

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

Statement of accordance with LNP principles

July 2016

Principle 1: Recognise the value of the natural environment and the range of benefits and services it provides

The provision of open spaces was an important part of the original new town structure. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan aims to ensure a network of multi-functional green spaces is retained throughout the town.

The network reflects one of the key objectives of Stevenage's Community Strategy 'to maintain the high quality spaces we have, and promote their use for a variety of activities'; and the findings of our Green Space Strategy, which recognises that green infrastructure performs a number of different functions, including providing ecological resources and processes. The Plan acknowledges the role of landscape design in its strategic policies and the contribution that this makes to the biodiversity value of the towns green infrastructure.

The Plan also acknowledges and reflects the importance placed on green infrastructure by the NPPF and NPPG, both as an essential contributor to healthy places and communities and as a way of combating the long term negative effects of climate change.

The Sustainability Appraisal acknowledges the wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits offered by open spaces and green infrastructure.

Principle 2: Protect and enhance existing biodiversity assets

Stevenage does not contain any European or nationally designated wildlife sites, such as SSSI's or NNR'S. However, there are a significant number of locally important sites. The Plan recognises that protecting and enhancing individual sites is important, but that it is also important to retain connections between these sites and other areas.

Policies are included to specifically protect, and enhance where possible, the following features:

- Principal Open Spaces (including parks, amenity greenspaces and woodlands)
- Wildlife Sites (as identified by the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre)
- Green Corridors (including ancient lanes, structurally important routes and green corridors)
- Green Links
- Trees and Woodlands
- Unallocated open spaces
- Flood Storage Reservoirs and Functional Floodplain.

The mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate) approach has been adopted in the Plan and where the release of sites with biodiversity interest is required to accommodate development needs, the Plan requires opportunities for biodiversity mitigation and compensation to be considered. Ecological assessments are a required element of major applications and are considered on a case by case basis for all other development sites in the Borough.

Principle 3: Seek opportunities to improve habitat connectivity

The Plan protects networks of green spaces and local landscape features throughout the town by designating Green corridors (including ancient lanes and structurally important routes) and Green Links.

These links and corridors provide attractive and sustainable routes for people to move through, but also to enable the movement of wildlife and the diversification and sustenance of biodiversity. The Plan recognises that the protection and enhancement of these links is as important as protecting the individual spaces themselves in upholding the integrity of the new town as it was conceived.

Through the development and master planning of the three urban extensions proposed for Stevenage, the provision of new green spaces, and their connecting Green corridors and Green links will add to the network of green infrastructure that already exists in the Borough.

In line with the River Beane Catchment Management Plan, adopted to protect the Lea Catchment Nature Improvement Area (NIA), the Plan acknowledges the scarcity of water supply in the area and aims to improve water efficiency by setting a target to reduce water consumption for new developments to 110 litres per person per day (including external water use). The Plan also acknowledges the objectives of the WFD and how development can contribute to the delivery of these ecological improvements.

Principle 4: Integrate biodiversity opportunities within new development

Policies within the Plan ensure that all new residential development will include on-site open space provision (where possible), in accordance with the standards and thresholds set out in our Green Space Strategy. It aims to ensure new spaces are usable and coherent and of an appropriate size. Planting schedules for such sites would be undertaken on the advice of Natural England and the Environment Agency to ensure suitable planting and habitat provision is maintained through appropriate management.

On each of the three larger new neighbourhood's specific policy criteria require that schemes make provision for new ecological features through means of incorporating 'a network of green infrastructure', amongst other more specific requirements, such as retaining hedgerow boundaries or tree lines. The policies also require masterplans to be prepared for these sites, to be approved prior to the submission of detailed development proposals, including appropriate management of the site that is wildlife friendly – an approach that is already adopted in large parts of the town.

Where biodiversity features are included within or adjacent to development sites, policies require that these are protected.

Principle 5: Make decisions informed by the best available ecological information and data

The Local Plan is informed by a wide range of evidence studies and data, from various different sources.

Our recently updated Green Space Strategy provides an up-to-date assessment of green spaces across the town, the findings of which have been used to directly inform policies within the Local Plan.

The Plan also relies on data relating to Wildlife Sites, which is regularly updated by Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre. A comprehensive review of Wildlife Sites within the Borough was carried out in 2013 and has been used to identify those sites that are protected within the Plan.

The Plan also makes clear that any sites designated by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust following adoption of the Plan will also be afforded the same level of protection, and the deletion of sites will also be taken into account.

Principle 6: Secure the long term management of existing and new habitats and sites

The Borough Council is working towards the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), alongside the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. This will include contributions towards biodiversity and the maintenance and enhancement of Wildlife Sites..

As part of this work, and to ensure the Plan can be delivered, an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been produced. This identifies the additional level of green infrastructure likely to be required to provide for the increase in population, the costs likely to be associated with this, and how it might be funded. The Plan recognises the role of partnerships in the delivery of ecological improvements and the IDP identifies these partners.

The Plan includes a policy to ensure that new schemes have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the long-term management of the open spaces they incorporate.