Wigan Council

Wigan Borough Local Plan

Topic Paper 7: Environment

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Note of changes made since the August 2026 version of this document:

Section	
2.2.1; 3.4.13	To reference new legislation on Biodiversity Gain
3.1.17; 3.4.7; 3.10.7	Factual updates

1. Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of 7 Topic Papers each one relating directly to one of the 7 policy chapters in the Draft Wigan Borough Local Plan. This is Topic Paper 7 on Environment.

1.1.2 The topic papers distil the evidence base that has been collated and, where applicable, commissioned to support the Local Plan, and set out the key messages to help demonstrate that the plan meets the tests of soundness in a proportionate way, specifically that it has been positively prepared, is justified and appropriate, is deliverable and effective, and is consistent with national policy and relevant strategic policies for the area, as set out in paragraphs 35 and 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).

1.1.3 It starts with the planning policy context for the Environment theme and identifies the policy requirements for the Local Plan to address, before focusing on more depth of each of those policy requirements.

1.1.4 The 7 Topic Papers need to be read alongside the 6 Site Allocation Assessment Reports and the self-assessment toolkit reports. For more detailed information reference should be made to the source reports and studies.

2. The planning policy context for Environment

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in August 2026. However, the Local Plan is being reviewed against the NPPF December 2023 version due to a criterion within the transitional arrangements surrounding the Places for Everyone plan.

2.1.2 Where relevant, material consideration has been given to the December 2024 version of the NPPF when preparing the Environment policies outlined in Section 3, particularly where the changes made relate primarily to development management. The August 2026 version was published too late to be considered in our topic papers, or to inform content in the Local Plan.

2.1.3 National planning policy on Environment is set out primarily in section 14 and 15 of the NPPF – 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change'; and 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.

2.1.4 The NPPF raises a number of policy requirements and challenges for Local Plans as set out in the Local Plan Route Mapper Toolkit Part 2: Local Plan Form and Content Checklist from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) (May 2025). As the PAS Toolkit is based on the December 2024 version of the NPPF, the Council has revised it to align with the December 2023 version against which the Local Plan will be examined. With numbering from the revised toolkit, these policy requirements and challenges are that Local Plans should:

88. 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.

89. Support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts.

90. Increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat by providing a positive strategy for energy from these sources, identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and identifying opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from

decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

91. Apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development taking into account all sources of flood risk and current and future impacts of climate change. Strategic policies should be informed by a strategic flood risk assessment and should consider cumulative impacts in, or affecting, local areas susceptible to flooding.

92. Steer new development to those areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Development should not be allocated if there are sufficient reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. If this is not possible, the exception test may have to be applied, informed by the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed. Where this is the case, sites need to demonstrate that the development would provide wider sustainability benefits outweighing the flood risk and that the development would be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere (and where possible will reduce flood risk overall).

93. Avoid inappropriate development in vulnerable areas and not exacerbating the impacts of physical changes to the coast.

94. Contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services.

95. Distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure, and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

96. Apply great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The scale and extent of

development within these designated areas should be limited. Development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

97. Conserve the special character and importance of Heritage Coast areas.

98. Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, 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.

99. Ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions, any risks arising from land instability and contamination, and the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment.

100. Sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas.

101. Ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities.

2.1.5 We are publishing the Local Plan Route Mapper Toolkit Part 2: Local Plan Form and Content Checklist with our response to each of these requirements separately. The remainder of this section in this Topic paper sets out what the policy requirements are for Environment in the Wigan Borough Local Plan, including the extent that, given it will sit alongside the Places for Everyone Plan, it needs to meet the requirements in the NPPF.

2.2 Legislation

2.2.1 Relevant legislation on the Environment topic area includes:

- **The Environment Act 2021:** This introduced mandatory biodiversity net gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Although biodiversity net gain requirements mostly impact on

the development management process, local planning authorities must also embed the approach into local policies. Local planning authorities are also required to ensure that policies align with their Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- **Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Amendments and Transitional Provisions) (England) Regulations 2026:** These amendments introduced an exemption for development on sites of 0.2 hectares or less, provided the development does not affect an on-site priority habitat. They also changed the statutory biodiversity-gain hierarchy for development that is not major development, allowing on-site enhancement, on-site creation or registered off-site biodiversity gain to be considered at the same stage before statutory credits are used.
- **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**: This requires local planning authorities to include policies in Local Plans that both mitigate and adapt to climate change. This statutory duty is detailed in Section 19(1A) of the act, which mandates that local plans must contain policies designed to ensure that development contributes to these climate goals.
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**: Section 40 of the Act, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, places a duty on public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Authorities must consider what actions they can take to further this objective and implement appropriate policies and actions.
- **Water Framework Directive:** Although originally an EU directive, its principles remain embedded in UK law. It requires the ecological and chemical status of water bodies to be protected and improved. It also encourages naturalisation of watercourses, wetland creation, and in-channel enhancements. The requirement for WFD assessments in development proposals affecting waterbodies is also underpinned by the directive.

2.3 Planning Practice Guidance, as applicable

2.3.1 Planning Practice Guidance is an online resource that is updated on an ongoing basis as needed. There is a wide range of guidance on the environment.

Air Quality

2.3.2 Relevant guidance on air quality states that:

- Local Plans are required to address air quality strategically at the plan-making stage, ensuring that development contributes to national air quality objectives and limits exposure to poor air quality (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 32-002-20191101).
- Plans should be informed by an evidence base that assesses current conditions, future trends with and without the plan, and cumulative impacts of development (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 32-002-20191101).
- Policies should promote sustainable transport, low-emission infrastructure, and green infrastructure, while avoiding sensitive uses in areas of poor air quality unless effective mitigation is achievable (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 32-002-20191101).
- Air quality considerations must be integrated into Sustainability Appraisal or Strategic Environmental Assessment, and plans should include measures for cross-boundary cooperation where impacts extend beyond local authority areas. Finally, Local Plans should set out monitoring arrangements to track the effectiveness of policies and mitigation measures (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 32-002-20191101).

Appropriate assessment

2.3.3 Relevant guidance on appropriate assessment states that:

- The purpose of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is to assess whether a plan or project could affect the protected features of a habitats site (as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework), before it is permitted or authorised (Paragraph: 001 (Reference ID: 65-001-20190722).
- In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), this Local Plan has been subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The HRA process begins with a screening stage to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on any protected habitats site. Where such effects cannot be excluded, an Appropriate Assessment is required (Paragraph: 002 (Reference ID: 65-002-20190722).
- The Appropriate Assessment must be comprehensive, precise, and conclusive, leaving no reasonable scientific doubt about the potential effects on the integrity of the site. It must include a detailed catalogue of all habitat types and species for which the site is protected and assess implications for features both within

the site and those outside the site that are functionally linked (Paragraph: 003 (Reference ID: 65-003-20190722).

Biodiversity Net Gain

2.3.4 Relevant guidance on biodiversity net gain states that:

- Local Plans do not need to duplicate the statutory requirement for biodiversity net gain, but they can include locally specific policies that complement the national framework. These policies should be consistent with the legal requirements and may include strategies for off-site delivery, monitoring, and even targets above the statutory 10% gain, provided they are supported by evidence and shown to be viable. Authorities are encouraged to set out how they will baseline, measure, and monitor biodiversity net gain delivery as part of Local Plan monitoring (Paragraphs: 006 Reference ID:74-006-20240214 and 020 Reference ID:74-020-20240214).

Climate Change

2.3.5 Relevant guidance on climate change states that:

- Local planning authorities are under a statutory duty, as set out in Section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to include policies in their Local Plans that are designed to secure the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. This duty complements the broader sustainable development duty and aligns with the objectives of the Climate Change Act 2008, which sets legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate risks (Paragraphs: 001 Reference ID: 6-001-20140306 and 002 Reference ID: 6-002-20140306).
- Local Plans should incorporate both mitigation and adaptation strategies. Mitigation includes reducing the need to travel, promoting sustainable transport, supporting renewable and low carbon energy, and encouraging energy-efficient design. Adaptation involves planning for climate risks such as flooding, water scarcity, and overheating, and promoting resilient infrastructure and building design (Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 6-003-20140612).
- Authorities are encouraged to pursue 'win-win' solutions that deliver both mitigation and adaptation benefits. For example, green infrastructure can reduce urban heat, manage flood risk, and support biodiversity. Plans should avoid maladaptation - design choices that may increase vulnerability to climate impacts

- and use tools such as sustainability appraisals and environmental impact assessments to evaluate long-term outcomes (Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 6-004-20140612).

- To support effective policy making, Local Plans should be informed by robust evidence, including climate change risk assessments, Strategic Flood Risk Assessments, Water Resource Management Plans, and infrastructure studies. This evidence base helps identify vulnerabilities and supports the development of locally appropriate responses (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 6-005-20140306).

Flood risk and coastal change

2.3.6 Relevant guidance on flood risk and coastal change states that:

- Local planning authorities must take flood risk into account when preparing Local Plans. This includes identifying areas at risk from all sources of flooding - such as rivers, the sea, surface water, groundwater, reservoirs, and drainage systems - and considering future flood risk influenced by climate change. Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRAs) must be undertaken to inform plan-making and site allocations (Paragraphs: 001 Reference ID: 7-001-20220825).

- Flood risk is defined as the combination of the probability and potential consequences of flooding. Authorities must understand the characteristics of flood events, including depth, velocity, speed of onset and duration, and assess the safety of people and buildings during such events (Paragraphs: 002 Reference ID: 7-002-20220825 and 004 Reference ID: 7-004-20220825).

- Local Plans must apply a sequential approach to site selection, starting with the sequential test to steer new development to areas with the lowest flood risk. The sequential, risk-based approach must consistently include all sources of flood risk, such as surface water, not just rivers or the sea. Where necessary, the exception test must also be applied to demonstrate that development is safe and sustainable. If these tests are not met, development should not be permitted (Paragraphs: 003 Reference ID: 7-003-20220825 and 023 Reference ID: 7-023-20220825).

- Plans should also promote flood risk avoidance, control, mitigation and management. This includes using site layout to locate vulnerable uses in areas of lowest risk, incorporating flood resistance and resilience measures and ensuring safe access and

evacuation routes. Passive measures should be prioritised over active ones, and residual risks must be safely managed (Paragraphs: 004 Reference ID: 7-004-20220825).

- Flood risk management infrastructure must be considered in terms of its operation, funding, maintenance and ability to keep pace with climate change. Local Plans should safeguard land for future flood infrastructure and consider the consequences of infrastructure failure (Paragraphs: 004 Reference ID: 7-004-20220825).

Hazardous substances

2.3.7 Relevant guidance on hazardous substances states that:

- Local planning authorities must consider the presence and risks of hazardous substances when preparing Local Plans. This requirement stems from the need to prevent major accidents and limit their consequences for people and the environment. Authorities must consider the long-term need for appropriate separation distances between hazardous establishments and areas of population or environmental sensitivity. They must also assess whether additional measures are needed for existing establishments to ensure that risks are not increased (Paragraphs: 001 Reference ID: 39-001-20140306).
- The planning system addresses hazardous substances through three main mechanisms: (1) the hazardous substances consent regime, (2) plan-making requirements, and (3) handling development proposals near hazardous installations. In plan-making, authorities are expected to integrate considerations of major accident hazards and consult relevant bodies, such as the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) competent authority, to understand the nature and severity of risks (Paragraphs: 002 Reference ID: 39-002-20161209).
- Local Plans must reflect the objectives of the Seveso III Directive (2012/18/EU), which requires land-use planning controls to prevent and mitigate the consequences of major accidents involving hazardous substances. This includes controls on the siting of new establishments and on developments near existing hazardous sites. The Directive also mandates public participation in decision-making processes (Paragraphs: 003 Reference ID: 39-003-20161209.

