

Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Report

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

May 2024



Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft report	N Smith R Martinez Cillero L Gara R Osborne S Newman	N Smith	M Kurihara	24.11.2023
2	Draft Final Report	N Smith L Gara	M Kurihara	M Kurihara	10.01.2024
3	Final Report (incorporating client comment)	N Smith	M Kurihara	M Kurihara	24.05.24



Land Use Consultants Limited

Registered in England. Registered number 2549296. Registered office: 250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD.

Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Contents

Chapter 1	7
Introduction	
The purpose of this strategy	7
Our approach to developing the Strategy	15
How this GBI Strategy is structured	17
Our use of themes	18
Chapter 2	20
A portrait of the GBI network in Oadby and Wigston	
Chapter 3	23
Theme 1: Nature rich beautiful places	
Why is GBI important for nature rich, beautiful places in Oadby and Wigston?	23
Chapter 4	35
Theme 2: Active and healthy places	
Why is GBI important for active and healthy places in Oadby & Wigston?	35
Chapter 5	46
Theme 3: Thriving and prosperous communities	
Why is GBI important for wider thriving and prosperous communities in Oadby & Wigston?	46
Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy	3

Contents

Chapter 6 **53**

Theme 4: Improved water management

Why is GBI important for enabling improved water management in Oadby & Wigston? 53

Chapter 7 **60**

Theme 5: Resilient and climate positive places

Why is GBI important for creating a more resilient and climate positive Oadby & Wigston? 60

Chapter 8 **64**

A Vision for GBI in Oadby and Wigston

Strategic objectives 64

Chapter 9 **66**

Strategic GBI Opportunity Areas

Opportunity Area 1: Oadby Urban Area 70

Opportunity Area 2: Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge 76

Opportunity Area 3: Wigston/South Wigston urban area 80

Opportunity Area 4: Grand Union Canal/ Sence corridor 85

Chapter 10 **90**

Policy recommendations

Embedding GBI into Local Plan Policy – “Mainstreaming GBI” 90

Contents

Alignment with emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy 91
Definitions 93
Vision and plan objectives 95
Local Plan Policies 97

Chapter 11 122
Delivering GBI in Oadby and Wigston

Overview of GBI delivery 122

Appendix A 129
Full analysis of Priority and Notable Habitats in Oadby & Wigston

Appendix B 135
Summary of stakeholder consultation

Appendix C 142
Developer Checklist

1. Has the landscape led the production of the masterplan? 143
2. Has nature led the masterplan and does the site relate to wider ecological networks? 143
3. Has consideration of water and drainage led the masterplan? 144
4. Does the development meet local open space and green space standards in a coordinated manner? 145
5. Does the development support active travel, linking up with active travel routes beyond the site boundary? 145
6. Is tree canopy cover across the site significantly expanded? 146
7. Does the masterplan address the design of GBI to meet wider needs? 146
8. How will the site be maintained in the long-term? 147

Contents

Appendix D Glossary	148
References	152

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC has been commissioned to prepare a Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy for Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (OWBC). The Strategy will provide an update and refresh of the former Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy that was published in 2018 [See reference 1]. The Strategy will be a key piece of evidence to support the Borough's new Local Plan.

1.2 Figure 1.3 provides an overview of the geographical context for the GBI Strategy.

The purpose of this strategy

1.3 The updated GBI Strategy is being developed against a backdrop of several key global and national challenges, the climate and biodiversity crises, pressure for more housing, and recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic. While these have global relevance, the GBI Strategy provides an opportunity to provide a local response and provide local solutions.

1.4 This GBI Strategy is intended to translate these global challenges into local action by informing the review of the Borough's Local Plan. It will help to identify the type of policy that will be necessary to help deliver the borough's GBI ambitions. It will also help to shape the plan's key proposals by identifying, for example, where GBI needs to be protected and where it can be extended or enhanced.

1.5 The Council expects the GBI Strategy to play a critical role in informing the investment that will be needed in GBI if the borough is to deliver its environmental ambitions. By helping to deliver an integrated approach to GBI across the Borough, the GBI Strategy seeks to deliver a broader suite of

multifunctional benefits to a wide variety of stakeholders across the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. It will also allow the Council to take a strategic and holistic approach to the planning, design and management of GBI as part of a wider framework to guide sustainable development.

1.6 The GBI Study will provide an important reference point to help identify the features and assets in the Borough that need to be protected, as well as identify the GBI opportunities that can be pursued across the Borough. Significantly, the strategy will help to communicate and develop a better understanding of GBI across the borough. In doing so, it will encourage and enable a wide suite of stakeholders to become involved in its planning, design and delivery. To support this objective, **Appendix D** explains the various terms that we use throughout this GBI Strategy.

What is Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI)?

Defining GBI

1.7 Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) forms an essential component of sustainable growth. It is fast becoming recognised as a key feature in enabling both local and global communities to tackle environmental, societal, and economic challenges. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines GBI as:

A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity [See reference 2].

