



# **Local Plan Update**

Leeds Local Plan

## **Green and Blue Infrastructure Background Paper**

Development Plan Document

September 2022

## 1. Context

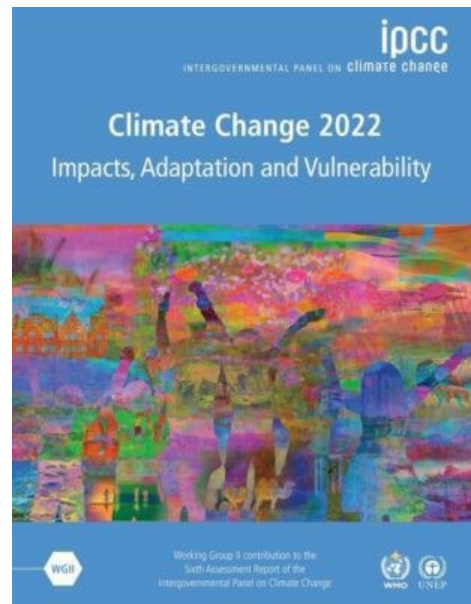
- 1.1 The purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development, which is about meeting current needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - July 2021) sets out that planning authorities should ensure that development meets economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 1.2 The environmental objective is:

*to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*
- 1.3 This paper focuses on Green and Blue Infrastructure, which forms a fundamental part of the natural environment and contributes to more sustainable development.

## 2. Recognition of the importance of the natural environment/GBI in addressing climate change?

### International Level

- 2.1 As far back as 2009 the European Commission highlighted the importance of terrestrial and marine ecosystems in regulating climate change and that they absorb roughly half of man-made carbon emissions in 'Nature's Role in Climate Change'<sup>1</sup>. This publication stated that "Working with nature, rather than against it, brings multiple benefits also for preserving our climate."
- 2.2 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its latest climate change assessment report in February 2022. This assesses the impacts of climate change on natural and human systems, the risks for the future and the options for adaptation to reduce these risks at a time when impacts of climate change continue to increase significantly. Approximately 3.3 to 3.6 billion people live in places that are highly vulnerable to climate change and hundreds of species at a local level and at least two species globally have become extinct due to climate change, with many more at risk. The report states there is an urgent need to adapt to reduce these risks to both people and nature as much as we can. Resilience to climate change can be increased by the protection and restoration of natural and semi-natural areas however this will need to be flexible to adapt to changes that can't be prevented which only highlights the importance of planning and managing change.
- 2.3 The report recognises the close linkages between people, nature and climate and states that



<sup>1</sup> 'Nature's Role in Climate Change' [ENV-09-002\\_biodiversity-CC-2.indd \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> IPCC - [AR6 Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

*‘maintaining the resilience of biodiversity and ecosystem services at the global scale depends on the effective and equitable conservation of approximate 30 – 50% of Earth’s land, freshwater and ocean areas, including currently near natural ecosystems’.*

2.4 At the local level, restoring natural systems can reduce risks to people from a range of climatic hazards, including flood and wildfire and trees and other vegetation can provide natural cooling for cities. Adaptation is limited due to factors such as a lack of finance and governance obstacles as well as those intrinsic to systems, such as the climatic limits within which species can survive however the report emphasises that it must be pursued in conjunction with mitigation to reduce risks within the wider context of sustainable development through ‘Climate Resilient Development’.

2.5 The IPCC’s Summary for Policy Makers report states that

*‘Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all’.*

### National Level

2.6 The Climate Change Committee (CCC) published a report in January 2020<sup>3</sup> presenting advice on what changes are required in how we farm and use land in order to deliver the UK Government’s Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050. The key actions promoted are:

- **Increase tree planting** – increasing UK forestry cover from 13% to at least 17% by 2050 by planting around 30,000 hectares (90 – 120 million trees) of broadleaf and conifer woodland each year.
- **Encourage low-carbon farming practices** – such as ‘controlled-release’ fertilisers, improving livestock health and slurry acidification.
- **Restore peatlands** – restoring at least 50% of upland peat and 25% of lowland peat.
- **Encourage bioenergy crops** – expand the planting of UK energy crops to around 23,000 hectares each year.
- **Reduce food waste and consumption of the most carbon-intensive foods** – reduce the 13.6 million tonnes of food waste produced annually by 20% and the consumption of beef, lamb and dairy by at least 20% per person, well within current healthy eating guidelines.

2.7 A useful summary of the findings are presented in the following CCC Infographic:

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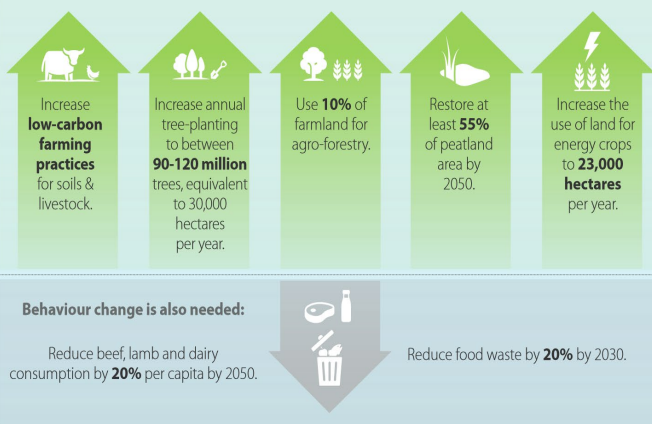
<sup>3</sup> Climate Change Committee - [Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK](#)

## Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK

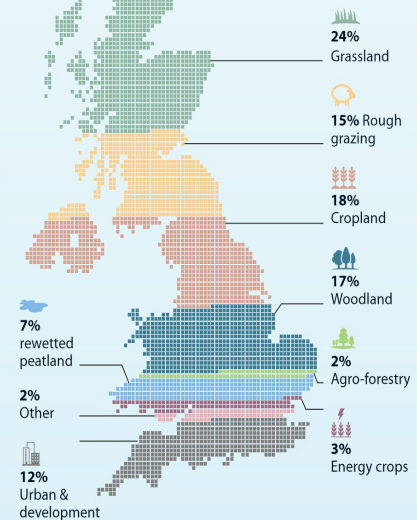
There is now a need to put in place clear, well-designed policies to ensure the UK's use of land contributes to the Net Zero emissions target.

