline mapping of GI assets, including SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites, country parks, Public Rights of Way, National Cycle Network routes, the Ashby Canal, the National Forest territory, and Charnwood Forest provides an accurate starting point for understanding the borough's existing network. While individual sites may have changed in condition, the overall pattern of assets remains a sound basis for the Local Plan policies.

Priority Opportunities

- 3.4 The 11 Priority Opportunities identified in the GI Strategy remain relevant to the Local Plan period. They were selected on the basis of their multifunctionality, identifiable delivery mechanisms and direct relationship to anticipated growth pressures. The growth pressures that will be generated by the Local Plan's strategic allocations make these priorities more, not less, important. The Borough Council confirms that the Priority Opportunities remain the delivery framework for GI gains in the borough:

- Re-wilding roadside verges

- Expanding woodland cover
- Managing public spaces for biodiversity
- Making space for play
- Enabling private gardens to act as stepping stone habitats
- Enhancing the Southern Green Wedge
- Preparing a wayfinding strategy for mixed-ability walkers
- Creating a northern gateway for Hinckley
- Creating greenways through Hinckley
- Creating a more resilient Burbage Common and Woods
- Creating a Battlefield loop line

Guiding Principles

- 3.5 The seven guiding principles established in the GI Strategy (delivery of multifunctional benefits; planning, design and connectivity; creating value; funding, stewardship and governance; climate change resilience and mitigation; supporting biodiversity network recovery; and partnership working) remain aligned with current national policy requirements and are reflected in the approach of the Local Plan policies on Green and Blue Infrastructure.

4. Policy and Legislative Context Update

- 4.1 This section updates the policy context chapter of the GI Strategy (Chapter 3) to reflect changes since July 2020. It should be read as a direct supplement to that chapter.

5 Policy/Legislation	Date	Relevance to Green/Blue Infrastructure
Environment Act 2021	November 2021	Places mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain on a statutory footing; establishes Local Nature Recovery Strategies; strengthens the biodiversity duty on public bodies; introduces mandatory BNG Gain Plans; establishes long-term environmental targets including on species abundance and habitat condition.
Biodiversity Net Gain (Mandatory)	12 Feb 2024 (major); 2 Apr 2024 (small sites)	All applicable planning permissions must achieve a minimum 10% BNG measured using the statutory biodiversity metric. Gain plans must be submitted with applications. Off-site and habitat bank provision is permitted. This fundamentally changes the relationship between development and GI delivery in the borough.
Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable)	2024	Sets out the list of irreplaceable habitats for the purposes of BNG legislation, including ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, old species-rich grassland and species-rich

Habitats) Regulations 2024		hedgerows meeting Hedgerow Regulations ecological criteria.
Biodiversity Net Gain Reforms (2026)	April-July 2026	Government has consulted on and begun implementing amendments to the BNG regime, including new exemptions for very small sites (0.2ha or less), changes to how minor development can access off-site compensation, and preparations for extending BNG to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects from November 2026. These changes do not alter the core requirement for biodiversity enhancement but affect implementation and delivery mechanisms.
Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework	January 2023	Sets out a series of principles and standards for green infrastructure provision in England's towns and cities. Major development proposals in Hinckley and Bosworth are required by Policy SP20 to be supported by a GI Plan demonstrating compliance with the Framework.
Natural England GI Planning and Design Guide	2023	Provides detailed guidance to support implementation of the GI Framework, including design standards for accessible natural greenspace and urban greening.
NPPF December 2024	December 2024	Key updates relevant to GI include explicit reference to net zero as a material consideration; strengthened tree-lined streets requirement (Para 136); SuDS requirement extended to all drainage-affecting applications (Para 182); Golden Rules for development on released Green Belt land requiring provision of or access to good quality green spaces.
Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs)	Established under Environment Act 2021; Leicestershire LNRs in preparation	LNRs will identify priority areas and actions for nature recovery, including habitat creation and connection. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy was formally published in July 2025. The LNR identifies priority areas and measures for habitat restoration, creation and connectivity and is now a significant material consideration in planning decisions. It provides an important spatial framework for targeting biodiversity net gain, habitat creation and wider green infrastructure investment across the borough.

Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs)	From 2021 onwards replacing CAP	Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery schemes replace EU agri-environment schemes. These provide significant new mechanisms for GI delivery and habitat creation in the rural parts of the borough, particularly relevant to the Western GI Zone priorities identified in the GI Strategy.
Building with Nature Standards	In use from 2020; referenced in NPPF PPG from 2023	A national benchmark standard for GI in new development. Policy SP20 encourages but does not mandate adoption of Building with Nature standards for major development.
Nutrient Neutrality (River Mease SAC)	Advice from Natural England from April 2022	The north-western tip of the borough is within the catchment of the River Mease SAC. Development proposals that may increase wastewater run-off must demonstrate nutrient neutrality. This is addressed by Policy SP10 of the Local Plan but has implications for the design and function of GI in the affected zone.
Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025	December 2025 (Royal Assent)	Introduces a new framework for strategic nature recovery and environmental delivery planning, including powers for Natural England to administer strategic mitigation schemes funded through developer contributions. Although secondary legislation and implementation are still evolving, the Act is likely to influence how biodiversity enhancement, habitat creation and nature recovery are secured and delivered alongside development. It reinforces the move towards landscape-scale environmental planning and investment.

5. Updates to Specific Sections of the GI Strategy

Chapter 3: Policy Context

5.1 The policy context chapter of the GI Strategy is updated by Section 4 of this Note. Of particular note:

- The Environment Bill, referenced in the GI Strategy as 'emerging', was enacted as the Environment Act 2021. The biodiversity net gain provisions of the Act are now operational, and Local Nature Recovery Strategies have been introduced as part of the statutory framework for nature recovery.
- The Agriculture Bill, referenced as 'emerging', was enacted as the Agriculture Act 2020. The Environmental Land Management schemes it established are now in operation.
- The NPPF referenced in the GI Strategy is the 2019 version. The current operative version is the December 2024 NPPF, which strengthens rather than weakens GI requirements.
- The Defra Biodiversity Metric referenced as 'beta test' is now in its current operational form and is required for all BNG calculations.

Chapter 4: Key Environmental and Socio-Economic Influences

5.2 The socio-economic data used in the GI Strategy (population, health, deprivation) was largely drawn from 2017-2019 sources. The Local Plan's Spatial Portrait (Section 2 of the Local Plan) provides updated data from the 2021 Census. Key changes relevant to GI include:

- The borough's population has grown from approximately 108,800 (2015) to approximately 113,700 (2021), representing continued pressure on the GI network particularly in the Southern GI Zone.
- The proportion of residents aged 65 and over has increased from 18.1% (2011) to 22.4% (2021), above national and regional averages, reinforcing the importance of accessible GI for health and wellbeing.
- Physical activity data indicates that levels of activity within the borough remain above the national average. However, a significant proportion of residents remain insufficiently active, maintaining the case for accessible green infrastructure that supports everyday recreation, active travel, physical health and wellbeing.

Chapter 5: Identifying GI Issues and Opportunities

5.3 The thematic assessment in Chapter 5 of the GI Strategy remains substantively sound. The following qualifications are noted:

- Theme 2 (Biodiversity): The mandatory biodiversity net gain regime introduced under the Environment Act 2021 is now operational. Most applicable development proposals are required to demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain using the statutory biodiversity metric and to secure biodiversity enhancements through approved Biodiversity Gain Plans. References to biodiversity offsetting as an emerging mechanism should therefore be read in the context of biodiversity net gain now forming part of the statutory planning framework.
- Theme 4 (Open Space, Play and Recreation): The GI Strategy identified deficits in open space provision in parts of the urban area. The NPPF 2024 Golden Rules strengthen the expectation that new residents should be able to access good

quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, adding policy weight to addressing these deficits through new development.

- Theme 5 (Carbon Sequestration): The carbon sequestration targets and mechanisms have developed significantly since 2020. The current UK Forestry Standard and Net Zero Strategy set more ambitious tree planting targets. Policy SP05 of the Local Plan directly addresses the carbon sequestration role of GI.
- Theme 6 (Water Resources): The GI Strategy's analysis of blue infrastructure remains valid. The extended SuDS requirements under NPPF 2024 (now applying to all applications affecting site drainage, not just major development) represent a strengthening of the policy context in favour of the Strategy's water management recommendations.

Plan Period Alignment

- 5.4 The GI Strategy was written to extend to 2036 to align with the then-emerging Local Plan. The current Local Plan covers the period 2024-2045. The Borough Council confirms that the GI Strategy's priority opportunities and big picture opportunities are considered to be relevant and applicable across the extended plan period to 2045. The scale of growth proposed in the Local Plan, including 15,687 dwellings and significant employment land makes the delivery of the GI Strategy's priority opportunities more pressing, not less, and the extension of the plan period provides additional time and opportunity for delivery.

