



Melton
Borough
Council

Green Infrastructure Strategy

14 January 2025



Planning | Regeneration
Green Infrastructure

Contents

Annexes	3
Acronyms and other terms used in this document.....	4
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Melton local plan	5
1.2 Policies in the local plan.....	5
1.3 Local planning regulations	5
1.4 Green Infrastructure	6
1.5 Green Infrastructure study objectives	6
1.6 Melton Corporate Strategy 2024 - 2036.....	7
1.7 Natural England Green Infrastructure Process Guide.....	8
2. Study Methodology	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Headline Standards.....	11
2.3 Relationship to Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.....	11
3. Green Infrastructure Consultation.....	12
3.1 Public and stakeholder consultation.....	12
3.2 Who was consulted	12
3.3 Results of the Consultation	13
4. Green Infrastructure Partnership	14
4.1 Aims and objectives	14
4.2 Stakeholder analysis	14
4.3 Partnership approach.....	16
5. Green Infrastructure Vision.....	18
5.1 National Policy review	18
5.2 Melton Borough Council policy EN3 review	19
5.3 Melton Green Infrastructure Vision	24
6. Green Infrastructure Evidence Base.....	25
7. Green Infrastructure Strategy	33
7.1 Spatial Strategy.....	33
7.2 Thematic Strategy.....	39

7.3 Listing of Green Infrastructure Strategies	46
7.4 Green Infrastructure Standards.....	47
S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard.....	47
S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard, including quality standards	49
S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard	52
S4: Melton Urban Greening Factor Standard.....	54
S5: Melton Urban Tree Canopy Standard.....	56
8. Integration of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy	59
8.1 Aims and objectives for integration.....	59
8.2 Meeting the aims and objectives.....	59
8.3 Integrating the Green Infrastructure Strategy.....	60
9. Monitoring and evaluation.....	64
9.1 Action Plan.....	64
9.2 New Green Infrastructure Developments.....	65
9.3 Funding	66
9.4 Monitoring and evaluation	67
9.5 Key Performance Indicators.....	69
Acknowledgements.....	70

Annexes

- I Green Infrastructure Consultation report
- II Action plan – a spreadsheet
- III Mapping on-line
- IV Guidance for developer contributions

Cover image: Grantham Canal on the edge of Redmile, as seen from the nearby highway bridge

Acronyms and other terms used in this document

This is a list of acronyms and terms included in this strategy that you may encounter in the appendices or in your further reading.

Action Plan	A freestanding appendix to the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
Biodiverse/biodiversity	The variety of natural life.
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
DCLG, MHCLG	Ministry for housing, communities and local government
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Duty to cooperate	Section 110 of the Localism Act sets out the 'duty to co-operate'. This applies to all local planning authorities, national park authorities, county councils in England, and several other public bodies.
Ecosystem Services	The contribution of biotic nature to human well-being may be unrecognised and undervalued, which results in destruction of ecosystems.
Flood Zone 3	An estimate of the risk of flooding when the presence of flood defence is ignored and covers land with a 1% or greater chance of flooding each year from rivers.
GIS	Geographical Information System(s) (Mapping Tool)
Green Flag/Green Pennant	Nationally recognised quality awards.
Green Infrastructure (GI)	Green infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green spaces, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include streams, canals, and other water bodies, as well as features such as green roofs and walls.
Ha or HA	Hectare.
LNRS	Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Local Plan	Statutory document which sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area.
LSOAs	Lower layer super output areas (LSOAs) are made up of groups of Output Areas (OAs), usually four or five. They comprise between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons.
Major residential and commercial development	For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. Non-residential development means additional floor space of 1,000m ² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. [Source NPPF Glossary]
NCA	National Character Areas are profiles of distinct and recognisable character at the landscape scale the boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape not county or district boundaries.
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework – Central Government document which is update periodically. This is produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
Open space (green)	Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities
PRoW	Public right of way
S106	Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
SEO	Statement of environmental opportunity in the National Character Area.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
Wolds	Generally rolling hills, which consist of open countryside.

1. Introduction

1.1 Melton local plan

Melton Borough Council adopted the Melton Local Plan in October 2018. The plan covers the whole Borough and sets out the development strategy, policies and proposals including site allocations to guide land use and development up to 2036. The plan has been prepared in accordance with legal requirements set out in the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and accords with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.2 Policies in the local plan

Policy EN3 of the local plan defines and supports the enhancement of the Melton Green Infrastructure Network. In tandem with the open space policy (EN7) and others, these policies require a strategic, design-led approach to open space provision to focus on the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in the locations identified in this plan. Prior to the completion of this new strategy, the available evidence for Green Infrastructure in Melton Mowbray was based on the previous strategy, dated 2011, which is out of date and in need of replacement. This new and up-to-date strategy takes account of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, the National Planning Policy Framework, links with Biodiversity Net Gain and other relevant policy developments introduced since 2011.

1.3 Local planning regulations

Section 17 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Regulation 10A of the Local Planning Regulations require that councils carry out a review of their local plans within five years of the plans' adoption. The review should focus on deciding whether the policies remain relevant and effective in addressing local needs. Where policies are no longer effective or relevant, the plan should be revised in whole or in part. The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) emphasises the need to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan and refers to this as a legal requirement.

A Melton Borough Council working group highlighted the following five elements as key topics for the required update of the Melton Local Plan:

- Strengthen the Council's response to climate change within the development plan.
- An increase in the provision of affordable housing.
- Progress with the delivery of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods and addressing the infrastructure challenges.
- Addressing the need for the potential additional employment land that may be required.
- Addressing the aspiration for additional leisure provision.

1.4 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is not simply an alternative name for open space. It is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, both urban and rural. Green Infrastructure can deliver a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. Furthermore, Green Infrastructure provides an opportunity to link with Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Nature Recovery Network, and Natural Capital. The distribution, standard and quality of open space are important to the Green Infrastructure network. For that reason, the Council has commissioned an updated Borough-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan which takes account of and references relevant aspects of the Melton Borough Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.

1.5 Green Infrastructure study objectives

- a. A review and assessment of the existing green infrastructure assets within Melton Borough, their coherence as a network and what benefits they deliver.
- b. Any lessons from the outcomes of earlier green infrastructure strategy work.
- c. Recommended objectives and priorities for the green infrastructure network including creating and enhancing links between open spaces.
- d. Forecast demands and needs on the network arising from population and other changes.
- e. Potential enhancements to the network.
- f. Implications of any emerging output from the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- g. Implications of Green Infrastructure strategies and assets in adjoining local authority areas.
- h. Links to and implications of other council strategies/evidence, including those on open space, sports pitches and flooding.
- i. Advice on the achievement of multiple objectives and uses of Green Infrastructure including, but not limited to leisure, biodiversity, transport, climate change mitigation and adaptation, tree planting, visual amenity, health and water management.
- j. A review and update of policy EN3 and related policies of the Melton Local Plan taking account of local evidence and the principles and standards in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework.
- k. Advice on the relationship between Biodiversity Net Gain and the provision of green infrastructure in Melton.
- l. An Action Plan for the enhancement, provision and protection of Green Infrastructure.

1.6 Melton Corporate Strategy 2024 - 2036

The Melton Corporate Strategy is based around an eight-point vision - Vision '36'¹. Accompanying the vision is a four-year plan for the period 2024-2028. Green infrastructure is linked to Vision 36 key points in the following ways (Table 1). It also contributes to the focus area theme 4 on sustainable growth and infrastructure in the four-year plan for the period 2024 to 2028.

1	A new, single, custom-built leisure centre and swimming pool fit for the next generation, supported by wider recreation and physical activity facilities across the borough.	Green infrastructure can increase recreation and physical activity across the Borough. Research has shown that those commencing exercise out of doors have lower dropout rates than those using leisure centres and indoor facilities.
2	Greater access to healthcare services, increasing the availability of primary care, meeting the needs of a growing population and encouraging activities to improve people's health.	Green infrastructure provides low-cost access to exercise, which has been shown to bring health improvements in the areas of mental health, some cancers, and healthy ageing.
3	More sustainable homes that meet the needs of our communities are supported by the right infrastructure and facilities, including the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) and adequate school places.	Being close to nature, living, and having access to green infrastructure improved property values and reduced the time that rental properties are vacant. Additionally, sustainable homes from access to local greenspaces for play and recreation.
4	High-quality homes across all tenures are supported by accountable and enabling landlord services.	High quality homes are normally situated in verdant neighbourhoods.
5	A bustling, vibrant and regenerated town centre, recognised as a regional destination, and supported by a thriving tourism sector.	In combination with town centre efforts, the Melton Country Park is a tourist draw.
6	Cherish and celebrate our villages and rural heritage, delivering on the Rural Capital of Food and maximising investment in our waterways, canals, walkways and green infrastructure.	As stated in this key point, green infrastructure is an opportunity to secure new investment for waterways, canals and walkways.
7	Harnessed new technologies, diversifying our business base, and securing more high skilled, higher paying jobs, creating a brighter future for young people.	Green infrastructure is a field of increasing employment opportunities notably in relation to sustainable design, such as landscaping
8	Be recognised as clean, green, and attractive; well on our way to becoming a net zero borough.	Well-designed green infrastructure can contribute to climate change adaptation and building resilience. Soils, water bodies and trees are carbon sinks.

Table 1 | Green infrastructure can contribute to all aspects of the Melton Borough Council corporate strategy 2024 to 2036.

¹ <https://www.melton.gov.uk/your-council/corporate-strategy/>

1.7 Natural England Green Infrastructure Process Guide

This strategy has been developed using the Natural England Green Infrastructure framework². A process guide has been produced by Natural England which sets out how to develop and implement green infrastructure policies and strategies. For this strategy, version 1.2 (Beta) was used, dated September 2024.

Natural England believes that networks of multi-functional green and blue spaces contribute especially to quality of life in towns and cities. Therefore, trees, green roofs, and vegetation can reduce extreme heat in urban areas; sustainable urban drainage features can reduce flood risk following heavy rainfall, which in turn can reduce costs of climate change for residents and businesses; and hedges and trees around schools can improve air quality, helping to protect those spaces from vehicle exhaust emissions.

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework helps local planning authorities, developers, and communities work in partnership to enhance existing green spaces and plan high-quality, nature-rich networks within and around residential and other developments. It offers an integrated approach to planning and design; many green infrastructure features can count towards Biodiversity Net Gain, and the nature networks created to support the growth of the National Nature Recovery Network.



Figure 1| The characteristic landscape of the Borough of Melton. The Leicestershire Wolds near Croxton Kerrial show a rolling landscape with hedgerows and trees, which can be described as 'quintessentially English'.

² designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/greeninfrastructure/home.aspx

2. Study Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The Natural England Green Infrastructure Process Guide³ sets out six steps to develop green infrastructure strategies and policies to integrate into local plans for the benefit of people and nature. It is intended to be used alongside the other components of the Green Infrastructure Framework- the Principles, Standards, Planning and Design Guide, Green Infrastructure Mapping Database and case studies. The Green Infrastructure principles developed by Natural England are shown in Figure 2 and the six-stage process to develop green infrastructure strategies and local policy is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 2 | The five descriptive principles are shown in the orange circles and set out the attributes of good green infrastructure and the five process principles are shown in the green circles showing how to do good green infrastructure.

³ designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/process-guide-and-journeys-2024/Green%20Infrastructure%20Framework%20Process%20Guide%20for%20Local%20Planning%20Authorities.pdf

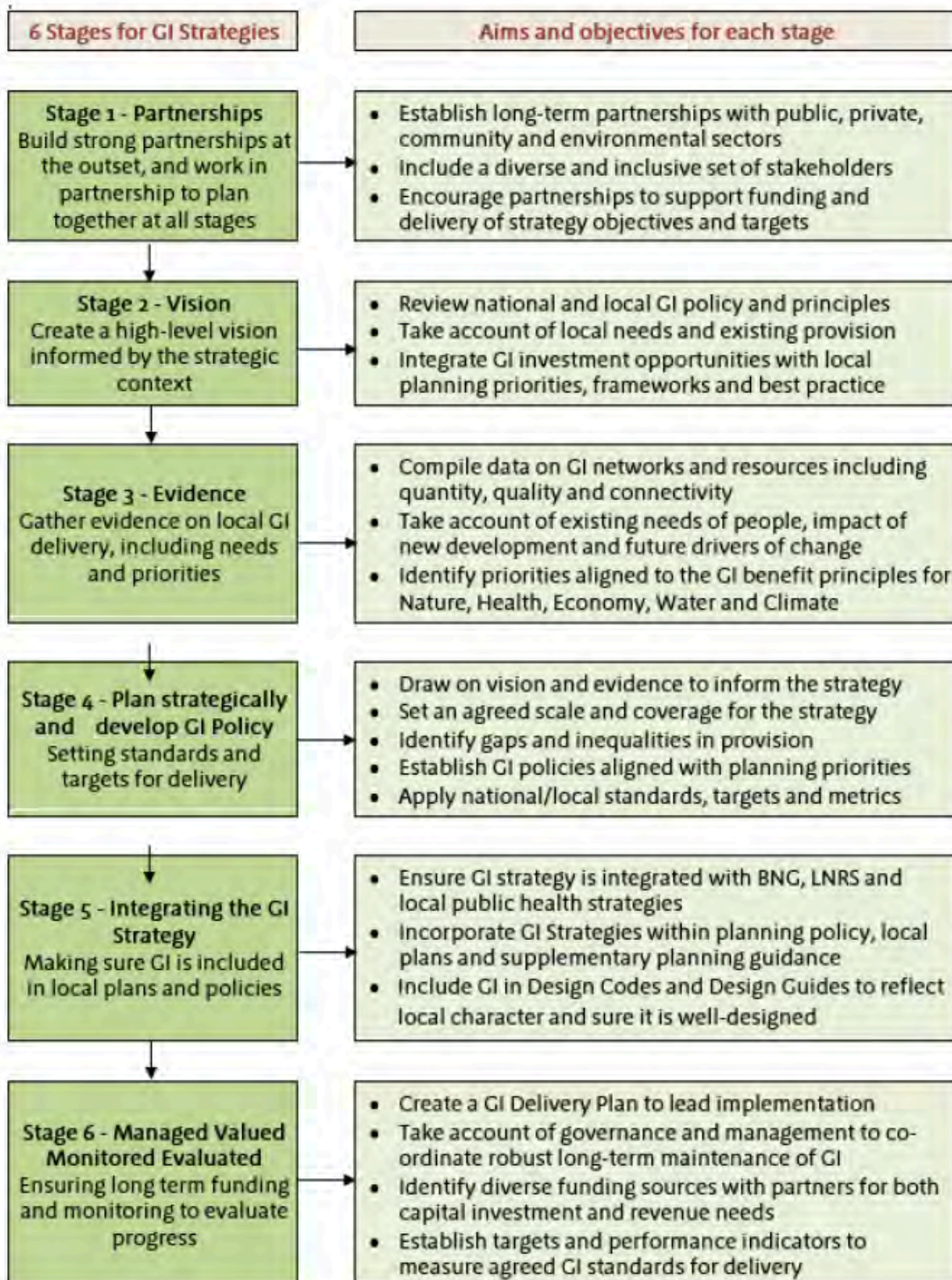


Figure 3 | An overview of the six-stage process to use the green infrastructure framework. These six stages have been used in the preparation of the Melton Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy.

2.2 Headline Standards

Headline standards are a central component of the Green Infrastructure Framework. As described above, they have been developed based on the principles set out by Natural England. The five headline standards are as follows.

- S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard.
- S2: Accessible Green Space Standard.
- S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard.
- S4: Urban Greening Factor Standard.
- S5: Urban Tree Canopy Standard.

2.3 Relationship to Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The importance of Green Infrastructure is reflected in Government policies and plans. For example these may comprise strategic policies for Green Infrastructure in the National Planning Policy Framework and action to improve access to nature, in the Environmental Improvement Plan (HM Government 2023). Green Infrastructure can help to deliver the enhanced biodiversity duty set out in the Environment Act (HM Government, 2021), Biodiversity Net Gain (Defra, 2023) and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Defra, 2023) priorities, especially in urban areas.

The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework complements the provision of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG sets a minimum requirement for new developments to achieve 10% net gain for biodiversity. Using the Green Infrastructure Framework can deliver additional benefits to habitats. BNG is mandatory having been introduced by the Environment Act 2021 (HM Government 2021).

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are new locally led, mandatory spatial strategies for nature required by the Environment Act 2021 (HM Government, 2021). LNRS are intended to drive more coordinated, practical and focussed action to help nature. Green Infrastructure strategies and policies can be used to inform LNRS and vice versa. The Borough of Melton falls within the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy and accordingly, the draft documents and mapping of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS have been used in the preparation of the Melton Borough Green infrastructure strategy and its associated action plan.