- Agriculture, land use and peatlands accounted for **12%** (58 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) of all UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2017
- Our use of land **must change** to meet the UK's Net Zero target
- Actions set out by the CCC can reduce land-based emissions by **64%** by 2050
- While maintaining other **essential functions** of land, including food production and climate change adaptation
- This will also deliver **£4 billion** each year in environmental and other benefits

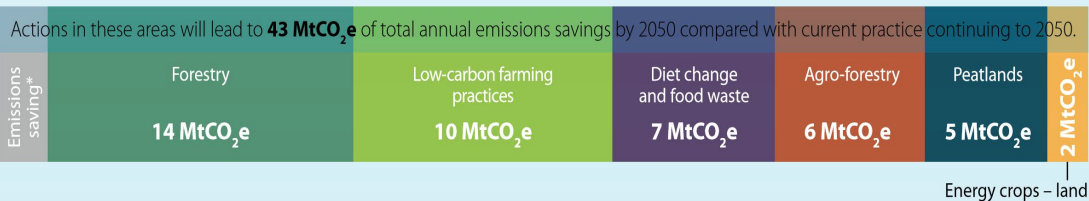
### Actions must be taken now...



### How our land could be used in 2050



### ...to reduce agriculture and land use emissions...



### ...delivering a range of wider environmental and other co-benefits.

- Recreational
- Health
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Biodiversity

It requires a coordinated approach, **led by Government** throughout the UK.

#### Government

- Introduce a mix of regulation, incentives and enabling measures to drive action to reduce land-based emissions.
- These should provide land managers with long-term clarity and incentives to deliver change.
- Implement a strategy to shift diets away from the most carbon-intensive products and reduce food waste.

#### Businesses

- A levy placed on polluting sectors (e.g. airlines and fossil fuel suppliers) to help fund tree planting.
- Water companies should restore peatland they own.
- Food retail and hospitality firms should commit to current pledges to halve food waste by 2030.

#### Supply Chains

- Fertiliser and livestock feed producers and distributors to provide low-carbon advice to farmers.
- Scale-up capacity in the forestry supply chain, from nurseries to wood processors.
- Food processors and supermarkets to develop common metrics on life-cycle emissions of foods to drive low-carbon standards.

#### Individuals

- Eating more plant-based foods can deliver health benefits.
- Reducing food waste will deliver cost savings for households.
- Health and recreational benefits from creating more woodland.

\* These figures are rounded.

2.8 Climate change solutions: The role of nature (parliament.uk)<sup>4</sup> June 2020 recognises the role of nature-based solutions in tackling climate change, especially in terms of how the natural environment can absorb greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, this is part of the government's strategy to meet the net zero target by 2050. It is therefore important that ecosystems are protected and improved to increase absorption of carbon dioxide and make them more resilient. The CCC (in 'Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK') estimated that policies such as increasing forest cover from 13% to 19% and restoring 55-70% of peatlands could contribute to cutting total UK projected emissions by 4-8% (20-40 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent) by 2050.

### Biodiversity loss

2.9 The loss of biodiversity (the variety of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms that make up the natural world) is an ongoing concern both nationally and internationally. Numerous reports, assessments and statements have been produced within Britain and across the world highlighting this, two of which are United Kingdom's 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>5</sup> and global assessment of biodiversity across the world by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)<sup>6</sup>.

2.10 Sir Robert Watson, chair of the IPBES wrote in The Guardian in 2019:

*"we cannot solve the threats of human-induced climate change and loss of biodiversity in isolation. We either solve both or we solve neither."*

*Guardian – Monday 6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2019 - [Link](#)*

2.11 The UK Government commissioned [a Review of the Economics of Biodiversity](#) in 2019, assessing the risks of global biodiversity loss and examining ways to enhance biodiversity and economic prosperity. Its [April 2020 interim report](#) identified nature-based solutions as an essential part of the package of measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, while providing benefits for biodiversity.

2.12 The [State of Nature](#) report (2019) was produced by State of Nature Partnership (a partnership of nearly 80 conservation and research organisations across the United Kingdom). The report contains data on the UK's biodiversity, both then and in terms of trends in species. It also reviews the pressures acting upon nature and the conservation response being made to counter these pressures.

## 3. Actions supporting nature-based solutions for Climate Change

3.1 On an international level, the 2021 Climate Change Conference (COP26) was held in Glasgow and attended by nearly 200 countries. It, along with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (also held in 2021 in Kunming, China), recognised the importance of nature-based solutions for addressing climate change and challenges to biodiversity. It is important, therefore, that planning policy supports and facilitates the vital role of nature in addressing climate change.

3.2 Nationally, the Government's [25-year Environment Plan](#) for England (2018) makes a commitment to take a '[natural capital approach](#)' to environmental protection and includes

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<sup>4</sup> [Climate change solutions: The role of nature \(parliament.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [United Kingdom's 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#)

<sup>6</sup> [global assessment of biodiversity across the world by the \(IPBES\).](#)

proposals for a nature recovery network, tree planting, an England Peatland Strategy, and creating financial incentives through the Agriculture Bill for natural carbon storage.

- 3.3 Others have also made proposals; the farming industry set out its approach for achieving net-zero by 2040 in September 2019. The Government's environmental bodies set out their approach to land use change in January 2020, with a focus on woodland creation, restoring peatlands, supporting farmers and working with nature.
- 3.4 Funding for projects, through a Nature for Climate fund, was announced in the April 2020 budget.
- 3.5 The Environment Act (2021) embeds certain environmental protections in law and establishes new powers to set new binding targets, including for air quality, water, biodiversity, and waste reduction. The main elements are:
  - Long-term, legally binding targets for environmental improvement.
  - The establishment of the Office of Environmental Protection.
  - Measures to incentivise recycling and more sustainable use of resources.
  - Measures to tackle waste crime and illegal activity.
  - Measures that will impact on the wider waste sector, such as product standards, information and labelling requirements.
  - Strengthened local powers in relation to air quality enforcement through, for example, updated, simplified and strengthened local air quality management framework (LAQM).
  - Water (Part 5)
  - Measures to support new and existing internal drainage boards and amend the Land Drainage Act 1991.
  - Strengthen duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including mandatory biodiversity net gain secured through the planning system.
  - The preparation and publication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
  - Greater enforcement powers for the Forestry Commission to reduce illegal tree felling.

