

Case Studies – Appendix 8

Process Guide for Local Planning Authorities –
Developing Green Infrastructure Policies and Strategies
using the Green Infrastructure Framework – Principles
and Standards for England

September 2024

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Case Studies

Telford and Wrekin

Telford and Wrekin Council are seeking to integrate the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) with their new Green Infrastructure (GI) policies. The Council are ensuring that, in preparing their Regulation 19 draft Local Plan for submission, they are engaged with, learning from and contributing to the development of the LNRS, led by Shropshire Council. Representatives of Telford and Wrekin's Green Infrastructure team collaborate with LNRS stakeholders through steering group meetings. The aim is to ensure that the LNRS and the Local Plan complement one another, with the LNRS providing evidence to support the plan's proposals, including urban greening, planned GI corridors and woodland priority areas.

The LNRS steering group has formed a partnership with the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute who have developed the Nature-based Solutions Knowledge Hub. The hub is a living resource that provides specific methods, concepts, and case studies regarding different elements of nature-based, GI delivery including integration, governance, funding programmes, monitoring outcomes and the Agile Opportunity Mapping tool. As a result of this partnership, the LNRS spatial mapping tool is making both technical and strategic advancements, many of which are being shared with the Telford and Wrekin team.

Subsequently, Telford and Wrekin's GI policies are being revised to include new data being fed through the LNRS mapping. Their draft Local Plan currently includes seven GI-related policies within their 'Green and Natural Environment' chapter. In particular, their 'Green network' policy and related mapping has been updated in response to new public health and ecology data, as well as initial nature recovery areas and corridors being prioritised through the LNRS. The GI planning teams are focused on ensuring that their green network complements and enhances LNRS efforts, creating strategic links between the urban and rural environments.

Bath and North East Somerset

Bath & North East Somerset Council are undertaking work to strategically embed GI into their Local Plan and secure better GI outcomes for people and nature. The council have focused efforts on producing a 'Green Infrastructure Framework for Bath and North East Somerset' which highlights 8 key sustainability issues and the role of GI to help meet shared outcomes set out in various council and regional plans to address those issues including obesity, mental health, loss of biodiversity and climate change over the next 10 years (2025-2035). The Framework for BANES has been developed in collaboration with external partners via workshops and internal council services, steered by an internal GI Review Group which met monthly and comprised of officers from:

- GI & Nature Recovery,
- Parks & Green Spaces,
- Leisure & Projects Development,
- Regeneration,
- Corporate Estate,
- Highways Maintenance & Drainage,
- Planning Policy,
- Public Health & Prevention,
- Strategic Transport
- Heritage Services

The Review Group and focused placemaking sessions provided cross service discussions which identified challenges, competing demands and proposed actions.

The first draft of the Framework will undergo internal and key stakeholder review before public consultation and final draft prepared for adoption, which is anticipated in December 2024. It will form the evidence base for new GI policy in their Local Plan, as well as provide a coordinated steer for internal teams and officers for consideration and delivery of GI

The draft Framework includes succinct guidance sections set out as follows:

1. Introduction: The background, vision, GI definition and purpose of the Framework.
2. **Case for Investment:** A summary of a commissioned report that explored key 'sustainability issues' that currently cost Bath and North East Somerset over £2bn per year and the financial savings and returns that investing in GI would deliver.
3. Context: Background information and signposting to Natural England's (NE) Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF), national planning policy, relevant local plans and strategies and the **draft GI policy**.

The **draft GI policy** includes strong wording to implement the UGF standard (signposting to NE guidance) and requires developers to submit a **Green Infrastructure Plan**. The Framework draft provides initial detail and a flow diagram to guide developers on what the GI Plan should entail. Ultimately, the GI Plan will require developers to succinctly collate a prescribed list of GI information such as BNG plans, enhancement of natural capital, connectivity, and the management, maintenance and funding for the development lifetime. It will form a clear evidence base for development management officers when assessing applications as well as informing public communities, individuals and commercial bodies on how local GI will be impacted by the proposed development.