3. Green Infrastructure Consultation

3.1 Public and stakeholder consultation

A public and stakeholder consultation was held in Melton Mowbray from 26 July to 6 September 2024. The consultation was preceded by a related consultation for the Melton Open Space Strategy & Action Plan 2024, which was held from 10 January to 4 March 2024. This Green Infrastructure consultation was primarily web-based, with paper-based response forms available upon request through Melton Borough Council Parkside Office reception, the Melton Mowbray Library, the Bottesford Library, and local Parish Council offices.

The consultation was open to all members of the public. A selection of relevant stakeholders, including statutory stakeholders, was approached directly using e-mail communication. The aim of the consultation was to uncover the lived experiences of Green Infrastructure in the Borough of Melton, giving residents, local businesses, community groups and other interested parties an opportunity to share their views and thoughts. The outcomes of the consultation are complementary to the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan developed by the authors.

3.2 Who was consulted

The consultation was open to all members of the public. A selection of relevant stakeholders, including statutory stakeholders, was approached directly by means of e-mail. A total of 55 unique responses were received (Table 2).

Type	Number
Digital form	53
Printed form	0
E-mail	2
E-mail addendum to submitted form	1
Total unique responses received	55

Table 2 | Number of respondents by type of response to the Green Infrastructure consultation.

The respondents represent a variety of relationships with the borough, different age groups and genders, with almost all respondents residing in and around the Borough. It was noted that a respondent can have multiple relationships with the Borough, such as residents who also work in the Borough. It was also noted that three respondents indicated 'other'; that is two non-departmental public bodies, as well as a utility provider, landowner, and blue infrastructure funder.

3.3 Results of the Consultation

Although not everyone in the community may be aware of the definition of Green Infrastructure, all respondents nevertheless indicated their appreciation of it and recognised its importance. In particular, respondents recorded their care and concern for wildlife and the environment, and the related pressure on them precipitated by new development. Respondents also pointed out the need for better connectivity: green corridors for wildlife and better infrastructure for people, including rights of way, public footpaths, cycle infrastructure and bridleways. Melton Borough Council has a clear mandate from respondents, with an expectation to work together closely with local government and specific partners for specific projects, such as applicable charitable organisations, corporate sponsors, landowners, local community groups, volunteers, and wildlife organisations and trusts. Both residents and other stakeholders want to be engaged in collaborations with these actors and ask for public engagement, volunteering opportunities as well as to be clearly informed during the process. See Figure 4 for the distribution of responses secured by the consultation exercise.

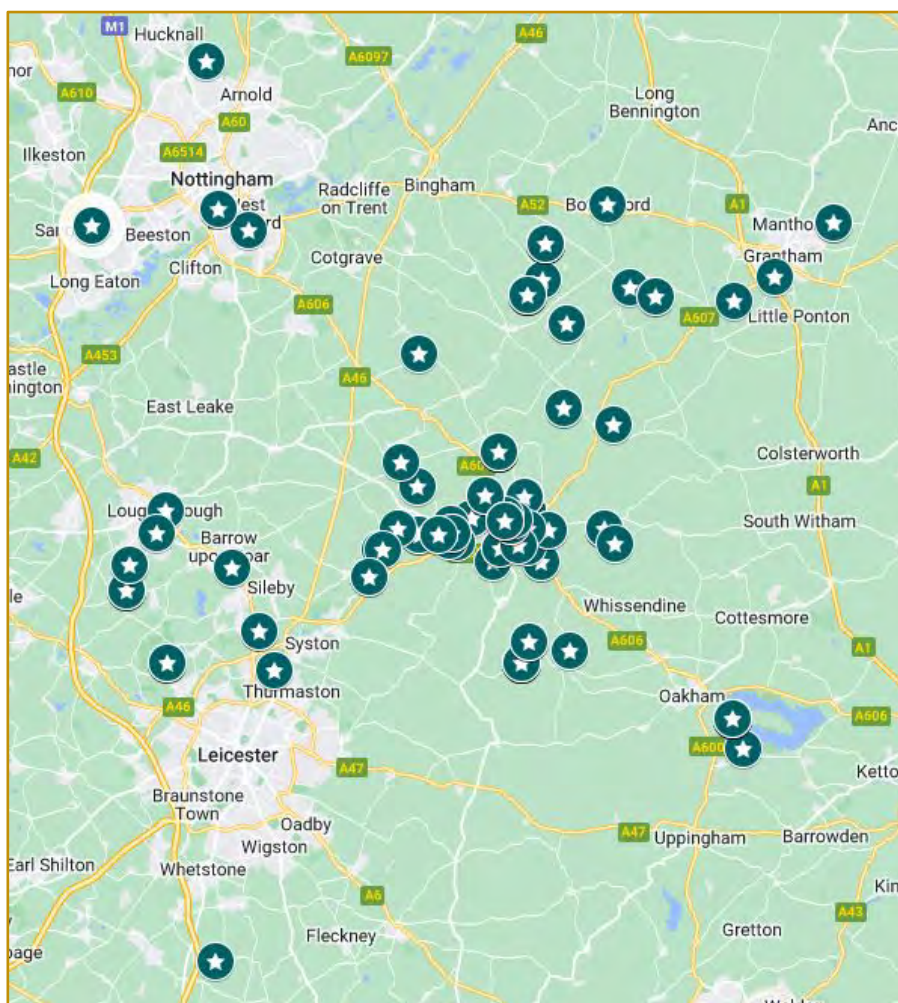


Figure 4 | [Interactive map](#) indicating green infrastructure in and around the borough most special to consulted respondents

4. Green Infrastructure Partnership

4.1 Aims and objectives

There are four aims and objectives to be met through the Natural England Green Infrastructure framework. These are:

- Establish long-term partnerships with public, private, community and environmental sectors.
- Include a diverse and inclusive set of stakeholders.
- Engage communities and user groups in a robust and inclusive way to enable them to be influential in the creation of the strategy.
- Encourage partnerships to support short and long-term funding and delivery of strategy objectives and targets.

4.2 Stakeholder analysis

The consultation undertaken for the preparation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan has revealed that there is community interest and support for Green Infrastructure. Whilst it is encouraging that this support exists, it is also apparent there is significant confusion over the difference between Green Infrastructure and open green space. This infers that there is an ongoing need for education on the concept of Green Infrastructure and its importance in terms of wider environmental, social and economic development within the Borough. In particular, one key group of stakeholders that could make a difference, are those involved in **children and adult education** who can incorporate Green Infrastructure into their curriculums, but who themselves may need upskilling.

Recommendation 4.2.1: there is a need for education to raise awareness of the concept of Green Infrastructure throughout the community. A focus on adult and children's education is advocated alongside up skilling those in local government and other public sector organisations in the concept and practice of green infrastructure.

The Borough of Melton is principally a rural local authority and progress on Green Infrastructure connectivity/network cannot be disaggregated from the way land is managed in the urban fringe and in the wider countryside. Hence, in the Borough of Melton those who manage land including **countryside estates, rural businesses, farmers and other landowners, including riparian and forest owners** are and will remain key GI stakeholders. These groups have strong representational structures, including the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land & Business Association (CLA) and the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA). These representative organisations are in regular contact with their members and produce newsletters and other communications.

Recommendation 4.2.2: the Borough of Melton is a substantial rural local authority, hence the engagement of those responsible for the management of rural landscape is a key stakeholder for the rollout and enhancement of Green Infrastructure. Efforts should be made by the Borough Council and other public sector partners to reach out to this community to promote Green Infrastructure creation and the enhancement of existing resources.

Public sector resources for Green Infrastructure continue to be limited in the short and medium term, so **funding partnerships are essential**. Green Infrastructure interfaces closely with the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy partnership as well as with community groups operating at the local level within the Borough of Melton. For the most part, funding from sources such as the National Lottery and any prospect of securing central government challenge funds will require a partnership approach. The role of **environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) and others through their regional activities can also be a pathway to future funding, e.g.** the Canals and Rivers Trust.

Recommendation 4.2.3: the Borough of Melton Council should pursue partnerships that develop funding proposals for Green Infrastructure creation and enhancement. The Borough Council should not only support such partnerships in the locality but also be a strong advocate and possible leader in making funding applications.

Communities of interest include those who regularly use Green Infrastructure assets and are key stakeholder groups. There are representative groups (such as the British Horse Society or the Ramblers Association), nature-focused bodies (such as RSPB) and others who take on a more campaigning role (such as the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England - CPRE). An important community of interest is considered to be organisations **promoting health and well-being** either from within the National Health Service (such as GP practices) or voluntary organisations promoting a healthier lifestyle. Commercial healthcare providers and health insurers offering health services have a financial interest in improving members' health, presenting a potential investment opportunity. Therefore, these organisations make natural partners regarding access to nature as well as the physical/restorative role that it can play towards wellbeing. Reaching out to this community can be a time-consuming activity, but equally an important aspect of realising the benefits of Green Infrastructure at the community and landscape scale. It is also the basis of future funding initiatives and should be viewed as an **investment rather than a cost**.

Recommendation 4.2.4: Whilst aspirational, there is a strong case to appoint a dedicated Green Infrastructure officer for Melton Borough Council within the planning service. An appointment would be justified by providing a bridge to the community and stakeholders in line with the Council's strategic objective of being "connected with and led by our community (outward)" and would enable partnerships to be developed and funding applications made to for example the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

4.3 Partnership approach

Section 3.1.3 of the Green Infrastructure Framework Process Guide suggests that it is important to make the most of existing partnerships. In addition, it is also recommending the need to carry out a stakeholder analysis, by establishing and agreeing terms of reference and ensuring that sufficient resources are available to build and maintain the partnership.

The Borough of Melton, which is a small local authority, logically has limited human and financial resources. In view of this, it is essential that Melton Borough Council maximise the benefits of existing partnerships. Furthermore, by its very existence green infrastructure does not stop at local authority boundaries because it frequently forms part of larger networks at the county or regional scale. Local authorities have a duty to cooperate, and green infrastructure is therefore an important topic. Key green infrastructure assets that cross local authority boundaries have been identified in the spatial strategy and included in this strategy report. This can be discussed within the framework of local authorities' joint work or any duty to cooperate.

Natural England believes that approaching these partnerships to discuss integration and joint working could promote mutual benefits through the efficient use of resources and joint funding to help deliver enhanced and integrated outcomes. There are several groups/forums that the Borough of Melton covers in its duty to cooperate compliance statement. Table 3 shows how these groups could interact with green infrastructure. Note that not all those listed are covered by the compliance statement.

Group or Forum	Green Infrastructure
<p>Members' Advisory Group (MAG) – representation is a councillor from each of the authorities, plus an observer from the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) - meets on a regular basis. Proposals or recommendations of the MAG pertaining to key strategic planning issues are subject to ratification by individual local authorities. Since April 2024, most of the LLEP functions have been covered by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council.</p>	<p>This group is useful in terms of cross-boundary work and securing political-level interest in green infrastructure, including project development and joined-up approaches with other strategic initiatives.</p>
<p>The MAG is supported by a Strategic Planning Group (SPG) made up of senior officer representatives responsible for overseeing strategic planning in each of the constituent authorities. SPG meets on a regular basis. The SPG is itself supported by further officer groups; including the Planning Officers' Forum (POF), which is a formal meeting of Chief Officers responsible for planning and transport services across Leicester and Leicestershire. The Forum provides professional advice to the SPG and is supported by joint officer-level meetings, which include managers responsible for planning and transportation policy within Leicester and Leicestershire.</p>	<p>These groups will be critical for the development of green infrastructure across the County and within the individual Districts and Boroughs. It is recommended that these groups are given the opportunity to discuss green infrastructure on a semi-regular basis as well as when an important issue arises.</p> <p>The consultation on the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy revealed that not all local authority offices are themselves aware of what green infrastructure is hence there is also a case for a briefing for senior officers.</p> <p>The relationship between green infrastructure and planning and transportation at the policy level is</p>

	significant, and senior officers should represent the green infrastructure framework at the decision-making level for larger infrastructure projects such as highways, rail, and energy.
A Task & Finish Group (T&F) of senior officers, who meet every week to work together on the strategic matters including housing, employment, transport and associated evidence studies. The T&F group supports and advises both POF and SPG.	This is a level at which green infrastructure issues can first be raised and decisions taken as necessary to lift them up to the Planning Officers Forum or Strategic Planning Group.
Green Living Leicestershire Working Group considers Climate Change and allied issues from the perspective of mitigation and adaptation.	Well-functioning green infrastructure makes a significant contribution to both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. It acts as a carbon sink and the provision of shade and accessible greenspaces is important for thermal comfort and reducing energy consumption through urban design. This forum could discuss how green infrastructure can be integrated into climate change initiatives within and beyond the Borough of Melton.
Local Nature Recovery Strategy: The Borough of Melton is engaged with the local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) on an ad hoc basis. There is a synergy between the LNRS and the Planning Officers Forum.	The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework stresses the important relationship with Local Nature Recovery Strategies. In the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan the spatial strategy has been closely matched to the ecological and strategic objectives of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS, hence the interface between it and the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy, is important and a basis for partnership working.

Table 3 | Groups and Forums in and around the Borough of Melton who could interact with green infrastructure in the borough.

Recommendation 4.3.1: That green infrastructure, including the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy becomes a regular discussion item for the Planning Officers Forum, the Task and Finish Group and when related to climate change, Green Living Leicestershire. Opportunities to secure funding partnerships for cross local authority projects as well as upward recommendations to the Members Advisory Group should be pursued. We believe that a one-off activity should be a briefing session facilitated by external experts on ‘what is green infrastructure’ and how it can interface with planning. This could take place within the framework of a Planning Officers Forum meeting.

Recommendation 4.3.2: That Melton Borough Council and the other Borough and District Council’s in Leicestershire (including the City of Leicester) seek to hold a green infrastructure ‘event’ every two years to which stakeholders are invited to share their relevant plans and aspirations. Such an event could be enabled and facilitated by a small contract to a suitable consulting firm.

5. Green Infrastructure Vision

5.1 National Policy review

As a first step towards developing a Green Infrastructure vision for the Borough of Melton, a review of policies of relevance at a national level (e.g. the National Planning Policy Framework) as well as Natural England's Green Infrastructure principles and standards was undertaken. Additionally, the existing Melton local plan policy EN3 was reviewed in order to provide a base line for the vision.

At the end of January 2023, Natural England introduced a new **Green Infrastructure Framework** for England based upon the **25 Year Environmental Plan**. On the one hand, the environmental plan aims to leave the environment in a better state than it was before and to make greener, healthier, climate-resilient, distinctive, and thriving places to live, learn, work and play. It includes a commitment that the public should be able to access green space or water, such as woodlands, wetlands, parks and rivers, within a 15-minute walk from their homes. On the other hand, the Green Infrastructure Framework aims to increase the amount of green cover to 40% in urban residential areas.

The Green Infrastructure Framework has the following aims:

- To be a comprehensive plan that seeks to promote sustainability.
- To improve the quality of life for communities.
- To conserve the natural environment for future generations.

The National Planning Policy Framework recognises the vital role that Green Infrastructure can play in addressing some of the most pressing environmental challenges faced by society today. In turn, the Green Infrastructure Framework is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environmental Plan. The Green Infrastructure Framework provides the means to help Local Planning Authorities and developers meet requirements of the NPPF to support the greening of our towns and cities as well as connections with the surrounding landscape as part of the Nature Recovery Network.

The Green Infrastructure Framework provides a structure to analyse where greenspace in urban environments is needed most. It aims to support equitable access to greenspace across the country, with an overarching target for everyone being able to reach good quality greenspace in their local area. From parks to green roofs, and increased tree cover, the Green Infrastructure Framework will make a significant contribution to nature recovery by embedding nature into new developments. Increasing the extent and connectivity of nature-rich habitats will also help increase wildlife populations, build resilience to the impacts of climate change, and ensure our towns and cities are habitable for the future.

Natural England has confirmed that the purpose of the **Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide** is to provide evidence based practical guidance on how to plan and design good

Green Infrastructure. It complements the National Model Design Code and National Design Guide and can be used to help planners and designers, and other professionals to develop local design guides and codes with multifunctional Green Infrastructure at their heart. The aim is to raise standards for green space in towns and cities in increasing the amount of green cover to 40% in urban residential areas and that these objectives may be achieved through the planning system. This will help to inspire the creation of healthier, nature-rich, climate resilient and thriving places to live, learn, work and play.

An updated **Process Guide for Local Planning Authorities** replaces the previous version “Process Journey for Local Planning Authorities (NE 2023)”. The updated Process Guide for Local Authorities sets out a six-stage best practice process for developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy and integrating green infrastructure policies into Local Plans. The Process Guide includes several appendices with further information, guidance and case studies.