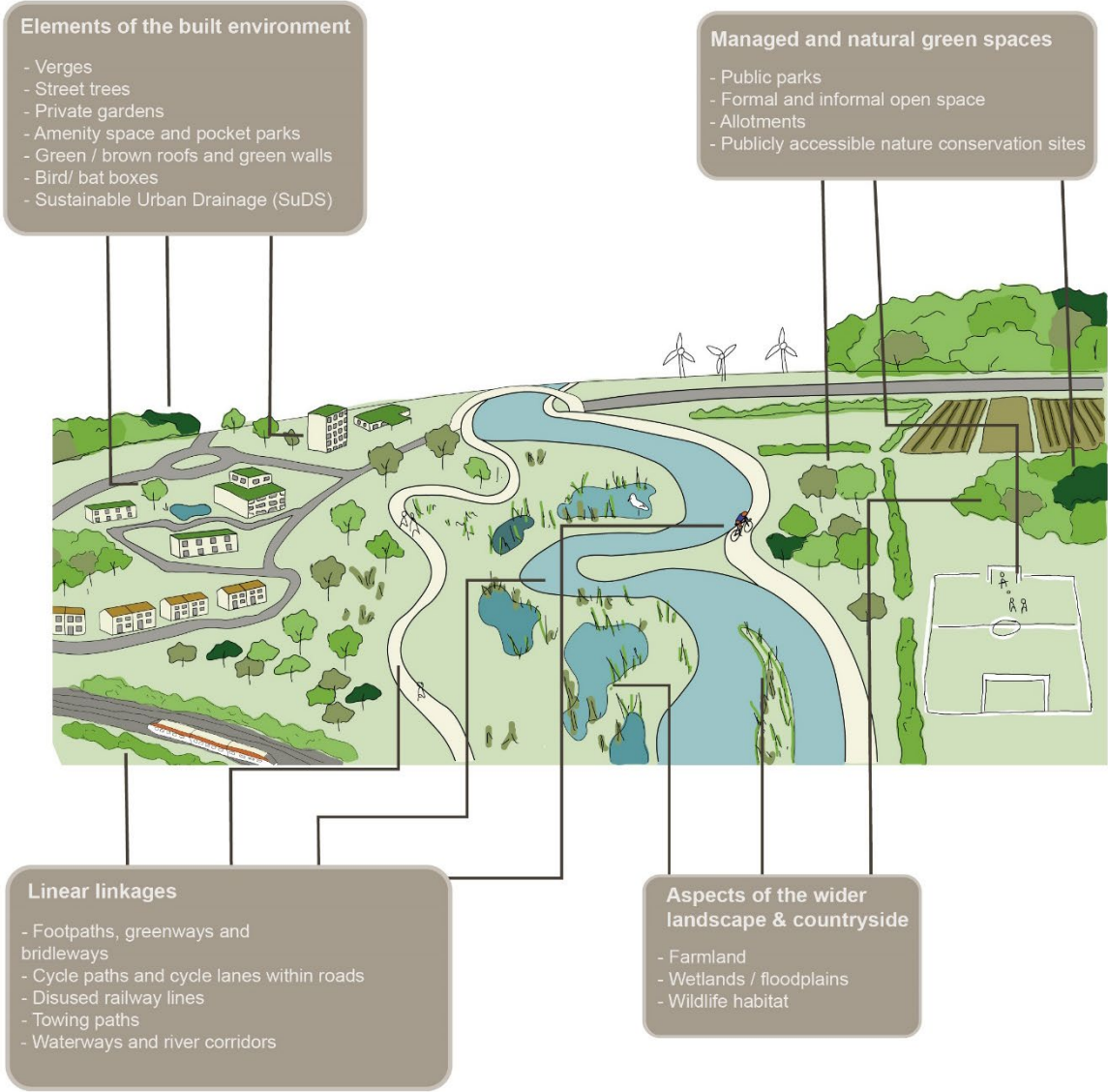
1.8 Importantly, GBI assets go beyond simply parks and open spaces to encompass a wide range of assets at all scales. This can include large green spaces like National Parks, Country Parks, farmed landscapes or river corridors. It can also include private gardens, allotments, hedges, street trees, roadside green verges, or footpaths. However, GBI is not about individual assets – more important are the connections between those assets and the *functions* they provide.

1.9 Unlike grey infrastructure, such as drainage pipes, which have a single function, individual GBI assets can have many functions. These include recreation, removing water pollution, providing homes for wildlife, providing flowers for bees and other pollinators and helping to keep urban areas cool.

1.10 While GBI assets are at their most powerful when they combine multiple functions, it is important to also recognise where GBI functions can conflict with each other. For example, the delivery of biodiversity enhancements (particularly related to the favourable status of statutorily designated sites or species) at select locations need to be carefully balanced with the need for active travel (walking, cycling or wheeling) or recreational access.

1.11 **Figure 1.1** provides an overview of how GBI assets of different types can extend across both urban and rural environments.

Figure 1.1: The assets of a GBI network



The National Policy Agenda and the Natural England GI Framework (2023)

1.12 Since the publication of the Borough's previous GI strategy in 2018, the issue of GBI has risen rapidly up the national policy agenda. In documents such as the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, further emphasis has been given to articulating and evidencing the wide-ranging benefits of GBI. There is also further direction, and greater certainty, about the ways through which GBI can be planned, designed and delivered.

1.13 The importance of GBI was recognised through the recent work of the Land Use in England Committee, which reported in December 2022 that:

"More must be done nationally and locally to increase the prevalence of green infrastructure and to make the most of the opportunities it offers. In particular, as well as supporting its protective aspects, there is unfulfilled potential for green infrastructure to deliver multifunctional land use benefits, for example through combining public health benefits with environmental enhancement" **[See reference 3]**.

1.14 To support the delivery of GBI in planning and placemaking, Natural England published a GI Framework in February 2023 [See reference 4]. The framework was published in response to a requirement that was embedded in the 25-Year Environment Plan and includes:

- A set of GI principles
- A set of GI standards
- A GI mapping guide
- A GI design guide
- A series of GI case studies
- Process guides to support the planning, design delivery of GI. Three guides have been produced to date, with these being directed to local planning authorities [See reference 5], developers and design teams [See reference 6], and for neighbourhood planning groups [See reference 7].

1.15 The ‘GI Principles Wheel’, as developed by Natural England, outlines 15 separate principles for successful GBI. As **Figure 1.2** shows, the principles are equally split across three headings, with these aligning to:

- The **“why” principles**, to explain the benefits that GBI can give rise to (The Benefit Principles);
- The **“what” principles**, to describe the features that a successful GBI network should have (The Descriptive Principles).
- The **“how” principles**, to explain the optimum processes for the successful planning, design and implementation of GBI (The Process Principles).

