

### 3. Green Spaces Policies

#### Green Infrastructure opportunities

- 3.1** Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. The Borough already contains a wealth of GI assets; these are the individual elements that form part of the green infrastructure networks, including, green spaces such as Woking Park, and individual trees and vegetation. Waterways such as Basingstoke Canal are GI assets but are also known as blue infrastructure. These existing GI assets, and new assets that come forward through development, can be harnessed in an integrated manner to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits, including biodiversity and habitat enhancement, healthier lifestyles through improved access to green space, reduction of flood risk and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- 3.2** Core Strategy policies CS6 Green Belt; CS7 Biodiversity and nature conservation; CS8 Thames Basin Heath SPA; CS9 Flooding and water management; CS16 Infrastructure delivery; CS17 Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation; CS21 Design and CS24 on Woking's landscape and townscape, set out criteria to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and GI, and protect the Borough's special landscape. The following Development Management policy expands upon this strategic approach by setting out criteria for developers in terms of identifying opportunity areas for green infrastructure extension and enhancement.
- 3.3** This Development Management policy should be read in conjunction with policies DM2 Trees and Landscaping, and DM3 Facilities for Outdoor Sport and Outdoor Recreation, which also promote the provision of GI assets within development.

#### Policy DM1: Green Infrastructure Opportunities

##### Multifunctional Green Infrastructure Assets

New green infrastructure assets required to support development and the general community will be expected to be designed and located to maximize the range of green infrastructure functions and benefits.

Where proposals include new or enhanced green infrastructure assets, the applicant will be required to provide a statement detailing:

- (i) where new features will be located and, where relevant, how they may be accessed. A map should be provided of the existing and proposed green infrastructure on relevant sites; and
- (ii) the function of green infrastructure assets, what benefits they will bring (e.g. social, environmental, economic) and how proposals will contribute or integrate with the existing and/or proposed green infrastructure network; and
- (iii) management and maintenance arrangements that will be put in place to ensure the sustainable long-term care for the asset; and
- (iv) that the provision of any Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace will not compromise the biodiversity value of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.



Provided proposals are consistent with nature conservation objectives in other policies of the Development Plan for the area, the Council will support:

- (i) the creation of footpaths and 'cycle greenways';
- (ii) the provision of new green infrastructure assets within the Green Belt, including open space proposals and facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation that preserve the openness of Green Belt which would improve public accessibility to open space and the countryside.

The provision of new or enhanced green infrastructure assets will be expected to take any reasonable opportunities to connect to, or enhance, the existing Green Infrastructure Network. Particular attention should be given to enhancing the green infrastructure opportunity areas that provides biodiversity benefits such as biodiversity opportunity areas (BOA) identified in Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy and by Surrey Nature Partnership. The Council will encourage partnership working in the delivery of new or enhanced green infrastructure.

Development proposals which would result in significant harm to the broader green infrastructure network will only be considered if:

- (i) all reasonable alternative locations with less harmful impacts are demonstrated to be unsuitable; and
- (ii) the proposal incorporates measures to avoid the harmful impacts arising, sufficiently mitigate their effects, or, as a last resort, compensate for them; or
- (iii) the benefit arising from the development is of sufficient value to the overall objectives of the Development Plan to outweigh any harm caused.

The Council will work with Neighbourhood Forums where they may designate Local Green Space in their Neighbourhood Plans to ensure they are well integrated into the broader green infrastructure network. The management of development on designated Local Green Spaces should be consistent with paragraph 78 of the NPPE.

## Reasoned justification

### Multifunctional green infrastructure assets

**8.4** The majority of the Green Infrastructure assets will be delivered by the Woking Borough Council using CIL, s106 agreements or other public sector funding (as set out in Core Strategy policy CS16). The Council will also work with local communities through Neighbourhood Plans to make sure that Green Infrastructure achieves maximum benefit to the Neighbourhood Area and in line with the strategic objectives of the Development Plan for the Area. There are various ways in which GI could be incorporated into proposals, for example, through the incorporation of the following connected features:

- trees and other vegetation such as hedgerows
- green walls and green roofs
- sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)
- open space and recreation areas.