Responsibility for Green Infrastructure cuts across various central government departments of which the most notable are, firstly the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which is responsible for environment policy including access to and enjoyment of nature; secondly, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which is responsible for policy concerning urban green spaces; for national planning policy; and for funding the local authorities who plan and maintain many green spaces and thirdly, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which is responsible for policy concerning playing fields; and historic gardens, parks and landscapes.

5.2 Melton Borough Council policy EN3 review

Multi-functionality

Existing policy EN3 (2018) states that in the past, open spaces were often planned to meet a single purpose, such as sport or flood protection. However, it is now recognised that open spaces can frequently combine several functions including:

- Informal recreation and relaxation.
- Children’s play.
- Outdoor sports provision.
- Countryside access and tourism.
- Conserving wildlife habitats and creating wildlife corridors.
- Protecting landscapes.
- Managing water resources and flooding. River corridors identified as functional floodplains are an excellent linkage of Green Infrastructure and can provide storage during a flood event.
- Producing useful products, such as timber, bio-crops and local food.
- Countering the ‘heat island’ effect of urban areas.

Recommendation 5.2.1: The policy remains highly relevant, and the concept of multifunctionality is strongly supported by both practice research and the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework.

Regional spatial

The former 6Cs sub-regional Green Infrastructure Strategy has now been overtaken by new policy and practice; however, elements of the 6Cs green infrastructure strategy remain very pertinent including sub regional Green Infrastructure corridors including the River Wreake. The Wreake remains an important element of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy 2024. The countryside in and around Melton Mowbray is recognised in the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy as an Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zone, and the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy 2011 (now superseded) identifies it as providing the links between the town, sustainable neighbourhoods and areas beyond.

Recommendation 5.2.2: This statement remains relevant, and the important role of water courses is a notable feature of the green and blue infrastructure in the Borough of Melton. The link between Melton Mowbray and its urban fringe remains a key issue in Green Infrastructure connectivity; note however, that almost all urban settlements exhibit limitations when it comes to connections between town and countryside, so the town of Melton Mowbray is not unusual in this regard.

Standards

The existing policy EN3 (2018) employed the Woodland Trust's 'Access to Woodland' Standard as an aspirational element. Following the introduction of the Natural England Green Infrastructure framework (2023) there are now five standards included in the new Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy which are:

- S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard.
- S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard, including quality standards.
- S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard.
- S4: Urban Greening Factor Standard.
- S5: Urban Tree Canopy Standard.

Recommendation 5.2.3: The Woodland Trust 'Access to Woodland' standard is recommended for removal from updated policy EN3, to be replaced by the five standards proposed by Natural England (2023).

Borough Green Infrastructure Network

Existing policy EN3 (2018) stated that a strategic approach to the delivery, protection and enhancement of Green Infrastructure will be taken by the Borough Council working with partners, to deliver new assets where deficits have been identified in the Green Infrastructure strategy and to enhance the following primary Green Infrastructure areas:

1. Melton North and Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhoods, in accordance with Policy C1
2. Areas of Separation in accordance with Policy EN4
3. River Wreake and River Eye strategic corridor
4. Jubilee Way
5. Leicestershire Round Footpath
6. Melton Country Park
7. Grantham Canal
8. The Wolds Escarpment

9. Burrough on the Hill Country Park.
10. Newark to Market Harborough disused railway line.

Recommendation 5.2.4: A new set of Green Infrastructure assets, both spatial and functional, are included in the strategy and recommended for inclusion in the updated policy EN3.

Existing policy EN3 (2018) states that new development proposals will be supported where they retain and enhance important **Green Infrastructure** elements such as:

1. Watercourses (including ditches) and their riparian zones with buffers (free from development or formal landscaping) extending to a minimum of eight metres from the top of the bank (on both banks) of any given watercourse.
2. Woodland, orchard, mature trees, hedgerows.
3. Local BAP Habitats and those supporting local BAP priority species and species in the UK Priority Habitat Species List.
4. Access routes (public rights of way and permitted routes).
5. Existing public green space, including sports pitches, is in accordance with the Playing Pitch Strategy, allotments, and designated Local Green Space.
6. Areas of geological and archaeological interest.
7. Green infrastructure identified in the Areas of Separation.
8. Settlement Fringe Sensitivity and Local Green Space Study.
9. Historic Parkland.

Recommendation 5.2.5: All the above green infrastructure assets are carried forward in the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan 2024, with an additional recommendation regarding point 5 of the above:

Amended point 5: Existing public green space including sports pitches included in the Playing Pitch Strategy, **Open Space identified in the Melton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan including allotments**, designated Local Green Space.

Existing policy EN3 (2018) states the Council will particularly support proposals that contribute towards:

1. The 6Cs Green Infrastructure and Strategic Networks.
2. The Woodland Trust's Access to Woodland Standards.

Recommendation 5.2.6: These proposals are now superseded by this Strategy. Support should be given to Green Infrastructure corridors that extend beyond the borough boundary noting the link with the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Woodland Trust 'Access to Woodland' standard is deemed replaced by new standards in this strategy.

Existing policy EN3 (2018) states that new or enhanced green infrastructure corridors and assets should be as inclusive as possible and look to make provision for more than one of the following:

1. Access to employment and leisure facilities and to the countryside.

2. Physical activity and well-being opportunities for local residents, such as formal sports, are in accordance with the Playing Pitch Strategy, parks, and allotment provisions.
3. Provide high-quality bridleways and walking and cycling links between the corridor and towns and villages.
4. Educational resources for local residents.
5. Biodiversity opportunities include the provision of tree planting, shrubs, and other natural features on all new development sites.
6. Mitigating and adapting to climate change, including through tree planting.
7. Enhancement of landscape character in accordance with Policy EN1.
8. Protection or enhancement of heritage assets and their setting in accordance with Policy EN13.
9. Opportunities for sustainable leisure and tourism.

Recommendation 5.2.7: The basis of this statement remains correct. However, the following amendments regarding the points above are recommended:

Amended point 2: Physical activity and well-being opportunities for local residents such as formal sports in accordance with the Playing Pitch Strategy, and the **Open Space Strategy** including parks and allotment provision.

Amended point 4: Educational resources for local residents **and visitors to the Borough's Green Infrastructure network (e.g. countryside events and countryside interpretation)**.

Amended point 6: It is recommended that the urban tree canopy standard proposed in this strategy is applied equally across the entire Borough area and not limited to the urban areas identified in this and the open space strategy, namely Melton Mowbray, Asfordby and Bottesford.

Existing policy EN3 (2018) states that where new development has an adverse impact on Green Infrastructure corridors or assets, alternative sites and scheme designs that have no or little impact should be considered before mitigation is provided (either on-site or off-site as appropriate). The need for and benefit of the development will be weighed against the harm caused.

Recommendation 5.2.8: This statement remains valid and unchanged.

With regards to areas of separation

Existing policy EN3 states that a number of villages in Melton Mowbray are separated from a neighbouring settlement by only a small area of open countryside which is often subject to development pressure. These areas are highly valued locally and are functionally important for maintaining separation between settlements. The Areas of Separation, Settlement Fringe Sensitivity Study and Local Green Space Study assessed a number of areas of landscape within the Borough. These support the overall principle of preventing coalescence and protecting areas of landscape between settlements. Also assessed were a number of areas of landscape and it was concluded that the following are particularly important in terms of preventing coalescence and protecting important landscape settings and areas of tranquillity:

- between Melton Mowbray and Burton Lazars.
- between Melton Mowbray and Thorpe Arnold.
- between Melton Mowbray and Asfordby Hill.
- between Melton Mowbray and Eye Kettleby.
- between Bottesford and Easthorpe.
- between Bottesford and Normanton.
- between Asfordby and Asfordby Valley.
- between Asfordby Hill/Valley and Kirby Bellars.
- between Old Dalby and Old Dalby Trading Estate.

It is recognised that some development may be acceptable in these areas, provided that the principles of maintaining separation and tranquillity are retained. The study therefore provides guidance for each area. This should be used to inform the master planning of future development proposals and the consideration of planning applications in the Areas of Separation identified above. These principles provide advice about how development can be accommodated in these sensitive locations in a way which maintains the sense of separation, and where appropriate landscape settings and areas of tranquillity.

Areas of Separation (AoS) do not have a defined boundary because their purpose is not to prevent all development within the AoS but rather to prevent development that would result in coalescence and harm to individual settlement character. They are not landscape designations, but rather areas which are identified as being particularly vulnerable to the effects of development.

Recommendation 5.2.9: This is a significant statement from a Green Infrastructure perspective as green infrastructure in its broader sense is a landscape characteristic that can be employed to avoid coalescence of communities. Hence, with regard to the requirement for master planning, it is expected that developers in putting forward proposals **must** consider how existing and new Green Infrastructure can be provided to provide a more permanent and multifunctional landscape that can help prevent the coalescence of settlements.

5.3 Melton Green Infrastructure Vision

A high-level vision for Melton Green Infrastructure has been devised based on a review of national and local planning including existing policy EN3, along with the results of the consultation exercise undertaken as part of the preparation of this Green Infrastructure Strategy and incorporating the breadth of the vision devised by Natural England in the Green Infrastructure Principles⁴. Natural England believes that a clear vision is:

- Informed by relevant policies and strategies and through a high-level evidence review.
- Co-created by the green infrastructure partnership, in a collaborative/partnership-led way, informed by robust and inclusive public/community engagement.
- Identifying the problems you are trying to fix and framing these as opportunities.
- Integrating green infrastructure investment opportunities with local planning priorities, objectives and frameworks.

In developing the vision for Melton several key factors were considered by the Consultants:

1. Aspirational but also realistically deliverable.
2. Existing policy EN3.
3. The rural character of the Borough of Melton with only one large urban settlement (Melton Mowbray) and the principal land use which is agricultural is an important factor.
4. Complementarity with the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
5. Reflecting existing rather than creating new partnerships.
6. Recognising the importance of water (and water bodies) in the landscape of Melton.
7. That important green corridors do not respect municipal boundaries hence the need for cross-boundary working with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders.
8. The social and economic co-benefits of Green Infrastructure.
9. Halting biodiversity loss, improved amenity, improved health and well-being (which is often linked to local access).

Mission statement for Melton Borough Council and partners

To enable every resource (human and financial) to enable the Green Infrastructure Aim to be achieved and whenever possible, exceeded.

Vision Statement

In the Borough of Melton, Green Infrastructure aspires to be equal to other forms of infrastructure (e.g. housing, transport, energy). Green Infrastructure is embedded in the local plan as a key policy which is supported by implementation through a wide range of partners. Green Infrastructure is implemented in a way that maximises ecosystem services and simultaneously reflects our shared responsibility and belief in genuinely sustainable development, nature recovery within a connected and multifunctional landscape.

⁴ designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Principles/GIPinciples.aspx

6. Green Infrastructure Evidence Base

The evidence base for the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy is a combination of activities taken in the preparation of this strategy report. First, national, regional and local policies have been reviewed through a desk study.

6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010)

Key sub-regional objectives were established in 2010 the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010). The 6Cs strategy covered Derby, Nottingham and Leicester and identified important green corridors of which the ‘strategic river corridors’ are described as the backbone of the strategic Green Infrastructure network and the basis for the dispersal of wildlife and movement of people between the urban centres and the surrounding countryside. Of particular significance to the Borough of Melton is the Wreake strategic river corridor. Figure 5 extracted from the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy Volume 1 Sub-Regional Strategic Framework indicated that for the Borough of Melton, waterbodies, existing strategic countryside access routes and a small number of designated historic environment assets are the predominant focus.

A Green Infrastructure for Melton Borough (2011)

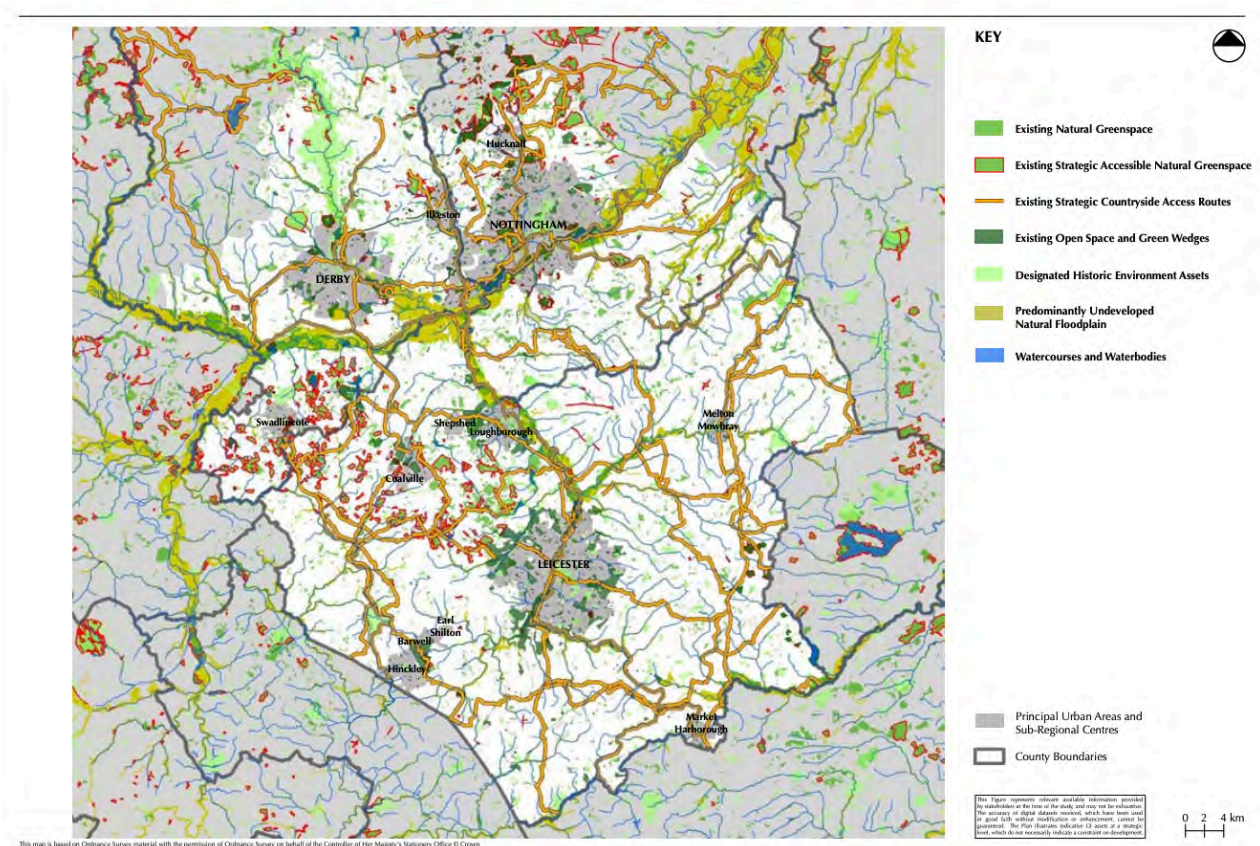


Figure 5 | Borough of Melton extracted from 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy Volume 1 Sub-Regional Strategic Framework

The Borough of Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) produced by TEP identified green infrastructure enhancement areas (see Figure 6 on the next page). Two tiers of enhancement (priority and secondary) were identified as follows:

1. Priority Green Infrastructure Enhancement Areas
 - Burrough Hill Country Park
 - River Wreake Strategic River Corridor
 - Newark to Market Harborough Dismantled Railway
 - Melton Mowbray Country Park
 - Sustainable Urban Extension Green Corridor
 - Grantham Canal
 - Jubilee Way
 - The Wolds Escarpment

2. Secondary Green Infrastructure Enhancement Areas
 - Gaddesby Brook
 - Scalford Brook and Feeder Streams
 - Sproxton to Scalford
 - Edmondthorpe to Thistleton
 - Bottesford and Muston
 - Buckminster Woodlands
 - Watercourse Buffering
 - Woodland Buffering

These are considered as spatial enhancements, except the watercourse and woodland buffering which are functional in nature. Whereas the Green Infrastructure Strategy 2011 is now replaced by the current strategy, it is still useful as background/contextual reading, especially with respect to the descriptions and recommendations that existed in 2011.