## 4. Climate Emergency and Leeds City Council

- 4.1 Leeds City Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 with an ambition to work towards carbon neutrality by 2030. This is a massive task, needing a sustained effort from not just the Council, who aim to lead by example, but for other agencies, businesses and residents of Leeds.
- 4.2 The Council aspires to be carbon neutral by 2030 because the evidence supports that, as follows:
  - the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that the opportunity to limit world temperatures
  - to under 1.5 °C and avoid the worst climate change impacts will vanish in the next decade
  - the UK government updated the Climate Change Act, committing to, by law, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at
  - least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050, in response to the Committee on Climate Change
  - to reach this target the government has set legally-binding 'carbon budgets' in 5-year periods i.e. the amount of

- greenhouse gases the UK is permitted to emit for each 5-year period
- the Committee has found that the government’s policies and plans are not enough to meet carbon budgets and that the policy gap has widened
- Yorkshire and Humber’s share of the ‘carbon budget’ to 2050 on a per capita basis is estimated at circa 250 megatonnes.
- If we continue business as usual the budget will have been used up within the next 5 years
- climate-related events are continuing to occur in frequency and severity both globally and locally e.g. frequency of storms, such as Storm Eva and the floods caused over Christmas 2015

4.3 The priority for the Local Plan Update is to update and improve existing policies and make new ones to address climate change, and the climate emergency declaration to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

4.4 Leeds has a Local Plan with existing policies aimed at addressing climate change. These policies range from a spatial strategy which encourages growth in sustainable locations, to detailed policies on carbon reduction, green infrastructure, flood risk, biodiversity, flood risk, heat networks, electric vehicles, renewable energy generation, air quality and tree replacement. However, these policies were made before the declaration of the Climate Emergency and the aspiration to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

4.5 The District’s environmental resources (Natural Capital) are crucial, not just in ensuring quality of life, but also sustaining life itself. The natural world regulates the atmosphere and climate and plays a part in breaking down waste. It provides the resources that we all use for our daily lives by providing clean air and water, land for growing food, open spaces for our health and wellbeing, minerals to use for building and the resources to provide heat and power.

4.6 It is important that these Policies fully work towards the aims above in a coherent and harmonious way as possible. The new policies and the amendments seek to do this.

## 5. What is green and blue infrastructure (GBI)

5.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is defined in the NPPF as:

*A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.*

5.2 The current definition in the Core Strategy 2019 (as Amended) is define as Green Infrastructure and Strategic Green Infrastructure as follows:

**Green Infrastructure:** *An integrated and connected network of green spaces, which have more than one use and function. GI is both urban and rural and includes protected sites, woodlands, nature reserves, river corridors, public parks and amenity areas, and sport facilities, together with green corridors.*

**Strategic Green Infrastructure:** *Green Infrastructure which has strategic importance across the District, including the strategic connections between green areas for the benefit of people and wildlife.*

5.3 Whilst the definitions may vary the theme is constant; GBI contributes to and enhances the local and natural environment by providing multi-functional natural capital benefits and ecosystem services.

5.4 The LPU 1 update has sought to clearly define Strategic GBI. Paragraph 9.2 and Appendix 1 go into further detail.

## 6. Why is GBI important in terms of addressing climate change and other associated benefits

6.1 Whilst it is unequivocal that GBI has significant benefit to mitigating Climate Change it is worth, in the interests of clarity, listing those and other benefits.

- It benefits public health by removing and reducing air pollution.
- It can capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (sequestration).
- It can encourage people to use non-motorised and active forms of travel.
- It can encourage exercise thereby improving health.
- Help cool built up and Urban areas.
- Mitigate water run-off during flash flooding.
- Significant Mental health benefits from exposure to Green and Blue Infrastructure.
- Increased opportunity for people to engage in Social Interaction.

## 7. Natural Capital, Eco-System Services and Multifunctionality in planning.

7.1 The NPPF recognises that GI has a value and recommends assessing the wider benefits of the natural environment / GI using two approaches:

- natural capital – a way of thinking about the natural environment as an asset
- eco-systems services - the benefits to people provided by the natural environment and ecosystems

7.2 In order to achieve net gains in sustainable development, it is therefore important to plan for Green Infrastructure in a way that:

- clearly sets out its underpinning importance to sustainable development in Leeds
- maximises its natural climate change role
- places a value on its management, creation and loss
- GI serves many purposes. For instance a small group of trees (copse) has various Natural Capital functions:
- biodiversity through both the species of trees, the habitat provided and the soils
- carbon capture (also known as sequestration)
- water storage



- creates opportunities for leisure that support physical and mental health benefits.

- 7.3 One of the principle issues is that of multi-functionality. A forest path that is created through a copse as a result of positive GBI design potentially adds the functions/services of health, leisure and education. These are the 'ecosystem services' that the 'natural capital' provides.
- 7.4 Our relationship with GI has to be understood in this context; that one asset or 'capital' can serve different purposes and good planning can support this principle and help ensure that GBI can benefit a wide range of users.
- 7.5 The time dependant importance of mitigating Climate Change, the value of GBI during the pandemic and the desire to see a healthier society are all key drivers that reinforce the importance of the availability of GBI.
- 7.6 Elsewhere in the Local Plan update there are topic papers which also consider interlinked issues around better place-making and 20-minute neighbourhoods. GI plays a key role in these planning areas.

## 8. GBI in the NPPF (July 2021)

- 8.1 The proposed changes in the Local Plan Update are entirely consistent with the aims of National Policy as set out in the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF). Below is a list of the relevant national policies that support the schedule of changes as outlined in Chapter 9.

- 8.2 It should be noted that the version of the NPPF used is the update that was published in July 2022

### Chapter 2. Achieving sustainable development

- 8.3 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental factors. Sustainable development is an overarching Policy narrative that must be embedded in all Development Plans.

Para 8(b) sets out the social objective -

*'to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;'*

Para 8(c) sets out the environmental objective

*'to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'*

Para 11(a) presumption in favour of sustainable development

*'all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects'*

### Chapter 3. Plan-making

Para 20(d) sets out the role of Strategic Policies

*'Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision<sup>13</sup> for:*

*(d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.'*

### Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities

Para 92(c) sets out how to create health, safe communities

*'Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which*

*c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.'*

Para 93(a) sets out the need to provide social, recreation and cultural facilities

*'To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

*(a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;'*

Para 98 sets out the need to provide open space.

*'Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.'*

Para 99 sets out the criteria for the protection of Open Spaces

*Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

*a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*

*b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*

*c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.*

Para 100 sets out the protection and enhancement of Public Rights of Way (PROW)

*'Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.'*

## Chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places

Para 126 creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places

*'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.'*

Para 130 development should be designed such...

*Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments*

*a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development*

*b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*

Para 131 importance of trees in design terms

*Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined<sup>50</sup>, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.*

Para 134 development that is poor design should be refused

*Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design<sup>52</sup>, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*

*a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*

*b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.*

## Chapter 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change)

### Para 152/153 Pro-active planning for Climate Change

*The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.*

*Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures<sup>53</sup>. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.*

### Para 154a Planning of New development

*New development should be planned for in ways that:*

*a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure;*

### Para 161 Sequential based approach and Flood Risk

*New development should be planned for in ways that:*

*c) using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management);;*

## Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (para 174 – 188)

### Para 174 b) d) e) contribute and enhance the natural local environment

*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

*b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*

*d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*

*e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans;*

Para 175 distinguish between hierarchy of designated natural sites

*Plans should set out clearly the hierarchy of designated (nature) sites, allocate sites with the least environmental or amenity value, maintain and enhance habitat networks and green infrastructure at a strategic level; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a broad, cross-boundary scale.*

Para 179 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity

*To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:*

*Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>61</sup>; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation<sup>62</sup>; and*

*promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

Para 180 sets out a number of principles which should be applied when determining planning applications:

*a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*

*b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site*

*that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*

*c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>63</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*

*d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.*

Para 181 protection of habitat sites

*a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*

*b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites<sup>64</sup>; and*

*c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.*

Para 182 exception of presumption of sustainable development on habitat sites

*The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.*

## 9. What are the policies seeking to achieve?

9.1 The policies are split into six broad areas. A summary is provided below

### Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure (Spatial Policy 13, G1)

9.2 Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas that spreads throughout the District. One of the key distinguishing features of the Leeds District is the way in which the countryside runs into the main built up areas along corridors and valleys. Strategic GBI comprises designated land for Green Space (Site Allocations Policy GS1 and AVLAAP Policy AVL14), Nature Conservation Sites (Policy G8a) and the Leeds Habitat Network (Policy G8b) together with additional assets including river corridors, lakes, ponds, woodland, Historic Parks and Gardens, functional flood plain and PROW (see Appendix 1 which includes a technical note explaining how the Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure is defined and the data sets used. This includes a map which illustrates the Strategic GBI network). It extends from urban centres through corridors to open countryside and supports the natural, recreational, and ecological processes which are integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities in the District. A key function of GBI in Leeds is to help maintain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of local communities and the wider setting of places

## Changes Summary and Evidence

- 9.3 There are two major changes in this area.
- i. Replace Spatial Policy 13 of the Core Strategy 2019 with new Spatial Policy 13
  - ii. Replace Core Strategy 2019 Policy G1 with the new Policy G1

The current Policy identifies and names specific areas of Green Infrastructure. The proposal is to ensure that:

- i. establish which areas form the GBI
- ii. development in the area protects, conserves and enhances existing GBI functions
- iii. that a detailed appraisal is provided to evidence the above on an application by application basis where appropriate
- iv. areas outside the defined GBI area also submit an assessment to ensure positivity with regard to increasing GBI.

This is to ensure that GBI is maintained, enhanced, extended and improved.

- 9.4 With regard to Spatial Policy 13 the existing Policy is a Spatial Policy that defines green corridors. These corridors were given limited potential for protection and enhancement within the current Policy. The change seeks to redefine these areas and ensure that any development within them will further enhance and protect the GBI. It also ensures that areas outside these areas work towards similar outcomes. In effect this provides a clear connection between National Policy aims (NPPF - see Section 8), the Spatial Policy and the more detailed 'G' and 'F' Policies later in the CS. It also embraces the overall aim to mitigate Climate Change.

## Corporate Aims

- 9.5 Best City Ambition - Health and Wellbeing
- i. In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.
  - ii. enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages

## Best City Ambition – Zero Carbon

- i. promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet
- ii. joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife
- iii. investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents

## Best Council Plan – Priorities - Age-friendly Leeds

- i. Making Leeds' public spaces and buildings accessible, safe, clean and welcoming
- ii. Promoting opportunities for older people to be healthy, active, included and respected

### National Policy

- 9.6 NPPF Paragraphs 8b, 8c, 11a, 20d, 92c, 93a, 98, 99, 100, 126, 130a, 130b, 131, 134b, 152, 153, 174b, 174d, 174e, 175

### Measurement of Policy

- 9.7 The current monitoring indicator for SP13 and G1 is:

*24. Provision of Green Infrastructure and Green Spaces as obtained through development process and other sources.*

The revised monitoring indicator is proposed to be:

*47. Net gain / loss of Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure (see Appendix 1 for definition of Strategic GBI).*

### Implementation of Policy

- 9.8 These are Spatial/Strategic Policies. The purpose is to outline outlines the key strategic approaches which Leeds City Council will implement to promote and deliver development of GBI. In effect Strategic Policy 13 and Policy G1 provide the framework for which other Policies work under.

### Trees (Policy G2A, G2B and G2C)

- 9.9 Trees provide many benefits to our environment. They extract and store carbon emissions and take pollutants out of the air, provide shelter and shade and valuable habitats, reduce flood risk, soften the built environment, bring colour and texture, provide opportunities for us to reconnect with nature and help to support our physical and mental wellbeing which has been brought into particular focus by the restrictions due to COVID-19. In many cases the degree to which trees can do these things increases as the tree grows and gets older therefore it is important that we protect existing trees to allow them to mature and bring the greatest benefits and plant more to maximise their effects and to ensure a future pipeline of mature trees.

### Changes Summary and Evidence

- 9.10 There are four major changes in this area
- i. Expansion of Current Policy G2 into 3 new Tree Policies
  - ii. New Policy G2A – Protection of Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
  - iii. New Policy G2B – Ancient Woodland, Long Established Woodland, Ancient Trees, Veteran Trees
  - iv. New Policy G2C – Tree Replacement

The overall aim of the policies is to

- i. increase protection of all trees and hedgerows
- ii. enhance the Protection of identified Ancient Woodland, Long Established Trees, Ancient Trees and Veteran trees and those that meet the criteria but have not been identified.



- iii. Ensure the replacement of trees lost results in no loss of Carbon Sequestration levels

*Policy G2A – Protection of Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows*

- 9.11 The intention of this policy is to prevent the loss of trees and hedgerows due to development. All too often, the nature, scale, massing, layout and design of developments necessitate the removal of existing trees. Whilst this can be on a relatively small scale if considered on a site-by-site basis, cumulatively the impact on the environment (such as carbon sequestration levels, shade, biodiversity/habitat retention) can be significant.
- 9.12 Some trees do have a level of legal protection through, for example, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Area designation but these are limited and TPOs are based on a tree's visual amenity value rather than on their other benefits such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity value. A decaying tree, for example, would not qualify for TPO protection but would be a highly valuable habitat which could support considerable biodiversity. It is therefore critical that all trees and hedgerows are given a greater level of protection, to ensure:
- stored carbon is not released through removal and burning
  - trees are allowed to grow and in doing so, they take more and more carbon dioxide and pollutants out of the air over many years
  - valuable habitats which support precious biodiversity can grow and mature rather than being destroyed
- 9.13 It is acknowledged that sometimes tree removal can be justified and in those cases the tree replacement methodology will be applied, however the starting point must be tree retention and development schemes should be designed around existing trees and nature.
- 9.14 The Council is aware that sometimes trees are removed from sites proposed for developments prior to the submission of a planning application to the Council. This undermines Leeds' ability to tackle climate change. In response, the tree protection policy sets out the Council's approach to this and that it will use pre-removal evidence.