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### Green Infrastructure opportunities

**3.5** When considering the function and design of green infrastructure assets applicants should consider sustainability issues relevant to the development site, which new or enhanced GI might assist in addressing. Sustainability issues to consider include: the site's proximity to priority habitats and species, including Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (Core Strategy policies CS7 and CS8 contains further information on nature conservation issues); flood risk issues in and around the site; any nearby cycle, public rights of way; strategic green infrastructure routes; local access, or lack of it, to public open spaces, allotments and opportunities for local food growing. Further information is included in Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy.

**3.6** The Council recognises that open green space is a finite resource, and therefore considers the existing green space as important to retain and enhance. The NPPF states that planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of Green Belt (paragraph 81). This includes provision or improvements to access, recreational facilities, biodiversity and the enhancement of the landscape. The Green Belt is a multi-functional resource and the Council will support proposals that would enable improved access to it for the Borough's residents.

#### Green infrastructure network

**3.7** Woking is generally well provided for in terms of good quality open spaces, and the coverage of the Green Belt means that many GI features are already, to some degree, connected. However, the Council recognises the need to strengthen linkages and connectivity and seeks new development to connect to, or enhance, existing GI assets. In order to achieve this, the Council is committed to mapping the existing strategic GI network, and identifying 'opportunity areas' where the network could be extended or enhanced. Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy has been published by the Council to help achieve this objective, and should inform development proposals.

**3.8** The Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies and maps components of the Borough's ecological network, including international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors (such as waterways) and Biodiversity Opportunities Areas. The Strategy should be taken into account when preparing development proposals in order to both enhance connectivity between and minimise any adverse impacts to these biodiversity features.

#### Policy links

##### Woking Core Strategy – lead policy

- CS17: Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation

##### Other key Core Strategy policies

- CS6: Green Belt
- CS7: Biodiversity and nature conservation
- CS8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CS9: Flooding and water management
- CS16: Infrastructure delivery
- CS21: Design
- CS24: Woking's landscape and townscape



#### Other Council/County strategy and policy

- Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy (2016)
- Woking 2050: A Vision for a Sustainable Borough – Key Theme 4: The Great Outdoors (2015)

#### Other supporting guidance

- Woking Climate Change SPD (particularly Section 7)
- Woking Design SPD
- Natural England Green Infrastructure Guidance and Case Studies,  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/greeninfrastructure](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/greeninfrastructure)

### Application information

**3.9** Full planning applications should be accompanied by a completed 'Climate Neutral Checklist', which includes prompts on Green Infrastructure such as the inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems ([www.woking2027.info/supplementary/climatechangespd/cnc](http://www.woking2027.info/supplementary/climatechangespd/cnc)).

**3.10** In addition, where new or enhanced GI is proposed and/or is required as part of a major development<sup>1</sup>, the following information should be submitted:

- a description of any GI assets affected by the development, and how the development seeks to incorporate and/or enhance and/or conserve them
- a map of new GI assets
- a short statement of the functions and benefits achieved by the provision of the GI asset(s) e.g. wildlife habitat, surface water flooding alleviation.

<sup>1</sup> Where the number of dwellings to be provided is 10 or more; or the development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 0.5 hectares or more; or the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more.



## 3. Green Spaces Policies

### Trees and landscaping

**3.11** A range of Core Strategy policies set out the criteria for the provision of certain types of biodiversity and green infrastructure features and the circumstances when they should be included in development proposals. Policy CS7 Biodiversity and nature conservation requires development to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity features and create new ones where appropriate. This includes trees and hedgerows, which make an important contribution to biodiversity. Policy CS16 Infrastructure delivery seeks to ensure that new developments provide the necessary infrastructure required for the development to be acceptable – this includes green infrastructure assets such as trees and hedgerows. Policy CS17 Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation requires new development to enhance the green infrastructure network in the Borough rather than creating additional pressures on it. Policy CS21 Design requires proposals to incorporate landscaping, including the retention of any trees of amenity value and other features. Policy CS24 Woking's landscape and townscape requires development proposals to provide positive benefits in terms of landscape character, and seeks to protect and encourage the planting of new trees where relevant.

**3.12** In keeping with these strategic policies, it is considered that there are a number of more detailed criteria necessary to maintain existing trees and landscaping and related features and secure new provision in development schemes. This policy should be read in conjunction with policy DM1 Green Infrastructure Opportunities.