6. Relationship with the Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 6.1 The Environment Act 2021 requires every area of England to be covered by a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). LNRSs provide a new mandatory spatial framework designed to drive nature recovery and wider environmental benefits across England, supporting national environmental targets and the Environmental Improvement Plan.
- 6.2 Leicestershire County Council has been appointed by the Secretary of State as the Responsible Authority for preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (LNRS). This work has been undertaken in partnership with Leicester City Council, Rutland County Council, the seven Leicestershire district councils, including Hinckley & Bosworth, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and the National Forest Company.
- 6.3 The LNRS is now published, and therefore no longer in preparation. It represents the first comprehensive, landscape-scale strategy for enhancing biodiversity across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
- 6.4 The published LLR-LNRS identifies a clear set of Strategic Aims, including:
- increasing the area and diversity of land and water managed for wildlife;
 - improving habitat quality;
 - reinstating natural processes and making space for water;
 - enhancing green and blue spaces within urban environments;
 - strengthening ecological connectivity; and
 - addressing major pressures such as invasive species, climate change, and habitat loss.

- 6.5 The strategy is underpinned by extensive evidence gathering, mapping of existing biodiversity assets, and identification of areas where habitat creation or enhancement would deliver the greatest benefit.
- 6.6 As a material consideration in planning, the LNRS provides the spatial framework required by the green and blue infrastructure policies of the Local Plan, guiding how development in Hinckley & Bosworth should contribute to the Nature Recovery Network through targeted habitat creation, enhancement and connectivity.
- 6.7 The Borough Council will review the alignment between the GI Strategy's Priority Opportunities and the published LNRS to ensure that future development proposals and supporting guidance fully reflect the strategic priorities, local habitat maps and identified recovery areas set out in the LNRS. Where necessary, supplementary guidance will be updated to maintain consistency with the LNRS.
- 6.8 In the context of the now-published LNRS, the GI Strategy's existing identification of priority habitats, connectivity opportunities and spatial zones remains broadly consistent with the LNRS's aims and mapped opportunities. The GI Strategy continues to provide a sound local framework for nature recovery, but development proposals must now demonstrate how they contribute directly to the published LNRS spatial priorities and measures.

7. Development of Local Plan Policies

- 7.1 This section demonstrates how policies in the emerging Local Plan have been developed and identifies the gaps identified between the GI Strategy 2020 and the consultation draft policy context.

Regulation 19 (2022)

- 7.2 The Regulation 19 (2022) draft of the Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan set out the Council's proposed spatial strategy and accompanying policy framework prior to submission for examination. Although now superseded by later national policy changes, it remains an important reference point for understanding how the borough's Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI/BI) policies were shaped at the time. Regulation 19 represented the statutory stage at which the Council invited representations on the soundness, legal compliance and duty-to-cooperate performance of the Local Plan before formal submission to Government.
- 7.3 The consultation followed earlier engagement stages including Scope, Issues and Options (2018), New Directions for Growth (2019) and the Draft Local Plan consultation (2021), which collectively informed the evolution of GI-related evidence and policy
- 7.4 Green and Blue Infrastructure was treated as a cross-cutting theme in the Regulation 19 Plan, reflecting the increasing national emphasis (even at that time) on biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience, sustainable drainage, landscape character and the integration of nature within new development. These policy directions were underpinned by the Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020), the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019/2020), and the Open Space and Playing Pitch Studies (2020).

NAT01: Green Infrastructure

- 7.5 Policy NAT01 set the overarching requirement for development to protect, enhance and connect the borough's network of multifunctional GI, forming a core mechanism for embedding the 2020 GI Strategy in plan-making. It required proposals to support the Nature

Recovery Network, deliver biodiversity enhancement, integrate GI with SuDS and tree-planting, and secure long-term management and stewardship arrangements.

- 7.6 The policy strongly aligned with national guidance available at the time, emphasising multifunctionality, climate resilience, pollinator-friendly planting and the incorporation of on- and off-site GI improvements.

NAT02: Green Wedges

- 7.7 NAT02 reinforced the long-established Green Wedge designations around Hinckley, Barwell, Earl Shilton, Burbage, and Rothley Brook Meadows, safeguarding them from inappropriate development to prevent settlement coalescence and maintain a network of strategic green corridors. Acceptable uses remained tightly defined, including recreation, nature conservation, agriculture and active travel connections.

NAT03: Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

- 7.8 At the time of Regulation 19, NAT03 strengthened protections for locally and nationally important tree assets, including ancient woodland and veteran trees, and introduced requirements such as a 3:1 tree replacement ratio and a 20% canopy cover target in rural developments. Native species, woodland expansion and biodiversity-led landscaping were strongly encouraged.

NAT04: National Forest

- 7.9 NAT04 set expectations for developments within the National Forest to deliver woodland planting, landscape integration, and contributions reflective of the Forest setting. It supported habitat connectivity and sustainable tourism as part of the National Forest's 25-year vision.

NAT05: Charnwood Forest Regional Park

- 7.10 This policy recognised Charnwood Forest as a unique landscape requiring protection and enhancement. It supported rural diversification, sustainable land management, recreation and biodiversity improvements in partnership with the Charnwood Forest Landscape Scheme.

NAT06: Local Green Spaces

- 7.11 NAT06 provided long-term protection for designated Local Green Spaces, limiting development to exceptional circumstances and reflecting NPPF guidance at the time. It recognised the role of neighbourhood plans in bringing sites forward for designation.

NAT07: Protecting Biodiversity

- 7.12 Policy NAT07 provided safeguarding measures for biodiversity sites of international and national significance, including SSSIs and irreplaceable habitats, and applied a strict mitigation hierarchy. It required ecological surveys, appropriate mitigation, and avoidance of impacts wherever possible.

NAT08: Enhancing Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity

- 7.13 NAT08 introduced the now-standard requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, to be measured using the statutory biodiversity metric. On-site delivery was prioritised, though off-site and habitat banking options were accepted when justified. The policy also emphasised habitat connectivity and pollinator-friendly design.

NAT09: Development in the Countryside and Settlement Separation

- 7.14 This policy sought to balance necessary rural development with strong safeguards against landscape harm, settlement merging and unsustainable patterns of growth. It supported limited forms of rural diversification, tourism, sport and recreation where compatible with character and environmental assets.

NAT10: Landscape Character

- 7.15 NAT10 required all development to demonstrate a positive response to local landscape character and to mitigate any significant visual impacts. Proposals needed to reference the borough's Landscape Character Assessment and integrate landscape design with the wider GI network.

NAT11: Blue Infrastructure

- 7.16 Policy NAT11 provided a dedicated policy for blue infrastructure, recognising rivers, streams, wetlands, ditches and the Ashby Canal as strategic ecological and recreational assets. It required development to protect and enhance riparian habitats, water quality and natural processes, and reinforced a presumption against culverting. A minimum 8-metre buffer was expected between development and watercourses.

- 7.17 The policy also supported flood management, SuDS integration, and new accessible routes along water corridors to strengthen recreation and ecological networks. It aligned with the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment's findings that managing surface water and culverted watercourses was a key priority for the borough.

- 7.18 These policies were drafted under the national legislative and policy framework in force at the time, including:

- NPPF (2021)
- Environment Act (pre-commencement of mandatory BNG)
- Building with Nature and Natural England GI guidance available in 2020
- National Forest and Charnwood Forest strategic frameworks

- 7.19 The Regulation 19 GI/BI policies therefore reflected best practice and statutory requirements as they stood in 2022, recognising themes such as climate resilience, biodiversity enhancement, sustainable drainage and nature recovery all of which have since been further strengthened by post-2022 legislation and guidance.

- 7.20 Across NAT01–NAT11, the Regulation 19 policies explicitly drew upon the Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020), which served as the primary spatial evidence base for GI and BI planning. Many of the GI Strategy's concepts—such as multifunctionality, priority habitat corridors, active travel integration and climate-resilient design—were incorporated directly into policy requirements.

Consultation Responses on NAT01 and NAT11 and Their Role in Policy Development

- 7.21 The Regulation 19 (2022) consultation attracted a range of stakeholder comments on the Natural Environment policies, including NAT01 (Green Infrastructure) and NAT11 (Blue Infrastructure). While the Regulation 19 version reflects the national policy context at the time of drafting, the feedback received has been valuable in shaping the subsequent refinement of the Local Plan's GI/BI approach and in reaffirming the continued relevance of the Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020) as part of the evidence base.