Figure 1.2: 'GI Principles Wheel, as developed by Natural England

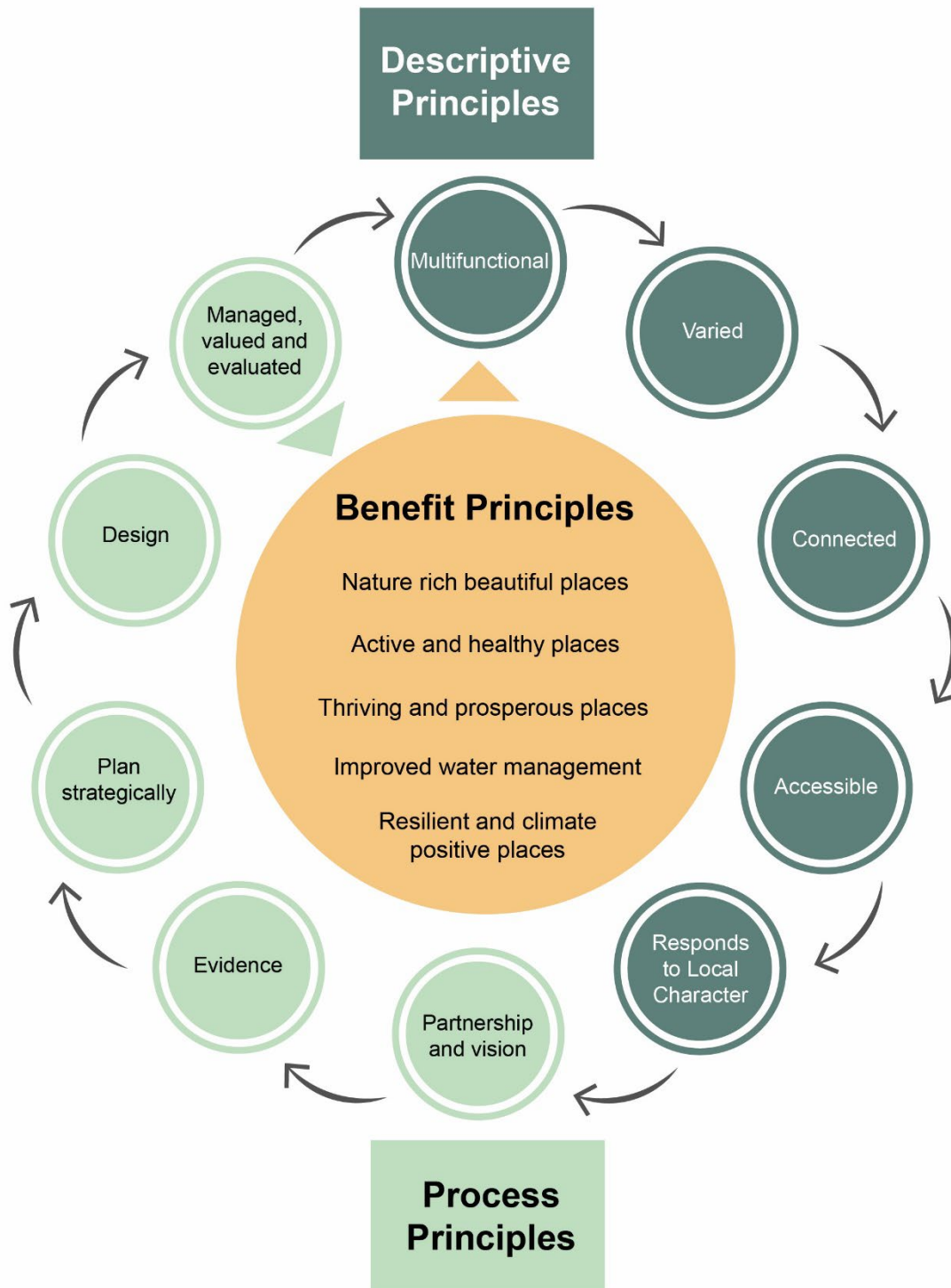
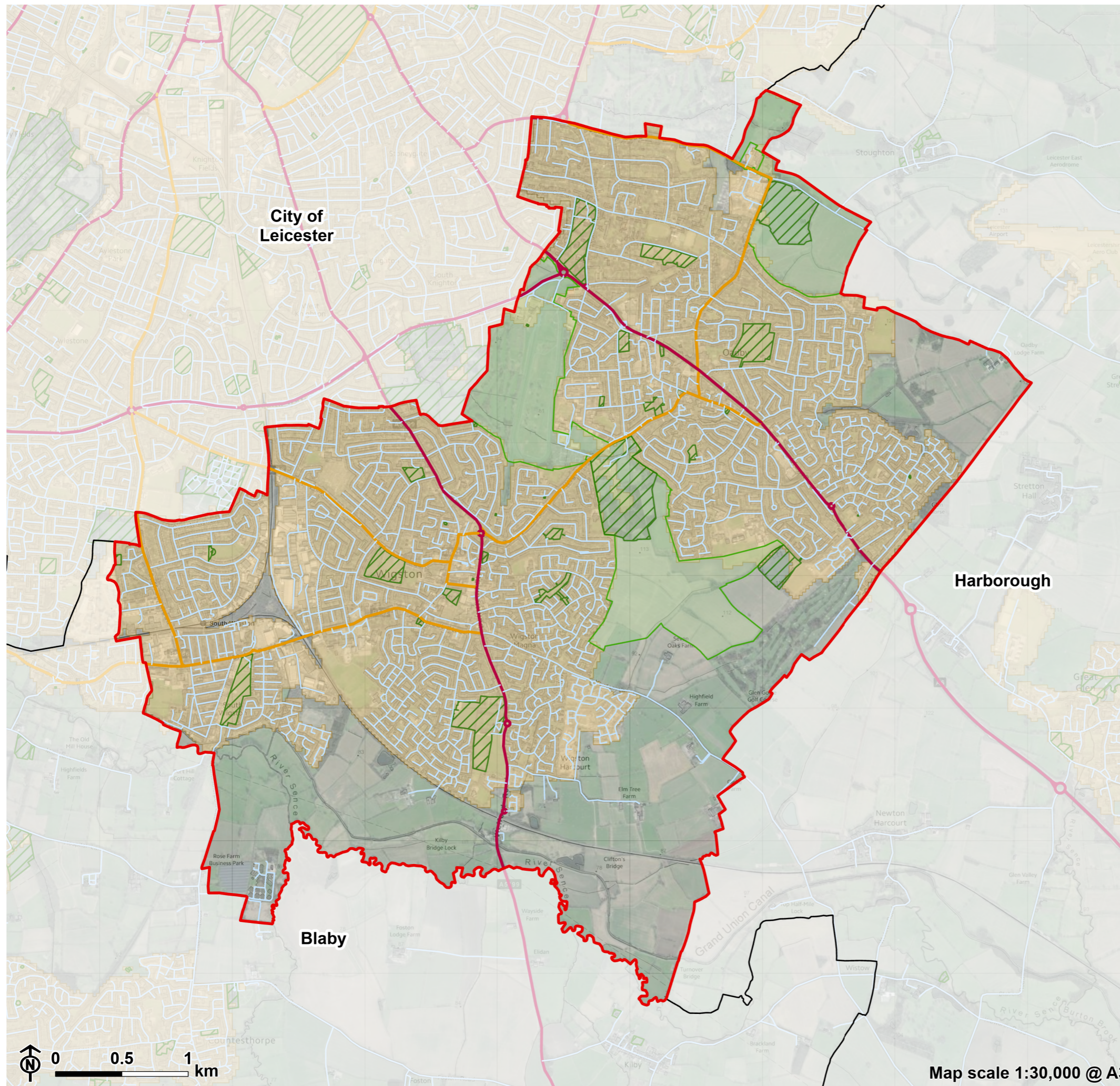


Figure 1.3: Oadby and Wigston in Context



- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Green wedge
- Accessible Green Infrastructure (Natural England)
- Built Up Area
- A road
- B road
- Other road

Our approach to developing the Strategy

1.16 Figure 1.4 shows the approach we have taken to developing a GBI strategy for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston.

Figure 1.4: Study approach



Stage 1: Policy review

1.17 In order to understand the characteristics of the existing GBI network and initiatives within Oadby & Wigston, we carried out a detailed policy review of key policy documents, studies and guidance. The outputs have been incorporated into the analysis set out in chapters 3-7. This task also focussed on the lessons learnt from the previous GI Strategy (2018), ensuring the alignment of the new Strategy with the rapidly progressing national and local policy agenda in this area.