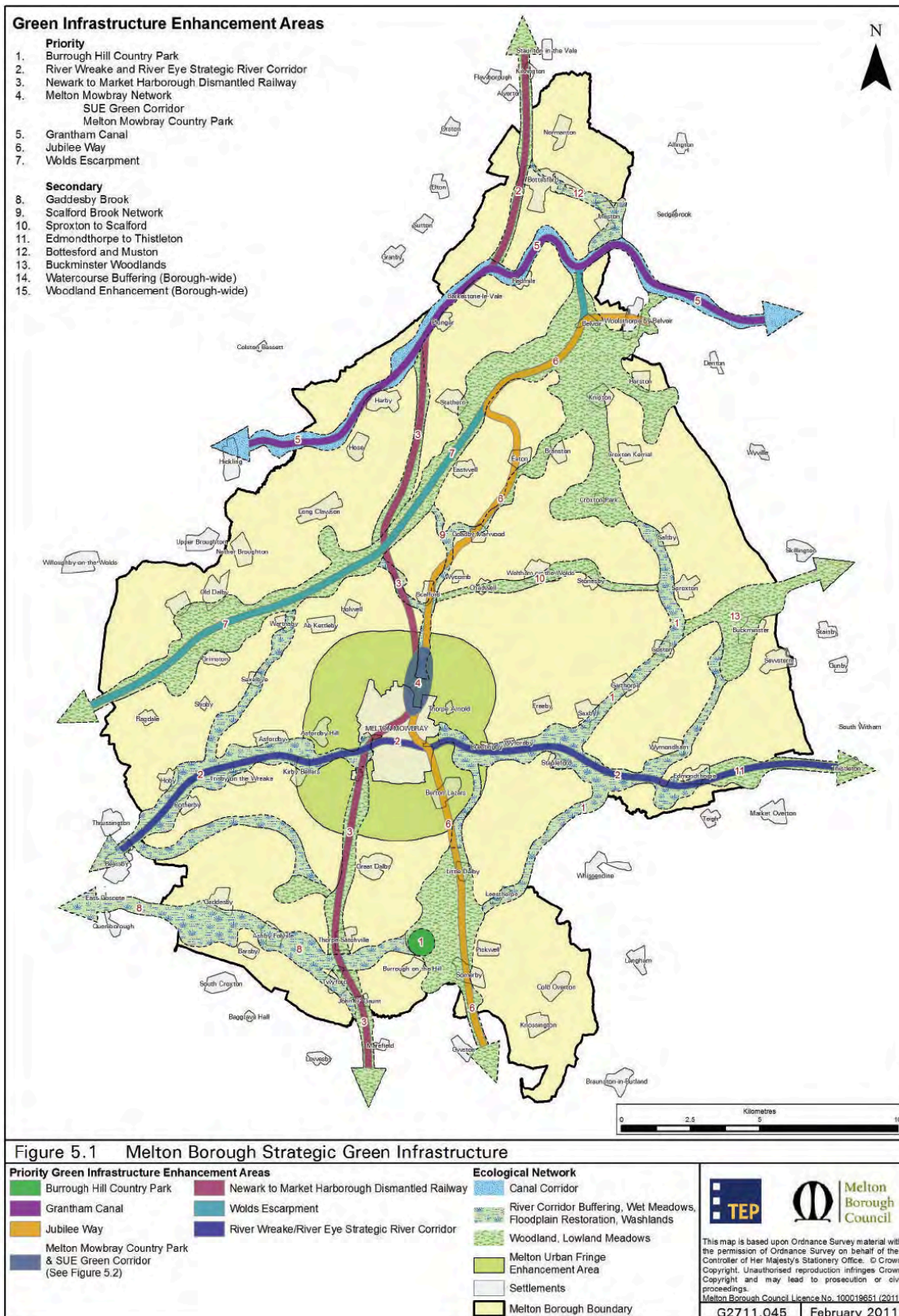


Figure 6 | Melton Borough Strategic Green Infrastructure according to Borough of Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)

Green Infrastructure Mapping Database

The Green Infrastructure Mapping database⁵ produced by Natural England combines over 100 datasets for all green and blue infrastructure, including designated sites, biophysical and socio-economic information and is a significant source for the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy 2024. At the landscape scale, the mapping indicates the highly fragmented structure of green infrastructure in the borough. As with the 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010) and the Borough of Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011), the importance of water courses and waterways provides the strongest connectivity within the borough landscape. Otherwise with a few exceptions for woodland, most green infrastructure assets are isolated and in need of buffering and where possible connection.

Melton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan 2024

An audit of open space which took place between December 2023 and April 2024 showed that there is significantly more accessible open space in Borough of Melton than had previously recorded. A total of 488 sites being recorded representing an increase of 51% from the previous audit. Many small open space sites occur in the town of Melton Mowbray as well as throughout the rest of the Borough. The largest typology in terms of number of sites is amenity green space (207 sites) followed by semi-natural green space (61 sites). However, when considered as the total area in hectares, the largest area is for parks and gardens at 100 ha and semi-natural green space at 92 ha. The average size of an individual open space is 0.7 ha. Table 4 below shows the area of recorded open (green) space by typology.

Typology	No. of Sites	Total Area (Ha)
Allotments	47	21.31
Amenity green space (including SuDS)	207	49.45
Cemeteries and churchyards	74	30.29
Parks and gardens	10	100.86
Provision for children and young people	81	42.42
Semi-natural green space	61	92.15
Non-pitch sports facility	8	16.34
	488	352.8

Table 4 | Area of recorded open (green) space by typology.

An outstanding factor of the audit was that the quality of green space within the Borough is good to outstanding. Only 2% of the audited sites were regarded as average and no sites were in the poor category. This is an exceptional result.

In terms of connectivity, many sites are associated with residential communities that have access to public roads and pavements. Naturalistic connectivity is less strong hence an opportunity exists for improvements is the creation of green routes that link existing green space assets to the priority enhancement areas identified in 2011. Even when off-road routes are not an option, the planting of street trees can provide a notable improvement.

⁵ designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx

Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy

A Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland is a forward-thinking strategy aimed at addressing biodiversity loss and other ongoing environmental challenges. The strategic aims of the LNRS are:

- Make more space for nature: increase the area and diversity of land and water managed for wildlife in Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland (make more space for nature).
- Increase biodiversity by improving the ecological condition (habitat quality) of existing areas for nature conservation.
- Re-instate natural processes and utilise Nature-Based-Solutions to support nature and climate resilience.
- Protect and enhance green and blue spaces within urban habitats.
- Promote sustainable agriculture and support local food systems.
- Improve ecological connectivity by establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks at scale.
- Reduce major pressures and threats to nature, including Invasive Non-Native Species control.
- Improve our understanding of the State of Nature and actively monitor habitat/species change over time.

These strategic objectives are entirely consistent with the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The Borough of Melton has several existing areas of particular importance to biodiversity as well as areas that could become of particular importance, including the River Wreake and River Eye. The town of Melton Mowbray has opportunities to expand its green and blue infrastructure, enhance habitat quality and create wildlife stepping stones within the built environment. Flood Zone 3, which are areas with a high probability of flooding, has the possibility for habitat creation in flood-prone areas as well as opportunities for river restoration, wet woodland, floodplain meadow creation and flood water management. Priority species are also identified, including rare vascular plants and lichens noting that green infrastructure can be one way of targeting conservation actions. There are also opportunities for nature recovery including new bigger areas for nature, especially by creating contiguous habitats and well-connected smaller currently isolated habitats.

One aspect of the LNRS to which green infrastructure can make a significant contribution, consists of 'corridors' and 'stepping-stones'. Corridors are continuous strips of habitat that connect different areas together and include rivers, field margins and public rights of way. Stepping stones are isolated patches of habitat that provide refuge and resources for species which allows them to move between larger habitat areas even when the patches are not directly connected. There are a wide variety of stepping stone typologies such as pocket parks, street trees and woodland glades and clearings.

Table 5 below shows some of the key ways that the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy can provide benefits to the LNRS.

Green Infrastructure that can benefit the LNRS	Benefit to LNRS
The creation of new links between urban settlements and the adjacent countryside	Can be used to assemble bigger areas for nature, Lead to improve design and planning of spaces that can lead to interconnected habitats, tie in accessible green space with the LNRS such as parks and gardens, allotments and tree management.
Alignment of strategies in support of funding applications.	The potential exists to apply for external funding, meeting objectives that feature both within the LNRS and the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy.
Better quality areas for nature.	Green infrastructure can be a reason for improved environmental management and through design and practice. This presents an opportunity to increase the health of habitats such as vegetation layers, water bodies and structural diversity.
Joining steppingstones and converting them into continuous corridors	Improved connectivity is a key aspect of the green infrastructure approach, and this presents an opportunity for better connection of stepping stones with existing corridors and in the future the connection of stepping stones into continuous corridors.
Green wedges	The creation of green wedges and areas of separation can provide recreational opportunities as well as help mitigate climate effects in urban areas. The existing Melton country Park is an example of an important green wedge and an opportunity to increase its ecological value through incremental management changes (such as converting some areas of recreational grassland into wildflower meadows)

Table 5 | Benefits of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy for LNRS for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

National Character Areas (NCAs)

National Character Areas in England are divisions of the landscape which follow natural lines in the landscape, not county or district boundaries. These are a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity.

Each of the 159 NCAs has a written profile which can be used to:

- help people to make decisions about the places that they live in and care for

- guide actions to achieve nature recovery, including through local nature recovery strategies
- support the planning of large-scale conservation projects and the design of land management schemes
- inform choices about landscape change
- encourage partnership working towards a common vision

They are particularly significant when considering changes up the landscape scale. The Borough of Melton is covered by four NCAs.

The largest by area is NCA 74 the 'Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds' which covers most of central and northern Borough. The headline Statement of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) in this NCA are:

- SEO 1: Promote sustainable agricultural practices in this important food producing area to conserve the soil resource and protect water quality, while also ensuring the distinctive historic field pattern and important grassland and broad-leaved woodland habitats are conserved and restored.
- SEO 2: Conserve and manage Rutland Water reservoir and nature reserve for its internationally designated habitats and for the variety of recreational and education assets it provides.
- SEO 3: Protect tranquillity levels in the rural landscape and ensure new development on the urban fringe incorporates green infrastructure into the design, maintains the vernacular and links with the wider countryside.
- SEO 4: Where new development is planned on the urban fringe consider integrating multi-functional greenspace into the design with links to the surrounding countryside. For example, by planning new developments to ensure they do not negatively impact on the character of the settlements or surrounding landscape, ensuring they provide accessible open green spaces as an integral component.

The second largest by area is NCA 93 'High Leicestershire', which covers most of the southern part of the Borough. The headline statements of environmental opportunity in this NCA are:

- SEO 1: Protect and appropriately manage the strong visual and historic character of this varied and sparsely settled rural landscape of broad rolling ridges and wide secluded valleys – maintaining the settlement pattern and features of High Leicestershire, in particular its areas and features of archaeological and heritage interest, including the field patterns, ridge and furrow, ancient woodlands, country houses and village churches – to enhance sense of place and history so that the area can be enjoyed by all for its tranquillity.
- SEO 2: Sustainably manage the moderately fertile soils, arable crops, livestock, grassland, woodlands, coverts and spinneys that contribute to sense of place while maintaining viable food production, enhancing biodiversity networks and encouraging farmland birds and mammals and rarer arable plants.

- SEO 3: Manage and enhance the recreational assets, such as the rights of way network, country parks such as Burrough Hill and waterbodies such as Eye Brook Reservoir and improve access to these assets and the open countryside from the city of Leicester and surrounding rural communities, to maintain a sense of place, enhance soil and water quality and have a beneficial effect on people's health and wellbeing.
- SEO 4: Manage, conserve and enhance the woodlands, hedgerows, streams, rivers and field ponds – including the rivers Chater, Gwash and Eye Brook, their tributaries and the Eye Brook Reservoir – to enhance biodiversity and soil quality and improve water quality, flow and availability.

To the north of the Borough including the settlement of Bottesford lies NCA 48 the 'Trent and Belvoir Vales'. The headline statements of environmental opportunity in this NCA are:

- SEO 1: Maximise the use of sustainable agricultural practices that protect and enhance ecological networks to help safeguard the long-term viability of farming in the area while benefiting biodiversity, landscape character, carbon storage, water quality, availability, and flow.
- SEO 2: Enhance the woodland and hedgerow network through the planting of small woodlands, tree belts, hedgerow trees and new hedgerows to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including the regulation of soil erosion, water quality and flow.
- SEO 3: Enhance the rivers and their flood plains for their ecological, historical and recreational importance, their contribution to biodiversity, soil quality, water availability and in regulating water flow and the important role they play in underpinning the character of the area.
- SEO 4: Maintain and enhance the character of this gently undulating, rural landscape. Promote and carefully manage the many distinctive elements that contribute to the overarching sense of place and history of the Trent and Belvoir Vales.

To the East of the Borough lies NCA 75 the 'Kesteven Uplands'. The headline statements of environmental opportunity in this NCA are:

- SEO 1: Manage and enhance the agricultural landscape and soils of the Kesteven Uplands, continuing the long tradition of mixed farming which has shaped the area, securing viable and sustainable food production, while seeking to enhance biodiversity and improve water quality and availability.
- SEO 2: Protect and significantly increase the extent, quality and connectivity of the unimproved and limestone grasslands throughout the NCA, to enhance biodiversity, ecological networks, water availability and quality, climate regulation and sense of place.
- SEO 3: Manage and expand the native woodlands throughout the Kesteven Uplands to reinforce the area's wooded character, benefit biodiversity, increase the potential for biomass, access and recreation, and help to regulate climate change and water quality.
- SEO 4: Protect, manage and promote the area's rich historic environment including the significant limestone geology, the historic parklands, the manor houses and medieval monastic buildings, and deserted medieval villages, while also improving access and interpretation to enhance people's understanding and enjoyment of the landscape.

7. Green Infrastructure Strategy

7.1 Spatial Strategy

The spatial strategy is one of the two core elements of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy (the other is the thematic strategy). It builds upon previous work as follows:

1. The 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010) which established a sub-regional framework.
2. A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Melton Borough (2011) produced by TEP identified green infrastructure enhancement areas. Two tiers of enhancement (priority and secondary) were identified.
3. The Green Infrastructure Mapping database produced by Natural England combines over 100 datasets for all green and blue infrastructure.
4. The Melton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan 2024 produced by MD2 Consulting Ltd
5. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy a forward-thinking strategy aimed at addressing biodiversity loss and other ongoing environmental challenges.
6. Landscape National Character Areas (NCAs) covering the Borough of Melton are divisions of the landscape which follow natural lines in the landscape, not county or district boundaries. These are a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity.



Figure 7 | Brooksby Quarry (part of Spatial Strategy RW) is a hub of ecological value, but access is severely limited.



Figure 8 | River Eye near Stapleford Park. The River Eye and tributaries (part of Spatial Strategy RE) run from Melton Mowbray east and north to Wymondham, Sproxton and beyond.



Figure 9 | Gaddesby Brook (part of the Spatial Strategy GB) near John O'Gaunt illustrates the importance of water courses to the distribution of green infrastructure in the Borough of Melton.

This previous work above provides the foundation for the Borough of Melton Green Infrastructure Spatial Strategy 2024. A range of priorities and spatial enhancements/interventions emerge from these foundations:

1. The importance of green corridors and their role in network connectivity of which the river corridors and surface water network is strong.
2. The importance of prioritisation notably those identified by TEP in the 2011 strategy which have been reviewed and confirmed as still relevant.
3. The significance of the distribution of accessible open/green space throughout the Borough, including the quality standards and access standards which exceed the minimum required under the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework. Linking individual accessible open/green space to wider networks is significant in respective multifunctionality.
4. The importance of integration with the overall spatial aims of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The spatial enhancement strategy for green infrastructure is summarised in Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8 on the following pages.



Figure 8 | Twyford viaduct (part of Spatial Strategy NM) is a key historical feature on the Newark to Market Harborough Dismantled Railway.