*Policy G2B - Ancient Woodlands, Long established woodlands, ancient trees, veteran trees*

- 9.15 It is widely acknowledged that historic woodlands and trees are incredibly important in terms of the habitats they provide and the species they support due to their longevity, the lack of soil disturbance and high levels of decay which are ideal for many species, including those that are threatened. They also have significant cultural, heritage and landscape value as well as storing carbon and benefitting our health and wellbeing. In recognition of this and their susceptibility to damage, they are classified as irreplaceable habitats and any damaging development will be refused unless there are overriding reasons to allow damage and full compensatory measures will be implemented. Damage and loss can be reduced by practical measures such as screening barriers and buffer zones. Those trees and woodlands formally identified and plotted on inventories and maps will be protected along with those not identified but that meet the relevant definitions.

*Policy G2C – Tree Replacement*

- 9.16 The Council currently seeks the replacement of trees removed based on 3 new trees for every one lost (Policy LAND 2, Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan). Whilst this seeks increased numbers of trees, there is no recognition of the characteristics of the trees lost and the replacements, in particular the relative sizes of the trees and their value. In terms of climate change, trees play a very valuable role in sequestering and storing carbon. The Council sees this as a vital way of reducing residual carbon left over after other carbon-reducing measures and therefore it employed the University of Leeds and the United Bank

of Carbon to devise a tree replacement methodology to achieve parity in carbon sequestration levels prior to trees being removed and after replacement planting. The methodology considers the condition, species and stature of the removed tree and the replacement trees as they impact on their ability to sequester carbon and the replacement numbers depend on the diameter and stature of the tree to be removed and the stature and condition category (BS 5837: 2012) of the replacement trees. The full report is available to view on the Council's website.

The Categories are as defined in BS 5837: 2012.

*The stature of the Tree will that as defined by the 'Tree Selection for Green Infrastructure – A Guide for Specifiers – Trees and Design Action Group'*

- 9.17 The policy also seeks maintenance and management arrangements to help ensure the continued health of those trees planted to allow them to mature and maximise their carbon storage potential and allows for off-site planting

#### Corporate Aims

- 9.18 Best City Ambition - Health and Wellbeing

- i. In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.
- ii. enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages

#### Best City Ambition – Zero Carbon

- i. promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet
- ii. joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife
- iii. investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents

#### Best Council Plan – Priorities - Age-friendly Leeds

- i. Making Leeds' public spaces and buildings accessible, safe, clean and welcoming
- ii. Promoting opportunities for older people to be healthy, active, included and respected

#### **Delivery of Best City Ambitions by Policies**

- 9.19 The protection and replanting of trees contribute to the Best City Ambitions, especially in terms of working towards being a net zero carbon city by 2030 following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. Actions are being guided by responses to the 'Big Leeds Climate Conversation', the Leeds Climate Change Commission's and the Citizens' Jury's, one of which is to increase tree canopy cover. Trees also contribute to the wider priorities of healthy, active lives for all sectors of the population by adding to the quality, attractiveness and variety of open spaces, streets and private spaces such as gardens.

### National Policy

- 9.20 NPPF Paragraphs: 8c, 11, 20d, 92c, 93a, 98, 126, 130a, 130b, 134a, 134b, 152, 153, 154a, 174, 175, 179, 180
- 9.21 The UK Government has an ambition to increase tree and woodland cover in England from 14 to 17%, by more than trebling annual planting rates by 2050. This will enhance carbon sequestration and give new woodlands and trees a pivotal role in the recovery of nature however planting must be in the right places and not damage existing valued wildlife and habitats which can be identified using tools such as botanical heatmaps and botanical value maps.<sup>7</sup>
- 9.22 The England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024<sup>8</sup> sets out the government's long-term vision for the treescape it wants to see in England by 2050 and beyond. The plan provides a strategic framework for implementing the Nature for Climate Fund and outlines over 80 policy actions the government is taking over this Parliament to help deliver this vision.
- 9.23 The Plan recognises the need to work towards net zero emissions by 2050, to address biodiversity loss, to better connect people with nature and to create more green jobs with trees at the heart of this. There are several initiatives to support woodland creation and management, such as the England Woodland Creation Offer and the Queens Green Canopy.
- 9.24 The Environment Act (2021) establishes Local Nature Recovery Strategies which will support a Nature Recovery Network. It is likely that these will incorporate tree protection and planting. It also introduces a duty upon Local Authorities to consult on street tree felling, strengthens woodland protection enforcement measures and prohibits larger UK businesses from using commodities associated with wide-scale deforestation

### Implementation of Policy

- 9.25 The policies will be applied during the consideration and determination of a planning application. An up to date and appropriate tree survey and assessment of carbon sequestration, storage of pollutants, biodiversity and amenity value will be required, including plans showing all existing trees and hedgerows (or previously existing trees and hedgerows if there is evidence of pre-application clearance) and assessments of their size, age, life span, health, biodiversity value and carbon sequestration abilities. Details of how a scheme has been designed to retain as many trees as possible should be submitted along with full justification supporting any proposed removal. A detailed calculation of any replacements will also be required using the tree replacement methodology along with a maintenance and management plan. The degree to which trees are being retained, the reasons for removal and the details of any replacement planting will be considered by planning, landscape and tree officers and elected Members if the application is determined by Plans Panel.

### Measurement of the impact of Policy

- 9.26 The current monitoring indicator for Trees is:

*24. Increase in the amount of tree cover in the District.*

The revised monitoring indicator is proposed to be:

*48. Area of woodland cover*

*49. Loss of Ancient woodland*

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<sup>7</sup> [Taking an evidence led approach to delivery of the Government's tree target - Natural England \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [The England Trees Action Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## 50. Loss of Long established woodland

### Green Space – Policies G4A, G4B, G4C and G6 (deletion of G5)

- 9.27 Leeds is a City which benefits from good overall provision of green space. However, this is not distributed evenly across the City and as a result, some areas have very little local green space and some of it is of a poor quality.
- 9.28 The overall aim of the Core Strategy green space policies is to use the development process through the Local Plan to strategically deliver the best type and the best quality of green space to where it is most needed in Leeds.
- 9.29 People moving into an area or general increases in population place a greater burden on existing green space. Therefore, it is appropriate that new housing development makes provision to address this burden by providing green space.