Stage 2: Data assembly and analysis

1.18 Following the desk-based policy review, we adopted a ‘themed’ approach to reviewing the Borough’s current GBI network. This enabled a detailed review

of the current functionality of the GBI network against a range of ecosystem services, particularly in relation to the climate emergency and nature recovery. The analysis also emphasised the importance of GBI in supporting health and wellbeing (as highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic). The resulting baseline analysis identified how the GBI network is currently performing against need. The series of maps provided in Chapters 3-7 help to illustrate the key messages coming through from the analysis.

Stage 3: Stakeholder consultation

1.19 To extend and validate our analysis, we approached and engaged with a number of stakeholders, initially via an online survey and then through an in-person workshop. By bringing the insights of different stakeholders together, we were able to build on our desktop analysis to identify the principal issues and opportunities relating to GBI provision across the borough.

1.20 Appendix B provides a summary of the stakeholder consultation process.

Stage 4: Visioning, challenges, and opportunities

1.21 All the above analysis and stakeholder inputs were then used to refine the challenges and opportunities present in the different parts of the Borough, and to develop an overarching vision for GBI in Oadby & Wigston. The vision is supported by a series of objectives. (chapter 8)

Stage 5: Priority interventions

1.22 The vision and objectives were then translated into strategic GBI opportunities (grouped by area of the borough) and delivery and policy recommendations (chapters 9-11).

How this GBI Strategy is structured

1.23 The GBI Strategy is structured as follows:

■ Chapter 1: Introduction

Provides a simple definition of GBI and GBI 'functions', outlines the structure of the Strategy and how it should be used by a range of audiences. The process of stakeholder consultation and the 'themed' approach are also described in further detail.

■ Chapter 2: A portrait of the GBI network in Oadby and Wigston

Provides a succinct overview of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network "in a nutshell", to be further expanded on within chapters 3-6.

■ Chapter 3-7: Thematic baseline analysis of existing network

Explores the current GBI network and how it is performing against each of the five study 'themes', using mapped figures to illustrate different parts of the Borough's network

■ Chapter 8: Vision and Objectives

States the agreed vision for GBI in Oadby & Wigston and details the strategic objectives that will help the vision be achieved.

■ Chapter 9: Identification of the Borough's strategic GBI opportunities

Identifies for each area of the borough where investment in the GBI network should be prioritised.

■ Chapter 10: Policy Recommendations

Identifies policy recommendations to shape the future planning, design, management and maintenance of greenspaces within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston

■ Chapter 11 Delivery checklist for new development

Provides a checklist of questions to assess the provision of GBI as part of proposed developments

Our use of themes

1.24 In order to establish a comprehensive baseline, a ‘themed’ approach was adopted to explore the existing assets and considerations within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. The five themes are designed to align with the five Benefit Principles set out in Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework. **[See reference 8]**. These Benefit Principles represent important drivers for those planning GBI, identifying how plans and strategies can help to create:

Nature-rich beautiful places

How the GBI network can support bigger, better and more connected habitats, and deliver gains in biodiversity performance.

Active and healthy places

How the GBI network can help to deliver better health outcomes, and positively support physical health and mental well-being for those living and working in the borough.

Thriving and prosperous communities

How the GBI network defines, and can positively contribute, to the Borough’s urban and rural environments. GBI can help to reinforce local distinctiveness and heritage and facilitate regeneration and investment in place.

Improved water management

How the blue elements of the GBI network can provide a range of functions, including aquatic habitats, natural flood management opportunities, and blue-green opportunities for walking, cycling and habitat connectivity.

Resilient and climate positive places

How an effective GBI network can help to make places more resilient and

adaptive to climate change, as well as help meet zero carbon and air quality targets.

Chapter 2

A portrait of the GBI network in Oadby and Wigston

2.1 This Strategy covers the whole of the area administered by the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. As **Figure 2.1** shows, the borough is relatively small and comprises a largely urbanised area to the south-east of Leicester City. All of the Borough's urban areas fall within the Leicester Principal Urban Area (PUA). The borough has a population of 57,700 and is among the top 30% of the most densely populated English local authority areas (Census 2021). The majority of that population live in the centres of Wigston, Oadby and South Wigston. Much of the Borough is urban or peri-urban with the surrounding and intervening greenspaces providing the principal areas for biodiversity to thrive and disperse.

2.2 Oadby and Wigston sits within the wider county of Leicestershire, which is a predominantly rural county. However, the County as a whole has very few biodiversity designations and is dominated by farmland - 84% of Leicestershire and Rutland is farmland (see Theme 1).

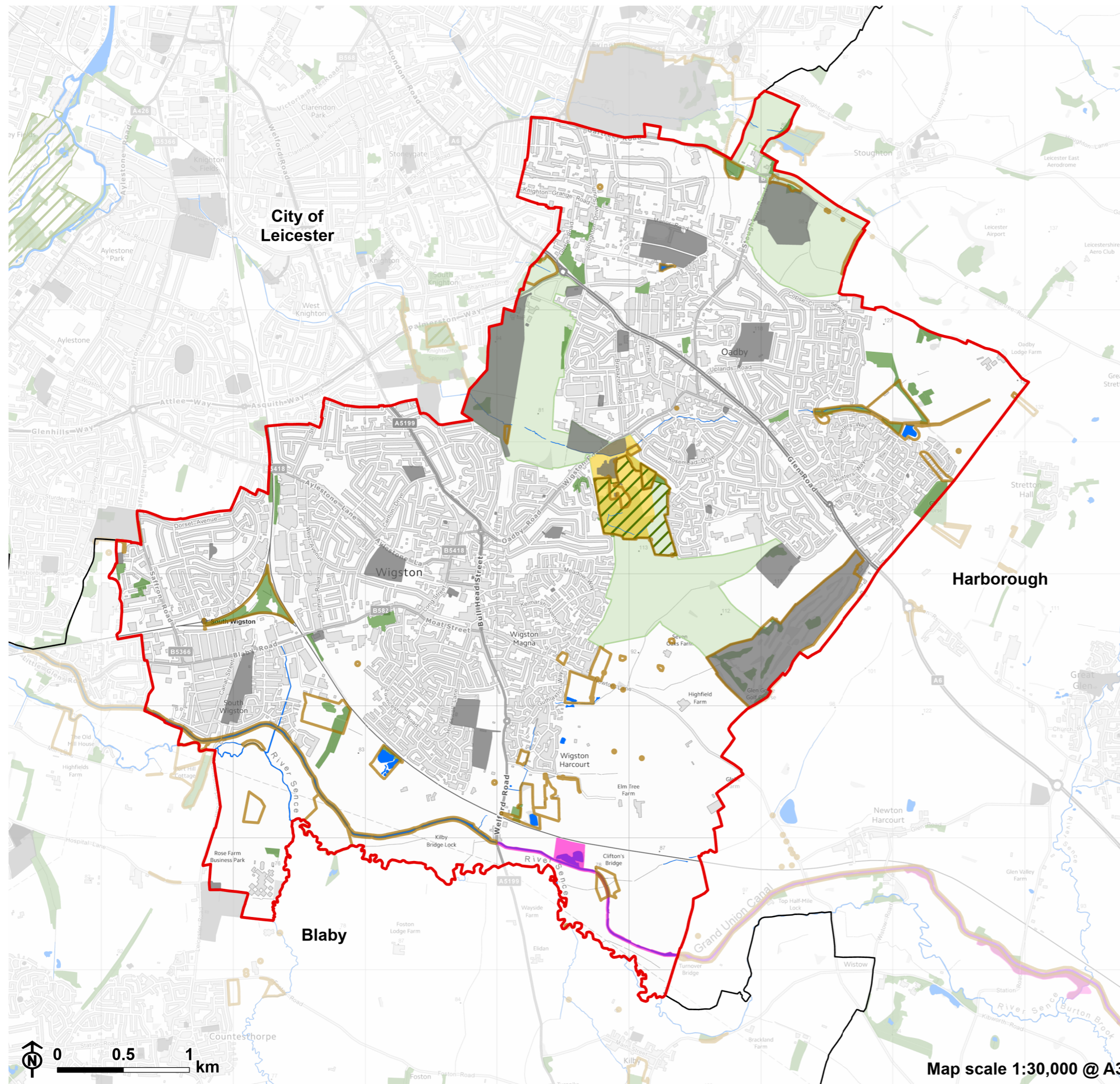
2.3 The three major blue corridors running as "blue spines" through the Borough are the River Sence, Wash Brook and the Grand Union Canal. These provide important connectivity to the wider network (see Theme 4).