Reference	Title	Description (also see figure 11)	Strategic action/opportunities
GB	Gaddesby Brook to Burrough Hill	Significant water corridor with adjacent open space sites near Gaddesby, Twyford and Ashby Folville some of which already lie within Flood Zone 3. Burrough Hill Country Park is a significant heritage and recreational destination.	<p>An opportunity exists for connectivity improvements to link Gaddesby Brook to Burrough Hill Country Park, which is a significant green infrastructure hub and of historic significance. On site improvements at the Country Park are possible to increase visitor experience.</p> <p>The waterside environment is suitable for bank and biodiversity improvements to adjacent agricultural land.</p> <p>A project plan which identifies the various benefits and funding sources can be used to construct a partnership.</p>
RW	River Wreake and Tributaries	<p>From Thrusington and Rearsby to Melton Mowbray.</p> <p>This corridor is highly significant to the green infrastructure of the western part of the Borough, including the tributaries that flow into the River Wreake.</p> <p>In addition to the landscape significance, this is also a significant flood zone and already includes several important public access points such as at Asfordby and in Melton Mowbray.</p>	<p>Bank side habitat improvements are desirable as well as planting of areas (trees, shrubs and headlands) to intercept diffuse pollution sources.</p> <p>Measures to improve access and recreation could bring significant benefits given the proximity to Melton Mowbray but these should be in keeping with a natural character.</p> <p>Brooksby Sand and Gravel Quarry has future nature-based habitat potential.</p> <p>The creation of wet woodland would establish/re-establish an important and underrepresented habitat.</p>
MM	Melton Mowbray and urban fringe	<p>The town and immediate environs of Melton Mowbray are a focus for development pressures but also where the need for recreational access for health and well-being is at its greatest in the Borough.</p> <p>There are a significant number of open spaces as identified by the Melton Open Space Strategy although many of these are isolated.</p> <p>The Melton Country Park is a significant steppingstone into the countryside and part of the Jubilee Way.</p>	<p>Connecting individual open/green spaces as stepping stones and with the green infrastructure network is an opportunity.</p> <p>There is a notable lack of green infrastructure in the south of the town which should be addressed on the back of new development ideally in the form of a green corridor.</p> <p>Management of the Country Park as an ecological resource is advocated.</p> <p>Efforts should be made to improve connectivity between the town and the adjacent urban fringe countryside.</p>

			<p>New development should be used as a mechanism to deliver the urban nature recovery standard, urban greening standard and the urban tree canopy standard.</p> <p>Strong encouragement to the use of green infrastructure within new development and to link new developments to adjacent areas, especially those already recognised in the open space audit.</p>
RE	River Eye and Tributaries	<p>From Melton Mowbray east and north to Wymondham, Sproxton and beyond. Bankside improvements including access corridors as well as habitat improvements as identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Corridor also includes Buckminster Woodlands.</p>	<p>This corridor enters a significant agricultural area hence improvements may be initially at a small scale such as hedgerow recovery, woodland planting and grassland management/meadows.</p> <p>Focus on landscape scale improvements which may be individually modest but collectively become significant.</p> <p>Potential link to equestrian development as a mechanism to improve access to this landscape.</p> <p>Recreation of meadow land and new woodland would be beneficial in this landscape.</p> <p>Woodland creation could also link to meeting England climate change targets.</p>
GC	Grantham Canal	<p>Already a significant green infrastructure asset and an important connectivity route through the landscape of the Borough.</p> <p>The canal combines high recreational value with important wildlife habitats, including a connection to Muston Meadows National Nature Reserve.</p>	<p>Local enhancements are possible, but for the most part the priority is maintenance and management of this important asset for nature and recreation.</p> <p>The creation of more microhabitats adjacent to the canal such as pollinator areas would be a benefit to wildlife diversity.</p>
BO	Bottesford, River Devon and Winter Beck	<p>There are significant areas of flood zone 3 within Bottesford and its environs which follow the River Devon and Winter Beck.</p>	<p>There are opportunities for the creation of new wetlands and the restoration of historical wetlands in this landscape.</p> <p>Providing improved public access to the adjacent countryside is an opportunity.</p>

		The Grantham Canal and the Muston Meadows National Nature Reserve are also in proximity (see GC).	<p>Given the proximity to neighbouring local authorities, there is an opportunity for collaboration.</p> <p>Some of flood zone three would be suitable for the creation of small to medium-sized areas of wet woodland which is an uncommon habitat locally.</p>
JW	The Jubilee Way (see also thematic strategy RW/TR)	<p>Opened in 1977 to mark the Queen Silver Jubilee is a 20-mile walk starting at the Burrough Hill Country Park through to Melton Mowbray and into the Vale of Belvoir.</p> <p>It is an outstanding example of the creative use of the rights of way network and an inspiration for future initiatives within the Borough of Melton to create long-distance walking paths.</p>	<p>There are opportunities for improvement of interpretation, including the use of new technologies (based on mobile devices).</p> <p>There is already a maintenance regime hence the focus is on management of the resources for public amenity.</p> <p>Interpretation and signage to be updated as required.</p> <p>Adjacent habitats such as Spinney and Copses and smaller microhabitats, including wet areas for vertebrates and amphibians should be encouraged.</p>
NM	Newark to Market Harborough Dismantled Railway (see also thematic strategy HE/TR)	<p>The dismantled railway corridor was identified in the last Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) as an important connectivity route which traverses the Borough from north to south.</p> <p>There is an important historical monument in the form of Twyford viaduct.</p>	<p>The actions set out in 2011 Green Infrastructure Strategy remain current, including improving access to the corridor for adjacent communities, working with landowners and buffering natural vegetation.</p> <p>This corridor is recommended as a priority action for green infrastructure enhancement and a parallel initiative to the Jubilee Way.</p> <p>Reinstating this as a recreational and ecological route is challenging but probably feasible given the right finance and timescale.</p>

Table 6 | Description of the Green Infrastructure Spatial Strategy for the Borough of Melton.

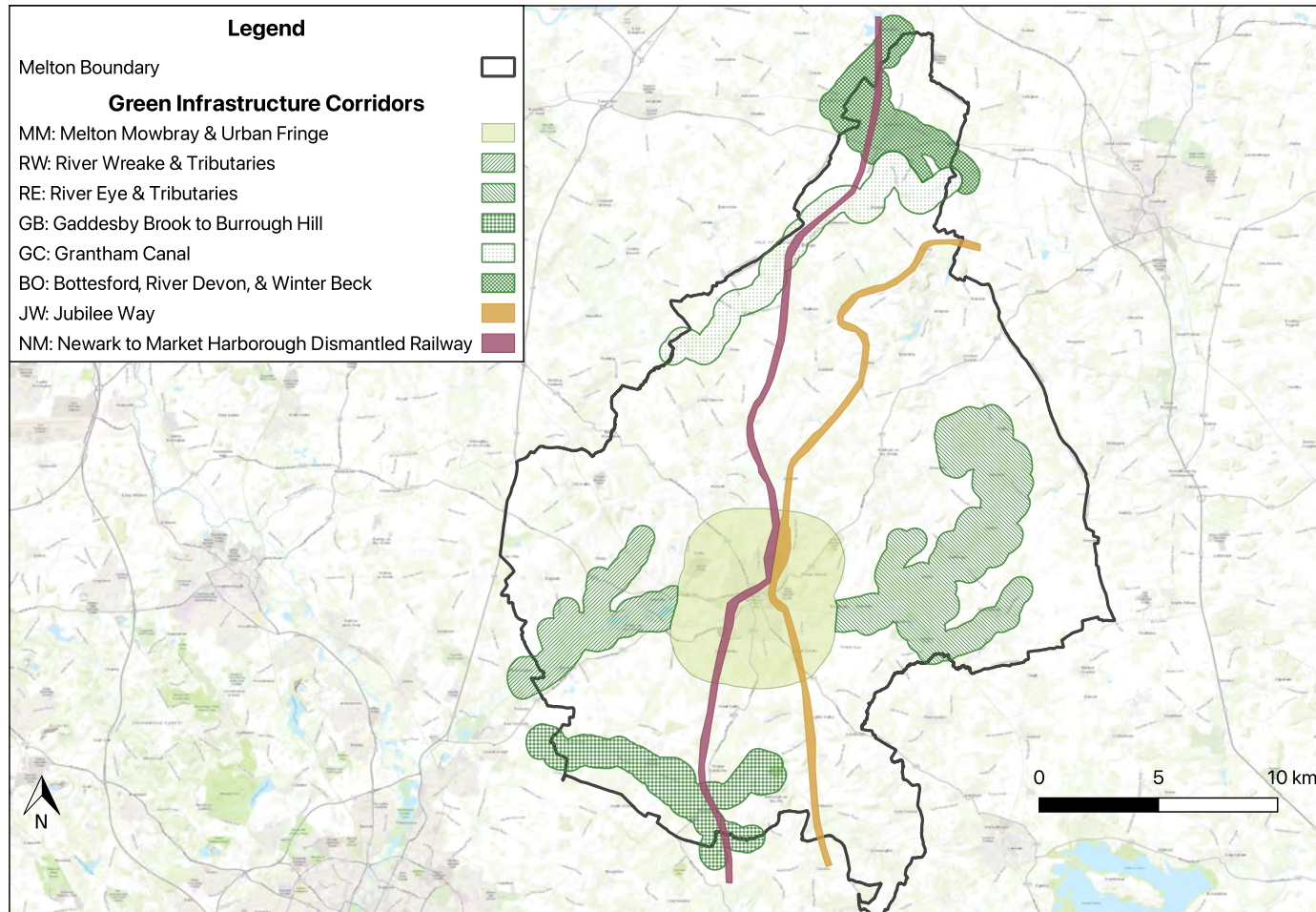


Figure 9: Spatial strategy map. Green infrastructure corridors JW and NM provide north to south connectivity, whereas RW, RE, GB, GC, BO are based on the drainage pattern of the landscape and strongly linked to the LNRS. MM is focused on the urban fringe of Melton Mowbray. The space strategy should read in conjunction with the thematic strategy, in section 7.2 below.

7.2 Thematic Strategy

Not all the potential enhancements and interventions for Green Infrastructure are limited to a particular location. These are grouped together by themes from which a thematic strategy can be determined. This draws on the National Character Assessment (landscape), aspects of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and issues of design and development.

Key National Character Assessment themes	Green infrastructure response
When new development is planned on the urban fringe consider integrating multi-functional green space into the design with links to the surrounding countryside.	This is consistent with the concept of connectivity and the importance of the relationship between the distribution of existing accessible open green space and a wider network of strategic corridors.
Protect tranquillity levels in the rural landscape and ensure new development on the urban fringe incorporates green infrastructure into the design, maintains the vernacular and links with the wider countryside.	This theme makes direct reference to the role of green infrastructure in the design, maintaining the vernacular character and the links between the wider countryside and urban fringe. It also suggests that green infrastructure developments should respect the tranquillity of these national character areas.
Enhance the woodland and hedgerow network through the planting of small woodlands, tree belts, hedgerow trees and new hedgerows to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services,	An important aspect of this is that the green infrastructure network is not only made up of larger-scale enhancement or interventions but that small-scale activities can cumulatively add up making a major contribution to green infrastructure. Furthermore, where large-scale interventions are being considered they should be accompanied by adjacent, more modest in extent, interventions in adjacent areas which given the character of much of the Borough of Melton may be agricultural.
Enhance rivers and their flood plains for their ecological, historical and recreational importance, their contribution to biodiversity, soil quality, water availability and in regulating water flow and the important role they play in underpinning the character of the area.	The landscape of the borough of Melton is significantly impacted by the distribution of water courses hence this is an important aspect of the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy. The ecological and recreational issues are significant with the latter being most notable where river courses coincide with the more urban areas, of the Borough especially around the town of Melton Mowbray.

Table 7 | Overlapping themes between National Character Areas and Green Infrastructure in the Borough of Melton. This table should be considered as a working reference and bridge between Table 6 and Table 8.

Reference	Title	Description	Strategic action/opportunities
LI	Landscape improvements and management	<p>The landscape of the Borough of Melton is substantially agricultural although there are significant pockets of woodland and important streams and becks throughout the landscape.</p> <p>The headline statement of environmental opportunity (SEO) in the National Character Assessment includes promoting sustainable agricultural practices, conservation of the soil resources and protecting water quality, while also ensuring the distinctive historic field pattern and important grassland and broad-leaved woodland habitats are conserved and restored.</p> <p>The majority of the rural landscape is owned by agricultural businesses hence improved recreational access will be dependent upon cooperation with this sector.</p>	<p>Green infrastructure can contribute to landscape improvements by improving habitat connectivity, buffering sensitive landscapes and providing additional access opportunities for local communities.</p> <p>Improving this structure of agricultural land by introducing smaller scale whenever practical will bring habitat benefits. This can lead to the better management of existing hedgerows, the creation of planting of new hedgerows, and small habitat areas such as ponds and scrapes.</p> <p>The Vale of Belvoir and the scarp slope of the Leicestershire Wolds between old Dalby and Woolsthorpe by Belvoir provide a setting for rural landscape improvements.</p> <p>Watercourses (including ditches) and their riparian zones with buffers (free from development or formal landscaping) extending to a minimum of eight metres from the top of the bank (on both banks) of any given watercourse.</p> <p>Woodland, orchard, mature trees, hedgerows</p> <p>Local BAP Habitats and those supporting local BAP priority species and species in the UK Priority Habitat Species List</p> <p>Access routes (public rights of way and permitted routes)</p> <p>Existing public green space including sports pitches in accordance with the Playing Pitch Strategy, allotments and designated Local Green Space</p> <p>Areas of geological and archaeological interest</p> <p>Green infrastructure identified in the Areas of Separation</p> <p>Settlement Fringe Sensitivity and Local Green Space Study</p> <p>Historic Parkland (note linkage to policy HE)</p>
UD	Urban design	Development frequently leads to the sealing of soil surfaces, altering drainage patterns and loss of habitat.	The use of sustainable urban drainage is now an established practice and is to be encouraged.

		<p>Incorporating principles of green infrastructure in urban design can reduce these impacts and may even increase the potential of a given area in terms of recreational access and biodiversity.</p>	<p>Sustainable urban drainage can be designed with access and even when it is not accessible can provide, visual amenity and habitat.</p> <p>The use of green roofs, green walls, porous surfaces and the creation of cycleways also present opportunities.</p> <p>In terms of design, new pathways and cycleways can be created within a landscape corridor made up of many microhabitats that provide foraging for animals and small habitats for invertebrates, pollinating insects, and amphibians.</p> <p>The commutative significance of small-scale interventions can be greater than the sum of the parts.</p>
OS	Open (green) space	<p>An audit of open space undertaken for Melton Borough Council in 2024 revealed that there is substantially more open green space in the Borough than had been previously recorded.</p> <p>However, the average size of these sites is only 0.7 ha and for the most part only a small proportion of the 488 recorded sites have discernible connectivity between them.</p> <p>Most of the open green spaces are either in urban or suburban areas hence the opportunities for linkage can be limited.</p>	<p>An opportunity exists for improving the street scene such as retrofitting street trees and ensuring the street trees are planted in new development, the use of planters and adopting nature-positive management of incidental green space such as road verges can improve habitats for pollinators, swales and rain gardens are a practical alternative to conventional surface water drainage in some locations.</p>
GC	Green Corridors	<p>Green corridors provide links between the town and countryside and can avoid the coalescence of communities through incremental urban development.</p>	<p>Maintaining existing green corridors is necessary and where significant areas are subject to development, new green corridors can help avoid coalescence of communities.</p> <p>The creation of new green corridors can be beneficial in terms of public access and being close to nature. Green corridors are also used by communities for foraging and exercising dogs.</p> <p>The Melton Country Park is located within a significant green corridor, which separates northeast Melton Mowbray from the north and northwest of the town. This green corridor follows the line of the disused railway.</p>

ND	New development	<p>There is demand for new development both for housing and commercial/industrial purposes.</p> <p>Any change in the landscape presents opportunities and threats and as seen with the other thematic strategies development can if correctly harnessed provide the resources needed to achieve green infrastructure improvements such as improved connectivity.</p> <p>New development in a suitable location can facilitate and direct funds to the green infrastructure spatial strategy.</p>	<p>Future communities should benefit from much greater access to nature than those of the past.</p> <p>Green infrastructure improvements can provide significant health and well-being benefits to local communities.</p> <p>The standards incorporated in the Green Infrastructure Strategy articulate how this might be achieved.</p> <p>A target of 40% of new development being functionally green is recommended as a future benchmark.</p>
RW	Rights of Way	<p>The rights of way network including footpaths and bridleways are a key attribute to recreational access to the landscape.</p> <p>The condition of rights of way including signage and path surfaces are important in terms of public use of these routes.</p> <p>Improvements to the rights of way network will normally focus on quality rather than quantity but these routes provide the essential framework for enjoying the landscape quality of the Borough of Melton.</p>	<p>The maintenance of public rights of way includes both public and private actors. Most rights of way cross privately owned land much of which will be in agricultural use.</p> <p>Leicestershire County Council has a key role in liaising with landowners and facilitating quality improvements.</p> <p>When projects are being developed, including the rights of way network should be a feature and where resources are secured for green infrastructure improvements then an opportunity exists for investment in quality.</p> <p>Recognition should be given to the importance of rights of way in terms of habitat improvement as many are bounded by features such as small woodlands, hedge rows and other small environmental features which collectively are very important in terms of the diversity of the landscape.</p>
HE	Access to local heritage	<p>Access improvements can link to the green infrastructure network can be used to connect important local heritage sites to nature rich corridors and encourage exploration of local heritage without necessarily relying on car-based access.</p> <p>The Borough of Melton has an extensive network of disused railway lines which if connected can be used to leverage new</p>	<p>Disused mineral and closed passenger railway lines are a notable opportunity for improvements to the green infrastructure network.</p> <p>Whilst negotiating access will require an investment of time and financial resources, improvements could significantly enhance the green infrastructure network.</p>

		access into the countryside. An outstanding example of the heritage value of disused railway lines is the Holwell Mineral line.	When improvements are undertaken these need to be respectful of vegetation that has developed since these lines were closed and a balance struck between access and conservation.
TR	Trails, cycleways and bridleways	<p>Several trails have been identified that are within or immediately adjacent to the Borough of Melton. There is growing interest in long-distance trails link to tourism and exploration of local heritage. Long distance trails are normally linked to the rights of way network and where possible to green corridors, and features such as disused railway lines. The trails within and immediately adjacent to the Borough include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midshires Way • Mowbray Way • Jubilee Way (see spatial strategy JW) • Leicestershire Round • Cross Britain Way • E2 European long-distance footpath • Viking Way <p>National Cycle Route networks No. 48 and No. 64 lie within the Borough of Melton and extend beyond. Significant sections are road-based and where the possibility exists for non-road-based route alternatives to be developed in the future these opportunities should be taken.</p> <p>Horse riding is a significant recreational activity hence the provision of bridleways is important. Horses on public roads can be a hazard for motorists, horses and riders hence opportunities for off-road horse-riding are especially valuable. Anecdotally, there is more demand than provision for off-road horse riding.</p>	<p>The Borough of Melton already possesses a number of trails, many of which cross the Borough boundary and hence within the scope of the duty to cooperate with neighbouring local authorities.</p> <p>The role of trails and cycle routes is advocated for inclusion in local tourist development strategies.</p> <p>Where equestrian developments are proposed and fall within the planning system this is an opportunity to leverage new access.</p> <p>Significant sections of the National Cycle Network in the Borough of Melton are road-based and where the possibility exists for non-road-based route alternatives to be developed these opportunities should be taken.</p>

Table 8 | Description of the Green Infrastructure Thematic Strategy for the Borough of Melton.