### Changes Summary and Evidence

- 9.30 The proposal is to ensure that:
- i. there is better understanding of what Leeds expects in terms of Quality of Green Space.
  - ii. a stronger and clearer expectation of what Leeds wishes with regard to maintenance of Green Space exists.
  - iii. there is Greater and better Green Space for the City Centre
  - iv. there is clearer and stronger protection of Green Space

#### *Policy G4B: Quality of new green space*

- 9.31 **Quality:** Whilst mentioned in the current Policy G4 'Quality' is not defined. Through consultation it was felt that a clearer definition of what Quality Green Space is will improve the environment for all. This ties into National Policy aims and good Placemaking.

#### *Policy G4C: Maintenance of green space*

- 9.32 **Maintenance:** Paragraph 5.5.18.1 of the Core Strategy 2019 (as Amended) states the current supporting text provision to Policy G4 (b) – 'Arrangements for -on-going maintenance must be agreed'. Through consultation it was felt that a clearer definition of what is required particularly with regard to ensuring the green space is maintained in perpetuity.

#### *Policy G5: Deletion*

- 9.33 **One Policy for City:** The Origins of having a separate Policy (G5) when calculating Green Space can be traced back to the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Policy CC10 stated:

CC10: FURTHER PROVISION OF PUBLIC SPACE WILL BE REQUIRED.  
OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COVERING MORE THAN 0.5 HECTARES  
SHOULD ALLOCATE A MINIMUM OF 20% OF THE DEVELOPABLE SITE AREA  
AS PUBLIC SPACE.

The Core Strategy 2014 was written in the shadow of the Financial crash of 2008 and so it was felt necessary to keep the restrictions on the development of Green Space in the City Centre.

However, the population of the City Centre has increased significantly from 11,400 to over 40,000 in 2022 which has increased the burden on existing Green Space facilities.

| LSOA11CD  | LSOA11NM   | 2002          | 2011          | 2012          | 2020          |
|-----------|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| E01011678 | Leeds 063B | 1,829         | 4,154         | 4,196         | 4,793         |
| E01033002 | Leeds 055F | 852           | 1,299         | 1,323         | 2,308         |
| E01033005 | Leeds 055H | 2,988         | 3,519         | 3,540         | 4,142         |
| E01033006 | Leeds 063E | 2,812         | 3,368         | 3,537         | 4,500         |
| E01033008 | Leeds 111A | 117           | 1,105         | 1,142         | 4,586         |
| E01033010 | Leeds 111B | 398           | 2,789         | 2,932         | 4,313         |
| E01033011 | Leeds 111C | 480           | 1,362         | 1,508         | 2,084         |
| E01033015 | Leeds 111D | 36            | 1,154         | 1,214         | 2,102         |
| E01033016 | Leeds 111E | 170           | 1,008         | 1,043         | 1,340         |
| E01033018 | Leeds 112D | 8             | 1,119         | 1,294         | 1,667         |
| E01033019 | Leeds 112E | 695           | 1,689         | 1,869         | 2,226         |
| E01033032 | Leeds 082F | 701           | 1,266         | 1,338         | 2,080         |
| E01033033 | Leeds 075F | 233           | 1,570         | 1,728         | 2,209         |
| E01033034 | Leeds 075G | 78            | 1,010         | 1,076         | 1,818         |
|           |            | <b>11,397</b> | <b>26,412</b> | <b>27,740</b> | <b>40,168</b> |

Coupled with this is the highlighted importance of local Green Space during the Pandemic particularly for people living in high density block development with no gardens.

Lastly, and in the long term possibly the most important, is the fact that greater numbers of Trees and Green Space will contribute to mitigating Climate Change and associated benefits below:

- Reconnection with Greenery and Nature
- The Mental Health benefits
- The Community benefits (meeting / Socialising)
- The Physical health benefits
- Mitigation of Urban Heat Island (UHI) effects
- The Biodiversity net gain benefits
- A more attractive physical environment.

Policy G5 currently demands a lower level of Green Space in the City centre compared to the rest of the City. With the above in mind it was appropriate to delete Policy G5 and have one Policy to apply to the whole City.

*Policy G6: Protection of existing green space*

9.34 **Clearer Protection:** The changes to Policy G6 are for Clarification only. In the main it ensures that all newly created and existing Green Space is afforded adequate protection under Planning. It also establishes a clearer link between the obligations of Climate Change Mitigation and Green Space protection.

**Corporate Aims**

9.35 Best City Ambition - Health and Wellbeing

- In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.

- ii. enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages

#### Best City Ambition – Zero Carbon

- i. promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet
- ii. joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife
- iii. investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents

#### Best Council Plan – Priorities - Age-friendly Leeds

- i. Making Leeds’ public spaces and buildings accessible, safe, clean and welcoming
- ii. Promoting opportunities for older people to be healthy, active, included and respected

### National Policy

9.36 The relevant paragraphs of the NPPF are as follows:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Quality:             | 8b, 8c, 11, 20d, 92c, 93a, 98, 126, 127, 130b, 130f, 134a and 134b, |
| Maintenance:         | 8b, 8c, 11, 20d, 92c, 93a, 98, 126,                                 |
| One Policy for City: | 8b, 8c, 11, 20d, 92c, 93a, 98, 126, 130b, 130f, 134a, 134b          |
| Clearer Protection:  | NPPF 8b, 8c, 11, 20d, 92c, 93a, 93c, 98, 99,                        |

### Measurement of Policies

It is accepted that the measurement of quality cannot be measured empirically and that the design of Green Space associated with a scheme will be in response to the site and the specific nature of the development. Each application will have the input of the design team of Leeds Planning Department. Any design will be judged against the requirements of the Policy and against established best practice. Schemes that do not design Green Space to a satisfactory quality may be refused.

The associated measurement of the success of the Policy will, therefore, take place during the implementation process.

9.37 The current monitoring indicator for Green Space is:

*24. Provision of Green Infrastructure and Green Space as obtained through development process and other sources*

*25. Amount of Green Space lost to redevelopment.*

The revised monitoring indicator is proposed to be:

*24. Collection/spend of commuted sums toward Green Space projects and Open Space projects in the City Centre.*

*25. Net gain/loss of Green Space*

### Implementation of Policy

9.38 The Policies will be implemented as follows.

Policy G4A: GREEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT AND NEW GREEN SPACE PROVISION

As current Policy G4

Policy G4B: QUALITY OF NEW GREEN SPACE

It is accepted that the measurement of quality cannot be measured empirically and that the design Green Space associated with a scheme will be in response to the site and the specific nature of the development. Each application will have the input of the design team of Leeds Planning Department. Any design will be judged against the requirements of the Policy and against established best practice. Schemes that do not design Green Space to a satisfactory quality may be refused.

The associated measurement of the success of the Policy will, therefore, take place during the implementation process.

Policy G4C: MAINTENANCE OF GREEN SPACE

As current Policy G4.