2.4 The Borough's GBI network too is relatively compact in nature. It supports a wide-range of functions and parts of the network are at a heightened level of use. Both the Borough and its GBI network are facing growing development pressure, with a number of GBI sites having been lost to housing in recent years. Where development has occurred, the Borough Council has sought, and has been largely successful, at ensuring that the schemes retain and contribute to local GBI as much as possible.

2.5 While not a GBI-related designation, the Borough has two designated Green Wedges which are design to preserve the ‘openness of land’. However, in many places these wedges provide important GBI assets as part of the wider network – including Brocks Hill Country Park in the Oadby & Wigston green wedge.

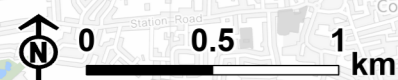
2.6 The County of Leicestershire was the subject of a 2017 Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Strategy [See reference 9], which situated Oadby and Wigston within the “Eastern Growth Corridor North”. Its recommendations for the network focused on creating a strategic recreation asset around the Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge, creating greenways around Brocks Hill Country Park, restoring the river corridor around the River Sence and enhancing the corridor around the Grand Union Canal.

Figure 2.1: An Overview of GBI Assets in Oadby and Wigton



- Oadby and Wigton study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Green wedge
- Water bodies
- Biodiversity Asset**
- Local Wildlife Site
- Local Nature Reserve
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Country Park
- Woodland cover (NFI)
- Recreation asset

For further details of Local Wildlife Site typology see figure 3.1. For further details of recreation asset typology see figure 4.1.



Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

Chapter 3

Theme 1: Nature rich beautiful places

Why is GBI important for nature rich, beautiful places in Oadby and Wigston?

The GBI network can support bigger, better and more connected habitats, and deliver gains in biodiversity performance.

3.1 As set out in Natural England’s GI Framework, overall biodiversity loss has been accelerating in recent years in England. Habitats are becoming more fragmented and many individual species are in decline. This has led to a recognition from government that action at both broad landscape and local scales is required. This means that implementation needs to go beyond protected sites to increase biodiversity and geodiversity “wherever it can be helped to flourish.” [\[See reference 10\]](#).

3.2 Grey infrastructure can act as a barrier to the movement of wildlife. However, the opportunity exists to address this issue within the Strategy through the identification of opportunities for habitat protection, connection, enhancement and creation. The network will need to accommodate future population growth, balancing the need for protection of habitats and species most sensitive to disturbance and promotion of the delivery of locally appropriate BNG.

3.3 Oadby and Wigston has a number of sites designated for their biodiversity value. However, local habitat conservation can also occur outside the boundaries of designated (legally protected) sites. Delivering nature recovery is

therefore underpinned by the need for natural spaces to become “bigger, better and more joined up”.

3.4 Finally, the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are also inextricably linked. Species struggle to adapt to changing global temperatures and the destruction of ecosystems undermines nature's ability to regulate carbon emissions. Without a good quality network of GBI, we undermine nature's ability to be productive, resilient and adapt to a changing climate.

Context

3.5 Recent policy developments underscore the critical role of resilient ecosystems in both facilitating nature recovery and supporting economic wellbeing. The introduction of the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) and the impending Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), aligning with the goals set out in the 2021 Environment Act, marks this significant shift. This initiative will bring together various Local Planning Authorities to collectively address the biodiversity duty and foster a cohesive approach to nature recovery. LNRSs will play a central role in shaping local plan policies, thereby ensuring that nature conservation is deeply embedded in development planning.

3.6 Leicestershire County Council is the Responsible Authority for the Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland LNRS. Due to the cross-boundary nature of the strategy and network, it is expected that OWBC will make significant contributions in the joined-up efforts to create an interconnected landscape that is ecologically resilient, connected and biodiverse.

3.7 Key strategies, such as catchment management and “living landscape” initiatives, are already in progress through collaborative efforts by the lead partners. These further reinforce the foundations for comprehensive nature recovery and are signposted in the baseline set out in this chapter, together with a baseline assessment of the sites and habitats that play an important role in efforts to promote nature recovery across the Borough of Oadby and Wigston see **Appendix A**.

3.8 To tackle the issues of habitat and species loss, the spread of invasive species, exploitation of natural resources, and the impacts of climate change, Leicestershire has developed a range of strategic documents and targets aimed at addressing these biodiversity challenges. These include:

- The **2016 - 2026 Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)**, which sets out the commitment to biodiversity as a framework for joined-up action for the County as a whole. As 80% of the BAP area is made up of farmed land, increasingly intensified farming practices have a particular influence. Priorities for action build on the core of the designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Wildlife Site (LWS) network, expansion of biodiversity access through strategic green infrastructure, habitat enhancements and promoting community involvement in wildlife conservation and education.
- The **2022 Biodiversity Quality Assessment Report** which provides valuable baseline for biodiversity monitoring alongside the BAP. It reveals that Oadby and Wigston currently falls within a range from “medium-high” to “very low” scores in terms of biodiversity quality. Importantly, these findings highlight the strategic potential of Oadby and Wigston as a key location for enhancing habitat connectivity between areas of higher biodiversity quality, offering an optimistic outlook and direction for future conservation efforts.