Land affected by contamination

2.3.8 Relevant guidance on land affected by contamination states that:

- Local planning authorities must consider the implications of land contamination when preparing Local Plans. Failing to adequately address contamination can harm human health, property and the wider environment, limit or prevent new development and undermine compliance with regulations such as the Water Environment Regulations 2017 (Paragraphs: 001 Reference ID: 33-001-20190722).
- The planning system plays a key role in ensuring that land is suitable for its intended use and that unacceptable risks from pollution are prevented. Planning must address contamination where it affects development suitability (Paragraphs: 002 Reference ID: 33-002-20190722).
- Authorities should use a range of information sources to assess the likelihood of contamination, including local surveys, River Basin Management Plans, historical land use data and environmental databases. This helps determine whether site-specific investigations are needed (Paragraphs: 005 Reference ID: 33-005-20190722).
- Local Plans should take a strategic approach to contamination, especially where it affects large areas. This includes using sustainability appraisal to shape remediation strategies, allocating contaminated land only for appropriate uses and considering the impact on neighbouring areas. Plans should clearly set out developer responsibilities and information requirements (Paragraphs: 006 Reference ID: 33-006-20190722).

Land stability

2.3.9 Relevant guidance on land stability states that:

- Local planning authorities must consider land stability when preparing Local Plans. to ensure that development is suitable for ground conditions and does not pose risks to people, property, or the environment. Land instability can result in landslides, subsidence or ground heave, and failing to address these risks can have serious consequences (Paragraphs: 001 Reference ID: 45-001-20190722).
- Local Plans should identify areas where land stability is a concern, such as those affected by landslides, mining hazards or subsidence. Plans may include policies requiring remediation, restricting development in high-risk areas, or specifying types of development that may be acceptable. Authorities may also require land stability or slope stability risk assessments and

consider removing permitted development rights in certain locations (Paragraphs: 003 Reference ID: 45-003-20190722).

- The Coal Authority plays a key role in managing land instability risks in coalfield areas. It identifies Development High Risk Areas, acts as a statutory consultee for certain applications and regulates intrusive investigations affecting coal mining features. Local Plans should use this information to guide development and ensure appropriate stability measures are in place (Paragraphs: 010 Reference ID: 45-010-201403061).

Light pollution

2.3.10 Relevant guidance on light pollution states that:

- Local planning authorities must consider the impact of artificial lighting when preparing Local Plans, particularly where development may increase light levels or be sensitive to existing lighting. While artificial light can offer social and economic benefits, such as enabling night-time activity and improving safety, it can also become a source of light pollution or obtrusive light. Poorly designed lighting can cause annoyance to people, harm wildlife, and undermine the enjoyment of dark landscapes and the night sky (Paragraphs: 001 Reference ID: 31-001-20191101).
- Local Plans should assess whether existing lighting installations make a location unsuitable for development, or whether new development would materially alter light levels and adversely affect nearby uses. Authorities should consider the agent of change principle, ensuring that new development near existing lighting sources includes appropriate mitigation. Plans should also consider impacts on sensitive facilities such as observatories, airports, and protected dark sky areas (Paragraphs: 002 Reference ID: 31-002-20191101).
- Local Plans should assess how much light shines. This includes evaluating the intensity, spectral characteristics (e.g. blue or UV content), and necessity of lighting. Excessive or poorly directed lighting can cause glare and disrupt both human and ecological systems. White and blue light sources are particularly disruptive to sleep and wildlife and should be carefully managed (Paragraphs: 005 Reference ID: 31-005-20191101).

Natural environment

2.3.11 Relevant guidance on the natural environment states that:

- Local planning authorities must consider the protection and enhancement of the natural environment when preparing Local Plans. This includes safeguarding agricultural land, soils, biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystems, landscapes, and green infrastructure. The planning system should aim to conserve and enhance natural capital assets and ecosystem services, contributing to sustainable development and climate resilience (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 8-001-20190721).
- Planning policies and decisions should take account of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2, and 3a). Natural England must be consulted before granting permission for large-scale non-agricultural development on such land if it is not in accordance with the development plan (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 8-001-20190721).
- Soil is a vital natural capital asset that supports food production, carbon storage, biodiversity, and pollution buffering. Local Plans should promote the sustainable use and protection of soils, including through planning conditions informed by Defra's Code of Practice for construction sites (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 8-002-20190721).
- Some brownfield land may have high environmental value, supporting priority habitats and species. Local Plans must assess the biodiversity or geodiversity value of such land and ensure that harm is avoided, mitigated, or compensated appropriately (Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 8-003-20190721).
- Strategic policies should identify existing and proposed green infrastructure networks and set out policies for their protection and enhancement. Green infrastructure strategies should be evidence-based and developed collaboratively with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 8-006-20190721).
- Green infrastructure must be considered early in development proposals and integrated into infrastructure provision. Planning conditions, obligations, and the Community Infrastructure Levy may be used to secure and fund green infrastructure, which must be sustainably managed and maintained (Paragraphs: 007 Reference ID: 8-007-20190721 and 008 Reference ID: 8-008-20190721).

Noise

2.3.12 Relevant guidance on noise states that:

- Local plans must address noise where development may generate additional noise or be sensitive to the existing or anticipated acoustic environment. This includes considering opportunities to improve the acoustic environment through good acoustic design, which should be integrated early in the planning process to ensure effective and economical solutions (Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 30-001-20190722).
- Noise can override other planning concerns if justified, but it must be assessed in the context of the development's characteristics, its intended users and the surrounding environment. These factors influence whether noise is likely to be a concern and should be weighed carefully in plan-making (Paragraph: 002, Reference ID: 30-002-20190722).
- Local plans should determine noise impacts by assessing whether a significant adverse effect or an adverse effect is likely, and whether a good standard of amenity can be achieved. This assessment should align with the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE), using the concepts of Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level (SOAEL), Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL), and No Observed Effect Level (NOEL) to guide decisions (Paragraphs: 003–005, Reference IDs: 30-003 to 30-005-20190722).

Renewable and low carbon energy

2.3.13 Relevant guidance on renewable and low carbon energy states that:

- When preparing Local Plans, LPAs should develop a positive strategy to promote renewable and low carbon energy. This involves assessing the local potential for such technologies, considering the range of technologies, their impacts, and the falling costs that may increase uptake. While there is no quota for renewable energy delivery, policies should be designed to maximise development in appropriate locations. Importantly, the planning concerns of local communities must be properly considered and addressed (Paragraph: 003, Reference ID: 5-003-20140306).
- Local Plans should also support community-led renewable energy initiatives, which can provide local benefits and foster public support. LPAs are encouraged to establish policies that give positive weight to such initiatives, especially where there is

clear evidence of community involvement and leadership. Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders can be used to facilitate these developments, and LPAs should share relevant evidence to support communities in their planning efforts (Paragraph: 004, Reference ID: 5-004-20140306).

- LPAs should consider the technical requirements of each technology and the potential environmental impacts, including cumulative effects. The views of affected communities must be taken into account. Tools such as Landscape Character Assessments can help determine appropriate locations and scales for development. Identifying suitable areas in Local Plans provides greater certainty and helps avoid speculative applications in inappropriate locations (Paragraphs: 005 and 032, Reference IDs: 5-005-20150618 and 5-032-150618).
- Local Plans should include criteria-based policies that are expressed positively - i.e., proposals will be accepted where impacts are or can be made acceptable. These criteria should reflect the technical siting considerations of different technologies, such as grid connection proximity, transport links, and environmental constraints. LPAs must also ensure that environmental protections, cumulative impacts, local topography, and heritage assets are carefully considered when shaping policies and assessing applications (Paragraphs: 006 and related guidance).

Water supply, wastewater and water quality

2.3.14 Relevant guidance on water supply, wastewater and water quality states that:

- Local planning authorities (LPAs) must consider the legal and policy framework for the water environment, particularly the Water Environment Regulations 2017, which aim to prevent deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and ensure water bodies reach 'good' status. LPAs must have regard to River Basin Management Plans and the National Policy Statement for Waste Water when exercising their planning functions (Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 34-001-20161116).
- In plan-making, LPAs should address concerns related to water supply, wastewater, and water quality. These include ensuring adequate infrastructure, protecting water quality, and managing cross-boundary issues. Early engagement with water and sewerage companies is encouraged to align growth with infrastructure planning and business plans. Plans should also

reflect objectives from the 25 Year Environment Plan, such as reducing damaging water abstraction and improving protected water bodies (Paragraph: 002, Reference ID: 34-002-20140306).

- Local Plans may need to identify suitable sites for new or enhanced water and wastewater infrastructure, considering their specific locational needs. Development should be phased to ensure infrastructure is in place when needed, and impacts on biodiversity and designated sites must be assessed. (Paragraph: 005, Reference ID: 34-005-20140306).
- Water quality considerations include steering polluting developments away from sensitive areas, especially near drinking water sources. Plans should promote sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and green infrastructure to mitigate impacts and improve water quality. These measures can also reduce flood risk and enhance biodiversity (Paragraph: 006, Reference ID: 34-006-20161116).
- Wastewater planning must assess the capacity and sufficiency of existing infrastructure, the feasibility of non-mains drainage, and the environmental capacity to receive effluent without breaching statutory objectives (Paragraph: 007, Reference ID: 34-007-20140306).
- LPAs must collaborate with neighbouring authorities, the Environment Agency, and water companies. This catchment-based approach supports integrated planning and helps meet the objectives of the Water Environment Regulations (Paragraph: 008, Reference ID: 34-008-20140306).
- Water supply and quality must be considered in Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisals (SA). Objectives should include preventing deterioration of water bodies, accounting for climate change, and identifying opportunities for improvement (Paragraph: 009, Reference ID: 34-009-20140306).

Sustainable drainage systems policy

2.3.15 Relevant guidance on sustainable drainage states that:

- Local Plans should promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments to manage surface water runoff, reduce flood risk, and deliver wider environmental benefits. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expects SuDS to be used unless demonstrated to be inappropriate (Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 7-079-201503231).

- SuDS should be designed to deliver multiple benefits, including water quantity and quality management, biodiversity enhancement, and amenity provision. Local Plans should encourage integration of SuDS with green infrastructure and landscape design. This aligns with the principles outlined in the National Standards for SuDS, particularly Principles 1–3, which advocate a natural approach to managing water and using a SuDS management train.
- Surface water management should be considered early in the planning and design process. Local Plans should support this by requiring developers to demonstrate how SuDS have been incorporated from the conceptual stage. This is covered in Principles 4–5 of the National Standards, which emphasise early integration with site layout, topography, and climate resilience strategies.
- Local Plans should also align with technical standards such as Defra's Non-Statutory Technical Standards and refer to best practice guidance like the CIRIA SuDS Manual. Where SuDS are deemed inappropriate, developers must provide clear justification, supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment and drainage strategy (Paragraph: 080 Reference ID: 7-080-201503231).
- Local Plans should ensure long-term maintenance of SuDS is secured through planning conditions or legal agreements. Early engagement with the Local Planning Authority is encouraged to agree on design, construction, and maintenance arrangements, as outlined in Principle 8 of the National Standards.