- 7.22 The following summarises the key themes raised and explains how these have informed the ongoing development of GI and BI policy.
- NAT01: Green Infrastructure*
- 7.23 In relation to Policy NAT01, one respondent questioned the reference to the “latest Borough Council Green Infrastructure Strategy,” noting that the Regulation 19 document explicitly cites the 2020 GI Strategy. The respondent expressed concern that the 2020 Strategy did not fully articulate the biodiversity importance of green infrastructure and included certain recommendations that were perceived as inappropriate or imprecise—such as references to the “management of private gardens” and the “re-wilding of highway verges.” They also suggested that the Strategy should not be relied upon as a comprehensive evidence base for matters relating to biodiversity.
- 7.24 These comments reflect the timing of the Regulation 19 consultation. At that point, the statutory framework for biodiversity—particularly the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)—had not yet come fully into effect. As a result, the 2020 GI Strategy was drafted within a more limited national policy context, one that has since been significantly strengthened.
- 7.25 The Addendum addresses these concerns through several strands of clarification. First, it updates the policy and legislative context to reflect the substantial changes that have occurred since 2020. Second, it demonstrates that the 2020 GI Strategy remains valid for the purposes of spatial analysis, identifying priority opportunities, and mapping the borough’s green infrastructure network. Third, it confirms that the policy framework for biodiversity is now driven principally by the Environment Act 2021, the BNG regulations, the LNRS, and dedicated Local Plan biodiversity policies (SP24 and SP25). In this respect, NAT01 now complements—rather than carries—the primary biodiversity requirements of the Plan.
- 7.26 A further objection was raised in relation to Paragraph 12.9 of the Regulation 19 document, which indicates that developments may, in certain circumstances, be required to contribute to off-site green infrastructure. Concerns focused on the lack of clarity regarding the specific locations where such contributions might be required, uncertainty about the scale of financial contributions, and the need for these requirements to be appropriately reflected within the Whole Plan Viability Appraisal.
- 7.27 This feedback has directly informed the refinement of green infrastructure policy, particularly the need for clearer criteria governing when off-site GI contributions are appropriate. It has also highlighted the importance of strengthening alignment with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and ensuring that GI-related costs are explicitly factored into viability assessments. Furthermore, it reinforces the need to integrate expectations for green infrastructure with linked policies covering BNG, SuDS, landscape considerations, and open space provision, ensuring a coherent and proportionate approach.
- 7.28 Collectively, these refinements ensure that GI contribution mechanisms are transparent, proportionate, and consistent with national guidance on viability and developer contributions. They also reinforce the importance of applying clear, evidence-based decision-making criteria when requiring off-site provision.
- 7.29 The nature of the representations suggests constructive engagement rather than outright objection. Respondents broadly acknowledged the importance of green infrastructure but sought clearer policy alignment with biodiversity regulations and national guidance. This aligns with the purpose of the Addendum, which provides necessary updates and

evidence-based justification to maintain the relevance and robustness of NAT01 within the revised Local Plan framework.

NAT11: Blue Infrastructure

- 7.30 A number of respondents expressed clear support for the overarching aims and direction of Policy NAT11. The policy’s emphasis on enhancing blue infrastructure for biodiversity, water quality, and recreation was viewed positively, with stakeholders recognising the strategic importance of protecting and strengthening the Borough’s waterways, canals and associated habitats. Particular endorsement was given to the requirement for development to provide safe and convenient walking and cycling routes adjacent to rivers and canals. Respondents noted that this approach aligns with wider objectives on active travel and recreational access and cited the Hinckley West (HIN02H) allocation as an example where a proposed pedestrian link to the Ashby Canal successfully reflects the policy’s intent.
- 7.31 However, several comments sought clarification regarding developer responsibilities. Respondents stressed the importance of ensuring the policy is clearly written and unambiguous, in line with NPPF paragraph 16(d), and requested confirmation that developers are accountable only for new blue infrastructure arising directly from their proposals. They emphasised that responsibility for the maintenance or improvement of existing strategic assets—such as the Ashby Canal—lies with the statutory undertaker or landowner, not the applicant.
- 7.32 In addition to general support, a number of representations explicitly welcomed the alignment between NAT11 and the principles of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Respondents highlighted the ongoing work between the Council, the Environment Agency and other partners to improve the ecological condition of local watercourses and underscored the importance of protecting and enhancing natural drainage features. The policy’s focus on safeguarding rivers, streams, canals and associated water bodies was considered essential for maintaining water quality, supporting biodiversity recovery, and ensuring the long-term security of water supply.
- 7.33 One objection stated that the draft wording of NAT11 was vague, imprecise and insufficiently clear to support effective implementation. This respondent argued that greater clarity is needed regarding expectations placed on applicants, the scope of required interventions, and the distinction between on-site enhancements and broader strategic actions. The comment reinforces the need to refine the policy to ensure that requirements are fully justified, proportionate, and capable of consistent interpretation during development management.

Consultation Summary

- 7.34 The consultation responses on NAT01 and NAT11 highlighted a mixture of support, requests for clarification, and constructive criticism. Collectively, these comments have reinforced:
- The importance of clear, unambiguous wording,
 - The need for evidence-based, proportionate developer responsibilities,
 - The role of GI and BI policies in supporting climate resilience, biodiversity recovery, and sustainable place-making.
- 7.35 Importantly, the feedback has not challenged the core spatial findings or strategic approach of the 2020 GI Strategy. Instead, it has helped shape a more refined and up-to-date GI policy environment—one that now reflects the Environment Act, mandatory BNG, the LNRS,

and updated national guidance—while grounding these developments in the still-valid spatial framework of the 2020 Strategy.

Local Plan Regulation 18 (2024)

7.36 The Regulation 18 (2024) consultation marked an important stage in refining the Local Plan’s emerging Green Infrastructure (SP20) and Blue Infrastructure (SP28) policies. These policies respond directly to the Borough’s Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, the updated evidence base, Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework, and the strategic principles embedded across Section 11 of the Regulation 18 Plan. Stakeholder feedback during the consultation period has provided valuable insights into the clarity, consistency and deliverability of both policies, highlighting areas where further refinement is necessary ahead of the Regulation 19 draft.

7.37 This section summarises key issues raised, explains how they relate to the evidence base, and sets out how the policy approach will be strengthened to ensure that SP20 and SP28 remain justified, effective and aligned with national planning policy expectations.

Policy SP20: Green Infrastructure

7.38 Policy SP20 sets out the Borough Council’s strategic approach to delivering a multifunctional, connected and resilient Green Infrastructure (GI) network across Hinckley & Bosworth. It emphasises that GI must be designed from the outset as an integral part of place-making and must contribute simultaneously to health and wellbeing, climate resilience, biodiversity recovery, and prosperity.

7.39 SP20 requires development to provide high-quality places which support active lifestyles, enhance nature, build climate resilience and deliver multi-functional GI networks that integrate green and blue spaces, routes and natural features.

7.40 The policy requires:

7.41 GI-led master planning: GI must be planned as a connected network of multifunctional spaces reflecting local landscape and ecological character.

- Green & Blue Infrastructure Plans: All major development must submit a GI plan demonstrating delivery of Natural England’s GI Framework (2023) and responding to the Borough’s priority opportunities.
- Integration of Green & Blue Infrastructure: GI proposals must be nature-rich, climate-resilient, pollinator-friendly, and designed to enhance air, soil and water quality.
- Active Travel & Healthy Places: GI must support accessible routes and encourage inclusive, active lifestyles.
- Long-term Management: Developers must secure a minimum 30-year management and maintenance plan, including funding and responsibilities.

7.42 SP20 is directly underpinned by:

- The Hinckley & Bosworth GI Strategy (2020) and its GI zones / priority opportunities.
- Natural England’s GI Framework and GI Planning & Design Guide (2023).
- Local climate, health, biodiversity and socio-demographic evidence presented in the Local Plan.

7.43 SP20 recognises three GI zones: Southern, Western, North-Eastern and uses them to guide GI opportunity prioritisation across the borough. Priority opportunities include woodland expansion, greenways, biodiversity-led spaces, and strengthening the Southern Green Wedge.

7.44 SP20 is the central spatial policy for ensuring that new development contributes meaningfully to the Nature Recovery Network, Biodiversity Net Gain, climate adaptation, and place-making objectives, forming a structural link between other nature and climate policies (SP21, SP24, SP25, SP28).

SP28: Blue Infrastructure

7.45 Policy SP28 provides a strategic framework for the protection, enhancement and creation of blue infrastructure (BI), recognising rivers, canals, wetlands, ponds, reservoirs and floodplain landscapes as key assets for biodiversity, flood management, water quality, climate resilience and recreation.

