

20. The Natural Environment

NE1 – The Natural environment

NE1.1 Trafford's protected natural environment assets, as shown on the policies plan, include:

- (i) Designated sites, habitats and species of European, national, regional, city regional and local importance including:
 - a) European Protected Species;
 - b) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
 - c) Sites of Biological Importance (SBI);
 - d) Local Nature Reserves;
 - e) Ancient Woodland;
 - f) Sites of geological and geomorphological importance;
 - g) Local Nature Conservation Sites;
 - h) Wildlife Corridors;
 - i) Areas of strategic importance as identified in The GM Ecological Framework
 - j) Habitats and species identified in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP)

- (ii) Defined landscape character types including:
 - a) Wooded Claylands – Timperley Wedge and open areas adjacent to River Bollin;
 - b) Wooded Estate lands – centred around the Dunham Massey Estate;
 - c) Settled Sandlands – Dunham and Warburton;
 - d) Mossland – Carrington Moss;
 - e) River Meadowlands – low-lying areas of the River Bollin and Mersey;
 - f) Wooded River Valley – east section of the River Bollin from M56 to A56; and
 - g) Urban River Valley – Manchester Ship Canal and canalised River Mersey.

NE1.2 These natural environment assets are shown on the policies map and included in Appendix 2

NE1.3 All proposals for major development, as defined in national planning guidance, will need to consider their impact on the natural environment, whilst demonstrating how natural assets are to be conserved and enhanced, for example through the delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain, contributing to habitat connectivity and nature recovery networks.

NE1.4 To ensure the protection and enhancement of Trafford's natural environment, developers will be required to demonstrate how their proposals:

- Protect and enhance the landscape character, biodiversity, geodiversity and conservation value of its natural and landscape assets, having regard not only to its immediate location but its surroundings and context
- Protect natural environment assets throughout the construction process

NE1.5 Given the spatial distribution of landscape character sites and ecological networks, the council will work collaboratively with other authorities, for example through the GM Natural Capital Group (Local Nature Partnership), to restore, protect and enhance landscape character and ecological and nature recovery networks.

NE1.6 The following sites have been identified as Biodiversity Opportunity Areas due to their location, scale and potential to support nature recovery networks as well as offering significant scope to accommodate biodiversity net gain improvements:

- a) Wellacre
- b) William Wroe Park (former municipal golf course)
- c) Davyhulme Millennium Nature Reserve
- d) Urmston Meadows
- e) Stretford Meadows
- f) Trafford Ecology Park
- g) Longford Park
- h) Turn Moss
- i) Sale Water Park
- j) Priory Gardens
- k) Dainewell Park and Woods
- l) King George V Pool/Timperley Moat
- m) Rossmill
- n) The Devisdale

NE1.7 A Biodiversity Net Gain approach would be applied as part of masterplanning for strategic allocations at New Carrington and Timperley Wedge and any subsequent planning applications.

Justification

National planning policy states that plans should identify and map components of the local ecological networks in order to protect and enhance biodiversity and to increase resilience to current and future pressures. These networks include the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them.

Plans should also 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.

Trafford's natural environment and natural environment assets provide a range of services and benefits for people, places and biodiversity including ecological connectivity, habitat and species protection, nature recovery networks, place and local identity, improved health and wellbeing, mitigating climate change and improving water and air quality.

The need for development to protect and enhance biodiversity is established in a range of legislation relating to designated sites, including the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017, as amended) (the Habitats Regulations) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended).

Duties relating to biodiversity outside designated sites are primarily within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain will facilitate adherence to relevant legislation and policy, including:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017, as amended)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) (WCA)
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2019)
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services

- A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan (25 YEP) to Improve the Environment (Defra, January 2018)

Natural capital refers to stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources such as air, water, soils and minerals as well as plants and animals.

Ecosystem services flow from natural capital, whilst biodiversity constitutes the living component of natural capital. Maintaining biodiversity is important for maintaining the scale and resilience of ecosystem service delivery.

Supporting and/or enhancing natural capital is a key element of the Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan, which includes habitat banking as one of the key investment opportunities for the delivery of off-site Biodiversity Net Gain in line with the guidance and approach adopted across GM as part of the Urban Pioneer.

Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain will not only enhance biodiversity, but also provide benefits for Trafford's stocks of natural capital.

Q19. Do you agree with the draft The Natural Environment policy NE1? If not, please explain why (providing supporting evidence where appropriate).