Water Efficiency

2.3.16 Relevant guidance on water efficiency states that:

- Local planning authorities can adopt the optional Building Regulations water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day for new dwellings, where there is a clear local need. This must be supported by evidence, consultation, and consideration of viability and housing supply impacts (Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 56-014-20150327).

2.4 Land Use Framework for England

2.4.1 In March 2026, the Government published England's first Land Use Framework, which provides an evidence-led national context for more consistent and joined-up decisions about land to support

housing and infrastructure delivery, maintain food production, restore nature and build climate resilience.

2.4.2 The framework is not intended to prescribe land uses in specific locations or form part of planning policy; instead, it sets a national vision, principles and actions that reinforce the approach to our Local Plan Policies in supporting multifunctional land use, nature recovery, energy supply and nature-based solutions.

2.4.3 The Land Use Framework concludes that England has enough land to meet key national needs - housing, domestic food production, nature recovery and clean power - and that these should not be treated as "competing demands." This is, however, conditional on using land more strategically and efficiently (including multifunctional use) supported by better data and strategic planning.

2.5 Development plan documents that will be replaced by the Local Plan, on adoption

The Replacement Unitary Development Plan (2006)

2.5.1 The Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in 2006 but many policies within it were replaced by policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy when it was adopted in September 2013 – see Appendix A of the Core Strategy for details. Those policies are shown crossed out in the contents list in the version of the UDP on the council's website.

2.5.2 Remaining policies relating to Environment in the UDP are as follows, with the intention to replace them with content in the Local Plan as applicable.

Policy EV1A: Land Reclamation and Renewal

2.5.3 This policy sets out a number of sites within the borough that are identified for reclamation and renewal by the council alongside partners.

Policy EV1B: Pollution

2.5.4 This policy sets out how the council will reduce pollution and the effects of pollution by not permitting developments that will result in unacceptable levels of air pollution; noise; pollution in watercourses or groundwater; or the transfer of contaminated run-off to foul or surface water sewers. It also only allows development on contaminated land where effective remediation is carried out beforehand.

Policy EV2C: Features of Major Importance for Nature Conservation and Wildlife Corridors

2.5.5 This policy sets out how the council will protect key natural features important for wildlife, such as woodlands, hedgerows, water bodies, and grasslands, from harmful development unless impacts can be fully mitigated or outweighed by other considerations.

2.5.6 It requires developers to protect and enhance habitats and species identified in national and regional Biodiversity Action Plans and sets out a network of wildlife corridors that should be safeguarded and enhanced, only allowing development that adversely affects them in exceptional cases.

Policy EV3F: The River Douglas, Canal Network and Other Water Features

2.5.7 This policy sets out how the council will consider the impact of developments near rivers, canals, and other significant water features, ensuring that proposals respect the area's visual character, traditional waterside setting, and ecological value.

2.5.8 Layout, design, and access must be sympathetic to these qualities to preserve both the landscape and wildlife.

The Local Plan Core Strategy (2013)

2.5.9 The Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in 2013. Some policies, and a part of one policy, within it were replaced by policies in the Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan when it was adopted in March 2024 – see Appendix A of the Places for Everyone Plan for details. Those policies are shown crossed out in the version of the Core Strategy on the council's website.

2.5.10 Remaining policies relating to Environment in the Local Plan Core Strategy are:

Policy CP16: Flooding

2.5.11 This policy aims to reduce flood risk across the borough from all sources, including rivers, surface water, groundwater, and sewers. It requires new development to not increase flood risk and, where possible, contribute to its reduction. For greenfield sites, development must not increase surface water run-off, while for previously developed land, a reduction of at least 30% is expected, rising to 50% in critical drainage areas. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are strongly encouraged, especially for major developments, unless deemed impractical. The policy promotes a hierarchical

approach to drainage starting with infiltration into the ground, then discharge to surface water bodies, followed by surface water sewers, and lastly combined sewers. Developers are urged to consider SuDS early in the design process to maximise benefits such as improved water quality, biodiversity, and landscape value.

2.5.12 The policy also supports safeguarding land used for flood water storage and requires developments in flood-prone areas to be resilient and resistant to flooding.

Policy CP17: Environmental Protection

2.5.13 This policy focuses on protecting the environment and public health by ensuring that new development does not result in unacceptable levels of pollution. This includes air, water, noise, light, and land contamination. It requires development to be appropriately located and designed to avoid or mitigate environmental harm and supports the use of best practice in construction and operation to minimise impacts on nearby communities and sensitive environments.

2.6 Supplementary Planning Documents

2.6.1 There are a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that support policies on Environment, as follows:

Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations (2025)

2.6.2 Adopted in May 2025, this jointly produced SPD provides guidance on, and facilitates the timely provision of, required mitigation at Holcroft Moss, within the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC), located within Warrington Borough close to its administrative boundary with Wigan Borough.

2.6.3 The SPD supplements Policy JP-C8 in the adopted Places for Everyone Plan, in particular clause 17, which requires planning applications accompanied by a Transport Assessment to consider air quality impacts on Holcroft Moss.

2.6.4 The SPD aims to ensure compliance with government regulations and provide clear guidance for developers setting out the planning obligations necessary for developments that exceed specific traffic flow thresholds impacting Holcroft Moss.

Development and Air Quality (2021)

2.6.5 This SPD sets out the requirements and guidance for developers to manage and mitigate the air quality impacts of their projects. The document explains how developers should assess the impact on air quality and what measures are required, in line with both national

and local planning policies. It supplements Policy CP17 Environmental Protection in the Local Plan Core Strategy (2013).

Landscape Design (2021)

2.6.6 This SPD promotes a landscape-led approach, meaning that landscape considerations should shape the overall design and layout of developments from the outset. This ensures that environmental assets and green infrastructure are preserved and enhanced, rather than being treated as constraints or afterthoughts. By doing so, the SPD helps developments respond more effectively to site-specific conditions and environmental challenges.

2.6.7 A key aspect of the SPD is its alignment with the council's climate emergency declaration and its commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2038. The SPD encourages the integration of green infrastructure, such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), native planting and habitat corridors, which not only support biodiversity but also help mitigate climate impacts like flooding and urban heat. These measures contribute directly to the Local Plan's goals for climate resilience and ecological enhancement.

2.7 Neighbourhood plans

2.7.1 There are Neighbourhood Plan for Standish (2019), Golborne and Lowton West (2023) and Abram (2025).

Standish Neighbourhood plan

2.7.2 The Standish Neighbourhood Plan has the following policies relating to Environment:

- **Policy VE10 - Agricultural Use Retention, Enhancement and Expansion**: This policy supports the retention and growth of agricultural activities in Standish. It recognises agriculture as vital for maintaining open space and the rural character of the area. The policy encourages development that supports existing farms and promotes diversification, provided it respects the landscape and local environment.

- **Policy OS1 - Creation of Green Corridors for Access and Enhanced Biodiversity:** This policy promotes the development of green corridors to improve connectivity for pedestrians and wildlife. These corridors aim to link key open spaces, enhance biodiversity, and provide safe, attractive routes for walking and cycling. The policy supports planting, habitat creation, and infrastructure that encourages sustainable travel and ecological networks.

- **Policy OS2 - Local Green Spaces:** This policy designates specific areas within Standish as Local Green Spaces, giving them protection similar to Green Belt land. These spaces are valued for their beauty, recreational value, historic significance, or wildlife interest. Development on these sites is generally resisted unless it is clearly beneficial to the community.
- **Policy OS3 - Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland:** This policy seeks to protect existing trees, hedgerows, and woodlands due to their ecological, landscape, and community value. It discourages unnecessary removal and promotes planting of native species. However, the policy wording was modified during examination to ensure it considers the age, condition, and location of vegetation.
- **Policy OS4 - Amenity Green Spaces:** This policy identifies and protects smaller green areas used for informal recreation and visual amenity. These spaces contribute to the character of Standish and provide accessible green areas for residents. The policy supports their maintenance and enhancement, and resists development that would reduce their value.
- **Policy OS5 - Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment:** This policy has a focus on conserving and improving Standish's natural assets, including biodiversity, landscape character, and ecological networks. It encourages development that enhances habitats, protects views and vistas, and integrates green infrastructure.
- **Policy R1 - Solar Farm Provision:** The policy supports the development of solar farms in appropriate locations. The policy encourages renewable energy generation while ensuring that such developments do not harm the landscape, biodiversity, or residential amenity. It promotes careful siting and design to minimise visual and environmental impacts.

Golborne Neighbourhood Plan

2.7.3 The Golborne Neighbourhood Plan contains the following policies relating to Environment:

- **Policy GLW-D1 - Sustainable Design**: This policy encourages all new development to be designed sustainably, with a strong emphasis on responding to the local character and context of Golborne and Lowton West. It promotes the use of energy-efficient building methods and materials, integration of renewable energy technologies, and the inclusion of green

infrastructure such as trees and sustainable drainage systems. Developments should also support active travel by providing safe and accessible routes for walking and cycling, contributing to a healthier and more environmentally friendly community.

- **Policy GLW-D2 - Natural and Green Environment:** The aim of this policy is to protect and enhance the area's natural environment. It requires developments to safeguard existing ecological assets and deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity. This includes preserving wildlife habitats, maintaining green corridors, and integrating natural features into site layouts. The policy also discourages fragmentation of green spaces and promotes landscape connectivity to support ecological resilience.
- **Policy GLW-D5 - Local Green Space:** This policy designates specific areas as Local Green Spaces, granting them strong protection from development. These spaces are recognised for their importance to the community due to their beauty, historical significance, recreational use, tranquillity, or ecological value. The policy ensures that these areas are preserved and, where possible, enhanced to maintain their contribution to local quality of life and environmental sustainability.

Abram Neighbourhood Plan

2.7.4 The Abram Neighbourhood Plan contains the following policies relating to Environment:

- **Policy GS1 - Local Green Space:** This policy designates several valued open spaces in Abram Ward as Local Green Spaces, affording them strong protection from development. These areas—such as Maypole Wood, Platt Bridge Community Green, Kingsdown Flash, and Victoria Fields—are recognised for their beauty, recreational use, wildlife and community importance. Development on these sites will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, ensuring they remain accessible and beneficial to local residents.
- **Policy GS2 - Proposed Green Corridor**: The plan proposes the creation of a Green Corridor to connect residential areas with key destinations like workplaces and community facilities. The corridor is intended to support walking and cycling, enhance biodiversity, and improve connectivity across the ward. It will serve both ecological and social functions, promoting healthier lifestyles and a more integrated green infrastructure.

- **Policy DES1 - Sustainable Design, Character and Biodiversity:** New developments are expected to reflect high standards of sustainable design, respecting the local character and contributing positively to the environment. This includes reducing carbon emissions, enhancing biodiversity, and ensuring resilience to climate change. Developments should also support wildlife habitats and deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain.
- **Policy REF1 - Reuse and Refurbishment:** This policy promotes the reuse and sensitive refurbishment of vacant or underused buildings, including temporary or 'meanwhile' uses. It encourages development that preserves local character and minimises environmental impact, while ensuring that any refurbishment does not negatively affect the amenity of nearby residents.

2.8 The Places for Everyone Plan

2.8.1 The Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan was adopted in March 2024. It is the strategic plan for Greater Manchester, not including Stockport but including the other nine districts, of which Wigan Borough is one. On adoption, the Wigan Borough Local Plan will sit alongside the PfE Plan, as part of the wider development plan for the borough, and should be consistent with it, in line with the December 2023 version of the NPPF (paragraph 36).