Figure 10 | Brown's Hill Quarry Nature Reserve managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. This site was quarried for building stone and iron stone and is an important geological site and features calcareous grassland (part of Thematic Strategy HE).



Figure 11 | There are several disused railway lines, both former mineral and passenger, that already act as ecological corridors. With access improvements, these disused railways could also offer recreational and health and well-being benefits (part of Thematic Strategies HE and TR).

7.3 Listing of Green Infrastructure Strategies

Spatial Strategies

1. SGI Ref GB: Gaddesby Brook to Burrough Hill
2. SGI Ref RW: River Wreake and Tributaries
3. SGI Ref MM: Melton Mowbray and its Urban Fringe
4. SGI Ref RE: River Eye and Tributaries
5. SGI Ref GC: Grantham Canal
6. SGI Ref BO: Bottesford, River Devon and Winter Beck
7. SGI Ref JW: The Jubilee Way
8. SGI Ref NM: Newark to Market Harborough Dismantled Railway

Thematic Strategies

1. TGI Ref LI: Rural landscape improvements access opportunities for local communities
2. TGI Ref UD: Urban design
3. TGI Ref OS: Open (green) space
4. TGI Ref GC: Green Corridors
5. TGI Ref ND: New development
6. TGI Ref RW: Rights of Way
7. TGI Ref HE: Access to local heritage
8. TGI Ref TR: Trails, cycleways and bridleways

Recommendation 7.3.1: For Melton Borough Council to adopt the spatial and thematic strategies set out in the Green Infrastructure Strategy as a basis for the Green Infrastructure Network of the Borough of Melton and to link these to local plan policy EN3.

7.4 Green Infrastructure Standards

SI: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard

Natural England recommends that local authorities, working in partnership with stakeholders including local communities, assess and strategically plan their green infrastructure provision, for example as part of a Green Infrastructure Strategy. Plans should set out how Green Infrastructure will help to create greener, more beautiful, healthier and more prosperous neighbourhoods, with a thriving nature network that can reduce air and water pollution, support sustainable drainage and help places adapt to climate change. Furthermore, they should apply the 15 Green Infrastructure Principles and the Green Infrastructure Standards locally and set Green Infrastructure policies, proposals and development requirements in development plans and local design codes. Local authorities should plan and monitor and evaluate progress against the delivery of these local targets every five years.

Each major new development should have a Green Infrastructure Plan (which may be part of a Design and Access Statement) setting out how the development will deliver the Green Infrastructure Framework's 15 Green Infrastructure Principles⁶, and the Green Infrastructure Standards as set out in this strategy. The Green Infrastructure delivered within (or associated with) major new developments should be managed, maintained and monitored for a minimum of 30 years.

Local context

The Borough of Melton has produced this Green Infrastructure Strategy and accompanying Action Plan based on the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework, including the framework process guide. The new Green Infrastructure Strategy replaces a previous strategy produced in 2011. Melton Borough Council has a local plan policy on Green Infrastructure which is being reviewed and updated in the light of this Green Infrastructure Strategy (2024). The strategy identifies improvements and interventions which are both spatial and thematic. These have evolved from earlier work, and include new content derived from the Natural England Green Infrastructure mapping tool⁷. The improvements and interventions identified address issues from the local nature recovery strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland and will interact with Local Plan policies, in particular:

- SS4: Melton South sustainable neighbourhood (strategic development location).
- SS5: Melton North sustainable neighbourhood.
- Environment policies EN1 to EN13 inclusive.
- D1: raising the standard of design.

⁶ designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/GreenInfrastructurePrinciples.pdf

⁷ designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx

Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard for Borough of Melton

1. The Borough of Melton Council will work with stakeholders both within and outside the borough (under the duty to cooperate) to ensure that Green Infrastructure corridors and other enhancements are 'joined up'.
2. The Borough of Melton Council will undertake a review and update of the Green Infrastructure Strategy five years after adoption of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan 2024.
3. Developers will be required as part of all major developments (e.g. ten or more dwellings) to provide a Green Infrastructure Strategy for their development either as a separate report or as a discrete and satisfactory part of the Design and Access Statement.
4. A developers Green Infrastructure Strategy whether a separate document or included in a design and access statement will be reviewed in the context of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy 2024, the action plan for the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy 2024 and the fifteen green infrastructure principles set out by Natural England.
5. Developers will be required to provide a proposal for management and maintenance for a period of 30 years to the satisfaction of the Borough Council planning service.

S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard, including quality standards

Everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature (see also the 3-30-300 Rule for Healthier and Greener Cities⁸ in S5).

To meet the Accessible Green Space (AGS) size and proximity criteria, with an initial focus on access to green and blue spaces, these should be within a 15 minute-walk from home. Natural England suggest that local authorities should have at least three hectares of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 population and there is no net loss or reduction in capacity of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population at an area-wide scale.

Local authorities specify capacity targets for all major residential developments informed by a local accessible greenspace baseline, and considering local needs, opportunities and constraints. Furthermore, accessible green space meets the [Green Flag Award Criteria](#) and best practice in accessibility for all: [By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors](#) (The Sensory Trust, 2020).

With regards to major development all major residential development should be designed to meet capacity targets (hectares of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population) and quality criteria namely that it aims to meet [Green Flag Award Criteria](#) (Ellicott, 2016) and best practice in accessibility for all: [By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors](#) (The Sensory Trust, 2020) in major new developments.

Local context

The Borough of Melton has produced an Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (2024). A stakeholder consultation with respect to the open space strategy and action plan was held between January and March 2024 and fieldwork was undertaken by two experienced surveyors between December 2023 and April 2024, for the purposes of a quality audit of sites that were considered as publicly accessible open space. A total of 488 sites have been recorded of which the largest typology in terms of number of sites is amenity green space (207 sites) followed by semi natural green space (61 sites). However, when considering the total area in hectares, the largest area is for parks and gardens at 100 ha and semi natural green space at 92 ha. The average size of an individual open space in the Borough is 0.7 ha.

⁸ nbsi.eu/the-3-30-300-rule/

The quality of sites in Melton is good to very good and, in some cases, outstanding as shown in Table 9 below:

Band	Scoring	Total No. of Sites	% of Audited Sites	No. of sites per typology						
				Allotment Total = 47	Amenity Green space Total = 207	Cemeteries (Total = 74)	Non pitch Sports Facility Total = 8	Park & Gardens Total = 10	Provision for Children & Young People Total = 81	Semi Natural Green Space Total = 61
A	Scores > 80%	62	13	2 (5%)	17 (8%)	10 (13%)	2 (25%)	7 (70%)	18 (22%)	7 (11%)
B	Scores 70 - 79%	250	51	11(23%)	103 (50%)	48(64%)	5 (63%)	2 (20%)	52 (64%)	30 (49%)
C	Scores 60 - 69%	166	34	31 (66%)	85 (41%)	16 (22%)	1 (12%)	1 (10%)	11 (14%)	20 (33%)
D	Scores 50 - 59 %	10	2	3 (6%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)
E	Scores < 50%	0	0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Total	488	100	47	207	74	8	10	81	61

Table 9 | Quality of sites in the Borough of Melton

Quantity and access standards have also been set and are compliant with the AGS, as shown in Table 10 below. Note that the total quantity standard of 5.03 ha/1,000 is ahead of Natural England guidance of a minimum of 3 ha/1,000 population and within the 15 minutes' walk accessibility standard.

Open space typology	Quantity standard 2020 (hectares per 1,000 population)	Access standard 2020 (measured in straight line)		Recommended quantity standard 2024 (hectares per 1,000 population unless indicated otherwise)	Recommended access standard 2024 (taking into account safe crossing points)	
Allotments and community growing spaces	0.30	15-minute drive in rural areas		0.30	In urban areas 15- minute walk or 1,200 metres	15-minute drive in rural areas
Amenity Green space	0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres		0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres	
Parks and gardens	2.08	10-minute walk or 800 metres	15-minute cycle ride in rural areas	2.08	In urban areas 10- minute walk or 800 metres	In rural area 15-minute cycle ride in or 5,000 metres
Provision for children and young people.	0.25	10-minute walk or 800m	15-minute cycle ride in rural areas	0.25	In urban areas 10- minute walk or 800 metres	In rural areas 15- minute cycle ride or 5,000 metres
Semi-natural green space	1.80	10-minute walk or 800 metres	20-minute cycle ride in rural areas	1.80	In urban areas 10- minute walk or 800 metres	In rural areas 20- minute cycle ride or 6,500 metres
Total open space (sum of above)	5.03	Not applicable	Not applicable	5.03	Not applicable	

Table 10 | Quantity and access standards in the Borough of Melton

The Council's access strategy states that "Access to open space is vital because the benefits that can accrue to individuals and communities include health and well-being, sensory experiences and being close to nature. Access to open spaces frequently require users to cross main roads. The situation precipitates pedestrian safety issues, with extended journeys to traverse roads at formal, safe crossing points. This should be accounted for when calculating the distance from a residential area to an open space. To reduce car use as the only option to access open spaces - cycling distance is now being used as an access standard".

Accessible Greenspace Standard for Borough of Melton

1. The Borough of Melton has set a standard of 5.03 hectares of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population. Developers are required to make provision to meet the quantity and access standards through their planning applications and delivery. Compliance will be monitored and where the standard is unsatisfactory developers will be required to make good at their own expense.
2. The Council accepts that access to open spaces frequently requires users to cross main roads. The situation precipitates pedestrian safety issues, with extended journeys to traverse roads at formal, safe crossing points. This should be accounted for when calculating the distance from a residential area to an open space.
3. To reduce car use as the only option to access open spaces - cycling distance is now being used as an access standard. This is becoming even more so as the Melton Borough Council is considering how best to respond to climate change.
4. Normally all major developers should ensure that their Green Infrastructure strategies and or design and access statements should allow for their management company or in the case of a S106 agreement for the site to be managed to green flag standard.
5. Given the importance of connectivity and the fact that the Borough of Melton is a substantially rural local authority, high importance is attached to the quality and accessibility of the public rights of way network. Where priority needs to be given this should be focused on access to green infrastructure corridors and links between urban areas and the surrounding countryside.

S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard

Natural England believe that in urban and urban fringe areas⁹, the proportion of Green Infrastructure that is designed and managed for nature recovery is increased by an agreed percentage based on a locally defined baseline and considering local needs, opportunities and constraints. This includes the creation and restoration of wildlife rich habitats, which can contribute to the delivery of local nature recovery objectives.

Local authorities in urban and urban fringe areas set targets for nature recovery through provision and sustainable management of Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites with an aim to provide 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) per 1,000 population (for nature conservation and quiet enjoyment) whilst enhance existing and identify new areas that qualify as Local Wildlife Sites (for nature conservation).

In the case of major development, the developer should provide a Green Infrastructure Plan for the development (or in the Design and Access Statement, as appropriate), on how the development contributes to nature recovery and/or the creation and restoration of wildlife rich habitats, which can contribute to the delivery of local nature recovery objectives, including the potential for creation or enhancement of Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites.

Local context

The Borough of Melton is substantially rural but for the purposes of the Melton Borough open space strategy and the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy three urban areas have been defined as following: Melton Mowbray, Bottesford, Asfordby and are hence the focus of the urban nature recovery standard.

The Borough of Melton is also committed to the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland hence the delivery of the urban nature recovery standard needs to consider the requirements of the LNRS as they apply to urban areas. In that context, it is considered that normally, the urban nature recovery standard should be focused principally on improving connectivity of habitats and where possible the multifunctionality of local nature reserves or local wildlife sites.

It is noted that in the Borough of Melton the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan includes areas surveyed and classified as semi-natural green space and these are considered as being an equivalent to a local nature reserve, local wildlife site or another site of significant wildlife value. Where the audit of sites classified as semi-natural green space have not met a quality standard equivalent to green flag status,¹⁰ these are considered as a priority for improvement.

⁹ The urban fringe is the extensive area around towns and cities which accounts for more than 20% of the land area of England. Source: publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/105001

¹⁰ These are referred to as 'Outstanding' in the Melton Open Space Strategy (2024) with a quality score of 80% or greater.

Urban Nature Recovery Standard for Borough of Melton

1. The Borough of Melton has set a standard of at least 1 ha of local nature reserve per 1,000 population. The term ‘Local Nature Reserve’ here also means local wildlife sites and other sites identified by the Borough of Melton as of significant wildlife value. In most cases these are synonymous with semi-natural green space as identified in the Council’s Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.
2. Normally all major developers should provide a Green Infrastructure Plan for the development (or in the Design and Access Statement, as appropriate), on how the development contributes to nature recovery and/or the creation and restoration of wildlife-rich habitats, which can contribute to the delivery of local nature recovery objectives, including the potential for creation or enhancement of Local Nature Reserves or Local Wildlife Sites.
3. Whenever possible, the urban nature recovery standard will be linked to the local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, notwithstanding the urban focus which is considered a priority for improvement and provision.
4. The health and well-being of the community is recognised as an important consideration in the provision of urban nature as research has shown the benefits to humans both in terms of physical and mental health. Where developers are producing a Green Infrastructure Plan for the development or as appropriate a Design and Access Statement, health and well-being impacts should be clearly set out, including any possible disbenefits.

S4: Melton Urban Greening Factor Standard

Natural England has developed an Urban Greening Factor for England. The Urban Greening Factor (UGF) is a planning tool to improve the provision of Green Infrastructure (GI). It is voluntary and can be used to increase urban greening and contribute to Biodiversity Net Gain. Blue green infrastructure can also reduce the urban heat island effect and hence provide climate regulation benefits. A report¹¹ on Developing a Model Urban Greening Factor for England introduces the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) and provides an analysis of current applications of the UGF in the UK and abroad.

The application of UGF is an area for creative approaches that does not unduly restrict land for new development. In terms of urban greening in new development consideration of meeting the Standard needs to consider:

- Land used for private gardens.
- Land used for surface-based sustainable urban drainage (SuDS).
- Green infrastructure on buildings such as green roofs and green walls.
- Swales and rain gardens (where separate from SuDS).
- Land provided as open space and play.
- Cycleways and footpaths (porous surfaces recommended).
- Tree cover existing and new.

Whilst the Urban Greening Factor Standard is targeted at urban areas it is recommend for all settlements in the Borough of Melton. Natural England guidance recommends that urban greening is at least 40% average green cover in urban residential neighbourhoods where they do not already meet that standard. Furthermore, that there is no net loss of green cover in urban neighbourhoods. With respect to major developments, it should meet at least 0.3 for commercial development, 0.4 for residential development and, where appropriate, 0.5 for residential greenfield development. As a tool, the London Assembly has produced a calculator that can be used by developers and planning authorities¹².

Local context

The Borough of Melton is substantially rural, but for the purposes of the Melton Open Space Strategy and the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy, three urban areas have been defined as following: Melton Mowbray, Bottesford, Asfordby. Hence the UGF is proposed for these three settlements. Notwithstanding this, the Council could seek to apply the UGF to any settlement which exhibits an urban character. The 3-30-300 Rule for Healthier and Greener Cities¹³ can also be used as a benchmarking tool (see S5 Urban Tree Canopy Standard) for more details on this.

¹¹ publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5846537451339776

¹² london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/implementing-london-plan/london-plan-guidance/urban-greening-factor-ugf-guidance

¹³ nbsi.eu/the-3-30-300-rule/

Melton Borough Council is recommended to apply the UGF for major new residential and commercial developments.