7.46 The policy emphasises the importance of maintaining and enhancing the Borough’s blue infrastructure network, including the Ashby Canal, River Sence, River Mease, River Tweed, and major still-water bodies such as Thornton Reservoir and Groby Pool.

7.47 BI is positioned as a core component of the Natural Environment chapter, directly linked with climate change, flood risk mitigation, SuDS, biodiversity and active travel.

7.48 SP28 requires development to:

- Protect and enhance waterbodies, riparian habitats and natural processes, including preventing culverting except where unavoidable for essential crossings.
- Improve habitat condition, particularly where watercourses suffer from poor ecological or chemical status (e.g., River Sence).
- Integrate SuDS and natural drainage into development layouts and support nature-based solutions (wet woodland, reed beds, raingardens, floodplain meadows).
- Support multifunctional blue corridors such as the River Tweed and Ashby Canal to increase biodiversity, recreation, and flood attenuation.
- Provide an 8m setback from the top of a watercourse bank to protect riparian habitats and allow access for maintenance.
- Ensure connectivity between blue infrastructure, active travel routes, and wider GI networks.

7.49 Like SP20, developers must provide long-term (minimum 30-year) management and funding mechanisms for any BI features created or enhanced through development.

7.50 SP28 is supported by:

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019/2024), highlighting risks from culverted watercourses, surface water, and the River Anker/Sence systems.
- The Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020) which identifies BI corridors as strategic ecological assets.
- Water Cycle Study (Published following the consultation in December 2024) for water quality, wastewater and nutrient neutrality considerations.

- 7.51 SP28 functions as the counterpart to SP20, focusing on the “blue” dimension of the Natural Environment. It supports:
- Flood risk reduction
 - Water quality improvements
 - River Basin Management Plan compliance
 - Nutrient neutrality (particularly in the River Mease SAC catchment)
 - Delivery of the Nature Recovery Network along riparian corridors
- 7.52 Together with SP20, it forms the core strategic framework for nature-based placemaking and climate resilience and they form a comprehensive GI-BI policy suite, ensuring:
- A landscape-led development approach
 - Delivery of multifunctional green/blue networks
 - Strong alignment with the Environment Act 2021, BNG, LNRS, and Natural England’s GI Framework
 - Coherent integration of flood risk, biodiversity, health, climate and accessibility objectives
 - Long-term stewardship embedded into development delivery
- 7.53 They anchor the environmental and place-making strategy of the Regulation 18 Plan and will be further refined in Regulation 19 to respond to consultation feedback.

Other relevant policies

- 7.54 Several other policies in the Local Plan directly address matters that were emerging or absent from the policy context of the GI Strategy:
- Policy SP24 (Protecting Biodiversity): Addresses the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitats) Regulations 2024 and provides the framework for protecting designated sites.
 - Policy SP25 (Enhancing Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity): Requires 10% mandatory BNG for applicable development, consistent with the Environment Act 2021.
 - Policy SP05 (Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change): Addresses carbon sequestration through GI, tree canopy enhancement and habitat network connectivity.
 - Policy SP06 (Flood Risk): Requires SuDS for all development affecting drainage, strengthening the blue infrastructure recommendations of the GI Strategy.

Consultation Responses on SP20 and SP28

SP20: Green Infrastructure

- 7.55 The Regulation 18 consultation generated a number of supportive responses in relation to Policy SP20.
- 7.56 In particular, Natural England provided strong, positive feedback on the overall direction of the policy. Natural England welcomed the clear alignment between SP20 and the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework, noting that the policy appropriately responds to national best practice.

- 7.57 Respondents also endorsed the requirement for major developments to prepare Green and Blue Infrastructure Plans, viewing this as an effective measure to ensure that GI considerations are embedded from the outset.
- 7.58 The early integration of green infrastructure into master planning approaches was highlighted as a strength, demonstrating a strategic, design-led method of shaping high-quality places.
- 7.59 Support was also expressed for the policy’s references to climate adaptation, accessible greenspace standards, urban greening principles and aspirations for increased tree canopy cover across the borough.
- 7.60 Taken together, these supportive comments indicate that SP20 reflects modern, evidence-based best practice in landscape-led and nature-positive design.
- 7.61 In addition to positive feedback, several respondents recommended enhancements to reinforce the robustness of SP20. A key theme was the desire for the inclusion of measurable green infrastructure standards, such as Accessible Natural Greenspace benchmarks, the Urban Greening Factor, and “green in 15” walkability targets.
- 7.62 Some stakeholders also encouraged stronger policy recognition of the strategic roles played by the National Forest and Charnwood Forest Regional Park, whether directly within SP20 or through improved cross-referencing with related Local Plan policies.
- 7.63 Suggestions were made for additional requirements within the National Forest, such as woodland planting ratios and explicit landscape integration policies.
- 7.64 These recommendations align with existing evidence and local landscape character priorities and have the potential to improve the spatial precision and deliverability of GI interventions across the borough. Overall, these requests demonstrate a desire for clearer, measurable outcomes to strengthen the effectiveness of SP20.
- 7.65 Some developers raised concerns regarding the scope and clarity of SP20. It was noted that the policy risks duplicating legal requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which are already addressed comprehensively under Policy SP25.
- 7.66 Respondents also identified potential ambiguity around the interaction between Natural England’s GI Framework standards and the Building with Nature standards, particularly where differing or overlapping expectations may arise.
- 7.67 Feedback indicated that the current wording of SP20 is lengthy and detailed, which some felt reduced clarity and made it more difficult to distinguish between mandatory requirements and optional enhancements.
- 7.68 Consequently, these respondents recommended that SP20 be refined, streamlined and re-structured for Regulation 19 to improve clarity and ensure effective implementation.
- 7.69 This feedback highlights the need for clearer internal signposting, reduced duplication and improved readability.
- 7.70 Comments relating to off-site GI delivery closely mirrored concerns raised in relation to SP28. Respondents noted a lack of clarity regarding the circumstances under which off-site GI contributions would be required, creating uncertainty for applicants. There was further ambiguity regarding the level, scale and calculation of associated financial contributions for such off-site provision.

- 7.71 A number of consultees emphasised the need for these expectations to be explicitly incorporated into the Whole Plan Viability Assessment to ensure that GI requirements do not undermine development viability.
- 7.72 Parish councils additionally commented that any land used for off-site mitigation should be designated as Green Infrastructure in perpetuity and preferably transferred to trusted conservation organisations. It was also suggested that such land should be managed in a way that secures long-term biodiversity outcomes, consistent with national guidance on GI stewardship.
- 7.73 These concerns collectively underline the importance of ensuring that GI requirements are evidence-based, proportionate and fully justified through viability testing. This will be an essential area for refinement in the Regulation 19 version.
- 7.74 Historic England and other stakeholders raised important points concerning the integration of heritage and landscape within SP20. Respondents highlighted the need for the policy to explicitly recognise the contribution that historic landscapes, heritage assets, canals and historic parks make to the wider green and blue infrastructure network. There was a strong view that GI proposals should be required to enhance, rather than inadvertently harm, the setting or significance of heritage asset. This reflects national policy requirements for the historic environment to be treated as an integral and positive component of green infrastructure planning. Together, these comments emphasise the importance of including explicit statements on cultural landscape sensitivity within SP20.
- 7.75 A number of place-specific suggestions were also submitted during consultation. 7.126. Several respondents recommended strengthening policy support for the Ashby Canal, recognising its strategic value as a GI corridor with ecological, recreational and heritage importance.
- 7.76 Stakeholders also requested reference to the Lawton Review (2010) principle of “Bigger, Better, More Joined-Up” as a guiding concept for habitat connectivity and ecological enhancement.
- 7.77 In addition, comments were made proposing a clause to support wildlife corridors linked to the Twycross Zoo Nature Reserve concept, ensuring alignment with the Zoo’s conservation objectives.
- 7.78 These comments highlight the need for SP20 to better articulate how it supports locally significant GI opportunities and ecological networks. Incorporating these place-based elements would help strengthen the relevance and practical direction of the policy.
- 7.79 In summary, while SP20 received strong support from statutory bodies, the consultation identified a series of areas requiring refinement. These include the need for a clearer structure and closer alignment with the broader suite of nature-related policies. Further work is required to refine mechanisms for off-site GI contributions and ensure they are financially viable and clearly justified. A greater level of recognition is needed regarding the role of the historic environment within GI planning. Improved signposting to regional assets such as the National Forest and Charnwood Forest would strengthen the spatial application of the policy. Clarification on the relationship between Building with Nature standards and the GI Framework would also support more consistent policy interpretation. Addressing these matters will improve clarity, enhance deliverability and strengthen alignment with both national and local evidence. The Council will therefore consider these refinements as part of the preparation of the Regulation 19 policy wording.