4. **Green Infrastructure Mapping:** Information regarding the series of **interactive GI maps** which are under development. They will inform stakeholders of existing GI assets and deficiencies to determine what interventions might be most useful to meet needs in different locations.
5. **Green Infrastructure Standards and Targets:** Context regarding local **standards** and targets that have been informed by NE GIF Standards and existing standards that have previously been identified and evidenced in local strategies. This work has been underpinned by baseline analysis which has been informed by NE guidance.
6. **GI Investment & Delivery Action Plan** for BANES 2025-2030: This Action Plan accompanies the Framework and identifies priority actions and projects where investment (including officer time and council funding) is needed. Part 1 is focused on actions relating to evidence, internal practice and processes. Part 2 are place based projects and correlate to GI outcomes and will contribute to GI standards and targets. Identified with stakeholders they have been identified as priority projects on which to focus and to deliver in partnership, to secure funding and long-term management.

The Framework also includes supporting sections on 'Monitoring and Reporting' and 'Supporting and additional resources' including relevant documents, tools and web site links including the council planning web pages. These list local requirements for planning applications and a dedicated guidance page on when the Green Infrastructure Plan is required within application and what it should include. This will form part of wider guidance that supports the 'Green Infrastructure Framework for Bath and North East Somerset'.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) published their Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2022 and have since submitted their Regulation 19 draft local plan (July 2024) which includes a GI Policy that incorporates the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) standard and the Urban Tree Canopy Cover standard. The GI Strategy drew on the GI Framework's 15 Principles for GI.

The Council commissioned external consultants to produce an Urban Greening Design Guide to provide detailed guidance on the benefits of green infrastructure and how it can be incorporated into the design of development and demonstrate how to calculate and meet the Urban Greening Factor Score.

The introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and assessment of recent planning applications have highlighted the need to supplement the GI Strategy with guidance on the links between BNG, Urban Greening Factor and GI in the BCP context particularly in relation to locally appropriate plant species and management plans. The

guide is a practical document to showcase delivery of GI, highlight its importance and provide a bridge to the broader GI Strategy. It aims to support developers, landowners and BCP residents in enabling all scales of GI improvements.

Following initial drafting and input from the green spaces, ecology, BNG and planning teams within the council, training and regular workshops are being held with case officers to understand more fully the issues arising and level of scientific evidence and guidance they required. The workshops seek to:

- Upskill case officers in how to use the biodiversity metrics
- Review recent planning applications' BNG plans and metrics to identify weaknesses and knowledge gaps
- Identify the relationship between UGF and BNG requirements
- Consider how a more comprehensive design guide could address weaknesses and concerns and better support developers

The workshops highlighted that developers and case officers require more localised and scientifically supported guidance for designing SuDS, green walls and green roofs; it was noted that smaller developers regularly produce BNG and GI plans that utilise unsuitable plant species for BCP's local context such that the urban greening efforts would not establish a resilient GI network.

The forthcoming local plan policies and Urban Greening design guide are further supplemented by an Urban Forest Strategy (adopted July 2024). This uses tree equity scores to highlight the disparity in canopy coverage across the BCP area, from 9% to 40% canopy cover by ward, and therefore prioritise wards for improvement in both tree stock and urban greening.

The local plan policy requires a minimum of 10% tree canopy cover on a development site. The detail of how this is managed and considered by planning officers is still being worked through as there can be examples where trees can have a negative impact on BNG. For example, trees could shade out acid grassland or ponds preventing them from attaining a quality standard and therefore inhibiting the wildlife benefit.

BCP Council is planning to provide ongoing BNG training workshops with development management officers to increase confidence and expertise and identify further gaps and challenges that the new design guide should address. They will also provide training workshops for small scale developers to help build better relationships, expertise and a greater understanding of their knowledge gaps. This will strengthen technical understanding of the BNG metric as well as how future UGF requirements should be integrated alongside BNG to produce locally effective, multi-functional, high-quality and well-managed urban greening.

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ISBN 978-1-78367-408-4
Catalogue code: NE820

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