Urban Greening Factor Standard for Borough of Melton

1. Normally all major residential development should have approximately 40% of the area committed to green and blue spaces, this can include land used for green roofs or green walls, open space required under the Melton Open Space standards, accessible and non-accessible open Sustainable (urban) Drainage Systems (SuDS), and tree canopy coverage. An exception may be made in the provision of social housing; however, this standard should not be disregarded in its entirety as environmental exclusion is often associated with social housing environments and the health and well-being benefits that accrue to communities may well be of great significance in these areas.
2. Normally all major commercial development should have approximately 30% of the area committed to green and blue spaces, this can include land used for green roofs or green walls, open space required under the Melton Open Space standards, accessible and non-accessible open SuDS, and tree canopy coverage.
3. Where land being proposed for development is presently Greenfield and where the council consider that there are significant losses in landscape and ecological benefit then approximately 50% of the area should be committed to green and blue spaces, this can include land used for green roofs or green walls, open space required under the Melton Open Space standards, accessible and non-accessible open SuDS, and tree canopy coverage.

S5: Melton Urban Tree Canopy Standard

Natural England propose that an Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard is set for green infrastructure strategies. They propose these are area-wide noting that:

- It is recommended that Urban Tree Canopy Cover is increased by an agreed percentage based on a locally defined baseline and considering local needs, opportunities and constraints.
- Major residential and commercial development is designed to meet these targets and that new and existing trees are incorporated into new developments and that new streets are tree-lined in line with NPPF requirements.

Local context

The Borough of Melton is substantially rural, but for the purposes of the Melton Open Space Strategy and the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy, three urban areas have been defined as follows: Melton Mowbray, Bottesford, Asfordby. Hence the Urban Tree Standard is proposed for these three settlements. Major residential and commercial development is understood to be in accordance with the NPPF Glossary definition¹⁴.

The distribution of trees within urban areas reflects upon several issues, including trees in gardens, highway trees, amenity trees including those in public parks and other open spaces, trees in natural settings (such as nature rich areas) and long-established brownfields.

There are two resources used in preparing the urban canopy standard for Melton:

1. The Right Tree in the Right Place for a Resilient Future¹⁵:

This is supported by a manual from Forest Research and advises on selecting and procuring the right tree for the right place in urban areas. It also highlights long term issues of the threats to existing trees from pests, disease and climate change, and describes the benefits to the environment and for well-being that urban trees can provide. It provides specific advice on location, tree selection, ecosystem services, biodiversity, procurement, planting and establishment, pests and diseases.

2. The 3-30-300 Rule for Healthier and Greener Cities¹⁶:

While situations will always be complex and different, this 'rule of thumb' focuses on the crucial contributions of urban forests and other urban nature to our health and wellbeing, as well as climate change adaptation. It recognises that there are many different aspects of the urban forest for it to be successful. It also addresses

¹⁴ For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the [Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#).

¹⁵ forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/urban-tree-manual/

¹⁶ nbsi.eu/the-3-30-300-rule/

the need for urban forests to percolate into the working and living environments. The rule of thumb provides clear criteria for the minimum provision of urban trees in our urban communities:

- 3 trees visible/close by every home.
- 30 percent tree canopy cover in every (urban) neighbourhood.
- 300 metres from the nearest public park or green space.

To monitor the effectiveness of the standard, it is important to have a baseline from which to work. The Council can establish this through a variety of mechanisms:

1. Commission a canopy study by consultants to establish a baseline and condition assessment.
2. Commission a canopy study by consultants to establish a baseline and condition assessment using remote sensing.
3. Approach on a case-by-case basis where new planning proposals come in which requires the developer to assess the existing canopy cover and the anticipated final canopy cover as part of the green infrastructure plan or green infrastructure section in the design and access statement.

The 30% tree canopy proposed in the 3-30-300 rule whilst aspirational can be considered at the neighbourhood scale, for example using Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs).

An important consideration is that the ecosystem services provided by urban trees increases significantly with the age of the tree and the growing congestion that the tree is subject to. In almost all cases a high level of protection should be given to mature trees and in particular the loss of a mature tree to development should normally be resisted and if unavoidable should be replaced by an appropriate number of new trees planted in a favoured location as close as possible to where the mature tree has been removed.

Urban Tree Canopy Standard for Borough of Melton

1. For the urban settlements of Melton Mowbray, Bottesford, Asfordby major new development should provide for three trees visible/close by every home, 30% tree canopy cover in the development or LSOA and be no more than 300 metres from the nearest public park or green space.
2. Developers will be expected as part of their planning proposals to submit a report that satisfies the standard in one above and addresses the advice available on the right tree in the right place for a resilient future using the Forest Research publication as a relevant source document. Mature trees should only be removed subject to a survey that this is essential for a development to proceed and if so, the developer will be required to plant a substantial number of replacement trees in a suitable and proximate location and provide for their maintenance long-term. The Bristol tree replacement standard¹⁷ is proposed as a guideline as follows in Table 11.

¹⁷ bristoltreeforum.org/2022/06/

Category	DBH (cm)	RPAr (m)	Area (ha)	Replacement trees required
Small	<30	3.6	0.0041	2
Medium	>30 to <90	10.8	0.0366	10
Large	>90	15.6	0.0765	21

Table 11 | Tree replacement standard guideline

3. When a financial alternative is proposed the contribution covers the cost of providing the tree pit (where appropriate), purchasing, planting, protecting, establishing and initially maintaining the new tree. The level of contribution per tree is as follows^{18,19}:
- Tree in open ground (no tree pit required) £765.21.
 - Tree in hard standing (tree pit required) £3,318.88.

The 'open ground' figure will apply where a development results in the loss of Council-owned trees planted in open ground. In these cases, the Council will undertake replacement tree planting in the nearest appropriate area of public open space.

Recommendation 7.4.1: Melton Borough Council adopt the Standards set out in the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and link these to policy EN3.

¹⁸ Benchmarked April 2022 and subject to RPI.

¹⁹ If not already applied to BNG.

8. Integration of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy

8.1 Aims and objectives for integration

The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework recommends that a Green Infrastructure Strategy is:

- Integrated with BNG objectives, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and local health strategies.
- Incorporate green infrastructure Strategies within planning policy, local plans area action plans and supplementary planning guidance.
- Draw on landscape character assessments, design guides and codes to make sure green infrastructure is appropriate and well-designed.
- Coordinate priorities for green infrastructure investment across partnerships and stakeholders to support funding and delivery.

8.2 Meeting the aims and objectives

This is a key role for the local authority, especially but not solely through its planning function. Melton Borough Council has already committed to the Council's four-year plan for the period 2024 to 2028 in the focus area theme 4 to Green Infrastructure.

The Melton Borough Council is also a partner in the Leicestershire Strategic Planning Group (SPG), which is made up of senior officer representatives responsible for overseeing strategic planning in each of the constituent authorities. This group is supported by a Planning Officers' Forum (POF). It is recommended that this POF considers how the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Borough of Melton along with those others from within Leicestershire are integrated with the BNG objectives. It is further recommended that LNRS ad hoc meetings be formalised and used to integrate nature recovery and Green Infrastructure within a single partnership approach. This could bring with it benefits in terms of integration of objectives as well as cost-effectiveness in avoiding confused messaging to stakeholders and reducing the number of potential meetings for Council Officers.

Notwithstanding the role of existing or potential new partnerships there needs to be an active response to the seeking of funding. Several possible pathways exist including the following²⁰:

- A funding leadership role by an environmental NGO on behalf of a partnership.
- A funding leadership role is held by one local authority on behalf of several, where the green infrastructure in question covers several local authority boundaries or is functional in nature (for example, woodland recovery).
- Task and finish group(s) charged and with access to seed-corn money (for example to employ a fundraising consultant) to prepare and submit a funding application.

Natural England stresses that the relationship between a Green Infrastructure Strategy and the LNRS is particularly important and provides opportunities to both maximise synergies and deliver significant benefits for people and wildlife. Whereas the primary focus of a LNRS will be to improve biodiversity, Green Infrastructure Strategies will have a broader and more multifunctional approach which is likely to be driven by more social and economic factors such as public health, access, development and recreation.

Through the preparation of this Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan 2024, the Council has sought to integrate with the LNRS process with the Green Infrastructure Strategies. For that reason, the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS mapping should be considered as supplementary evidence for the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy within the borough boundary and immediately beyond where connections are being made (which is linked to the duty to cooperate).

8.3 Integrating the Green Infrastructure Strategy

Melton Local Plan

The Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan (2024) is an evidence-based document in support of the Borough of Melton Local Plan. Policy EN3 of the local plan (green infrastructure) is being updated to reflect the content of this strategy (also note allied policy EN7 on open space) to inform the Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation.

Policy in respect to managing development (policy D1) is relevant in the context of 'active by design' and is closely linked with the aims of the Green Infrastructure Strategy. Of particular significance is the link to tackling the prevalence of obesity and inactivity among both adults and children meaning that open spaces should support physical activity across all ages.

Furthermore, communities should be walkable and that walking and cycling routes should be connected too. The policy context also states that a network of multi-functional open space to support a range of activities including sport, recreation and play plus other landscape uses including SuDS, woodland, wildlife habitat, allotments and orchards. These development aims are consistent with the Green Infrastructure approach.

²⁰ This is not an exhaustive list as other options may exist; the list is illustrative.

Policy EN1 on landscape is relevant through the evidence-based document (Melton Borough Landscape and Historic Urban Character Assessment report, 2006) and was updated using the Settlement Fringe Sensitivity and Local Green Space Study from 2016. However, the landscape descriptions are likely to be little changed since extensive use is made of National Character Areas which were reviewed in preparing this Green Infrastructure Strategy. Note that the landscape character assessment predates several important governmental periods/initiatives including austerity and the introduction of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). Given the widespread reporting of biodiversity decline, it is anticipated that an updated landscape character assessment will identify further deteriorations in the state of hedgerows and some other landscape features and also reveal efforts funded through ELMS to reverse this trend (e.g., wildlife headlands).

Health and well-being

Access to green space and Green Infrastructure is known to be very significant in terms of physical activity, especially for those on lower incomes where gym membership is less affordable, and research has shown that there are additional benefits from spending time in nature. Hence an investment in Green Infrastructure is beneficial to both physical and mental wellness and the Green Infrastructure Strategy can make a significant contribution to meeting this strategic priority. Community health and well-being are factors to be taken into consideration by the Borough Council in making development decisions.

Local Design

Local planning authorities use design codes to incorporate the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and embed these in the development process. Natural England proposes that the geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription within codes should enable Green Infrastructure to be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety. Design approaches for Green Infrastructure Strategy should be considered for all relevant area types. The Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide (2023a) uses ten area types including high streets, urban, suburban, streets, parks and gardens and linear infrastructure. These can be used to correlate to or used to inform the structure and content of a local design code (notably Melton Local Plan policy D1). The Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide²¹ (2023 and as updated) is recommended as a technical appendix to the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan (2024). See Figure 12, Figure 13, and Figure 14 for illustrations.

²¹ designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Design%20Guide%20-%20Green%20Infrastructure%20Framework.pdf

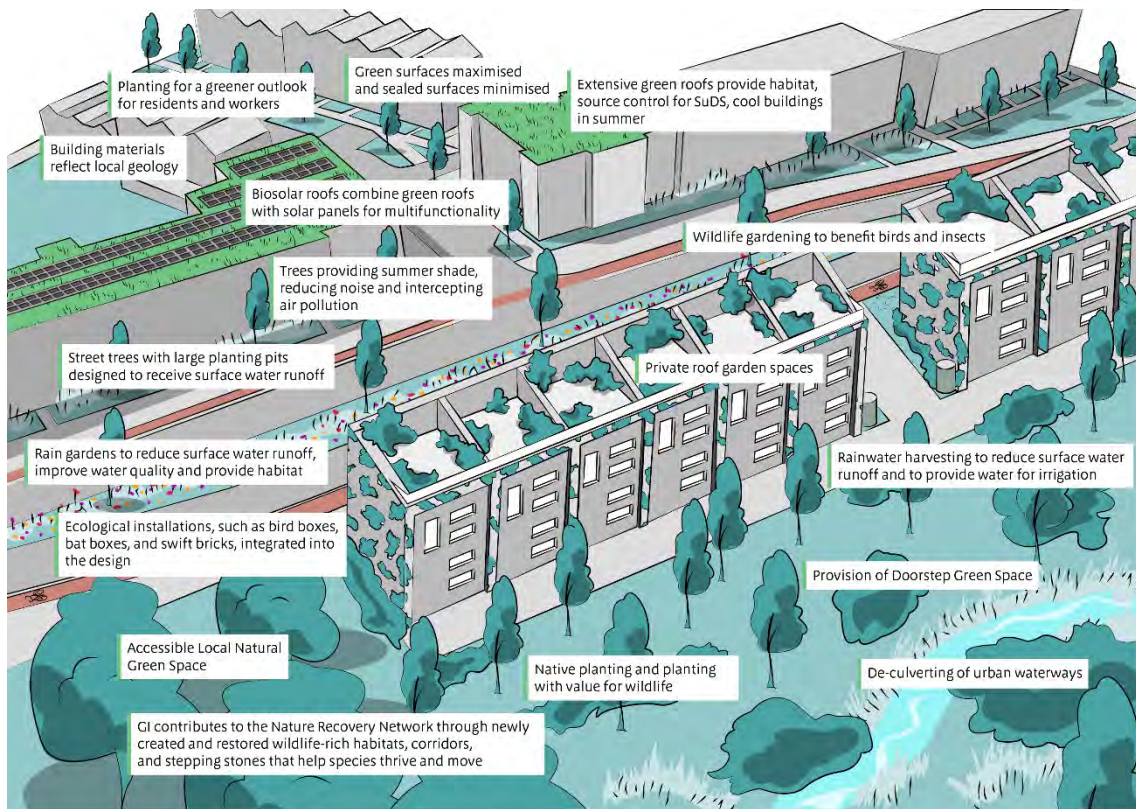


Figure 12 | Design of streets in urban areas factoring in green infrastructure (Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide, 2023, p.101).

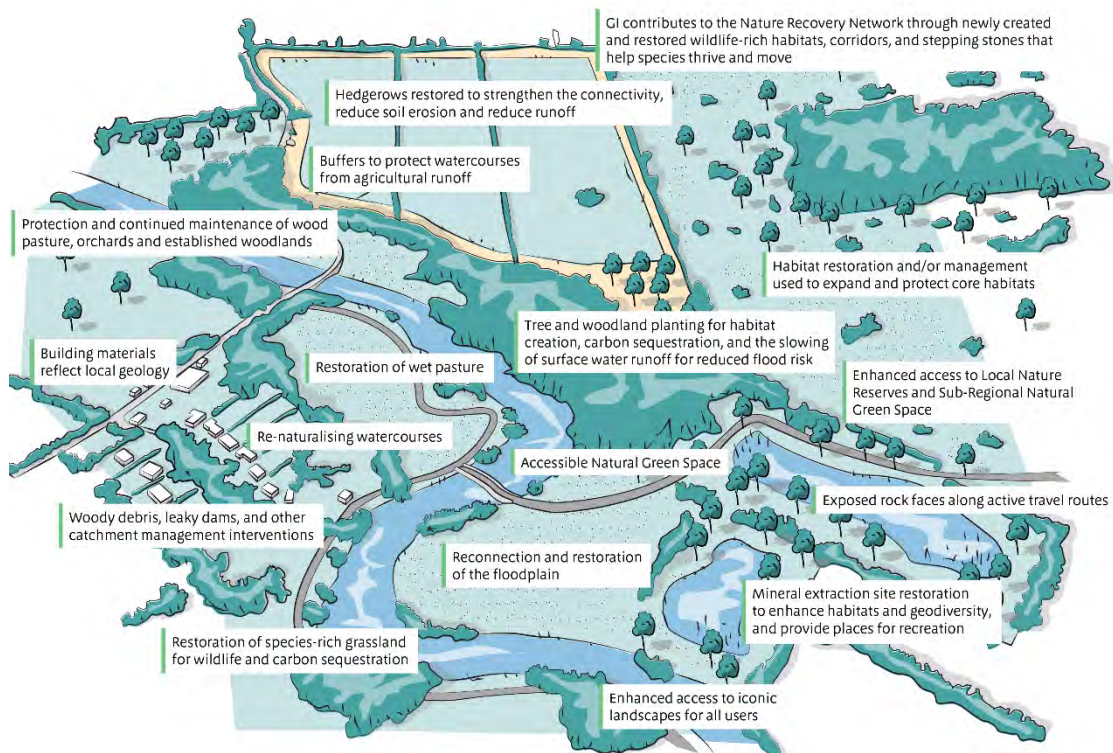


Figure 13 | Design of a rural area factoring in green infrastructure (Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide, 2023, p.109).