SP28: Blue Infrastructure

- 7.80 The Regulation 18 consultation generated considerable support for the overall intent and direction of Policy SP28. Respondents recognised blue infrastructure as a multifunctional environmental asset, noting its role in supporting biodiversity, improving water quality, enabling natural drainage processes, and enhancing recreational opportunities for local communities. There was positive acknowledgement that SP28 appropriately requires development to provide safe and convenient walking and cycling routes along watercourses, aligning with the wider objective of strengthening the blue infrastructure network, including the key Ashby Canal corridor. Stakeholders welcomed the explicit references within the policy to major still-water bodies such as Thornton Reservoir and Groby Pool, both of which contribute significantly to ecological resilience and recreational value in the Borough.
- 7.81 The policy’s requirement for an 8-metre development setback from watercourse banks was also supported, with several respondents suggesting that it would be beneficial to clarify that this standard applies specifically to Main Rivers.
- 7.82 Overall, the supportive comments indicate that the strategic approach contained in SP28 is well-aligned with the Regulation 18 objectives to protect linear water environments, secure access enhancements, and integrate nature-based drainage solutions within new development.
- 7.83 Alongside the positive feedback, several respondents highlighted areas where the clarity and precision of SP28 could be improved. A common theme was the need for clearer wording to ensure that the policy is “clearly written and unambiguous”, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 16(d). Respondents requested explicit clarification that the policy relates to new blue infrastructure created or enhanced as part of development proposals, and that responsibility for the maintenance or improvement of existing assets—such as the Ashby Canal—remains with the relevant statutory undertakers or landowners.
- 7.84 Some comments drew attention to terminology, recommending that the policy consistently use the statutory term “Local Wildlife Site”. In addition, several consultees asked for stronger emphasis on the River Sence, highlighting that its catchment currently holds Poor Chemical Status, and should therefore be treated as a priority for restoration in line with Water Framework Directive objectives.
- 7.85 Collectively, these comments underline the need for SP28 to more explicitly cross-reference the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Water Cycle Study and River Basin Management Plan, which together provide the technical evidence underpinning the Borough’s blue infrastructure strategy.
- 7.86 A key area of discussion concerned the policy’s use of a blanket 8-metre buffer requirement for all watercourses. Some respondents felt that this standard had not been sufficiently justified within the draft policy. Others noted that a fixed buffer may not always reflect site-specific circumstances. Concerns were also raised that an unqualified 8-metre buffer may be more rigid than the approach recommended in national guidance or by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). In light of these views, several representations proposed replacing the blanket requirement with an approach based on “appropriate buffer distances informed by Flood Risk Assessment and site constraints.”
- 7.87 Although some stakeholders supported retention of the 8-metre standard—particularly for Main Rivers—others advised that a more flexible, evidence-led approach would improve proportionality. This feedback suggests the need for clearer justification of the chosen standard or, alternatively, a revised approach that builds greater flexibility into the policy wording.

- 7.88 Respondents also commented on the deliverability of SP28, particularly in relation to long-term management expectations. Some stakeholders stressed that the policy should remain aspirational but realistic, ensuring that requirements can be delivered through the master planning process.
- 7.89 It was noted that certain enhancements promoted by the policy—such as deculverting or naturalising watercourses—may not be feasible in all locations due to landownership, engineering constraints, or existing infrastructure.
- 7.90 Concerns were raised regarding the inclusion of mandatory 30-year management and maintenance arrangements, with some developers suggesting that such provisions are typically secured through planning conditions or obligations, and do not necessarily require explicit policy wording.
- 7.91 The development industry, including David Wilson Homes, identified the final paragraph of SP28 as being overly burdensome and not fully justified under NPPF paragraph 35(b), which requires policy requirements to be proportionate and adequately supported by evidence.
- 7.92 These comments point to the need for SP28 to distinguish more clearly between essential and desirable requirements, and to ensure that long-term management expectations remain deliverable and proportionate.
- 7.93 The consultation also emphasised the importance of ensuring that SP28 is well-integrated with the broader suite of nature-related policies in the Local Plan. Respondents noted that the blue infrastructure policy should more clearly articulate its relationship with SP20 (Green Infrastructure), SP24 (Protecting Biodiversity), SP25 (Enhancing Biodiversity), and SP21 (Green Wedges), particularly in relation to shared ecological, landscape and climate objectives. A specific point raised was the need to clarify how blue infrastructure contributes to achieving the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement.
- 7.94 Historic England requested that the policy explicitly recognise the role of the historic environment—especially heritage assets associated with the Borough’s waterways, such as the Ashby Canal—in shaping the character and ecological value of the blue infrastructure network.
- 7.95 These observations highlight the need for strengthened internal coherence to support interpretation and implementation of the nature policies collectively. Improved integration would also help ensure that applicants understand how the contributing policies function together to deliver wider environmental outcomes.
- 7.96 In summary, the consultation identified strong support for the strategic intent and environmental ambition of SP28. However, respondents emphasised the need for stronger justification for specific numeric standards used within the policy. Further refinement is required to ensure that terminology and definitions are used accurately and consistently. The policy would benefit from clearer articulation of responsibilities relating to new versus existing blue infrastructure assets. A more explicit relationship between SP28 and biodiversity, climate, heritage and drainage policies would strengthen the policy’s clarity and effectiveness. Greater emphasis is also needed on ensuring that long-term management requirements are deliverable within the practical constraints faced by developers. Collectively, these refinements will enhance the clarity, proportionality and robustness of SP28. They will also help ensure that the policy remains ambitious yet realistic and fully aligned with the evidence base that supports it.

- 7.97 The Regulation 18 consultation has provided detailed, constructive feedback on SP20 and SP28. Across both policies, key themes have emerged, including:
- The importance of clear, unambiguous policy wording (per NPPF para 16d).
 - The need for proportionate, evidence-based and viable requirements.
 - Strong support for the ambition and direction of travel, particularly from statutory bodies.
 - The need for improved policy integration across GI/BI, climate change, biodiversity, heritage, flood risk and open space policies.
 - Recognition that long-term stewardship is essential but must be approached in a proportionate and flexible way.
 - The need to better articulate how the policies contribute to mandatory BNG, the Nature Recovery Network, and the wider LNRS.
- 7.98 The consultation has therefore played a crucial role in shaping a more coherent, deliverable and future-proof GI/BI policy framework for Regulation 19.

8. Green Infrastructure Policy Review

- 8.1 This Chapter reviews Policy SP20 (Green Infrastructure) in the Regulation 18 Local Plan (July 2024) and makes recommendations for an amended Green Infrastructure Policy for the Local Plan Regulation 19 document (2026). It considers the concerns and recommendations raised through previous consultations on NAT01 and SP20, particularly where modifications to the policy or supporting text are considered necessary. This review also considers the Policy against the previous chapters setting out the updates to the Green Infrastructure 2020.
- 8.2 Policy SP20 incorporates several robust and forward-looking GI principles that remain consistent with national policy and best practice. The emphasis on multifunctional GI aligns clearly with NPPF paragraphs 20, 96, 97 and 135, and the integration of Natural England's GI Framework (2023) into development management is notably strong. The requirement for a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (criterion b) represents one of the most effective mechanisms available to local planning authorities for embedding GI systematically into major development proposals.
- 8.3 The 30-year management requirement (criterion g) is also well aligned with the Environment Act 2021's BNG provisions, ensuring continuity between GI and habitat management regimes. The policy's references to Building with Nature, pollinator-friendly GI, and nature-rich design approaches further strengthen ecological functionality and climate resilience.
- 8.4 The original strengths of SP20 therefore remain valid, but consultation responses, particularly those raised under NAT01 and SP20 highlight areas where refinements are required to ensure clarity, proportionality, and internal consistency across the nature-related policy suite.
- 8.5 The table below provides an assessment and sets out where the policy requires strengthening and recommended amendments for the Regulation 19 submission version plan.