Policy G6: PROTECTION OF EXISTING GREEN SPACE

As current Policy G6

### Nature Conservation (Policy G8A, G8B)

9.39 Nature Conservation is not just about rare or threatened species or habitats, it is also about ensuring widespread and common species remain an integral part of a sustainable natural environment. In Leeds there are many designated sites but also many undesignated areas of habitat that are of value as part of the city's natural capital. These include areas of woodland, grasslands, hedgerows, waterways and water bodies, gardens, allotments, shelter belts, farmland and field margins, scrub, and other open spaces. It is therefore important that planning policies seek the protection, improvement and increase of sites recognised for their biodiversity and habitat value which create an interlinked, city-wide network of spaces for nature. Such a network is a critical part of the Council's response to climate change.

### Changes Summary and Evidence

9.40 The proposal is to ensure that:

- i. any terminology associated with nationally designated areas is up to date
- ii. there are high levels of protection and robust maintenance arrangements for such sites
- iii. the Policies harmonise with expectations of the Environment Act 2021

- iv. The Leeds Habitat Network is protected from adverse impacts due to development and improvements are sought.

The Environment Act (2021) strengthens the duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and requires the delivery of at least 10% biodiversity net gain by developments. It also establishes Local Nature Recovery Strategies which will support a Nature Recovery Network, Conservation Covenants and Protected Site Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies. This recognises the importance of the natural environment and the need to protect, enhance and expand the network of such spaces.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (in force in 2006) transferred the duty of biodiversity conservation to local public authorities which must use policy and decision making to ensure biodiversity is kept consistent, enhanced, restored, or protected, including the 943 species and 56 habitats on Natural England's protected species and habitats list.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (in force in 1981) is the primary mechanism for wildlife conservation and protection in Britain, giving certain animals, plants, wild birds and their eggs and nests protection from killing, injury, being taken, or having their places of shelter interfered with.

The importance of nature and biodiversity to climate change is widely recognised at an international, national and local level as set out in paras 2.1 - 2.12 above.

### Corporate Aims

#### 9.41 Best City Ambition - Health and Wellbeing

- i. In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.
- ii. enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages

#### Best City Ambition – Zero Carbon

- i. promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet
- ii. joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife
- iii. investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents

#### Best Council Plan – Priorities - Age-friendly Leeds

- i. Making Leeds' public spaces and buildings accessible, safe, clean and welcoming
- ii. Promoting opportunities for older people to be healthy, active, included and respected



Delivery of the Best City Ambition by Policies - The protection, enhancement and expansion of the network of nature sites contributes to the Best City Ambition, especially in terms of working towards being a net zero carbon city by 2030 following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. Existing and future habitats and biodiversity are also key elements of the city's natural environment and infrastructure and have a large part to play in mitigating climate change, responding to its effects and improving resilience to future changes. Paras 2.9 – 2.13 set out the international and national recognition of the important relationship between climate change and biodiversity and the need to consider these together through, for example, nature-based solutions.

#### National Policy

- 9.42 NPPF Paragraphs 8c, 9, 11, 20d, 92c, 98, 126, 130a, 130b, 134a, 134b, 152, 153, 154a, 174, 175, 179, 180, 181, 182

#### Measurement of Policy

- 9.43 The current monitoring indicator for Nature Conservation is:

*37. Quality of Existing Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Leeds*

The revised monitoring indicator is proposed to be:

*51. Loss of Leeds Habitat Network through development*

#### Implementation of Policy

- 9.44 The policies will be applied during the consideration and determination of a planning application and will protect important habitats and species on designated sites, candidate designated sites and the Leeds Habitat Network. They will prevent harmful impacts on these important habitats and species and seek ongoing maintenance, management and monitoring. Development proposed in the Leeds Habitat Network must not have significant adverse impacts on its value, integrity and connectivity and any negative impacts should be compensated for by enhancements. The details submitted as part of a planning application will be assessed by planning and nature conservation officers and elected Members if the application is determined by Plans Panel. West Yorkshire Ecology can also provide expertise.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain (Policy G9)

- 9.45 Biodiversity is the term used to describe the amazing variety of life on Earth. It has a huge role in helping us live healthy and happy lives; it provides us with food, raw materials, medical discoveries and ecosystem services. There are also many and varied benefits provided by the natural environment and healthy ecosystems such as natural pollination of crops, clean air, a supply of oxygen, clean water, extreme weather mitigation and human mental and physical well-being, recreation and even tourism.

#### Changes Summary and Evidence

- 9.46 The proposal is to ensure that:
- i. Minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain is delivered in line with the Environment Act

#### Delivery will be on-site unless off-site is justified.

- 9.47 Off-site delivery will be focussed on existing wildlife sites, the Leeds Habitat Network and site which create a link between existing sites.

- 9.48 The importance of biodiversity to climate change is widely recognised at an international, national and local level as set out in paras 2.1 - 2.13 above.
- 9.49 The Environment Act (2021) strengthens the duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and requires the delivery of at least 10% biodiversity net gain by developments. Whilst this requirement will not be in force until Winter 2023, this Local Plan review enables it to be embedded in the Leeds Local Plan in a timely fashion.

### Corporate Aims

- 9.50 Best City Ambition - Health and Wellbeing
- i. In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.
  - ii. enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages

### Best City Ambition – Zero Carbon

- i. promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet
- ii. joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife
- iii. investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents

### Best Council Plan – Priorities - Age-friendly Leeds

- i. Making Leeds’ public spaces and buildings accessible, safe, clean and welcoming
- ii. Promoting opportunities for older people to be healthy, active, included and respected

- 9.51 Delivery of Best City Ambition by Policies - The protection and delivery of an increase in biodiversity contribute to the Best City Ambition, especially in terms of working towards being a net zero carbon city by 2030 following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. Biodiversity is also a key element of the city’s natural environment and infrastructure and has a large part to play in mitigating climate change, responding to its effects and improving resilience to future changes. Paras 2.9 – 2.12 set out the international and national recognition of the important relationship between climate change and biodiversity and the need to consider these together through, for example, nature-based solutions.

