

## APPENDIX 25

### DRAFT GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY

Policy XX demonstrates the Council's commitment to conserve and enhance the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure, which will help to improve the District's Green and Blue Infrastructure network and ensure its multi-functional benefits are achieved. The conservation and enhancement of the Green and Blue Infrastructure network will help to enhance biodiversity resources, support healthy lifestyles, minimise flood risk and mitigate against pollution.

#### **Policy xx Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy**

- 1) The Council will seek a net gain in the quality and quantity of Green and Blue Infrastructure, through the protection and enhancement of assets and the provision of new green spaces.
- 2) Priorities for Green and Blue Infrastructure focus on conserving and enhancing the following key assets and the linkages between them:
  - a) the corridors of the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade and the Grand Union Canal;
  - b) the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
  - c) the Colne Valley Park;
  - d) the District's Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, key biodiversity habitats, species and areas identified in the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>1</sup> and heritage assets and landscape character within areas of Green Infrastructure.
- 3) The Council will require new development to contribute to the delivery of new safe and accessible Green and Blue Infrastructure and to the management of a linked network of new and enhanced open spaces and corridors.
- 4) Development proposals should improve connectivity between key assets in the Green and Blue Infrastructure network through the establishment of linked and coherent networks and corridors of green spaces.
- 5) Public rights of way and other sustainable transport links between spaces in the Green Infrastructure network should be protected and enhanced through development proposals. Diversions of public rights of way will only be appropriate where an alternative route of equal or improved character, amenity, safety, directness and convenience is provided.
- 6) Development will not compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network, by causing fragmentation, damage to, or isolation of Green Infrastructure assets including natural habitats and species.

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<sup>1</sup> Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (2006) [http://www.hef.org.uk/nature/biodiversity\\_vision/contents.htm](http://www.hef.org.uk/nature/biodiversity_vision/contents.htm)

## ***Reasoned Justification***

Green Infrastructure is defined national policy as a “network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities”. Green infrastructure includes a range of spaces and assets including parks and gardens, playing fields, woodlands, wildlife habitats, street trees, amenity greenspace and other open spaces. Green Infrastructure networks also include ‘blue infrastructure’ features, such as ponds, rivers, canals and other water bodies and may subsequently be referred to as Green and Blue Infrastructure.

Green and Blue Infrastructure is essential to the success of the District, given its multi-functional benefits, including the promotion of health and wellbeing through opportunities for recreation, exercise and social interaction; mitigation against climate change and flooding through the migration of species to more suitable habitats, the protection of water quality and the provision of sustainable drainage systems; the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through better ecological connectivity and the facilitation of biodiversity net gain and the enhancement of local landscape character and economic growth through the creation high-quality environments.

The key Green and Blue Infrastructure assets in Three Rivers include:

- the corridors of the Rivers Chess, Colne and Gade and the Grand Union Canal;
- the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- the District’s Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, key biodiversity areas<sup>2</sup> and priority habitats and species identified by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan; and
- The Colne Valley Park.

These form significant Green Infrastructure assets within the District into which other assets link through the identified Green Infrastructure corridors, however, these are not the only important elements for Green Infrastructure within and around the District. Open spaces, woodlands, parks and gardens, allotments, amenity greenspace and other spaces may also be important. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Map is shown at Appendix 2<sup>3</sup>.

Given its importance to the District, it will be vital that all new developments protect existing and incorporate new green infrastructure wherever possible. All Green Infrastructure provision should be made safe and accessible and new or improved active

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<sup>2</sup> The three key biodiversity areas are: the Mid-Colne Valley (wetlands and grasslands), Whippendell Woods and surrounds (woodlands, grassland and wetlands) and the River Chess Valley (wetlands, grasslands, woodland and heath).

<sup>3</sup> This map will be updated in the new Local Plan to incorporate new spaces in the Green Infrastructure network that have been provided since 2011 as well as new areas of open space that may be provided through new housing allocations which will form part of the District’s Green and Blue Infrastructure in the future.

travel routes which connect people to green infrastructure should also be provided where possible. These measures will help to ensure that the multi-functional uses of green and blue infrastructure are maximised and that all parts of the District benefit from high quality and accessible green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals to ensure that it forms an integral part of proposed developments and to ensure that existing Green Infrastructure assets are taken into account. Opportunities should be sought to improve ecological connectivity, including through the creation, restoration and enhancements of linking habitats through the landscape. This means that links between green infrastructure features within development sites and where possible, to nearby features beyond sites, should be created or enhanced. A loss of green infrastructure and the breaking up of its networks can damage wildlife and ecosystems; development should therefore be planned to avoid habitat loss and fragmentation and the isolation of Green Infrastructure should be prevented.

Developers should refer to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2019) to determine which open spaces in the Green Infrastructure network should be prioritised for enhancement. The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study assesses the quality and value of open spaces in the District, with these green spaces forming part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure network; if a low quality open space in the Green Infrastructure network is located in reasonable proximity to a development, these open spaces be prioritised for enhancement.

The Council will work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities, the County Council and relevant interest groups in order to improve cross-boundary Green and Blue Infrastructure links.

The Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan (2011) and subsequent updates produced by Hertfordshire County Council provides the strategic framework for Green Infrastructure planning and design in Hertfordshire and outlines a series of potential projects to take forward. Opportunities for the enhancement and creation of Green Infrastructure at a District level are identified in the Three Rivers District Green Infrastructure Plan (2011). Developers should take account of both documents and subsequent updates when considering potential enhancements and/or extensions of the Green Infrastructure network.

The Colne Valley Regional Park Strategy<sup>4</sup> (2019) highlights opportunities to improve blue and green infrastructure and access and connectivity within the network. Applicants are

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/green-infrastructure-strategy-colne-and-crane-valleys/>

advised to refer to this document when considering projects to enhance and extend the Green and Blue Infrastructure network.

Specific projects to enhance of Green and Blue Infrastructure in the District are also identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.