STRONG		ADEQUATE	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	CONCERN
Assessment Criterion	Rating	Findings and Recommendations		
NPPF 2024 compliance	STRONG	SP20 is broadly aligned with NPPF requirements for strategic GI provision, accessible natural greenspace, and climate-resilient design. However, representation comments (NAT01 & SP20) highlight that the policy wording would benefit from clearer structure, distinguishing mandatory requirements from advisory elements. Improved drafting at Regulation 19 will ensure the policy is “clearly written and unambiguous”, consistent with NPPF para 16(d).		
GI Framework alignment	STRONG	The explicit requirement for GI Plans to align with Natural England’s GI Framework (2023) remains a key strength. Representations requested the inclusion of measurable GI standards to reinforce the GI Framework’s quantitative expectations. Adding these measures would enhance robustness and predictability for applicants.		
BNG consistency	ADEQUATE	SP20 references long-term management (30 years), consistent with BNG. However, representations noted a perceived overlap with SP25. Adding an explicit cross-reference in the Regulation 19 Policy to the equivalent SP25 Policy will reduce duplication and clarify complementary roles.		
LNRS alignment	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Representations (including Natural England) emphasised the need for explicit reference to the LNRS. Since the consultation the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS has been published and in line with the addendum it is agreed that amendments to the policy should be made to reflect the current position.		
Quantitative GI standards	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Representations requested clear, measurable GI expectations to ensure policy effectiveness and monitoring. AGS (Accessible Greenspace Standard) benchmarks, the Urban Greening Factor, or distance-based access standards could provide clarity and reduce site-by-site negotiation.		
Evidence base reference	ADEQUATE	NAT01 representations criticised exclusive reliance on the GI Strategy (2020), noting its dated treatment of biodiversity and some imprecise recommendations. The evidence base must therefore reference both the		

		2020 GI Strategy and this Addendum Note to demonstrate that the evidence base has been refreshed. Clarifying that biodiversity matters are principally addressed through the relevant Protecting and enhancing biodiversity policies in the Local Plan would directly respond to these concerns.
Monitoring framework	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Representations emphasised the need for measurable indicators for GI delivery (e.g., number of GI Plans submitted; area of GI secured; canopy cover increase). Monitoring indicators should be incorporated through the Local Plan monitoring framework and Authority Monitoring Report..
Internal consistency	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Several representations highlighted the need for clearer alignment between SP20, SP21, SP24, SP25 and SP28. Concerns included duplication with SP25, unclear interactions between GI and BNG, and insufficient linkage to heritage-related GI issues (raised also in NAT01/NAT11 responses). The supporting text should therefore be restructured for coherence.
Clarity of Policy Requirements	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Feedback under NAT01/SP20 emphasised the need for SP20 to be “clearly written and unambiguous”, with better separation of mandatory and advisory clauses. Users of the policy require clarity on which expectations are policy requirements vs. aspirational enhancements.
Off-Site GI Contributions	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Representations raised concerns about: • When off-site GI contributions are required • How costs will be calculated • The need for inclusion in plan viability testing Long-term management arrangements: SP20 should specify triggers, expectations, and stewardship mechanisms for off-site GI delivery.
Integration with Heritage	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	NAT01/NAT11 respondents highlighted the role of heritage features (canals, historic parks, landscapes) as GI assets. SP20 should explicitly acknowledge the importance of heritage within GI planning.

Recommended Amendments for Regulation 19

1. Add a clear cross-reference to SP24 and SP25, explaining how GI Plans complement Biodiversity Gain Plans.
2. Include a requirement for GI proposals to align with the Leicestershire LNRS once published.
3. Reference both the 2020 GI Strategy and the 2026 Update Note in the evidence base.
4. Introduce measurable GI standards using AGS or equivalent evidence-based thresholds.
5. Specify triggers and expectations for off-site GI contributions, including viability considerations and long-term stewardship.
6. Clarify the relationship between Natural England's GI Framework and Building with Nature.
7. Add wording recognising the role of heritage landscapes in the Borough's GI network.
8. Incorporate monitoring indicators to track GI delivery.
9. Provide clearer drafting to remove ambiguity and avoid misinterpretation.

8.6 Having considered the findings and recommendations outlined above, the proposed Regulation 19 Local Plan Green Infrastructure policy is set out in Appendix B of this report.

9. Blue Infrastructure Policy Review

9.1 This chapter reviews Policy SP28 (Blue Infrastructure) in the Regulation 18 Local Plan (July 2024) and makes recommendations for an amended Blue Infrastructure Policy for the Local Plan Regulation 19 document (2026). It considers representations made on the policy at previous stages and highlights areas where clarification, strengthening, or refinement is considered necessary to ensure that the policy is justified, effective, positively prepared and coherent with wider Local Plan policy.

9.2 Policy SP28 provides a dedicated framework for the borough's blue infrastructure network, which includes the Ashby Canal, River Sence, River Mease, River Tweed and the network of brooks that play a strategic role in biodiversity, water management, recreation and place-making. The policy is widely welcomed by stakeholders but requires targeted amendments to reflect representations concerning clarity, integration with other policies, the role of natural flood management, active travel, and the prominence of the River Sence.

9.3 Policy SP28 contains several important strengths which align well with national policy and the evidence base:

9.4 The creation of a standalone Blue Infrastructure policy is a notable strength, recognising the importance of the borough's water environments, including the Ashby Canal SSSI, the River Sence corridor, and numerous brooks within and around the urban area.

9.5 The treatment of the Ashby Canal as a multifunctional asset (heritage, ecology, recreation, active travel) reflects the multifunctional principles set out in the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

9.6 The integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) requirements ensures that water quality and surface water management are embedded in development management.

- 9.7 The inclusion of nutrient neutrality requirements for the River Mease SAC is appropriate, proportionate, and consistent with Policy SP10 and Natural England’s statutory advice.
- 9.8 These strengths ensure that SP28 establishes a firm foundation for managing the borough’s blue infrastructure in a coherent and future-proofed manner.
- 9.9 The table below provides an assessment and sets out where the policy requires strengthening and recommended amendments for the Regulation 19 submission version plan.

STRONG	ADEQUATE	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	CONCERN
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Assessment Criterion	Rating	Findings and Recommendations
NPPF compliance 2024	STRONG	The policy is consistent with the NPPF’s requirements relating to water management, flood risk mitigation and protection of the natural environment. Representations reinforced this strength but requested clearer, unambiguous drafting regarding developer responsibilities for new blue infrastructure only (not existing assets such as the Ashby Canal).
Water Framework Directive / Humber RBMP	ADEQUATE	The policy should make explicit reference to the objectives of the Humber River Basin Management Plan and the Water Framework Directive (now retained in UK law post-Brexit as the Environment (Retained EU Law) Act equivalent). Demonstrating that the policy supports 'no deterioration' and 'good status' objectives for waterbodies would strengthen the policy at examination.
Accessible Blue Infrastructure	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	The policy addresses ecological and water quality aspects of blue infrastructure but does not explicitly address the role of blue infrastructure in providing accessible open space and active travel routes. The Ashby Canal towpath and the River Sence corridor are key active travel and recreation assets identified in the GI Strategy but these functions are not fully captured in SP28. Stronger wording is needed to ensure these functions are addressed explicitly.
Natural flood management (NFM)	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	The policy does not explicitly address natural flood management (NFM) as a tool. NFM (upstream planting, floodplain restoration, reconnecting river meanders) is now an important component of flood risk management and is supported by NPPF 2024 and the

		Environment Agency's approach. A reference to NFM as a preferred approach ahead of engineered solutions would be appropriate.
Integration with SP20	ADEQUATE	The policy notes that Blue Infrastructure should be addressed through the GI Plan required by SP20. The cross-reference is present but brief. A stronger statement of the integration between green and blue infrastructure — and the requirement that GI Plans address both — would improve clarity for applicants.
River Sence corridor	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	The River Sence corridor is identified in the GI Strategy as a key 'Big Picture' opportunity but receives less prominence in SP28 than the Ashby Canal. Given the corridor's significance for biodiversity, flood risk and recreation in the Western GI Zone, the policy should give it equivalent weight.
Evidence base	ADEQUATE	The policy references the GI Strategy (2020) and the SFRA (2019/2024). The GI Strategy Update Note should be added as a companion evidence document. The policy should also reference the Leicestershire LNRS now it has been published. The Humber RBMP should be referenced to demonstrate alignment with statutory water management objectives.
Developer Responsibilities and Policy Clarity	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Representations on NAT11 and SP28 consistently asked for clarification that: • Developers are responsible only for new or modified blue infrastructure elements; • Existing water assets such as the Ashby Canal remain the responsibility of landowners or statutory bodies. This mirrors concerns under SP20 and NAT01 about ensuring policies are “clearly written and unambiguous” and supports strengthening SP28’s clarity at Regulation 19.
Recognising Multifunctionality and Active Travel	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Responses welcomed the policy’s ambition but noted that SP28 underplays: • The role of the Ashby Canal and River Sence as active travel corridors; • The importance of accessible blue space for health and recreation. SP28 should explicitly reference these functions, particularly given their prominence in the Green Infrastructure Strategy and stakeholder feedback.