### National Policy

- 9.52 NPPF paragraphs: 8c, 9, 11, 20d, 98, 126, 130a, 130b, 134a, 134b, 152, 153, 154a, 174, 175, 179, 180

### Measurement of Policy

- 9.53 There is no current monitoring indicator for BNG:  
The monitoring indicator is proposed to be:

## 52. Net gain in biodiversity through new development

### Implementation of Policy

- 9.54 The policy will be applied during the consideration and determination of a planning application and a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) will be required. Comprehensive measurements of biodiversity levels before and after the proposed development will be submitted as part of a planning application, using the latest version of Natural England's Biodiversity Metric and setting out where losses and gains will occur. Furthermore, details of how BNG will be delivered will also be required, along with maintenance and management arrangements to ensure the survival and health of biodiversity for at least 30 years. BNG should be delivered on-site and the retention and improvement of existing habitats and biodiversity is preferred. Applicants should show they have fully considered and followed the mitigation hierarchy. If all biodiversity units cannot be delivered on site for fully justifiable reasons, off-site delivery may be pursued within or immediately adjacent to a West Yorkshire Local Wildlife Site or Local Nature Reserve. If this is not possible, the policy provides other options; within or immediately adjacent to the Leeds Habitat Network, outside the Leeds Habitat Network but where a new strategic connection between two separate parts of the Network will be created, or other publicly accessible locations which function as a nature reserve. The details submitted as part of a planning application will be assessed by planning and nature conservation officers and elected Members if the application is determined by Plans Panel. West Yorkshire Ecology can also provide expertise.

### Food Resilience

- 9.55 Food Resilience is an important part of Green Infrastructure because it helps deliver many of the benefits of GI (e.g. for biodiversity and well-being). It is also an important part of cutting carbon in its own right because the travel and processing associated with food generates significant carbon emissions. Indeed food is one of the biggest contributors to our individual carbon footprint. It is for this reason that the Leeds Climate Commission have concluded that growing food locally and reducing food waste are important steps in becoming a zero-carbon city. Food growing can be on a commercial scale i.e. through farming, and on a local community scale, such as allotments, community gardens or forest gardens.
- 9.56 The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan<sup>9</sup> notes that the UK needs to optimise sustainable national food production for both the climate agenda and also to respond to Brexit and make the UK more self-sufficient.

*We will ensure that resources from nature, such as food, fish and timber, are used more sustainably and efficiently. We will do this by:*

*Ensuring that food is produced sustainably and profitably*

It is also noted in the same document that.

*Agri-tech developments can significantly improve farm performance, in terms of both profits and the environment.*

- 9.57 The Climate Change Emergency, recent pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis has brought into sharp focus the importance of Food Resilience. As a society we are much more aware factors such as the distance food travels, its availability, its quality and its cost impact

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<sup>9</sup> [25-year-environment-plan.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

on our lives on a day to day basis particularly with regard areas of deprivation and malnutrition.

### Changes Summary and Evidence

9.58 The proposal is to ensure that there is :

- i. support for sustainable food growing in district
- ii. support innovation and diversity that promotes sustainable food growing
- iii. support community food growing.
- iv. A requirement in Policy for fruit trees in new gardens over a certain size

### Corporate Aims

9.59 Best City Ambition:

- i. In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.
- ii. promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet

### National Policy

9.60 NPPF Paragraphs 8b, 8c, 11a, 92c, 126, 130a, 130b, 131, 134b, 152, 153,

### Measurement of Policy

9.61 There is no current monitoring indicator for Food Resilience:

The monitoring indicator is proposed to be:

*53. Number of trees in Gardens approved*

*54. Number of community food growing projects created*

### Implementation of Policy

9.62 There are two discrete parts to the Policy. The first 6 bullet points support and encourage planning applications that improve Food Resilience in Leeds. The last bullet point demands that a new Tree is placed in the garden of new residential development. The placement of Tree will be controlled by the standard DM process.

## 10. APPENDIX 1

### Technical Note - Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Network Map

#### Purpose

- 10.1 This note has been prepared to accompany the Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Network Map. It outlines the following:
- How the network has been defined as part of the Local Plan Update
  - The spatial datasets that have been used identify the boundaries of the GBI functions
  - Any further work that is being undertaken that may result in amendments to the network prior to submission of the Local Plan Update for examination.

#### Local Plan Update Policy

- 10.2 The 'Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Network' (GBI network) is referred to under the following revised policy proposed in the Local Plan Update.

**Spatial Policy 13** '*Protecting, Maintaining, Enhancing and Extending Green & Blue Infrastructure*'

Spatial Policy 13 identifies the GBI network as comprising the following designations and other areas of land:

| Local Plan designations   | Other corridors and sites  |
|---|----------------------------|
| Green space (Site Allocations Policy GS1 & AVLAPP Policy AVL14) | River corridors            |
| Nature Conservation Sites (Policy G8a)*                         | Lakes                      |
| Leeds Habitat Network (Policy G8b)*                             | Ponds                      |
| Functional flood plain (Policy Water 3) – Undeveloped areas*    | Woodland                   |
|   | Historic Parks and Gardens |
|   | Public Right of Way (PROW) |

\* These policies are proposed to be updated as part of the Local Plan Update

#### Strategic GBI Network Mapping

- 10.3 The definition of Strategic GBI set out under Spatial Policy 13 has been used to define the spatial extent of the network. Any parcel of land meeting one or more of the GBI definitions set out in the policy falls within the Strategic GBI Network and is shown on the map.
- 10.4 The boundaries of some GBI functions, as shown in the table above, are defined in the Local Plan. It should be noted that three of these designations are subject to a proposed update as part of the Local Plan Update process. The datasets used to represent these designations on the Strategic GBI Network Map is based on the latest available information supporting the Local Plan Update publication draft. This may be subject to change as the Local Plan progresses to reflect further updates to the evidence base and changes resulting from consultation.
- 10.5 Other areas of land falling under within definition of Strategic GBI are not defined within the Local Plan. The extent of these areas has been derived using the most appropriate national and local datasets available.

### Using the Strategic GBI Network Map

- 10.6 The Strategic GBI Network Map can be viewed by clicking on the link below. The GBI network is shown in green or blue.
- 10.7 The status of any parcel of land can be checked by clicking on the map (see link below). This will show all the GBI functions that apply on a pop-up box. These can be seen individually by scrolling on the arrow at the bottom right of the box.

### [Strategic Green & Blue Infrastructure Network Map](#)

### Further Updates to the Strategic GBI Network Map

- 10.8 Leeds Habitat Network update

The Council is reviewing the Leeds Habitat Network as part of the Local Plan Update. The existing Leeds Habitat Network is shown on the map with the following types of site removed (as part of the first stage of the review)

Any land within the LHN which was included by virtue of falling within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 which had no other type of habitat value identified.

Any part of the LHN (usually small areas) which has been developed since the LHN was defined and has no habitat value remaining.

The review is likely to identify further areas of habitat which will be added to the network. This will be reflected in the next iteration of the Strategic GBI network map.

- 10.9 Public Rights of Way (PROW)

The PROW network is not currently shown the map. Further work is to be undertaken to identify the parts of the PROW network that has a strategic role in providing access to or linking other GBI sites and corridors. These will be added to the network map