#### DM2: Trees and landscaping

Trees, hedgerows and other vegetation of amenity and/or environmental significance or which form part of the intrinsic character of an area must be considered holistically as part of the landscaping treatment of new development. When considering development proposals, the Council will:

- (i) support or consent to the removal of protected trees (TPO trees and trees within a Conservation Area) and/or proposals that would have detrimental impact on the health of protected trees only in exceptional circumstances and where there are over-riding planning benefits. In such cases full compensation will be required, in the form of suitable replacements and/or additional planting. Such compensatory measures will have to be to the satisfaction of the Council;
- (ii) make sure that where trees, hedgerows or other landscape feature are to be removed it is justified to the satisfaction of the Council and appropriate replacement planting will be required if it is safe and practical to do so and will enhance the quality of the development. Where the removal of trees is necessary in order to manage and maintain priority habitats, this should be demonstrated by the applicant;
- (iii) require landscape proposals for new development to retain existing trees and other important landscape features where practicable and include the planting of new trees and other planting to enhance the quality and character of the development and the general area;
- (iv) require any trees which are to be retained to be adequately protected to avoid damage during construction;
- (v) require adequate space to be provided between any trees to be retained and the proposed development (including impervious surfaces);



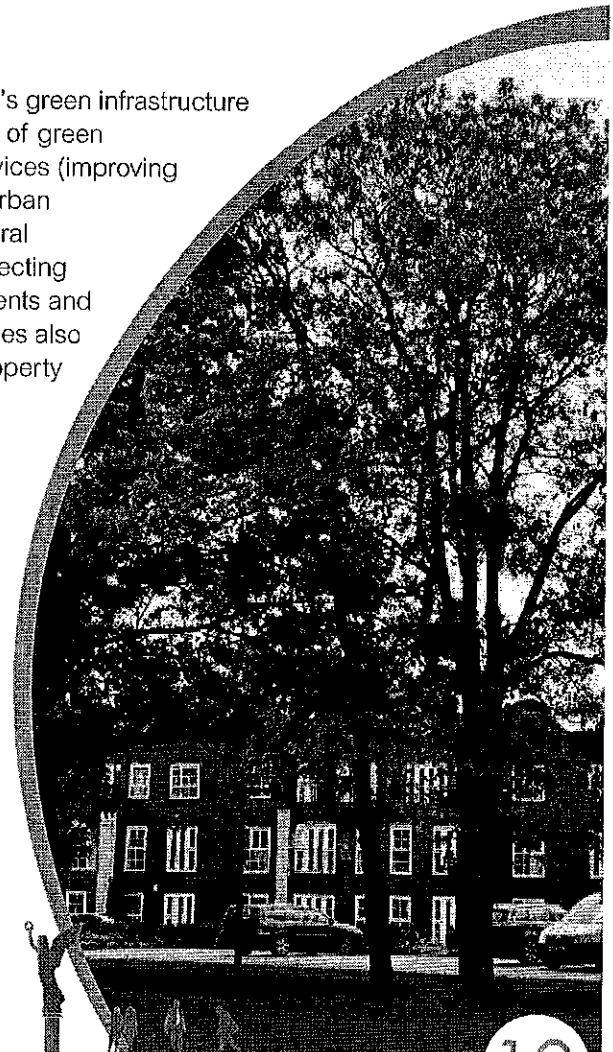
- (vi) support the incorporation of green walls and roofs in proposals, particularly within the urban environment, where appropriate in design and functional terms and which would not detract from the character of the area;
- (vii) require the design, size, species and placement of trees and other landscape features to take practicable opportunities to realise their multifunctional green infrastructure benefits as set out in Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy, including:
  - connecting the development site to the surrounding green infrastructure network and wildlife habitats; and
  - assisting in providing shade and shelter to address urban cooling; and
  - assisting in reducing or mitigating run-off and flood risk on the development site; and
  - creating a strong framework of street trees to enclose or mitigate the visual impact of a development.

The Council will consider making Tree Preservation Orders and/or attach suitable Conditions or seek Legal Agreements to secure the proper future maintenance and management of existing trees and new planting where necessary.

## Reasoned justification

**3.13** Trees and woodland are a vital component of the Borough's green infrastructure network. As such, trees and woodland contribute to a host of green infrastructure benefits, including providing ecosystem services (improving air quality, storing carbon, energy savings, cooling rising urban temperatures); improving the quality of the visual and natural environment; enhancing biodiversity by creating and connecting habitats for wildlife; and increasing the well-being of residents and workers through access to natural green surroundings. Trees also deliver a whole host of other benefits such as boosting property values and improving personal wellbeing.