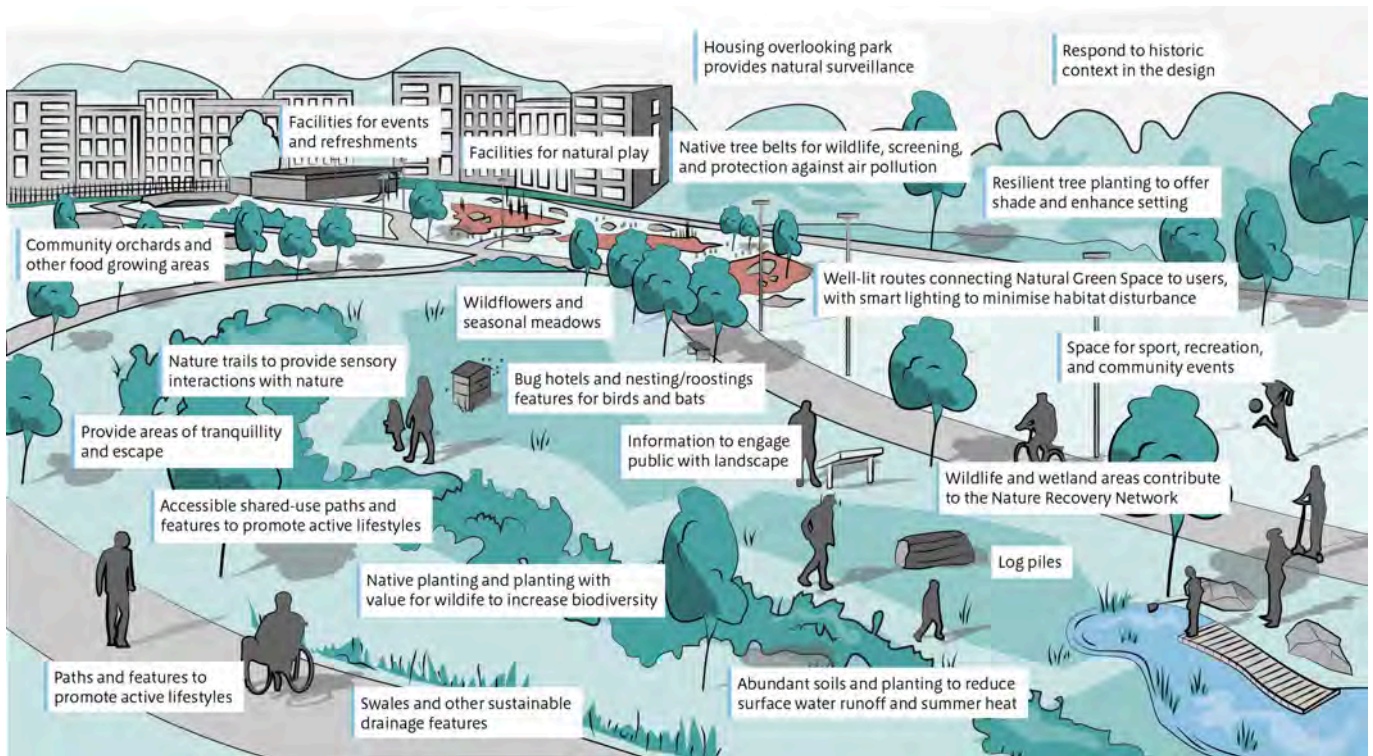


Figure 14 | Design of parks and green spaces factoring in green infrastructure (Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide, 2023, p. 114).

Development management

Planning applications represent the closing stage of the planning and design development process and should demonstrate the continuity of Green Infrastructure policy, planning and design objectives. The validation of planning applications for either outline, hybrid or detailed schemes provides an opportunity to demonstrate this continuity and cross-check delivery with the strategic objectives set out in this strategy. This can ensure that Green Infrastructure is considered fully from the early stages in a planning application. It can also demonstrate practically how the standards will be met and delivered, ensuring the right quantity and quality of Green Infrastructure is in the right location.

Recommendation 8.3.1: Melton Borough Council Planning Service to recognise the central importance of (i) the local plan policy EN3 and others, (ii) health and well-being, (iii) local design (guides) and (iv) development management as key factors in the integration of the Green Infrastructure Strategy with the work of the Melton Borough Council.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

9.1 Action Plan

Accompanying the strategy is a Green Infrastructure Action Plan for the Borough of Melton. The key focus of the action plan is on the activities needed to implement the Green Infrastructure Strategy and set strategic goals. The action plan can be considered a delivery-focused spreadsheet based on coordination of implementation activities. The role of Melton Borough Council, in the action plan is not to undertake each action included within it but to identify the processes, partnerships and instruments needed for delivery. Natural England states that there are three elements to good management, and these have been adopted as underlying principles in the Action Plan:

- Well-managed and maintained.
- Adaptable to changing needs and evolving technologies.
- Having a sense of ownership.

It is important to recognise that the governance, stewardship, funding, management maintenance, and monitoring of green infrastructure for the long term must be considered from the outset and at all stages of a development or project. Effective management and maintenance are important for ensuring green infrastructure quality, which in turn is key for ensuring that the green infrastructure delivers its intended multifunctional benefits. Natural England advise that good design can plan for management and maintenance requirements and minimise long-term costs. A strategic approach to green infrastructure delivery, funding, stewardship management maintenance and monitoring is therefore needed to ensure that the green infrastructure delivers its intended benefits for the long term.

Recommendation 9.1.1: Melton Borough Council planning service adopt a central coordinating role for the delivery of the action plan. This involves processes of resource allocation, developing partnerships and other instruments needed for delivery. As owner of the action plan the Melton Borough Council should consider the recommendations of Natural England stated above in terms of management and maintenance and a long-term strategic approach. Should Melton Borough Council be able to action recommendation 4.2.4 then a Green Infrastructure Officer for the Council could lead on this. If this proves not possible the duty will need to rest with an existing planning officer.

9.2 New Green Infrastructure Developments

Green Infrastructure will be delivered by a variety of actions and stakeholders. Often the Green Infrastructure Framework is already in place and requires enhancement rather than entirely new provision. It is necessary to identify who will take the long-term responsibility for each Green Infrastructure intervention or enhancement and this is generally not a cost-neutral undertaking. Like any form of equivalent infrastructure such as transport, energy or telecoms, green infrastructure likewise needs management and maintenance, and this should be considered at the outset. For example, path services need regular maintenance from 'wear and tear' and damage from flooding. Nature-rich areas will need interventions such as woodland management and removal of invasive species depending on the site management plan. Where the green infrastructure is also part of conventional open green space near communities, there are responsibilities for health and safety and the maintenance of infrastructure, ranging from play equipment through to interpretation panels²².

Any significant intervention should be planned from the outside with management and maintenance in mind and a general rule of thumb is that securing capital resources to create a green infrastructure asset is generally much easier than the revenue cost of future management and maintenance. Note should be made that many prospective funders are more eager to invest in creation or restoration than in management and maintenance, so this responsibility needs to be addressed upfront. Often the assumption is made that the responsibility for green infrastructure will fall back on the local authority. In the case of some infrastructure assets such as canals and rivers this might lie with other competent authorities (e.g. Canals and Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, Water Authority).

One area that requires careful consideration is to do with Green Infrastructure and green open spaces created as part of development proposals and funded through S106 agreements. There is a need for realistic costing of management and maintenance as part of the development negotiation rule of thumb is the developers will wish to discharge their responsibility to the local authority or another actor at the earliest opportunity. Natural England suggest that the stewardship of Green Infrastructure in major new developments include:

- Adoption and management by Local Authority or Parish Council.
- Management companies.
- Community Trust | Community Interest Companies.
- Housing associations.
- Charities.

Recommendation 9.2.1: Green infrastructure should be recognised as an equivalent to any other form of infrastructure and that management and maintenance is not optional but essential in planning and maintenance of quality in the long term. The cost of management and maintenance should be identified in advance of green infrastructure enhancements and interventions and built into funding proposals with a clear identification of where the long-term responsibilities for upkeep lie.

²² NB: Interpretation panels have limited life due to built-in obsolescence and fading from exposure to sunlight.

Recommendation 9.2.2: Where green infrastructure enhancement or development is being funded through S106 planning agreements it is essential to factor in the cost of management and maintenance of quality beyond the development agreement.

9.3 Funding

In terms of funding environmental issues have often been the subject of cuts to a greater degree than other forms of investment funding. Whilst this is a reality, there is an increasing understanding that the health and well-being of society depend to a large degree on the quality of the environment. In view of this, there is a strong case for investment not only for environmental but also for social and economic reasons related to community health and well-being.

A variety of sources exist for the creation and management of green infrastructure. These include.

- Public sources: whilst capital budgets are now very limited in local authorities there are new instruments such as Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Neutrality, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Community Fund.
- Charitable sources: whilst these are under considerable pressure, there are charitable trusts that give money to nature-based improvements and new mechanisms are opening such as charitable entrepreneurship and crowdfunding.
- Corporate: companies can get marketing and some tax benefits from donating through mechanisms such as corporate social responsibility. There are several agri-food businesses located in the Borough of Melton who may have an interest in association with environmental enhancements.
- Payment for ecosystem services: the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) is a key fund for improvements on agricultural land and in the borough of Melton which has a substantial agricultural area this may be a major contributor.
- Enterprise: notwithstanding the need to provide free and open access to green infrastructure there is the opportunity for money raising activities through for example events charges and concessions for refreshment.
- Philanthropy: individual giving should not be underestimated and across England there are examples of projects that have been funded by individual donors including through living and post-life legacies.

When considering funding applications, it is useful to place a value (and value added) to investment in Green Infrastructure using toolkits such as the Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit.²³

There are also tools available for developing project applications. A valuable source is provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. These include activity plan guidance which sets out everything an applicant needs to do as part of a National Lottery-supported project to achieve positive outcomes for the people involved, a project budget template and a project plan and risk

²³ ecosystemsknowledge.net/resources/tool-assessor/green-infrastructure-valuation-toolkit-gi-val/

register template²⁴. The project plan outlines detailed information about the tasks needed in an application and is based on SMART principals, i.e.

- specific
- measurable
- achievable
- realistic
- time-related

Recommendation 9.3.1: Mapping of funding sources is normally project/intervention specific and for the Borough of Melton likely to include a variety of partnership actors cutting across the public sector, private sector and third sector. Melton Borough Council has a role in funding partnerships and could take on a pecuniary role in providing costings and undertaking valuation of the overall/net benefit of a green infrastructure project intervention.

Recommendation 9.3.2: Given the predominantly rural characteristic of the Borough of Melton, the payment for ecosystem services and corporate sources relating to agri-food businesses are considered as opportunities that may not be available to the same extent elsewhere. In this respect there is a role for council officers and members in dealing with the agricultural and food businesses in the area and to interest them in the topic of green infrastructure.

9.4 Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of policy EN3 is the responsibility of the Borough of Melton Council planning service. The policy is informed by an up-to-date evidence base. It is good practice that the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan is updated on a regular basis. The previous Green Infrastructure Strategy is dated 2011 which is a duration of 13 years. This interval is considered too long given the increasing priority given to topics such as nature recovery, community health and well-being, climate change and the pressure of urban development. Hence it is considered that a term of 5 years is a reasonable interval for a strategy update.

Recommendation 9.4.1: That Melton Borough Council review and update the evidence space for Green Infrastructure on a 5-to-7-year time horizon.

Recommendation 9.4.2: That the impact of policy EN3 is reviewed by planning officers in advance of an update of the evidence base for Green Infrastructure as set out 9.4.1.

In addition to the review of policy impact the effectiveness of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and action plan can be monitored against progress on the ground/site level. A variety of mechanisms are available for this purpose:

- Green Infrastructure projects identified, underway or completed.
- Total investment secured for Green Infrastructure projects and any co-benefits (monetary and non-monetary) secured.

²⁴ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-heritage-grants-10k-250k/project-plan-risks-template-0>

- Number of Green Infrastructure S and green space projects funded and/or delivered through planning agreements (e.g. S106)
- Surveys of public awareness and appreciation of the Borough’s Green Infrastructure surveys which can be hosted on the council website and social media.
- Quality audits of open greenspace undertaken in support of Policy EN7 (a proxy of progress towards green flag standard).
- Mapping of projects overlain against a Green Infrastructure base map using GIS.
- Monitoring of landscape change undertaken by consultants or as research projects.
- Measurable key performance indicators (KPIs)

Recommendation 9.4.3: Mechanisms should be introduced to review the impact of policy (EN3), with the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan and on the ground site delivery. This can be regarded as a tiered approach as shown in Figure 15 below.

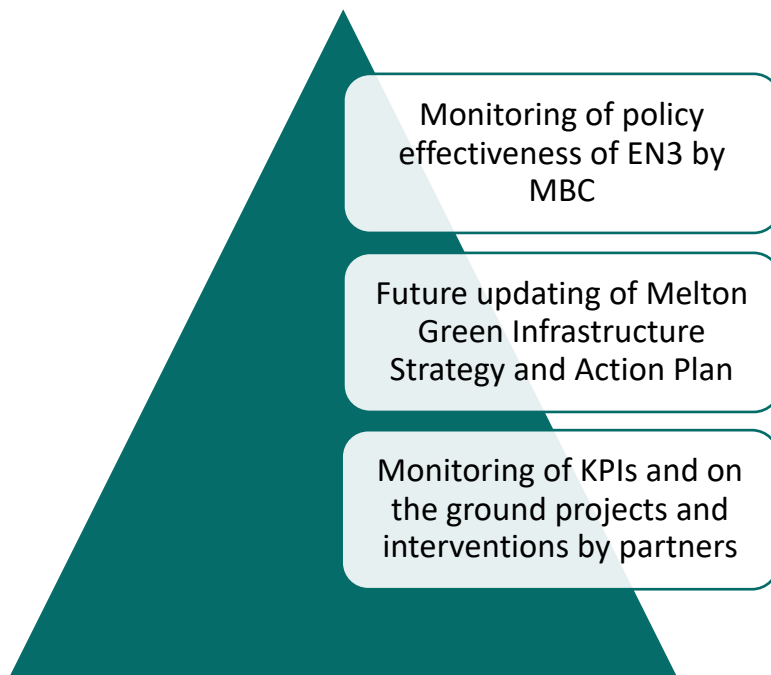


Figure 15 | Monitoring hierarchy for the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy.

9.5 Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators should be relevant, measurable and cost-effective. The performance indicators proposed for this strategy and policy EN3 are linked to the five Green Infrastructure Standards as set out in Section 7.4. One key performance indicator has been identified for each of the standards in Table 12 below.

Green Infrastructure Standard	Indicator	Measurement	Ownership
Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard	Number of green infrastructure strategies and/or green infrastructure sections in design and access statements in developer applications.	Number of strategies/design and access statements as a percentage of all major developments approved by the Borough Council planning service.	Melton Borough Council
Accessible Green Space Standard	That the standard of 5.03 ha of accessible green space for 1000 population is maintained or exceeded.	Included within the next open green space quality and quantity audit in no more than five years' time.	Melton Borough Council
Urban Nature Recovery Standard	Semi-natural green space identified in the Borough of Melton Open Space Strategy 2024	That the semi-natural greenspace identified in the Borough of Melton Open Space Strategy 2024 of 61 Sites and 92.15 ha is increased by 10% in area (based on BNG)	Melton Borough Council
Urban Greening Factor Standard	Percentage of all major residential development as green or blue spaces	40% of all major developments over a five-year period reaching this cumulative target ²⁵	Melton Borough Council
Urban Tree Canopy Standard	The 3-30-300 rule	3 trees visible/close by every home, 30% tree canopy cover in the development and be no more than 300 metres from the nearest public park or green space.	Melton Borough Council

Table 12 | The key performance indicators for the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy

Recommendation 9.4.4: the key performance indicators (Table 12) based on the five Green Infrastructure standards are adopted by the Borough Council as the basis for performance monitoring.

²⁵ Can include areas for private gardens, green roofs, green walls, planters, trees, nature-based solutions such as rain gardens and swales, surface based sustainable urban drainage (accessible and non-accessible), amenity grassland, meadows, playgrounds, multiuse games areas and other green space types in agreement with the Borough Council.

Acknowledgements

Previous reports including Green Infrastructure Strategy (TEP-2011), 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy, National (Landscape Character Assessment)

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

MD2 Consultants Ltd: Clive Davies, Glenn McGill, Paul Davies, Jane McGill, Clive Rowley, and Lotte Dijkstra (Studio Places)

Melton Borough Council: Jorge Fiz Alonso, Bernice Turner, Simon Thornley.

Leicestershire County Council: Paul Killip

Participants in the design and delivery of the consultation on the Green Infrastructure Strategy, including all respondents.

Any others not mentioned by name whose contribution is hereby recorded with thanks.

MD2 Consulting Ltd
The Dene
36 Nevilledale Terrace
City of Durham
DH1 4QG

info@md2.org.uk
www.md2.org.uk

Company registration number
08263372