2.8.2 The PfE Plan has a mix of strategic and detailed policies. It has 13 policies relating to the Environment topic area, the key elements of which are set out in turn below.

- **Policy JP-Strat13: Strategic Green Infrastructure:** This establishes a strategic framework for green infrastructure across Greater Manchester, aiming to enhance connectivity between natural assets, improve climate resilience, and support biodiversity. It aligns with the NPPF's emphasis on conserving and enhancing the natural environment and meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (paras 159 and 181) and supports Planning Practice Guidance on planning for green infrastructure by promoting multifunctional spaces that deliver ecological, recreational, and health benefits.
- **Policy JP-S1: Sustainable Development:** This sets out an overarching commitment to sustainable development, integrating economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. It reflects the NPPF's core principle of a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paras 7–11), ensuring that planning decisions contribute positively to the three dimensions of sustainability. The policy is supported by integrated

assessments that mirror the approach recommended in Planning Practice Guidance.

- **Policy JP-S2: Carbon and Energy:** This requires new development to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency, contributing to Greater Manchester's target of net zero carbon by 2038. It aligns with NPPF paras 157–161, which encourage planning for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and is supported by Planning Practice Guidance on renewable and low carbon energy. The policy promotes passive design, renewable technologies, and carbon reduction strategies.
- **Policy JP-S3: Heat and Energy Networks**: This promotes the development of decentralised, low-carbon heat and energy networks, identifying opportunity areas for their implementation. It supports NPPF para 160, which encourages local planning authorities to support renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure. The policy is underpinned by technical guidance and feasibility studies, consistent with Planning Practice Guidance on energy supply and infrastructure.
- **Policy JP-S4: Flood Risk and the Water Environment**: This ensures that development avoids areas of high flood risk, incorporates sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and protects water quality. It is fully consistent with NPPF paras 165–169, which requires planning to direct development away from flood-prone areas and manage water sustainably. Planning Practice Guidance on flood risk and water supply is reflected in the policy's emphasis on resilience and natural flood management. The policy states that district local plans should consider setting more detailed surface water drainage policies to reflect local circumstances (criterion 4) and may and should consider setting tighter water efficiency standards where there is clear local need (criterion 7).
- **Policy JP-S5: Clean Air**: This seeks to improve air quality by controlling emissions from development and promoting sustainable transport. It aligns with NPPF para 192, which requires planning decisions to ensure new development does not contribute to unacceptable levels of air pollution. The policy supports the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan and reflects Planning Practice Guidance on air quality assessments and mitigation.
- **Policy JP-S6: Resource Efficiency**: This policy encourages efficient use of land, materials, and energy, and promotes circular economy principles such as reuse and recycling. It supports NPPF

paragraphs 8 and 157, which advocate for sustainable resource use and waste minimisation. Planning Practice Guidance on waste and minerals is reflected in the policy's approach to construction practices and lifecycle resource management.

- **Policy JP-G2: Green Infrastructure Network:** This defines a strategic network of green spaces and ecological corridors, aiming to enhance connectivity and ecosystem services. It supports NPPF paras 180, 181 and 185, which promote the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure. The policy is consistent with Planning Practice Guidance on integrating green infrastructure into spatial planning and development design.
- **Policy JP-G3: River Valleys and Waterways:** This protects and enhances river valleys and waterways for biodiversity, recreation, and flood management. It aligns with NPPF paras 180–181 and 185, which encourage the conservation of the water environment and natural landscapes. Planning Practice Guidance on water quality and green infrastructure is reflected in the policy's emphasis on multifunctional use and ecological restoration.
- **Policy JP-G4: Lowland Wetlands and Mosslands:** This focuses on the restoration and protection of peatlands and mosslands, recognising their role in carbon sequestration and biodiversity. It strongly supports NPPF paras 180 and 185, which advocate for climate change mitigation and the protection of ecological networks. The policy is consistent with Planning Practice Guidance on soil resources and climate resilience.
- **Policy JP-G5: Urban Green Space:** This protects and enhances urban green spaces to support health, wellbeing, and biodiversity. It aligns with NPPF paragraph 102, which promote access to open spaces and recreational facilities. The policy reflects Planning Practice Guidance on open space provision and urban greening, contributing to placemaking and community cohesion.
- **Policy JP-G7: Trees and Woodland:** This promotes tree planting, woodland creation, and the protection of existing trees, recognising their environmental and social value. It supports NPPF para 136, which encourages the incorporation of trees into new developments. The policy is consistent with Planning Practice Guidance on forestry and biodiversity and contributes to climate adaptation and air quality improvement.
- **Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity:** This requires developments to deliver measurable net gains in biodiversity and protect geodiversity. It fully aligns

with NPPF para 185 and the Environment Act 2021, which mandate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. The policy is supported by Planning Practice Guidance on ecological assessments and habitat enhancement, ensuring that development contributes positively to the natural environment.

2.9 The policy requirements for Environment in the Wigan Borough Local Plan

2.9.1 Having considered the national planning policy and guidance and, where applicable, legislation for the Local Plan on planning for Environment, the existing local development plan that will be replaced by the Local Plan, the wider planning policy and guidance locally across Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans, and both the extent that the recently adopted Places for Everyone Plan both meets those requirements and sets new ones for the Local Plan, there is a strong case for the Wigan Borough Local Plan to include policies on the following matters:

- Our natural environment
- Development and green infrastructure
- Blue infrastructure network
- Nature recovery and improvement
- Chat Moss
- Safeguarding soil resources
- Protecting amenity and the environment
- Land reclamation and renewal
- Low carbon heat and energy
- Development and flood risk
- Flood water storage areas
- Groundwater source protection zones
- Water efficiency in new developments

2.9.2 We have a range of policies for our natural environment and green infrastructure because we want to protect and enhance the aspects of this that are unique to Wigan Borough and its natural heritage. We are ambitious for our record in terms of nature recovery to continue through these policies.

2.9.3 Several policies specific to the water environment in the borough are proposed as we want our communities to be resilient to climate change. Our low carbon heat and energy policy builds on the content in the Places for Everyone plan and our environmental protection policy will help ensure that our communities and the environment are protected from various forms of pollution.

2.9.4 These policies are right of the heart of the contribution of the Local Plan to achieving the Progress with Unity Missions, to break down the barriers that create environmental inequalities in our borough and to help each town and neighbourhood in the borough celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive.

2.9.5 It is not proposed to take forward policies on Minerals and Waste in the Local Plan because they are currently covered by the respective Greater Manchester Joint Development Plan Documents on Minerals and Waste, which are currently under review with the intention of producing a joint Minerals and Waste Plan.

3. Our Environment policies

3.1 Our natural environment

The proposed policy

3.1.1 Policy EN1 covers Our natural environment.

3.1.2 Wigan Borough's natural environment includes internationally and nationally important habitats such as mosslands, wetlands, ancient woodlands and canals, forming part of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area. These green spaces offer vital ecological, social and climate benefits. The policy aims to protect and enhance this network by working with stakeholders and focusing efforts on key areas like the borough's flashes, mosslands, river valleys, canals, parks, town centres and strategic development sites.

3.1.3 The policy provides a clear hierarchy that guides the protection of nature conservation and geodiversity sites, prioritising internationally designated areas (e.g. Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation), nationally important SSSIs, irreplaceable habitats like ancient woodland, regionally designated sites and locally significant areas supporting priority species and habitats. Development affecting these areas must demonstrate an overriding need, include robust mitigation, and be supported by ecological assessments.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.1.4 Policy EN1 is in line with the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance notably Reference: 8-001-20190721 paragraph 1, which state that local plans should prioritise the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, geodiversity and green infrastructure. The policy also meets the NPPF requirement to safeguard valued landscapes and habitats, deliver biodiversity net gain and protect irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland. It promotes the creation of resilient ecological networks and sets out a clear hierarchy of designated sites and supports the delivery of the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

3.1.5 The policy is consistent with policy JP-Strat13, policy JP-G2, policy JP-G3, policy JP-G4, policy JP-G7 and policy JP-G8 in the Places for Everyone Plan.

3.1.6 The content within the policy largely covers the previous Local Plan Core Strategy spatial policy SP5 Greenheart and it will replace that policy.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.1.7 The proposed policy takes a strategic approach to protecting and enhancing our natural environment assets, which is in line with the adopted Warrington Local Plan Policy DC4 – Ecological Network.

Key evidence

3.1.8 Key evidence supporting the content in the Our natural environment policy includes the internationally, nationally and locally designated sites within the borough alongside local nature improvement initiatives, the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy and key messages from our work on the Local Plan including consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and good practice gleaned from other Local Plans.

Internationally, nationally, locally designated sites and habitats

3.1.9 Registers of designated sites and nationally available habitat mapping such as ancient woodland have been used to collate the hierarchy within the policy. They are all shown on our evidence map that sites alongside our policies map.

Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area

3.1.10 Wigan Borough is part of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area. It was established in 2013 and is a landscape-scale initiative to create and restore wetland habitats within the Greater Manchester and Merseyside regions.

3.1.11 The Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area has 3 goals all of which are supported by this policy:

- Nature Recovery: to create a thriving, resilient, and interconnected network of wildlife sites to support nature's recovery in a heavily urbanized landscape.
- Climate Resilience: to enhance the resilience of habitats and species to the increasing pressures of climate change.
- Community Benefits: to improve access to nature for local communities and enhance well-being through connection to the environment.

Greater Manchester State of Nature Report 2024

3.1.12 Greater Manchester's first State of Nature Report highlights the urgent challenges faced by nature across the city-region, reflected in the declaration of a biodiversity emergency in Greater Manchester in March 2022. The report covers trends in the city-region's wildlife and most important spaces for nature, the use of land and pressures on nature, the wider benefits received from nature and people's access to nature and engagement with it.

3.1.13 Wigan Borough reflects the same regional biodiversity decline with notable reductions in bird and mammal populations. However, the borough also shows signs of ecological recovery, including the return of species such as otters, nightjars, and Manchester Argus butterflies in restored habitats like Chat Moss.

3.1.14 The borough contributes significantly to Greater Manchester's nature network through the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve and the Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery Scheme. These areas are key to delivering biodiversity net gain and nature-based solutions in line with the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The report also notes inequalities across the city-region with regards to public access to nature and green space.

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy, 2025

3.1.15 The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a statutory, evidence-based framework developed under the Environment Act 2021 to address the biodiversity emergency across the city-region, including Wigan Borough. It sets out a long-term vision for reversing biodiversity loss, enhancing ecological networks, and improving access to nature for all residents. The strategy covers the period from 2025 to 2035 and applies to all ten Greater Manchester districts.

3.1.16 The LNRS aims to create a resilient nature network by safeguarding and restoring nature-rich sites, connecting fragmented habitats and expanding green infrastructure. It identifies priority habitats - such as wetlands, woodlands, urban green spaces and rivers - and outlines practical actions to enhance them. It also highlights species of concern, including the water vole, hedgehog and swift, which require targeted conservation efforts.

3.1.17 The strategy includes ambitious targets to be achieved by 2035, such as:

- Increasing protected land for nature from 11% to 15%.

- Bringing 50% of Local Wildlife Sites into active conservation management.
- Creating or restoring 1,800 hectares of wildlife-rich land.
- Expanding tree canopy cover from 15% to 17%.
- Improving access so more residents live within 15 minutes of a quality green space.