Key GBI assets

Designated sites for nature conservation

3.9 The network of designated sites stretches across the Borough, protecting a range of important wildlife habitats. Maintaining the designated sites as key nodes within the nature network is critical to maintaining the wider ecological health. The “upper echelon” SSSIs are supported by the wider LWS and, in turn, the wider green space network. Many mobile species rely on multiple sites and/or habitats within their lifecycles, connected via suitable green corridors.

3.10 There are no internationally designated sites within the Borough. Hence, in Oadby and Wigston, the core nature network comprises of national designations followed by local designations – as shown on **Figure 3.1**. These sites provide the core of a resilient nature recovery network and form the areas where nature conservation efforts are traditionally focussed.

3.11 There is one SSSI in the Borough, the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI, which runs alongside the River Sence in the south of the Borough.

3.12 There are 3 statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), designated both for wildlife and for people to engage with / for educational purposes:

- **Brocks Hill Country Park LNR** is owned by the Borough Council. The park covers 67 acres, containing young broadleaved plantation woodland, orchards, hedgerows, ponds, meadows and a medieval ridge and furrow field, with a network of accessible paths.
- **Lucas Marsh LNR** is owned by the Borough Council and is leased to the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. The site includes areas of reed-bed, ponds, rough grassland, dense scrub, scattered trees and a mature hedge. This site is of foremost importance as it is recognised in the Leicestershire BAP.
- **Clifton Bridge LNR** is located alongside the Grand Union Canal and is owned by the Borough Council. As an area of unimproved mesotrophic grassland, scrub and mature hedgerows, the habitat is important for grass snakes and farmland birds.

Non-statutory designations

3.13 The Borough's Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are protected land of significant nature conservation value at the local level. The LWS in Oadby and Wigston vary in size, from the 24 sqm Spinney Pond LWS at Brock's Hill Country Park (with a significant amphibian population) to the 44-hectare Leicestershire Golf Course (with mesotrophic grassland, ponds, mature trees, hedgerows, and Red Data Book species).

3.14 LWS are relatively uniformly distributed throughout the Borough, with two notable areas:

- Alongside the Grand Union Canal. These sites are interconnected with the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI. This configuration offers an excellent opportunity to establish a wildlife corridor, leveraging the natural connectivity facilitated by watercourses.
- The central Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge in the Borough.

3.15 There is a single Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGS) at Kilby Bridge Quarry. The site is located within the much larger Barn Pool Meadow LWS .

Priority and Notable Habitats

3.16 In examining the strategic importance of the Borough for plant life, it becomes evident that the overall classification primarily falls within the 'low' category. **[See reference 11]** However, it is crucial to recognise the presence of pockets of moderate importance, notably within the Green Wedges — home to two of the Borough's LNRs — and the southern region adjacent to the Kilby-Foxton Canal Site SSSI. The southern area of the Borough falls within Natural England's "Network Enhancement Zone 2", offering prospects for enhancing ecological connectivity (**Figure 3.3**).

3.17 In the context of strategic habitat enhancement and creation integral to a GBI strategy, it is important to examine habitat composition within the Borough in order to discern the assets and opportunities that a cohesive GBI network aims to strengthen. The full results of this examination are provided in

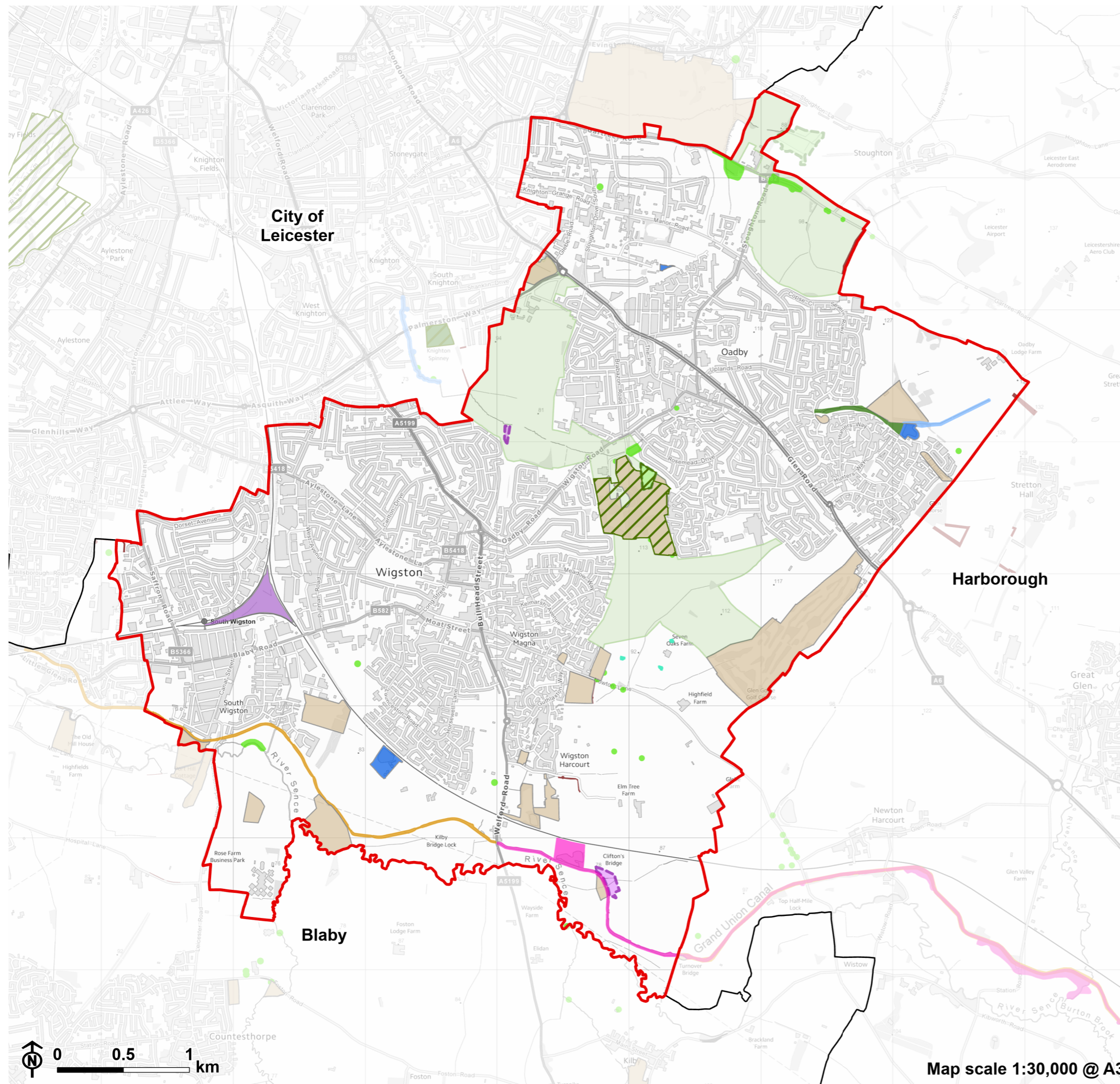
Appendix A. In summary:

- While there are no 'irreplaceable' ancient woodland habitats in the Borough, there are a significant number of 'veteran trees'.
- The predominance of urban and farmland habitats in this area has led to a relatively limited coverage of Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) habitats. **Figure 3.2** shows the distribution of the borough's PHI. The majority

consist of deciduous woodland in and around urban areas and the green wedge. All in all, these habitats play a vital role in extending and supporting connectivity beyond the designated site network.

