



## **WARNDON PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Open Meeting held at the Lyppard Hub,  
on Wednesday 17 May 2023, at 7.30 p.m.

**Present:** Cllrs K Collier, S Forrest, E Kimberley, D Merriman, J Rudge, A Taylor, Rebecca Lashley (Worcestershire County Council)

**In attendance:** the Clerk, twelve members of the public

**Apologies** were received from: Cllrs L Hodgson, S Hodgson

Cllr Rudge introduced and welcomed Rebecca Lashley to the meeting.

### **Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy**

Rebecca Lashley, Environmental Projects Officer, Strategic planning team at Worcestershire County Council addressed the meeting on 'Restoring and enhancing Worcestershire's natural environment with Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity Net Gain and a Local Nature Recovery Strategy'.

#### **How can we design good green infrastructure?**

The National Green Infrastructure Framework was launched in January 2023 by Natural England outlining the following:

- The Benefit Principles: why GI should be provided
- The Descriptive Principles: what good GI looks like
- The Process Principles: how to plan, design and nurture green infrastructure best practice standards for:
  - Accessible Greenspace
  - Urban Nature Recovery
  - Urban Greening Factor
  - Urban Tree Canopy Cover

(A Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide is available at:  
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>)

## **Green Infrastructure in policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework focusses on:

- Conservation and enhancement of green infrastructure
- Enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure Ensuring that risks (*related to the impacts of climate change*) can be managed, including through the planning of green infrastructure
- Taking a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of green infrastructure
- Planning policies and decisions which should sustain and contribute towards green infrastructure provision and enhancement

At local level, Local Planning Policy e.g., *South Worcestershire Development Plan*) policies give a % of land area that developers must dedicate to GI.

The Worcestershire GI Strategy review consultation ran from 23 January to 6 March 2023, and a summary of consultation responses will be published in June, prior to the publication of a revised strategy in the Autumn.

In brief, the Strategy:

- Takes the principles set at an England level; and gives them a county scale context
- Sets out why GI should be delivered in Worcestershire and asks what are the benefits for the environment and economy
- Provides guidance on what GI should look like in Worcestershire - the priorities for types of GI and its scale
- Advocates for how GI should be delivered in Worcestershire - site-level GI concept plans and masterplans

Environmental Character Areas - Landscape Character - Biodiversity 'richness' - Historic environment value.

In urban Areas: the mapping tool within the National Green Infrastructure Framework provides a resource for communities to map the extent, quality and accessibility of GI within their local area.

An interactive mapping and planning tool is available at:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx>

## **What is Biodiversity Net Gain?**

The Environment Act 2021 mandates that a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity value be delivered via the planning and development process. The BNG Mandate comes into force in November 2023 (and for minor developments April 2024). The practical application of the mandate

at local level will, in theory, ensure that developers will calculate a baseline and uplift in Biodiversity Units which must be submitted as Biodiversity Net Gain Information on planning applications. A successful planning application under this scheme will be marked 'BNG secured' and then held to on-site BNG maximised (with off-setting if possible). Developers will have to commit to a 30-year schedule for habitat creation, enhancement, maintenance and monitoring.

### **Making sure that BNG delivers for nature**

Although still in development phase, Worcestershire's approach is to assess the validity of planning/development proposals which must be ecologically and financially sound. Parties involved must be accountable, and the responsible parties adhering to the following principles:

- Developers to adhere to planning conditions; s106; with approved biodiversity gain plan and habitat condition targets
- Local planning authority will establish biodiversity reporting duty, public consultation and scrutiny
- Landowners will be subject to a Conservation Covenant (conserves natural or heritage features)

Guidance on location and delivery will pay particular attention to the distance between impact and offset, and location within prioritised delivery areas.

### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Introduced in the Environment Act 2021, appointed 'Responsible Authorities' are charged with preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which is a 'spatial strategy for nature and environmental improvement', containing a statement of biodiversity priorities and a local habitat map. It is a cornerstone for delivery of Government's Environmental Improvement Plan - agreeing and mapping local priorities for nature's recovery and identifying practical measures and actions we can take. Natural England will use LNRS's as the basis for delivery of the National Nature Recovery Network. Mechanisms intended to support delivery of the LNRS include:

- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Environmental Land Management Schemes
- Biodiversity Duty on public authorities

Worcestershire County Council will be the Responsible Authority and statutory guidance and funding will be confirmed end April/early May - recruitment for an officer post has commenced. The Government expects to consult on a first draft of LNRS by November with a final document published within 12-18 months - a Draft local habitat map plus accompanying narrative. A stakeholder engagement plan is being developed and. Parish councils are invited to suggest dissemination routes at local level whereby information and communications may reach a wide local audience and encourage engagement in the consultation.

There was a lively discussion on aspects of the Strategy with members of the audience.

## Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Andy Taylor addressed the meeting with an overview of the Neighbourhood Plan from inception to the present. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been a contributing factor in the development of Warndon's plan. The Plan was originally developed to consider what is important to the parish - the relationship between environment, housing and business. The local planning authority needs to decide on a strategy - such as outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan - this will eventually become part of the Local Plan. Originally started in 2016 in response partly to planning application policies which at that time were contrary to what the public wanted (notable those pertaining to the Significant Gap), SWDP policy enabled an understanding of how planning should work and eventually led to a measure of protection against development applications contrary to the Warndon vision and objectives - as originally laid out in the 1988 Warndon plan. The original desired balance between housing, business and nature and biodiversity was retained.

The priority objectives in the Plan now are to:

- protect the green network
- recognise the value of local green space to the local environment and to visitors
- safeguard the rural nature of the parish landscape
- protect the Significant Gap and Trotshill conservation areas

The draft plan was put to public consultation in 2020 and the pandemic affected SWDP data availability and review. Now almost all problems have been resolved. The Significant Gap (mentioned in the SWDP in 2016) was likely to be no longer under protection in 2019, yet by 2021 this decision has been mostly overturned. The Newsletter NP article in December 2022 outlined that conservation areas have been extended, and the Plan's work had helped persuade the City Planning department to overturn a number of applications to build on areas such as Darwin Fields. WCC has acknowledged all the local green spaces highlighted in the Plan.

There is still work to be done on the handover of previously unadopted land to the City authority, whilst developers finish work on bringing land up to code.

The Parish Council is waiting for the Plan to be accepted as part of the Local Plan, which in its turn then helps inform its response to planning applications. The NPPF may affect some of City's planning decisions, The consultancy working on the Neighbourhood Plan has advised the Council to press on and complete work on the Plan.

Cllr Rudge thanked Rebecca Lashley and Cllr Taylor for their presentations to the meeting.

**Date of the next meeting: Monday 5 June 2023 at 7pm.**

*The meeting closed at 9.00pm*

Signed: .....  
(Chair)

Date: .....