3.1.18 For the Local Plan, the LNRS provides a valuable framework to inform environmental policies and spatial planning. It supports the integration of biodiversity net gain, landscape-led development and climate resilience into local decision-making. The strategy's mapping of opportunity areas - such as the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh - can guide where development should contribute to nature recovery, ensuring that planning aligns with regional ecological priorities.

3.1.19 The LNRS also complements the borough's existing environmental initiatives, such as the Greenheart programme, by reinforcing the importance of habitat connectivity and community access to nature. It encourages collaboration between developers, landowners and local authorities to embed nature recovery into all aspects of growth and regeneration.

Greater Manchester five-year environment plan

3.1.20 The Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan is directly supported by the policy EN1. It supports the Five-Year environment plan's strategic framework for climate action, nature recovery and sustainable development. It promotes the integration of green infrastructure into urban planning, aligning with goals to enhance biodiversity, improve air quality and increase resilience to climate change. The policy also supports the plan's emphasis on tree planting, habitat restoration and community engagement.

The history of Wigan's natural environment

3.1.21 Wigan's natural environment has a rich and evolving history shaped by its industrial past and subsequent regeneration efforts. Historically, the borough was heavily industrialised with coal mining and textile manufacturing dominating the landscape. These activities left behind extensive areas of derelict land, particularly in the south and west of the borough, where subsidence and spoil heaps were common. By the mid-20th century, much of Wigan Borough's open land was degraded and inaccessible, prompting a need for environmental restoration.

3.1.22 In response, initially Lancashire County Council and the National Coal Board, and then Wigan Council from 1974 along with partners undertook a series of landscape recovery programmes, culminating in the creation of the Greenheart initiative. Greenheart was a large-scale environmental regeneration project covering over 1,400 hectares of interconnected green space. It includes country parks, wetlands, woodlands, and nature reserves such as Bickershaw Country Park, Amberswood Common and Pennington Flash. Many of these areas were formed through the flooding of sunken land as a result of former coal workings, creating unique wetland habitats that now support a wide range of wildlife, including priority species like the willow tit, bittern, and water vole.

3.1.23 Greenheart is not only a conservation success but also a strategic asset in Wigan's planning framework. It forms part of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area and lead to the designation of the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve. It is supported by organisations including Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Forestry England and Natural England. The initiative contributes to biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience and public health, aligning closely with Wigan Council's environmental policies and its commitment to carbon neutrality by 2038.

Wigan Council Our Natural Environment Action Plan 2021-26

3.1.24 Locally, our Natural Environment Action Plan (2021–2026) provides a strategic and evidence-based foundation for policy EN1. It identifies key habitats and species, assesses development pressures and highlights opportunities for ecological enhancement. The action plan sits alongside the council's wider objectives with regards to climate change.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.1.25 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN1 is broadly positive against the health and community, equality and diversity, climate change, water, environmental quality, biodiversity and geodiversity, economy and town centres objectives and broadly neutral against the other 6 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.1.26 This policy will replace in large parts Core Strategy policy SP5 'Greenheart' and UDP policy EV2C 'Features of Major Importance for Nature Conservation and Wildlife Corridors' and related content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.1.27 There is no policies map content in relation to this policy.

Evidence map content

3.1.28 The boroughs Special Area of Conservation, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Biological Importance, Local Nature Reserves, Regionally Important Geological Sites, Ancient Woodland and Canals and Rivers are included on the evidence map as they are not designated through the Local Plan process. The evidence map also includes layers from the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery strategy, namely, the Greater Manchester Nature Network and Land Use Actions that are relevant to the borough.

The duty to cooperate

3.1.29 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.1.30 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers, the council, GMCA, strategic and local partners and local communities through the development management processes, site management and improvement works.

Summary and conclusion

3.1.31 The policy provides a positive and effective strategic policy on the conservation and enhancement of the borough's natural environment, in accordance with national planning policy, and will play a key role in ensuring the delivery of both the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area and the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

3.1.32 It has full support from Lancashire Wildlife Trust who are a key partner. Through consultation, Natural England suggested some minor amendments to the policy to strengthen it further.

3.2 Development and green infrastructure

The proposed policy

3.2.1 Policy EN2 covers Development and green infrastructure.

3.2.2 This policy promotes the protection and enhancement of Wigan Borough's green infrastructure, aiming to improve biodiversity, climate resilience, and community wellbeing. The Council will work with partners to expand tree cover, strengthen wildlife networks, improve access to green spaces and active travel routes, and reduce flood risk—especially in the Douglas and Mersey catchments.

3.2.3 New developments must include green infrastructure plans and long-term management, enhancing existing networks and ensuring connectivity. Major developments are required to submit Urban Greening Factor assessments (or the equivalent) and aim to secure minimum scores and provide maintenance plans. Loss of valuable green assets is only permitted in exceptional cases, with strong justification and compensatory measures. Irreplaceable habitats like ancient woodland are protected unless exceptional reasons and significant compensation are demonstrated.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.2.4 The NPPF requires local authorities to plan for sustainable development, including the provision of green infrastructure to support health, climate resilience, and biodiversity. It highlights the importance of accessible green spaces (paragraph 92), climate adaptation (paragraph 159) and conserving the natural environment (paragraph 186).

3.2.5 The policy is consistent with policy JP-Strat13, policy JP-G2, policy JP-G3, policy JP-G4, policy JP-G6, policy JP-G7 and policy JP-G8 in the Places for Everyone plan.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.2.6 The proposed policy takes a similar approach to the adopted St Helens Local Plan Policy LPA08: Green Infrastructure, which is a good local example covering an authority with a similar natural environment to Wigan Borough.

3.2.7 The Urban Greening Factor element is taken from the Exeter Draft Local Plan (October 23) Policy NE6: Urban greening factor, although not adopted this policy has been highlighted as a case study by Natural England in their GI framework as an appropriate example of a UGF policy.

Key evidence

3.2.8 Key evidence supporting the content in the development and green infrastructure policy includes sub-regional strategies; key messages from our work on the Local Plan including consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and where it applies, good practice gleaned from other Local Plans.

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.2.9 The LNRS aims to create a resilient nature network by safeguarding and restoring nature-rich sites, connecting fragmented habitats, and expanding green infrastructure. It identifies priority habitats - such as wetlands, woodlands, urban green spaces, and rivers - and outlines practical actions to enhance them.

3.2.10 The strategy includes ambitious targets to be achieved by 2035, such as:

- Increasing protected land for nature from 11% to 15%.
- Bringing 50% of Local Wildlife Sites into active conservation management.
- Creating or restoring 1,800 hectares of wildlife-rich land.
- Expanding tree canopy cover from 15% to 17%.
- Improving access so more residents live within 15 minutes of a quality green space.

3.2.11 For the Local Plan, the LNRS provides a valuable framework to inform environmental policies and spatial planning such as our green infrastructure network. It supports the integration of biodiversity net gain, landscape-led development and climate resilience into local decision-making which support the approach taken in this proposed policy.

Greater Manchester Five-year environment plan

3.2.12 The Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan directly supports the proposed development and green infrastructure policy. It supports the Fiver-Year environment plan's strategic framework for climate action, nature recovery, and sustainable development. It promotes the integration of green infrastructure into urban planning, aligning with goals to enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, and increase resilience to climate change. The policy also supports the plan's emphasis on tree planting, habitat restoration, and community engagement.

All Our Trees – Greater Manchester's Urban Forest Plan

3.2.13 The 'All Our Trees – Greater Manchester's Urban Forest Plan' is relevant to the development and green infrastructure policy as it provides a robust, evidence-based framework for enhancing urban tree cover, biodiversity and climate resilience across the region.

3.2.14 It prioritises tree planting in areas of low canopy cover and high social need, and integrating green infrastructure into planning and development, the strategy aligns closely with the council's goals to create healthier, more sustainable communities. The plan sets out a target to increase canopy cover from 15% to 17% over the next decade which this policy will support.

Natural England Urban Greening Factor

3.2.15 The Natural England Urban Greening Factor (UGF) is a planning tool designed to improve green infrastructure in urban environments, although it is voluntary it was designed it to be implemented via local plans and contribute directly to the objectives outlined in the NPPF and the government's wider environmental goals. It works by setting a target score for new developments to achieve by incorporating a variety of green and blue surfaces, with higher scores for more natural, beneficial features. Early consultation with Natural England on proposed policy content was supportive of its inclusion in the local plan.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.2.16 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN2 is broadly positive against the health and community, equality and diversity, climate change, water, environmental quality, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, transport, economy and town centres objectives and broadly neutral against the other 4 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.2.17 This policy will replace in large parts content in Core Strategy policy SP5 'Greenheart' and UDP policy EV2C 'Features of Major Importance for Nature Conservation and Wildlife Corridors' and related content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.2.18 There is no policies map content for this policy.

Evidence map content

3.2.19 The strategic green infrastructure network mapped for the PfE Plan is shown on the evidence map. The evidence map also includes layers from the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy, namely, the Greater Manchester Nature Network and Land Use Actions that are relevant to the borough.

The duty to cooperate

3.2.20 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan that are not picked up by other policies, including Chat Moss (policy EN5), Development and flood risk (policy EN10) and the borough's canals (policy PL6).

Delivering the policy

3.2.21 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers, the council GMCA, strategic and local partners and local communities through development management processes, site management and improvement works.

Summary and conclusion

3.2.22 The policy provides aligns with NPPF paragraph 181 with regards to taking a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of green infrastructure, supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, and public health. The inclusion of Urban Green Factor aligns with national guidance in terms of encouraging measurable green standards in new development.

3.3 Blue infrastructure network

The proposed policy

3.3.1 Policy EN3 covers the Blue infrastructure network.

3.3.2 Blue infrastructure forms a vital part of Wigan Borough's wider green infrastructure, consisting of multifunctional water-based assets identified in policy EN1. Developers must ensure that any proposals near or affecting waterbodies protect and enhance their environmental, social and economic value. A natural buffer zone must be maintained - 10 metres from Main Rivers (or at least 8 metres if justified) and 5 metres from ordinary watercourses - free from development and featuring native vegetation. Proposals should include a management plan for riparian areas to ensure access for maintenance.

3.3.3 Biodiversity must be conserved and improved through Water Framework Directive (WFD) measures such as wetland creation, in-channel enhancements and invasive species control. Developments should also support appropriate water-based leisure activities and seek to open and re-naturalise modified watercourses. Culverting is not permitted and hard engineering solutions are discouraged. A WFD assessment is required to evaluate flood risk and ecological impact.

3.3.4 Crossings and bridges must be justified by transport needs, support active travel, and avoid impeding flood flows, with WFD assessments provided. Where full compliance is not feasible, proposals must present sound planning reasons aligned with other Local Plan policies.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.3.5 The blue infrastructure policy reflects national and regional context by embedding the WFD principles into local planning policy, such as requiring natural buffer zones, biodiversity enhancements and discouraging culverting and hard engineering. It also promotes NPPF paragraph 180 by making efforts to improve water quality and various aspects of planning practice guidance on flood risk, biodiversity, climate change and healthy and safe communities.

3.3.6 The policy also aligns with PfE Plan policies JP-Strat 13 Strategic Green Infrastructure, JP-S4 Flood Risk and Water Environment and JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy

3.3.7 Clause 6 of Core Strategy policy CP17 'Environmental Protection' covers improving water quality and will be replaced in part by the policy.

Key evidence

3.3.8 Key evidence supporting the content in the blue infrastructure network policy includes local evidence commissioned to support the Local Plan; other key reputable evidence published nationally and internationally, and within the borough or sub-regionally; key messages from our work on the Local Plan including consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and where it applies, good practice gleaned from other Local Plans (delete as applicable).