**3.14** The Borough enjoys an especially rich legacy of trees and landscape features in its parks, gardens and open spaces which the Council aims to preserve and enhance, regardless of their public or private ownership, and even if they are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order or within a Conservation Area.



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- 3.15** When granting planning permission for development, the Council may require existing trees to be retained as a condition of planning permission. Where tree loss or damage is considered absolutely essential to allow for appropriate development, replacement planting of an appropriate species may be required to be provided. Where appropriate and practical, the Council will require that new development incorporates new trees and other planting that enhances the Borough's treescape and wider biodiversity, and thereby contributes towards the Borough-wide Green Infrastructure network. Whilst the benefits of trees are acknowledged, the Council is also aware that trees might not always be beneficial to some forms of biodiversity, and they need to be maintained to avoid potential danger to safety, property and amenity. This will be taken into account in planning decisions. It should be recognised that it is not simply a matter of tree provision: the selection of suitable species, size and soil volumes are also important considerations. The provision of appropriate underground structures – particularly in hard-surface areas – is essential to enable any planting to reach its long term potential. Arboricultural advice should be sought with the Council's Arboricultural Officer, including early pre-design discussion where relevant.
- 3.16** Protection of some hedgerows of historic or nature conservation importance is given through the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. However, garden hedgerows and removals associated with built development tend to be exempt from the Regulations. The Council will seek to mitigate the removal of hedgerows that are valued in the landscape, but do not meet the importance criteria of the Regulations. Planning conditions will therefore be used to secure or seek appropriate replacement of hedges associated with development.
- 3.17** Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) protect trees for the benefit of public amenity, enjoyment and the environment. TPOs may apply to individual trees, groups of trees, areas or woods. Many trees in the Borough are protected by TPOs, and the Council will continue to make TPOs where trees of environmental importance are threatened.
- 3.18** Trees in Conservation Areas (not protected by TPOs) are also given special protection. Written notice will need to be submitted to the Council of any proposed works to any tree within a Conservation Area greater than 7.5cm in diameter (as measured at 1.5m above ground level) (or 10cm if thinning to help the growth of other trees). Written notice should be given at least six weeks before works are due to start. This allows the Council to make an inspection of the tree(s) and consider if a TPO should be made.
- 3.19** It is recognised that in some historic restoration schemes there may be some removal of trees. Exceptions will only be considered to this approach on sites where it is demonstrated that it is not physically possible to introduce replacement landscaping and planting.
- 3.20** Trees can be damaged during construction and it is important that preventative measures are taken in good time. The Council will consider attaching the appropriate conditions to prevent damage and ensure satisfactory arboricultural works in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations' (or any future equivalent).



## Policy links

### Woking Core Strategy – lead policy

- CS24: Woking's landscape and townscape

### Other key Core Strategy policies

- CS7: Biodiversity and nature conservation
- CS16: Infrastructure delivery
- CS17: Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation
- CS21: Design

### Other Council/County strategy and policy

- Woking Tree Strategy (forthcoming)
- Woking tree enforcement policy available at [www.woking.gov.uk/planning/trees/treenfpol](http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/trees/treenfpol)
- Natural Woking: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy (2016)

### Other supporting guidance

- Woking Borough Council's trees webpage, [www.woking.gov.uk/planning/trees](http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/trees)
- Protected trees: A guide to tree preservation procedures, [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/244528/2127793.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244528/2127793.pdf)
- BS 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations' (April 2012)

## Application information

- 3.21** Where trees are present within the application site, or within close proximity to the site that could influence or be affected by the development (including street trees), information will be required about which trees should be retained and how they will be protected during construction works. Full guidance is provided in British Standard 5837 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations' (or any future equivalent) on the tree survey, arboriculture implications assessment, and arboriculture methods statement (which would include a tree protection plan) that should be provided with an application.
- 3.22** Any landscape proposal submitted with an application should be of an appropriate scale (usually 1:100 or 1:200) showing:
  - existing and proposed levels (with sections as necessary);
  - positions and depths of buildings and foundations, paved surfaces, drainage, and services (water, gas, electricity, telecommunications);
  - trees to be retained, numbered as on the tree survey; and
  - new planting (including the location, species and size of proposed trees and other significant planting).