- The central Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge is the most significant area for wildlife and biodiversity in the Borough, but currently suffers from urbanisation pressures.
- Within Wigston and the Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge, traditional orchards are a notable habitat type.
- There are 85km of recorded hedgerow within the Borough, which bring permeability through areas of intense land use such as urban, peri-urban or agricultural.
- The Borough's grassland areas play a vital role in supporting various bird species.
- The Borough has an extensive network of wetlands – from canals to flowing rivers and streams (brooks) and flushes, to lakes and ponds (eutrophic and mesotrophic standing water), and other wetlands, such as floodplain wetlands, springs and flushes.
- The entire Borough lies within a Nitrate Vulnerability Zone. This emphasises the importance of habitat restoration efforts along the SSSI and the Grand Union Canal as crucial for improving the filtration of nutrients from agricultural runoff originating in the surrounding farmland, together with reduction of nutrients at source.

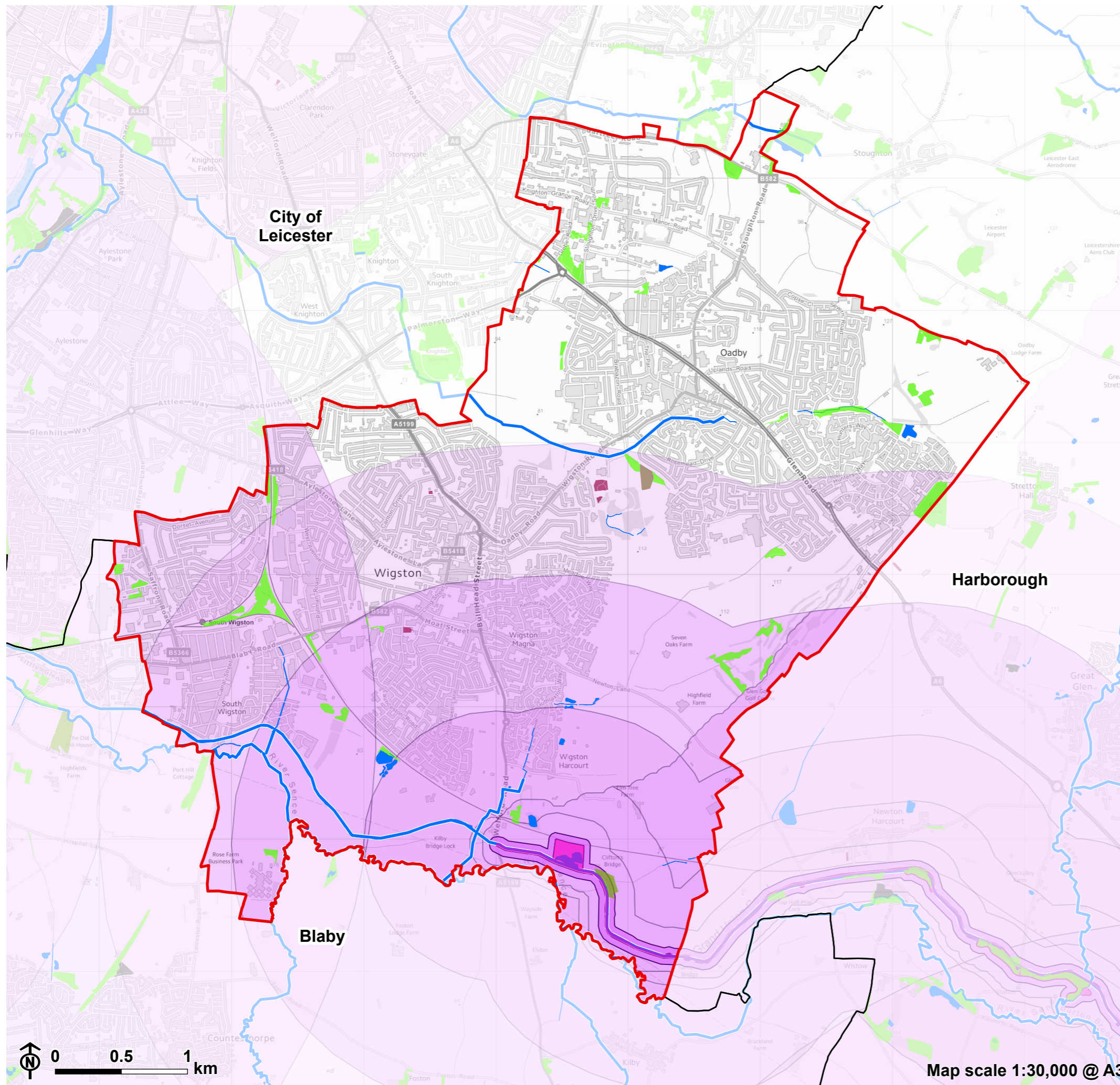
Figure 3.1: Designated Site Network



- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Green wedge
- Designated Site**
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Site - habitat type**
- Canal
- Hedgerow
- Mature tree
- Mesotrophic grassland
- Mixed grassland
- Pond
- Small river or stream
- Standing water
- Woodland
- Wet grassland
- Wet woodland