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.3.9 Through the LNRS, Greater Manchester aims to restore and enhance its rivers, canals, and waterbodies to support biodiversity, improve water quality, and build climate resilience. The strategy prioritises making water environments more visible and accessible, removing barriers to species movement, and strengthening ecological connectivity.

3.3.10 Natural flood management is a central focus, with actions such as creating space for water in urban and rural areas and implementing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). These measures help reduce flood risk while supporting wildlife. Efforts also include prioritising the roles canals play for both nature and people, improving habitat quality, and reducing pollution.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.3.11 The Planning for the Natural Environment and Water Toolkit (PNEWT) is a strategic resource developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in partnership with the Environment Agency, as part of the Natural Course EU LIFE Integrated Project. It is designed to help Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) across Greater Manchester and beyond to integrate water and environmental considerations into the planning process.

3.3.12 The PNEWT was used to identify good practice from other local plans, in this case Watford Local Plan policy NE9.3: Blue Infrastructure Network (adopted 2022) is considered a good example, as it focuses on the protection, enhancement, and integration of blue infrastructure whilst recognising the critical role

blue infrastructure plays in supporting biodiversity, flood risk management, climate resilience, and public wellbeing.

Northwest River Basin Management Plan, December 2022

3.3.13 The river basin management plan highlights that many water bodies within Wigan Borough are often heavily modified due to urban development and historic industrial activity. The pressures on the water environment include diffuse pollution, misconnections, invasive species, and physical modifications (e.g., culverts, barriers). The plan also highlights that none of the watercourse in the borough have good ecological status.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.3.14 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN3 is broadly positive against the health and community, climate change, water, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and geodiversity and transport objectives and broadly neutral against the other 8 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.3.15 This policy will replace UDP policy EV3F 'The River Douglas, Canal Network and Other Water Features' and related content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.3.16 The borough's canals are shown on the policies map.

Evidence map content

3.3.17 The boroughs canals and rivers are included on the evidence map.

The duty to cooperate

3.3.18 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan that are not picked up by other policies, including Chat Moss (policy EN5), Development and flood risk (policy EN10) and the borough's canals (policy PL6).

Delivering the policy

3.3.19 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.3.20 In summary the blue infrastructure network policy aligns well with both national and local planning requirements demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainable water management, biodiversity and climate resilience.

3.3.21 It supports the NPPF's emphasis on protecting and enhancing green and blue infrastructure, promoting biodiversity, and managing flood risk through natural solutions. It reflects best practice by requiring buffer zones, sustainable drainage, and integration of water-based assets into development. The policy directly incorporates WFD principles by encouraging ecological enhancements, discouraging culverting, and requiring WFD assessments for proposals affecting waterbodies.

3.4 Nature recovery and improvement

The proposed policy

3.4.1 Policy EN4 covers the Nature recovery and improvement.

3.4.2 The policy requires development proposals that are subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to prioritise delivering gains on-site, guided by the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Off-site provision is only acceptable when all reasonable on-site options have been exhausted or when greater ecological benefits can be achieved elsewhere, provided they are deliverable and aligned with the strategy. A locational hierarchy applies for off-site gains, starting with adjacent sites, then progressing through Wigan Greenheart, other areas in the borough, Greater Manchester, relevant National Character Areas, and finally elsewhere in England. Statutory biodiversity credits are a last resort.

3.4.3 BNG should also contribute to nature-based solutions for climate change, such as flood mitigation and carbon sequestration. To support ecological enhancement, new buildings over 5 metres in height must include built-in swift bricks unless impractical. Additional measures include bird and bat boxes, hibernacula, habitat piles, bug hotels in public spaces and hedgehog-friendly garden boundaries. Maintenance of these features should be incorporated into broader landscape or habitat management plans.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.4.4 The accompanying Planning Practice Guidance outlines the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), now mandatory in England, requiring a minimum 10% gain in biodiversity value through onsite or offsite measures, supported by a Biodiversity Gain Plan. These policies ensure that biodiversity is integrated throughout the planning process and that development contributes positively to nature recovery.

3.4.5 The policy is consistent with policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity in the Places for Everyone plan.

Key evidence

3.4.6 Key evidence supporting the content in the nature recovery and improvement policy includes key reputable evidence published nationally and internationally, and within the borough or sub-regionally; key messages from our work on the Local Plan including

consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and where it applies, good practice gleaned from other Local Plans.

Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery Scheme

3.4.7 The Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery Scheme is a major environmental initiative covering over 1,400 hectares of post-industrial land, including the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve. It is one of 22 pilot projects under the UK Government's Landscape Recovery scheme, part of the Environmental Land Management (ELM) programme. The project is led by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, in partnership with Wigan Council, Forestry England, and Natural England. It is expected that the scheme will enter the formal delivery phase prior to adoption of the local plan.

3.4.8 The scheme builds on over 50 years of restoration following the decline of mining and other heavy industries. The landscape, shaped by flooded subsided coal mine workings, has evolved into a rich mosaic of wetlands, reedbeds, meadows, and wet woodlands, supporting species such as the willow tit, bittern and water vole.

3.4.9 Key aims include:

- Restoring and connecting habitats to support biodiversity.
- Improving access to nature for local communities.
- Using nature-based solutions to address climate change impacts like flooding and carbon sequestration.
- Creating green corridors that link wildlife and people across the borough.
- Demonstrating innovative funding models, blending public and private investment.

3.4.10 The scheme sits within the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area, making it a flagship example of how post-industrial landscapes can be reimagined for ecological and community benefit.

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.4.11 The GM LNRS provides the strategic framework for identifying where nature recovery efforts should be prioritised, helping to ensure that BNG delivers meaningful ecological improvements. From February 2025, it is the only local document used to assign strategic significance to habitat parcels in Greater Manchester, as required by the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

3.4.12 By mapping areas of high ecological value and restoration potential, the LNRS guides developers and planners in locating BNG interventions where they will have the greatest impact. This includes aligning habitat creation and enhancement with local priorities such as wetland restoration, urban greening, and ecological connectivity.

Legislation

3.4.13 The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Amendments and Transitional Provisions) (England) Regulations 2026 came into force on 6 August 2026. The regulations amended the application of the biodiversity gain hierarchy and introduced an exemption for qualifying development on sites no larger than 0.2 hectares where no on-site priority habitat is affected. Policy EN4 should therefore be applied consistently with the statutory exemptions and the different statutory hierarchy applicable to major and non-major development.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.4.14 Dover District Council Local Plan policy NE1 - Biodiversity Net Gain (adopted October 2024) was highlighted on the PAS BNG Basecamp as a good example of an up-to-date local plan policy that covers BNG and includes a local hierarchy.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.4.15 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN4 is broadly positive against the health and community, climate change, water, environmental quality, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and geodiversity and economy objectives and broadly neutral against the other 7 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.4.16 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.4.17 There is no policies map content for this policy.

Evidence map content

3.4.18 The evidence map includes layers from the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery strategy, namely, the Greater Manchester Nature Network and Land Use Actions that are relevant to the borough.

The duty to cooperate

3.4.19 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.4.20 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process, and through statutory biodiversity net gain procedures and requirements.

Summary and conclusion

3.4.21 The proposed policy supports key legal principles behind Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in England which are established through the Environment Act 2021 and amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The policy fully supports the requirements within paragraph 180 of the NPPF for minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains.

3.5 Chat Moss

The proposed policy

3.5.1 Policy EN5 covers the Chat Moss.

3.5.2 The area of Chat Moss in Wigan will be safeguarded and enhanced as a vital part of Greater Manchester's strategic green infrastructure, contributing to a wider lowland wetland network that extends into Salford and Warrington. The focus is on restoring peatland habitats within the Risley, Holcroft & Chat Moss National Nature Reserve, strengthening ecological connectivity and supporting the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

3.5.3 Public access will be improved through high-quality routes for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding, designed to connect communities while remaining compatible with nature conservation goals. This includes avoiding adverse impacts on the Manchester Mosses Special Areas of Conservation. Visitor facilities, such as those at Moss Side Farm, will be enhanced to support recreation and environmental education.

3.5.4 The area's role in carbon storage and sequestration will be protected and strengthened to support climate resilience. The policy also aims to retain the tranquil, open character and natural darkness of the landscape, restore peat hydrology linked to Glaze Brook and promote sensitive wetland farming practices. Remaining peat areas will be protected from harmful development, preserving both their environmental and archaeological significance, with opportunities for heritage interpretation encouraged.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.5.5 NPPF paragraph 158 states that plans should actively address climate change by considering long-term risks such as flooding, biodiversity loss and overheating. The content within this proposed policy is consistent with this approach given the importance of Chat Moss to climate resilience and the amount of carbon which the area stores.

3.5.6 The policy supports objectives in paragraph 180 of the NPPF by protecting and enhancing a valued landscape, biodiversity and soils whilst recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

3.5.7 The policy also aligns with PPG in relation to climate change as it will provide carbon sequestration and land-based climate mitigation it

also supports green infrastructure through a multifunctional landscape that supports nature, access, and climate resilience.

3.5.8 The proposed policy is consistent with Policy JP-G4: Lowland Wetlands and Mosslands in the PfE Plan.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.5.9 The proposed policy on Chat Moss is largely influenced by policy GI2: Chat Moss within the Salford Local Plan: Development Management Policies and Designations (adopted 2023). The policy developed by Salford Council was discussed through engagement on their local plan with a view to Wigan Council taking forward a similar approach in our local plan. As proposed, the Chat Moss designation forms a contiguous area with that in Salford and the policy content is in line with Salford Council's albeit with spatial specifics that relate to the Wigan Borough area of Chat Moss.

Key evidence

3.5.10 Key evidence supporting the content in the Chat Moss policy includes local evidence commissioned to support the Local Plan; other key reputable evidence published nationally and internationally, and within the borough or sub-regionally; key messages from our work on the Local Plan including consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and where it applies, good practice gleaned from other Local Plans (delete as applicable).

Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area (NIA)

3.5.11 The proposed policy directly supports the objectives of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area given its focus on habitat restoration and ecological connectivity, particularly given the importance of Chat Moss.

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.5.12 The LNRS aims to create a resilient nature network by safeguarding and restoring nature-rich sites, connecting fragmented habitats, and expanding green infrastructure. It identifies priority habitats—such as lowland raised bog which is extensive within the Chat Moss area—and outlines practical actions to enhance them.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.5.13 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established

in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN5 is broadly positive against the health and community, climate change, water, environmental quality, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, land and soil, transport and economy objectives and broadly neutral against the other 5 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.5.14 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.5.15 The area designated as Chat Moss is shown on the policies map.

Evidence map content

3.5.16 There is no evidence map content for this policy.

The duty to cooperate

3.5.17 The Chat Moss area by definition is a strategic cross-boundary issue as it connects into Salford and Warrington. There are however no matters of concern related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.5.18 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers, the council GMCA, strategic and local partners and local communities through development management processes, site management and improvement works.

Summary and conclusion

3.5.19 The policy aligns with the and supports the NPPF's emphasis on conserving and enhancing biodiversity by promoting peatland restoration, nature conservation, and ecological connectivity under paragraph 180. It also contributes to the creation of coherent ecological networks and supports the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as encouraged by national policy and guidance. The policy supports NPPF paragraph 158 by promoting peat restoration to reduce carbon emissions and improve climate resilience. This is consistent with PPG advice on using land use planning to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The policy also take account of paragraph 196 of the NPPF by conserving the tranquil character and archaeological significance of Chat Moss.

