

features and necessary supporting habitats, such as ponds, hedgerows, ditches and trees which are to be retained. Where loss of habitat is unavoidable, adequate mitigation measures should be undertaken and only where this is not possible, adequate compensation measures should be implemented. In this instance development proposals should be guided by the Council's approach to biodiversity offsetting (or equivalent) as set out in the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Green Infrastructure Strategy, or any subsequent update to this document and national policy. In all instances, the long term management and maintenance of ecological features must be demonstrated. In order to assist in ecological assessments the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre should be consulted.

Policy NE2: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure

The Council will work with partners towards the creation of a comprehensive Borough wide Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network which is inclusive of the Princethorpe Woodland Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (also known as the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape), as shown on the Green and Blue Infrastructure Policies Map. This will be achieved through the following:

- The protection, restoration and enhancement of existing and potential Green and Blue Infrastructure assets within the network as shown on the Policies Map; and
- The introduction of appropriate multi-functional corridors between existing and potential Green and Blue infrastructure assets.

Where appropriate new developments must provide suitable Green and Blue Infrastructure corridors throughout the development and link into adjacent strategic and local Green and Blue Infrastructure networks or assets where present.

Where such provision is made a framework plan should be produced as part of the planning application demonstrating the contribution to the overall achievements of the multi-functional strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure network. A management plan, based on delivering the framework plan and detailing how the infrastructure will be managed, may be required by condition.

9.9. Green Infrastructure includes 'Blue' elements such as rivers, streams and ponds. The surface water part of Green Infrastructure is referred to as 'Blue' Infrastructure. It is not only important to protect the existing Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI) network in its current role but also to enhance it, both in its function and where possible in its physical extent. Through new developments there is an opportunity for the enhancement of GI assets particularly through the introduction of appropriate multi- functional corridors between them.

9.10. Where new multi-functional corridors between existing Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI) assets are made from a development site a framework plan will be required which addresses how to achieve the balance of public access and the protection of the existing Green/Blue Infrastructure site's asset. The framework plan should be informed by the GI Study and factor in the following:

- Indicative buffers for the important Green and/or Blue Infrastructure corridors which form part of the strategic networks such as watercourse corridors and disused railway lines;
- Retain sites of historic environmental value;
- Indicative buffers where required to protect important Green/Blue Infrastructure against adjacent developments;
- Retain valued semi natural habitats; and
- Set out the local network of Green/Blue Infrastructure and how it will be managed and developed.

9.11. The Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network that runs through the Borough and connects to networks beyond the administrative boundary contains many different elements, each of which contribute to its overall achievements as a Strategic Green Infrastructure Network. The principal assets of the Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network are watercourse corridors, disused railway lines and Local Sites. It is vital that those elements of the network remain intact and are able to function in their role and Policy NE2 seeks to enable this. New Green and Blue Infrastructure should support the aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan and the aims of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.

9.12. The Sub Regional Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Green Infrastructure Study and Rugby Borough Green Infrastructure Study set out that there is a distinct opportunity for improvement in the west of the Borough, where a cluster of ancient woodlands and unimproved or semi improved grasslands are located near to the urban edge of Coventry. This area, identified as the Princethorpe Woodland Biodiversity Opportunity Area (also known as the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape project), is significant in size and is already rich in Green Infrastructure assets. Therefore its inclusion in Policy NE2, as a focus for enhancement of the overall Strategic Green/Blue Infrastructure Network, is extremely important.

9.13. In spite of this importance to the Strategic GI Network the location of the Princethorpe Woodland Biodiversity Opportunity Area is not in a location which will see significant growth and consequently limited developer contributions will be available for its enhancement. The Council realises that opportunities for delivery against Policy NE2 through planning applications are limited, however it considers that this strategic approach to Green and Blue Infrastructure should be embodied in Development Plan policy for the long term. Control of the principal assets of the Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network rest principally with the public sector and partnership working is therefore particularly key to its success.

9.14. It is important to understand the intrinsic value of any asset that may be lost and this will be established through consultation with relevant partners in addition to reference to existing evidence such as Habitat Biodiversity Audits and the Green Infrastructure Study. The Borough has several non-statutory biodiversity sites including Local Wildlife Sites and UK Biodiversity Action Plan sites. As these sites have no protection nationally, the Biodiversity Action Plan and Habitat and Biodiversity Audit information will inform whether the feature should be safeguarded. Within the Borough, there are also distinctive historic and archaeological landscape features. As these sites have no statutory

protection, the Historic Landscape Characterisation and Historic Environmental Records will inform whether the feature should be safeguarded.

Policy NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement

New development which positively contributes to landscape character will be permitted.

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they:

- Integrate landscape planning into the design of development at an early stage;
- Consider its landscape context, including the local distinctiveness of the different natural and historic landscapes and character, including tranquillity;
- Relate well to local topography and built form and enhance key landscape features, ensuring their long term management and maintenance;
- Identify likely visual impacts on the local landscape and townscape and its immediate setting and undertakes appropriate landscaping to reduce these impacts;
- Aim to either conserve, enhance or restore important landscape features in accordance with the latest local and national guidance;
- Address the importance of habitat biodiversity features, including aged and veteran trees, woodland and hedges and their contribution to landscape character, where possible enhancing and expanding these features through means such as buffering and reconnecting fragmented areas; and
- Are sensitive to an area's capacity to change, acknowledge cumulative effects and guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements.

9.15. The purpose of Policy NE3 is to ensure that significant landscape features are protected and enhanced and that landscape design is a key component in the design of new development. Planning applications will be required to submit a landscape analysis and management plan in appropriate cases. This should take into account evidence on landscape including the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines and Assessment of Rugby (2006), Landscape Sensitivity Study – Main Rural Settlements (2016), Rainsbrook Valley Landscape Sensitivity Study (2017), Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Green Infrastructure Strategy and data obtained from the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record.

9.16. When considering historic landscapes Policy NE3 must be cross referenced with Policy SDC3 'Protecting and enhancing the Historic Environment'.