Natural flood management	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	Given the significance of flood risk in the River Sence and its surrounding catchments, SP28 should: • Prioritise nature-based solutions; • Recognise the essential role of floodplain meadows, wet woodland and upstream attenuation; • Position engineered solutions as a last resort.
Internal Coherence (SP20, SP24, SP25, SP21)	NEEDS STRENGTHENING	SP28 should be more explicit about its relationship with related policies. The ecological, climate, heritage and connectivity functions of blue corridors must be consistent across SP20 and SP28. The role of blue infrastructure in helping deliver mandatory BNG should be clear.

Recommended Amendments for Regulation 19

1. Add explicit reference to the Humber River Basin Management Plan and confirm that SP28 supports delivery of “good status” and “no deterioration” objectives for local waterbodies.
2. Add a criterion addressing the role of blue infrastructure in providing accessible recreation and active travel routes, with explicit reference to the Ashby Canal towpath and River Sence.
3. Insert a requirement for development to demonstrate how it will contribute to, or be consistent with, natural flood management principles, prioritising nature-based approaches.
4. Give the River Sence corridor explicit recognition in the policy text and justification, reflecting its strategic significance in the GI Strategy.
5. Strengthen the cross-reference to SP20, clarifying that GI Plans must include and integrate blue infrastructure design and management.
6. Add the GI Strategy Update Note (2026) to the evidence base and include reference to the published Leicestershire LNRS.

9.10 Having considered the findings and recommendations outlined above, the proposed Regulation 19 Local Plan Green Infrastructure policy is set out in Appendix C of this report.

10. Conclusion and Summary

10.1 The Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (LUC, July 2020) remains a sound and relevant piece of evidence for the Local Plan 2024–2045. Its spatial analysis, GI zone framework, asset baseline assessment, thematic analysis and 11 Priority Opportunities are all considered to remain valid for the purposes of informing and justifying the emerging Green Infrastructure and Blue Infrastructure Policies in the Local Plan.

10.2 The following changes in national policy and legislation since July 2020 are addressed through this Update Note and through the Local Plan policies themselves:

- Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain under the Environment Act 2021, now operational from February/April 2024, is addressed through Policies SP25 and SP20 and the requirement for Biodiversity Gain Plans.
- Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (January 2023) is directly embedded in Policy SP20's requirement for GI Plans for major development.
- The NPPF December 2024 strengthens GI requirements overall, and the Local Plan's policies are consistent with that strengthened context.
- The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy, published in July 2025, complements the GI Strategy's spatial priorities and provides an additional spatial framework for nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement.
- The extended plan period to 2045 is addressed by confirming the continued relevance of the GI Strategy's priority opportunities across the full plan period.

10.3 The Borough Council is satisfied that, read together, the GI Strategy (2020) and this Addendum Note provide a proportionate and robust evidence base for the Local Plan's GI and Blue Infrastructure policies, and that those policies address the current national policy and legislative requirements for green and blue infrastructure.

Appendix A: Summary of Key Documents Post-dating the GI Strategy

The following documents, all published after the GI Strategy's completion in July 2020, are relevant to the evidence base for Policies SP20 and SP28 and should be read alongside the GI Strategy:

Policy/Legislation	Date	Relevance to GI/Blue Infrastructure
Environment Act 2021	2021	Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain; LNRS; biodiversity duty; long-term environmental targets.
Agriculture Act 2020	2020	Establishes Environmental Land Management (ELM) Schemes influencing rural GI delivery.
Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework	Jan 2023	National GI principles and standards.
Natural England GI Planning & Design Guide	2023	Design guidance for implementing GI Framework.
NPPF (December 2024)	2024	Strengthened GI, SuDS and nature recovery policy.
Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitats) Regulations	2024	Statutory protection for irreplaceable habitats; relevant to GI and BI policy.
Biodiversity Net Gain Reforms (2026)	2026	Amendments to the BNG regime
HBBC Climate Change & Biodiversity Strategy 2024–28	2024	Local strategic direction for net zero, nature recovery and GI.
Hinckley & Bosworth Level 1 SFRA Review	2024	Critical evidence for Blue Infrastructure, flood zones and SuDS.
Hinckley & Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (LUC)	2020	Primary spatial GI evidence (zones, assets, priority opportunities).
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	2025	Statutory spatial biodiversity framework informing GI/BI priorities.
Water Cycle Study (HBBC)	2024	Evidence for water supply, wastewater, nutrient neutrality, core to BI policy.

Humber River Basin Management Plan (EA)	Latest 2022 cycle	WFD compliance; ecological status; required reference for SP28.
Open Space & Recreation Study	2025	Updates 2016 study; accessibility and quantity standards relevant to GI.
Hinckley Town Centre Wayfinding Strategy	2026	Supports active travel and green-blue corridor connectivity.
Building with Nature Standards	Updated 2024	Recognised GI accreditation framework (policy encourages use).
Water Resources Management Plan (Severn Trent)	Latest	Influences BI and water infrastructure planning.
Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025	December 2025 (Royal Assent)	Introduces a new framework for strategic nature recovery and environmental delivery planning, including powers for Natural England to administer strategic mitigation schemes funded through developer contributions.

Appendix B. Local Plan Regulation 19: Policy NE03 Green Infrastructure

Policy NE03 – Green Infrastructure

Policy NE03 – Green Infrastructure

Development must create high quality multifunctional Green Infrastructure (GI), including but not limited to public open space, that is integrated from the outset of site design to contribute to a connected, nature rich and climate resilient network across the borough. The GI network includes all natural and seminatural spaces and the routes that connect them.

Development proposals must:

- a) Protect and integrate existing GI Assets: Identify, retain and enhance onsite GI features, including trees, hedgerows, watercourses, habitats, historic landscapes and public rights of way, and demonstrate how they have shaped development layout;
- b) Plan GI as a connected network: design GI as a coherent network of multifunctional spaces reflecting the borough's GI Zones and contributing to the 11 Priority Opportunities in the GI Strategy. GI should also consider the priorities and opportunity areas identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. GI must connect habitats, green routes and blue infrastructure across and beyond the site;
- c) Support health, wellbeing and active travel: Provide safe, inclusive and accessible green and blue spaces, and traffic-free routes. Layouts should aim to provide access to a variety of green and blue spaces within a 15-minute walk of all homes, consistent with Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard;
- d) Deliver climate resilience: Incorporate GI that contributes to urban cooling, carbon sequestration, surface water management, improved air and water quality and nature-based flood solutions;
- e) Reinforce local character and heritage: Use GI to strengthen landscape character and the setting of heritage assets, including Ashby Canal, parklands and cultural landscapes; and
- f) Secure long-term management: Submit a GI Management Plan setting out management responsibilities, funding arrangements, and stewardship mechanisms for a minimum of 30 years, proportionate to the scale of development. Arrangements must be agreed before construction begins.

Major development must also submit Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan that:

- g) Demonstrates alignment with the latest Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework: addressing Accessible Natural Greenspace, Urban Greening, Urban Tree Canopy Cover and Strategic SuDS standards proportionate to the scale and context of the site. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan must also set out how GI integrates with blue infrastructure requirements under Policy; and
- h) Sets out measurable GI outcomes: including contribution to the borough's GI Priority Opportunities, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the creation or enhancement of strategic habitat networks. GI requirements under this policy

Policy NE03 – Green Infrastructure

complement but do not duplicate Biodiversity Net Gain requirements under Policy NE01.

Off-site contributions

Where on-site delivery is demonstrated to be impracticable, off-site GI contributions may be secured through planning obligations provided the requirement is necessary, reasonable and directly related to the development, the off-site delivery supports the borough's GI Priority Opportunities or the LNRS, long-term management is secured, and the contribution is consistent with the whole plan viability assessment.

Supporting Text

Green Infrastructure (GI) differs from traditional landscaping in that it is multifunctional, connected and strategically planned. It comprises the interconnected network of natural and semi-natural spaces and corridors within the borough, including parks, allotments, woodlands, fields, hedgerows, watercourses, wetlands, bridleways, cycle routes and public rights of way.

GI is multifunctional, providing benefits for biodiversity, climate resilience, landscape character, public health, recreation, air and water quality, flood management and sustainable travel. GI requirements under this policy complement the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain framework by addressing wider spatial, functional and accessibility outcomes.

While landscaping and biodiversity features contribute to Green Infrastructure, standalone or ornamental landscaping that does not provide wider functional or connectivity benefits will not, in itself, fulfil the requirements of this policy.

The Borough's approach to GI is informed by the Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020) and the Green Infrastructure Strategy Update Note (2026), which confirm the continued relevance of the borough's GI Zones, asset baseline and 11 Priority Opportunities. These documents form the spatial evidence base for Policy NE03.

The NPPF (2024) requires strategic policies to make sufficient provision for green infrastructure (paragraph 20) and to enable healthy lifestyles through safe and accessible green infrastructure (paragraph 96). Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (2023) provides national principles and standards including Accessible Natural Greenspace, Urban Nature Recovery, Urban Greening Factor, Urban Tree Canopy Cover and Strategic SuDS which the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan must address proportionately.

The Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025) identifies priority areas and actions for nature recovery across the county. Development must demonstrate how Green Infrastructure (GI) proposals are consistent with relevant LNRS priorities and opportunities. GI requirements under this policy complement but do not duplicate, Biodiversity Net Gain obligations under Policy NE01: Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity and relevant national legislation. Green and Blue Infrastructure Plans and Biodiversity Gain Plans may be submitted as a single integrated document where this would provide a clearer and more effective demonstration of compliance with both policy requirements.

The GI Strategy (2020) identifies three GI Zones that reflect the borough's physical, demographic and environmental context:

- Southern Zone – Densely populated with higher proportions of older and younger

residents, areas of poorer health and limited access to green space. This zone is more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and has the greatest need for enhanced and accessible GI.

- Western Zone – An open rural landscape with dispersed settlements, rich in cultural and tourism assets but with relatively low biodiversity, offering significant opportunities for habitat creation and landscape-scale enhancement.
- North-Eastern Zone – Encompassing the National Forest and Charnwood Forest fringe, this zone contains areas of high biodiversity value but is subject to pollution and disturbance from strategic road infrastructure.

The Strategy identifies 11 Priority Opportunities (e.g., woodland expansion, enhanced greenways, improved access and wayfinding, resilient landscapes at Burbage Common and the Battlefield Trail). These opportunities guide the location and type of GI enhancements that development should support, either on-site or off-site.

GI and blue infrastructure (GBI) must be considered from the outset of site planning to create a connected, multifunctional network. Integrating GBI early ensures that environmental, social and economic benefits are fully realised. Well-designed GI can:

- Support nature recovery and ecological connectivity;
- Improve air and water quality;
- Reduce flood risk through sustainable drainage;
- Encourage walking, cycling and active travel;
- Enhance local landscape character and sense of place; and
- Provide shading, cooling and carbon capture to support climate resilience.

Policy NE03 requires major development to include a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan demonstrating how green and blue infrastructure principles, including Natural England's standards, are applied proportionately to the scale and context of the site.

GI must deliver lasting benefits. Policy NE03 requires long-term management and stewardship, typically a minimum of 30 years. Developers must set out: Management responsibilities; Funding arrangements; Maintenance schedules; Mechanisms for secure stewardship (e.g., management companies, conservation bodies, trusts). These arrangements must be agreed with the Council before construction begins to ensure GI remains robust, functional and ecologically rich over time.

Figure 1: Photo of Burbage Woodland

Appendix C: Local Plan Regulation 19: Policy NE4 Blue Infrastructure

Policy NE04 – Blue Infrastructure

Policy NE04 – Blue Infrastructure

Development must contribute to a high-quality, multifunctional and resilient Blue Infrastructure (BI) network by protecting, enhancing and creating water environments that support biodiversity, natural flood management, water quality, climate resilience, active travel and landscape character. Blue Infrastructure is a core component of the borough's wider Green Infrastructure network.

Major development required to submit a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan under Policy NE03 must demonstrate how blue infrastructure has been integrated into site design, having regard to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (2023), the GI Strategy, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Developers are responsible for the blue infrastructure arising from or modified by their own proposals. Responsibility for existing strategic assets (including the Ashby Canal) remains with the relevant landowner or statutory undertaker.

Watercourse Protection and Naturalisation

Development must:

- a) Avoid culverting of watercourses; culverting will only be permitted where essential for a specific infrastructure crossing and no reasonable alternative exists;
- b) Maintain a minimum 10-metre undeveloped, vegetated buffer from the top of the bank of all open watercourses. For culverts, watercourse structures and flood risk management infrastructure, maintain a minimum 8-metre appropriate and unobstructed easement from the outer edge of the structure. These are separate requirements applying to different circumstances; and
- c) Seek opportunities to restore, enhance or naturalise watercourses, such as opening culverts, removal of redundant structures, channel naturalisation, re-profiling engineered channels, and restoring riparian habitats, where practicable.

Water Quality, Drainage and Natural Flood Management

Development must:

- d) Retain, enhance and reconnect natural drainage features, prioritising nature-based solutions and natural flood management consistent with the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Engineered flood defences should be considered only where nature-based approaches are demonstrated to be insufficient;
- e) Incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in accordance with Policy ER07, designed to deliver water quality, biodiversity and amenity benefits alongside drainage function;
- f) Contribute to improving the ecological and chemical status of priority waterbodies, supporting delivery of the objectives of the Humber River Basin Management Plan and the Water Framework Directive, including the Ashby Canal, River Sence, River Tweed and River Mease catchment; and

Policy NE04 – Blue Infrastructure

- g) Secure long-term management and maintenance of blue infrastructure for a minimum of 30 years on major sites, with clear responsibilities, funding arrangements and stewardship mechanisms agreed before construction begins.

Habitat Creation, Enhancement, Access and Heritage

Where relevant to the location and scale of development, proposals should:

- h) Create and enhance wetland habitats, including wet woodland, reedbeds, scrapes, ponds, backwaters, floodplain meadows, rain gardens and naturalised SuDs and improve connectivity through removal of physical barriers and reconnection of watercourses with their floodplains;
- i) Support ecological networks associated with the River Sence LWS, Manor Farm Meadows LWS, Sheepy Fields SSSI and rural tributary systems and strengthen the River Tweed corridor as a strategic green and blue infrastructure route;
- j) Support active travel and recreation along watercourse corridors, particularly Ashby Canal and River Sence where compatible with ecological sensitivity; and
- k) Enhance blue infrastructure opportunities on restored or partially restored mineral and waste sites, including still water bodies such as Thornton Reservoir and Groby Pool.

Recognise and enhance historic water environments, including the Ashby Canal and associated heritage landscapes, as multifunctional GI assets contributing to biodiversity, recreation and cultural identity.

Blue Infrastructure comprises the borough's rivers, streams, brooks, canals, ponds, wetlands, reservoirs, floodplains and natural drainage features. These water environments are essential for ecological connectivity, flood risk management, water quality, climate resilience and recreation and form part of the wider GI network.

The borough's principal blue assets include the Ashby Canal (SSSI), a multifunctional heritage and ecological corridor; the River Sence, which is currently recorded as having Poor Chemical Status under Water Framework Directive principles, making riparian restoration a priority; and the River Tweed corridor, which represents a significant opportunity to strengthen green-blue connectivity on the urban edge of Hinckley. The River Mease SAC catchment influences the north-west of the borough; development affecting that catchment must separately demonstrate nutrient neutrality under Policy HPD04 Preventing Pollution.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment recommends that development avoids further culverting of watercourses and seeks opportunities to de-culvert or naturalise existing channels wherever feasible. It requires maintenance easements to enable future flood management interventions. Natural flood management, including upstream planting, floodplain restoration and reconnection of river meanders is the preferred approach to managing flood risk, with engineered solutions considered only where nature-based approaches are demonstrated to be insufficient.

Within the 10m buffer zone from a watercourse, no works, clearance, storage, or run-off should be permitted in accordance with the Sustainability Appraisal. However, it is considered that development further away than this has the potential to lead to adverse impacts such as those resulting from runoff.

Blue infrastructure supports biodiversity by linking habitats across the borough and enabling

species movement. Restoration of the River Sence, including riparian habitats, wet grassland and naturalised watercourse edges, is a priority to support the Nature Recovery Network and deliver the LNRS's habitat connectivity objectives. The creation of wetland features, ponds and naturalised SuDS will strengthen habitat connectivity across both rural and urban areas.

In addition to environmental benefits, blue infrastructure contributes significantly to recreation, health and wellbeing. The Ashby Canal towpath and the emerging River Tweed corridor provide opportunities to support active travel and create accessible natural recreation routes connecting neighbourhoods with the wider countryside. Enhancing these corridors will strengthen local placemaking, increase access to nature and support healthier lifestyles. Waterways also form an important part of the borough's historic environment, and the conservation and interpretation of historic canals, water management systems and associated landscapes can enrich cultural identity and diversify tourism opportunities.

To ensure that blue infrastructure continues to deliver long-term benefits, it must be accompanied by appropriate management and stewardship arrangements. New development is expected to secure long-term funding and clear responsibilities for the maintenance of blue infrastructure features, typically for a minimum of 30 years on major sites. These arrangements are essential to maintaining water quality, ecological value, flood management functions and the safe operation of SuDS and restored watercourse channels over the lifetime of the development.

This policy works alongside Policy NE03, which requires major development to prepare a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan. This Plan must demonstrate how blue infrastructure is fully integrated into site design and management.