3.6 Safeguarding soil resources

The proposed policy

3.6.1 Policy EN6 covers the Safeguarding soil resources.

3.6.2 New development should protect valuable soil resources, particularly the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2, and 3a), preserving its long-term potential for future generations unless there are overriding reasons not to. Where development occurs on such land, it must be supported by a soil handling plan and a sustainable soil management strategy, informed by detailed soil surveys. Additionally, peat and wetland soils must be safeguarded due to their high environmental value and role in carbon storage and biodiversity.

3.6.3 To support more sustainable soil management, the council encourages the use of fixed facilities for the temporary relocation of clean, natural soil. This approach helps reduce the environmental impact of development and supports the reuse of soil in a way that maintains its ecological function.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.6.4 Policy EN6 supports the NPPF's objective to protect and enhance soils as a vital component of the natural environment. It promotes sustainable soil management, minimises soil degradation and encourages reuse—aligning with paragraph 180 which highlights the importance of soil quality in planning decisions.

3.6.5 By protecting soil functions such as carbon storage and water regulation, policy EN6 contributes to climate resilience and flood mitigation, supporting NPPF paragraph 158 on adapting to climate change and managing environmental risks.

3.6.6 Policy EN6 reflects PPG on the natural environment by recognising the importance of soil health in supporting biodiversity, ecosystem services, and sustainable land use. It promotes soil conservation during development and encourages restoration where feasible. The policy also aligns with climate change PPG by emphasising soil's role in carbon sequestration and flood resilience. Additionally, the policy supports reducing land contamination and waste PPG by encouraging the reuse of clean soils and the treatment of contaminated soils, contributing to circular economy principles and sustainable land management.

3.6.7 The proposed policy is consistent with policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity in the Places for Everyone plan.

Wigan Local plan Cire Strategy

3.6.8 Clause 1 of Core Strategy policy CP17 'Environmental Protection' covers best and most versatile agricultural land and will be replaced in part by the policy.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.6.9 Blackburn Local Plan (adopted Jan 2024) Core Policy 6 (CP6): The Natural Environment clause 3. This is a good example of a recently adopted policy that covers soils and best and most versatile agricultural land.

Key evidence

Potential for a Soil Reuse and Storage System in England

3.6.10 This study was undertaken by Lancaster University in collaboration with the Environment Agency. The study introduces the concepts of soil hotels (temporary storage for clean, reusable soils) and soil hospitals (facilities for treating contaminated soils and manufacturing improved soil products). The findings of the study directly support the objectives of policy EN6, which seeks to:

- Protect and enhance soil health during development.
- Minimise soil loss and degradation, especially from construction activities.
- Promote sustainable soil management practices, including reuse and restoration.

3.6.11 The study underlines the importance of treating soil as a non-renewable resource and provides practical models—like soil hotels and hospitals—that could be adopted locally which the policy supports. The study also aligns with the policy's emphasis on carbon sequestration, flood mitigation and biodiversity, reinforcing the policy's role in climate resilience and environmental stewardship.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.6.12 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN6 is broadly positive against the climate change, water, environmental quality, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and

geodiversity and land and soil objectives and broadly neutral against the other 8 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.6.13 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.6.14 There is no policies map content for this policy.

Evidence map content

3.6.15 There is no evidence map content for this policy.

The duty to cooperate

3.6.16 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.6.17 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.6.18 In summary the proposed policy takes a positive and proactive approach towards protecting and sustainably managing soil resources in Wigan Borough in line with national policy and guidance whilst supporting emerging new concepts that fully take account of our soils as a valued resource.

3.7 Protecting amenity and the environment

The proposed policy

3.7.1 Policy EN7 covers Protecting amenity and the environment.

3.7.2 The policy ensures that new development does not result in unacceptable levels of pollution, either individually or cumulatively, during construction or operation. Developers must assess environmental risks and implement appropriate mitigation measures.

3.7.3 The policy safeguards the amenity of existing and future occupiers by preventing adverse impacts from air quality, noise, vibration, odour, light, dust, privacy, and temperature. It promotes high-quality living environments and protects community wellbeing by implementing the agent of change principle into the policy to ensure that new development takes account of existing noise and nuisance generating uses so that they can remain viable and continue to grow without unreasonable restrictions.

3.7.4 EN7 requires developments to be designed so they do not compromise the viability of existing noise-generating or nuisance-sensitive uses, ensuring that such uses can continue or grow without unreasonable restrictions.

3.7.5 The policy places particular emphasis on avoiding harm to air quality, especially within Air Quality Management Areas. It also requires thorough assessment and remediation of contaminated or unstable land to ensure it is suitable for development.

3.7.6 To prevent pollution, the policy prohibits developments that would contaminate watercourses, groundwater, mossland, or transfer polluted runoff to drainage systems or adjacent sites with pathways to water bodies.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.7.7 Policy EN7 aligns with NPPF paragraphs 180, 189, 190, 191, 192 and 193 by requiring development to avoid unacceptable pollution, safeguard residential amenity and ensure land is suitable for use, particularly in relation to air quality, noise and contaminated land. The policy reflects PPG across several areas including air quality and noise, land contamination and water quality.

3.7.8 The proposed policy is consistent with Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan

3.7.9 The policy will replace UDP policy EV1B – Pollution.

Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy

3.7.10 Clauses 3-5 and 7 of Core Strategy policy CP17 'Environmental Protection' have been reflected in the new policy. Other clauses in Policy CP17 are covered by other proposed Local Plan policies within the Environment chapter and the policy will be replaced by these policies collectively.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.7.11 The policy has been influenced by elements of Warrington Local Plan Policy ENV8 Environmental and Amenity Protection (adopted 2023). Some elements of the London Plan 2021 Policy D13 – Agent of Change have also influenced the policy as a good example of embedding the principle in policy.

Key evidence

Air Quality Management Areas

3.7.12 These are declared on a city region basis by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.7.13 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN7 is broadly positive against the health and community, water, environmental quality, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and geodiversity and land and soil objectives and broadly neutral against the other 8 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.7.14 This policy will replace Core Strategy policy CP17 'Environmental protection' and UDP policy EV1B 'Pollution' and related content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.7.15 There is no policies map content for this policy.

Evidence map content

3.7.16 Air Quality Management Areas are shown on the evidence map.

The duty to cooperate

3.7.17 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.7.18 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.7.19 The proposed policy is in line with multiple requirements set out in in the ground conditions and pollution section of the Conserving and enhancing the natural environment chapter of the NPPF and the associated PPG. It also reflects and covers existing policies in the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan and Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy which it will replace.

3.8 Land reclamation and renewal

The proposed policy

3.8.1 Policy EN8 covers Land reclamation and renewal.

3.8.2 The policy supports transforming underused or derelict areas into valuable community and ecological assets, contributing to regeneration, biodiversity, and sustainable transport infrastructure.

3.8.3 Where contaminated land exists on a site, it must be remediated to ensure it is suitable for its proposed use. At a minimum, the land should no longer meet the legal definition of contaminated under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The council, working with partners, aims to reclaim and renew a series of former industrial and railway sites across Wigan Borough. These sites are intended for future development, active travel routes (walking, wheeling, cycling, horse riding), and/or nature recovery, depending on their suitability.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.8.4 The proposed policy is in line with paragraph 122 of the NPPF which states that planning policies should make effective use of land, and this policy proposes the reclamation of former industrial and railway sites for suitable development with a focus on nature recovery and active travel for the benefit of our communities. Paragraphs 189 regarding land remediation is directly supported and the proposed policy also supports wider NPPF objectives around nature conservation, sustainable transport and healthy and safe communities.

3.8.5 There are no directly linked policies within the PfE Plan for this proposed policy.

Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy

3.8.6 Criterion 2 of Core Strategy policy CP17 'Environmental Protection' covers the reclamation and re-use of derelict sites and will be replaced in part by the policy.

Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan

3.8.7 The proposed policy directly replaces Policy EV1A – Land Reclamation and Renewal with an updated list of proposed sites based on reclamation projects that have taken place since the previous policy was adopted in 2006.

Key evidence

3.8.8 The key evidence for this policy is the list of existing land reclamation sites that have been historically identified and updated for inclusion in the Local Plan.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.8.9 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN8 is broadly positive against the housing, health and community, equality and diversity, environmental quality, landscape / townscape, biodiversity and geodiversity and land and soil objectives and broadly neutral against the other 7 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.8.10 This policy will replace criterion 2 of Core Strategy policy CP17 'Environmental protection' and UDP policy EV1A 'Land reclamation and renewal' and related content on the policies map.

3.8.11 **Policies map content**

3.8.12 Designated land reclamation and renewal sites are shown on the policies map.

Evidence map content

3.8.13 There is no evidence map content with regards to this policy.

The duty to cooperate

3.8.14 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.8.15 This policy will be delivered through project work by the council, partners of communities or by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.8.16 The proposed policy is consistent with Wigan's historic approach to dealing with land reclamation sites in the borough updating the

saved policy from the Wigan Unitary Development Plan. The proposed policy is also consistent with other policies in the environment chapter of the local plan and wider plan aspirations around promotion of active travel. It also further supports requirements set out in in the ground conditions and pollution section of the Conserving and enhancing the natural environment chapter of the NPPF and the associated PPG, alongside policy EN7.

3.9 Low carbon heat and energy

The proposed policy

3.9.1 Policy EN9 covers Low carbon heat and energy.

3.9.2 To help achieve Greater Manchester's 2038 carbon neutrality goal, the council will support development that reduces carbon emissions from heating, including the use of hydrogen and district heat networks in designated opportunity areas. It will also promote retrofitting homes and buildings to improve energy efficiency and enable low-carbon heating.

3.9.3 The council is exploring innovative solutions such as using underground mine water for district heating. It will also encourage renewable energy generation, including large-scale solar and wind projects on urban fringes, and small-scale hydroelectric schemes where feasible.

3.9.4 Battery energy storage systems will be supported in appropriate locations, with environmental safeguards required for installations over 1MWh to ensure safety in case of fire.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.9.5 The policy supports the strategic role of planning to support the transition to a low carbon future. Alongside the policies in the PfE Plan it takes a proactive approach to renewable and low carbon in the borough.

3.9.6 The policy is consistent with both policies JP-S2 Energy and Carbon and JP-S3 Low Carbon Heat.

Key evidence

Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan

3.9.7 Greater Manchester is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2038, and the Five-Year Environment Plan outlines a strategic approach to reduce emissions and transform the region's energy system. The plan focuses on improving energy efficiency in homes and buildings, expanding renewable energy generation (such as solar, wind, and heat networks), and promoting smart energy technologies that allow for better energy management and storage.

Local Area Energy Plan for Wigan.

3.9.8 Key evidence supporting the content in the Low carbon heat and energy includes local evidence commissioned to support the Local Plan; other key reputable evidence published nationally and

internationally, and within the borough or sub-regionally; key messages from our work on the Local Plan including consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and where it applies, good practice gleaned from other Local Plans (delete as applicable).

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.9.9 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN9 is broadly positive against the housing, health and community, equality and diversity, climate change, resource efficiency and economy objectives; broadly neutral against the environmental quality, historic environment, land and soil, transport and town centres objectives; and questionably negative against the water, landscape / townscape and biodiversity and geodiversity objectives.

3.9.10 Criteria 3 and 5 of the policy impact on water. Criterion 3 is about capturing the heat from mine water and returning it underground to repeat the process, which should be neutral on water resources. Criterion 5 is about small scape hydroelectric generation, which could impact adversely on water resources but would be considered against other policies including policies EN1 and EN3 to ensure that there is no adverse impact.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.9.11 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.9.12 There is no policies map content in relation to this policy.

Evidence map content

3.9.13 There is no evidence map content in relation to this policy.

The duty to cooperate

3.9.14 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.9.15 This policy will be delivered through project work by council, partners and communities or by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.9.16 The proposed policy fully supports NPPF paragraphs 157 and the transition to a low carbon future. It also supports paragraph 160 by referencing the Local Area Energy Plan in supporting potentially suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy.

3.10 Development and flood risk

The proposed policy

3.10.1 Policy EN10 covers Development and flood risk.

3.10.2 The policy sets out our approach to flood risk and development in line with national policy. Development must follow the NPPF's sequential approach, avoiding flood-prone areas and ensuring no increase in flood risk elsewhere.

3.10.3 Where required, proposals must show reduced surface water and fluvial flood risk, with level-for-level and volume-for-volume flood storage compensation, preserved flow routes, and additional storage unless justified otherwise.

3.10.4 Surface water discharge must follow a set hierarchy: infiltration systems, surface water bodies, public surface water sewers/highway drains, and finally combined sewers. SuDS should be integrated early and comply with National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)and greenfield run-off rates must be achieved unless impractical.

3.10.5 Major schemes should use multi-functional SuDS aligned with sustainable drainage principles. Masterplans must include holistic drainage strategies and avoid excessive use of pumped systems. Proposals must safeguard access for maintaining water supply and drainage infrastructure to ensure long-term resilience.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.10.6 The NPPF and Planning Policy Guidance contain clear requirements with regards to assessing flood risk in new development therefore this policy does not repeat those requirements. The sustainable drainage section is consistent with the NPPF, PPG and Places for Everyone policy JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment. Reference to the new National standards for sustainable drainage Systems (SuDS) in England, published by DEFRA has been included in the policy.

3.10.7 The policy will replace policy CP16 in the Local Plan Core Strategy.

Key evidence

3.10.8 Key evidence supporting the content in the Development and Flood Risk policy includes local evidence commissioned to support the preparation of the Places for Everyone Plan, namely the Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The policy is also based

on collaboration and consultation with the Environment Agency. The section on replacement flood storage for example is in direct response to an issue raised by the Environment Agency in relation to existing planning applications key messages from our work on the Local Plan including consultation and engagement and the integrated assessment; and where it applies, good practice gleaned from other Local Plans (delete as applicable).

Greater Manchester Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

3.10.9 The GM SFRA was prepared to support the policies and allocations within the Places for Everyone plan. This considered flood risk against the Wigan allocations in the PfE Plan and the wider land supply at the time it was undertaken.

Wigan Flood Risk Evidence Paper

3.10.10 In support of the proposed polices and allocations within the local plan the council has collated flood risk evidence to supplement the GM SFRA, which is increasing in age. The evidence paper assesses up to date evidence on flood risk including updates to the national assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England (NaFRA2) mapping and subsequent updates to the Flood Map for Planning (March 2025) which were not available in preparation of the GM SFRA. This has included an assessment of our land supply with capacities amended where applicable to take flood risk into account. This is covered in our Site Allocation Assessment Reports and our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Collaboration with stakeholders

3.10.11 The proposed policy has been developed through engagement with the Environment Agency from an early stage in the local plan process. Content has been incorporated as suggested by the EA including that on compensatory flood storage which was based on specific issues that had arisen within Wigan Borough through previous planning applications.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.10.12 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN10 is broadly positive against the health and community, climate change, water, landscape / townscape and biodiversity and geodiversity objectives and broadly neutral against the other 9 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.10.13 This policy will replace Core Strategy policy CP16 'Flooding'.

Policies map content

3.10.14 There is no policies map content in relation to this policy.

Evidence map content

3.10.15 Flood zones 2 and 3 from the EA flood map for planning and critical drainage areas are shown on the evidence map.

The duty to cooperate

3.10.16 There are strategic cross boundary issues related to this policy but we are not aware of issues with the policy content itself.

Delivering the policy

3.10.17 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process and through project work by council, partners and communities.

Summary and conclusions, including the test of soundness

3.10.18 The proposed policy supplements the national approach to managing flood risk in the planning system as highlighted in the NPPF and associated PPG. Reference to the National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) is also embedded in the policy making it clear that new sustainable drainage systems should be designed in line with these standards. The policy has full support from the Environment Agency through engagement on its development and aligns with existing flood risk policies in the Places for Everyone plan.

3.11 Flood water storage areas

The proposed policy

3.11.1 Policy EN11 covers Flood water storage areas.

3.11.2 The policy safeguards key flood water storage areas, including Lilford Park Basin and the Wigan Flood Alleviation Scheme, from development that would compromise their function. Development proposals within or adjacent to these areas will not be permitted if they negatively impact flood storage capacity. The policy strongly supports the implementation of flood storage and natural flood management schemes, particularly on Borsdane Brook upstream of Hindley and Platt Bridge, and within the Leigh East catchment, where such interventions are necessary to maintain the long-term effectiveness of Lilford Park Basin and Bedford Pumping Station.

3.11.3 Where development is proposed within catchments identified as potentially requiring flood storage to alleviate existing flood risk, applicants must collaborate with relevant stakeholders to explore flood risk reduction opportunities. They must demonstrate the feasibility of these measures and incorporate them into their proposals unless exceptional justification is provided.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.11.4 The proposed policy is in line with clause b of paragraph 167 in the NPPF which states that local authorities should safeguard land from development that is required, or likely to be required, for current or future flood management.

3.11.5 The policy has been developed in close consultation with the Environment Agency, who own the assets concerned and are leading on identifying future requirements and opportunities for flood water storage.

Key evidence

3.11.6 The two catchments named in the policy as potentially requiring future flood water storage areas have been identified by the Environment Agency, based on specific flood risk issues in these areas and the potential for a range of flood risk reduction measures to be implemented should funding and suitable schemes be identified.

Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram Integrated Water Management Plan

3.11.7 The Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) was developed in response to severe flooding on New Year's Day 2025, which exposed the complex mix of flood risk and water quality issues in Hindley, Platt Bridge, and Abram. Led by the Environment Agency, United Utilities, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Wigan Council, the plan aims to deliver coordinated, long-term solutions through better data sharing, aligned priorities, and integrated action.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.11.8 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN11 is broadly positive against the climate change and water objectives and broadly neutral against the other 12 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.11.9 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.11.10 The Lilford flood storage basin and Wigan flood alleviation schemes are shown on the policies map.

Evidence map content

3.11.11 Flood zones 2 and 3 from the EA flood map for planning and critical drainage areas are shown on the evidence map.

The duty to cooperate

3.11.12 There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.11.13 This policy will be delivered through project work by council, partners and communities and by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.11.14 The policy provides an effective policy with regards to protecting existing flood water storage areas to retain their functionality whilst providing flexibility to deliver and support new schemes in the future and will support delivery of the priorities in the Hindley, Platt Bridge and Abram IWMP. The policy is in line with NPPF requirements and is fully supported and evidenced by the Environment Agency.

3.12 Groundwater source protection zones

The proposed policy

3.12.1 Policy EN12 covers Groundwater source protection zones.

3.12.2 Development proposals within Groundwater Source Protection Zones—specifically to the south of Golborne, Lowton and Ashton-in-Makerfield—must comply with the latest national guidance on groundwater protection. Such proposals should be supported, where appropriate, by a risk assessment and mitigation strategy, masterplanning that reduces risks to the water environment and a management plan covering construction and operational activities throughout the development's lifecycle.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.12.3 There is no specific mention of groundwater source protection zones within the NPPF, but the general principle of groundwater protection is covered in the ground conditions and pollution chapter. The Places for Everyone plan mentions GSPZ in terms of flood risk and water environment but there are no spatial references.

Key evidence

3.12.4 There is no key evidence for this local plan other than the presence of groundwater source protection zones which are designated by the Environment Agency.

Good practice from other Local Plans

3.12.5 The proposed policy reflects a similar policy in the adopted Warrington Local Plan (Policy ENV8 - Environmental and Amenity Protection – section on Water Quality), which also set out requirements for development that is within or has the potential to impact groundwater source protection zones. There is overlap between the groundwater source protection zones present in Warrington and Wigan.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.12.6 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN12 is broadly positive against the water objective and broadly neutral against the other 13 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.12.7 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.12.8 There is no policies map content in relation to this policy.

Evidence map content

3.12.9 The Groundwater Source Protection Zones within the borough are included on the evidence map as they are not designated through the Local plan process.

The duty to cooperate

3.12.10 The Groundwater Source Protection Zones are strategic cross-boundary matters, but no issues have been identified with this policy through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.12.11 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.12.12 The policy provides effective criteria with regards to development within or with the potential to impact groundwater source protection zones. It is in accordance with national planning policy and guidance and will play a key role in ensuring the delivery of sustainable development.

3.13 Water efficiency

The proposed policy

3.13.1 Policy EN13 covers Water efficiency.

3.13.2 The policy states that all new residential developments must meet a minimum water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day, in accordance with the optional requirement in Building Regulations. For major non-residential developments, water efficiency measures must be incorporated to ensure predicted water use does not exceed the thresholds set by the BREEAM 'Excellent' standard, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that meeting this standard is not feasible.

The policy context for the proposed policy

3.13.3 Planning Practice Guidance states that local planning authorities can adopt the optional Building Regulations water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day for new dwellings, where there is a clear local need.

3.13.4 The policy is also consistent with policy JP-S4: Flood Risk and the Water Environment.

Key evidence

3.13.5 United Utilities Water (UUW) has an adopted 2024 Water Resource Management Plan, recommending that local authorities enforce a stricter water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day. This is supported by national planning guidance as valid justification for implementing the optional standard.

3.13.6 Recent evidence (from the April 2024 Future Homes Hub report) shows that meeting this water efficiency standard does not add extra cost for developers. Therefore, any viability assessments should reflect this finding.

The integrated assessment of the Local Plan

3.13.7 The broad implications of the policy for sustainable development are set out in the matrix at appendix B of the integrated assessment (IA) of the Local Plan, against the 14 sustainability objectives established in Table 3.1 of the IA. It sets out that, as an individual policy, policy EN13 is broadly positive against the water and resource efficiency objectives and broadly neutral against the other 12 objectives.

Replacing policies currently remaining in the Local Plan Core Strategy, the Replacement Unitary Development Plan and the Policies Map

3.13.8 This policy will not replace any policy content in the Core Strategy or the UDP, or any content on the policies map.

Policies map content

3.13.9 There is no policies map content in relation to this policy.

Evidence map content

3.13.10 There is no evidence map content in relation to this policy.

The duty to cooperate

There are no strategic cross-boundary matters related to this policy that have been identified through the duty to cooperate on the Local Plan.

Delivering the policy

3.13.11 This policy will be delivered by landowners, developers and the council as local planning authority through the development management process.

Summary and conclusion

3.13.12 The policy provides a positive and effective policy with regards to water efficiency in new development; it is in accordance with national planning policy and guidance and will play a key role in ensuring the delivery of sustainable development.

3.13.13 It has support from United Utilities and, as required by national planning policy guidance is based on sound evidence within the United Utilities 2024 Water Resource Management Plan.