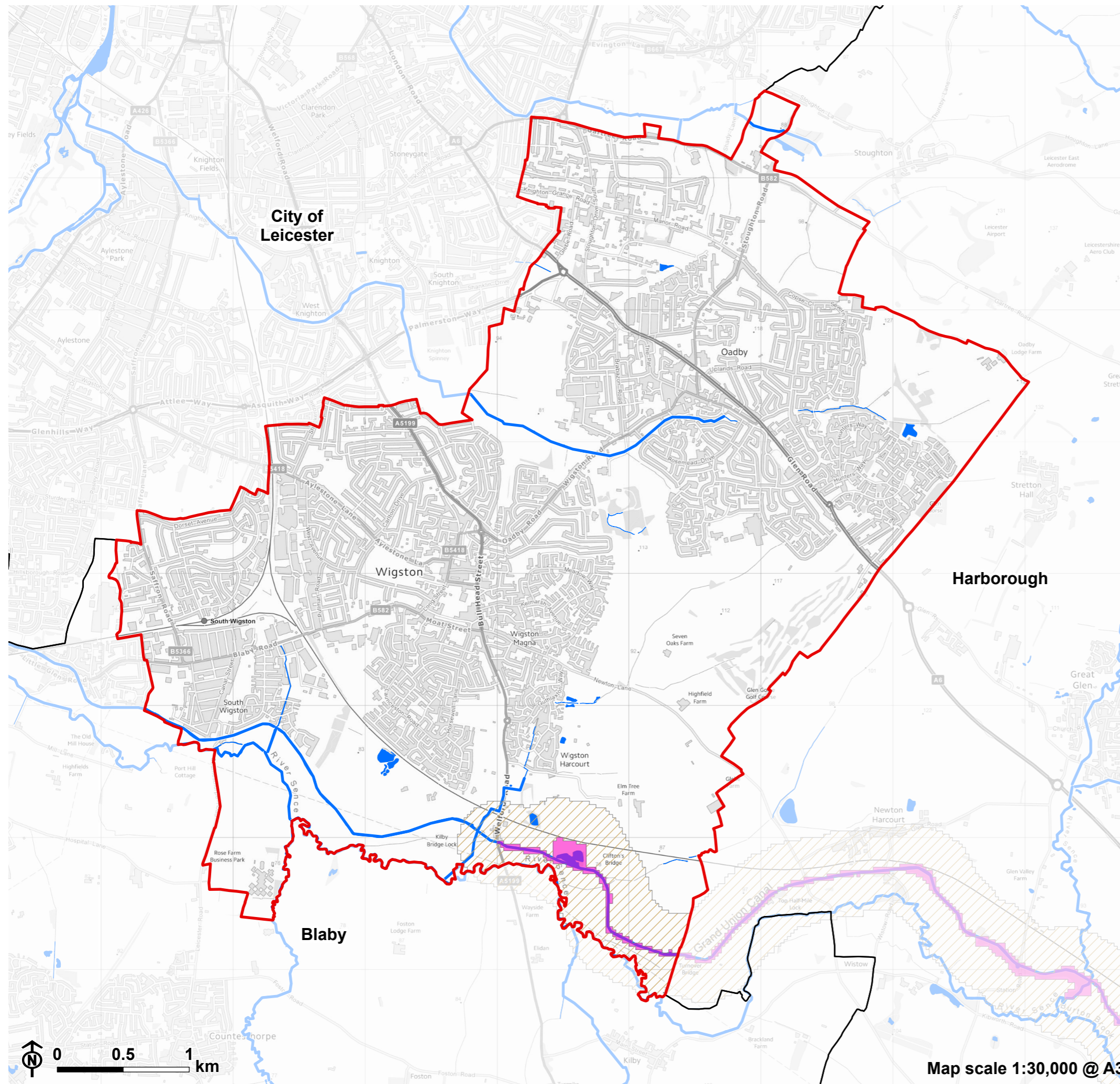
Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

Figure 3.2: Priority Habitats and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Risk Zones



- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- SSSI Impact risk zone
- Water bodies
- Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory**
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Deciduous woodland
- Good quality semi improved grassland
- Lowland fens
- No main habitat but additional habitats present
- Traditional orchard

Figure 3.3: Habitat Networks in Oadby and Wigton



- Oadby and Wigton study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Water bodies
- Natural England Habitat Networks**
- SSSI
- Network Enhancement Zone 2

Key challenges

3.18 As a County, Leicestershire ranks among the lowest in the UK for biodiversity representation, with only 2% of its land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), compared to the national average of 6%. Within Oadby and Wigston, SSSI influences relate primarily to those of wetland habitats.

3.19 The main reasons for the decline in biodiversity in Leicestershire are identified as:

- modern farming methods.
- development (housing, roads and mineral extraction).
- recreational activities.
- drainage schemes, and
- the “tidying up” and destruction of rough ground and 'brown-field' land .

3.20 The Leicestershire BAP notes that habitats in decline include grassland habitats (neutral, heath and calcareous), roadside verges and sphagnum ponds.

3.21 The one SSSI in the Borough was designated due to the plant and animal communities, which represent excellent examples of those associated with slow-flowing lowland rivers in eastern and central England. Within Leicestershire this type of habitat is under increasing threat due to hydrological modification of many of the County's natural catchment systems. All the units of the site are under unfavourable condition (as of 2010) due to freshwater pollution as a result of agricultural runoff. Levels of phosphorus are over twice as high as they should be to meet favourable condition, siltation, and public disturbance.

3.22 As shown in **Figure 3.2**, the SSSI “Impact Risk Zones” (IRZ) of this and other SSSIs extend across the majority of the Borough. The IRZ underscores the importance of collaboration between Local Planning Authority and wider stakeholders to implement effective strategies that safeguard the unique biodiversity found within SSSIs.

3.23 In the case of Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI, this collaborative effort extends to engaging with landowners and managers in the surrounding agricultural lands, in order to address nutrient runoff issues affecting the water quality of the site. Strategies may encompass the implementation of Nature-based Solutions and the creation of habitats designed to filter nutrient pollution. This is of foremost importance as the area falls within a Nitrate Vulnerability Zone.

Key opportunities

3.24 Based on our policy review, baseline mapping and input from stakeholder engagement, the following were identified as key opportunity areas relevant to our Nature-Rich and Beautiful Places theme:

- **Connectivity and buffers:** As suggested in the 2017 Leicestershire GI Strategy, buffers could be created around the existing designated wildlife sites. Ecological connectivity could be improved by joining up the few remnant woodland areas, wood pasture, meadows, semi-natural grassland and associated habitats.
- **Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge:** The central designated Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge is the most significant area for wildlife and biodiversity in the Borough and will be of central importance for the nature recovery agenda in Oadby and Wigston. This area presents a strategic opportunity to create a natural corridor connecting the three key LNRs of Knighton Spinney, Brocks Hill Country Park and the neighbouring Lucas Marsh. The corridor would encompass valuable priority habitats inventory, including the only lowland fens in the Borough and most of the remaining traditional orchards.

- **Woodland cover:** To expand tree/woodland cover across the Borough's streets and green spaces.
- **BNG:** To maximise the potential for biodiversity net gain, with increases beyond 10% being sought where possible.
- **Agricultural management:** To prioritise agri-environmental schemes across the borough (with a focus on the land between the River Sence and the Grand Union Canal).
- **Wetlands and de-culverting:** To provide additional wetland habitats by de-culverting existing channels and water courses (e.g. at South Wigston). This could also include wetlands to help filter pollution in order to protect the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI.
- **Nature-rich management of existing green spaces:** To shift from 'business as usual' to more wildlife-friendly management practices in existing managed green spaces, recognising them as important corridors and 'stepping stones' in a GBI network (The Leicestershire Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2019-2029 commits to creating and enhancing habitats and species richness within those habitats). This could include the "re-wilding" of key verges across the borough (such as along sections of the A6).

Chapter 4

Theme 2: Active and healthy places

Why is GBI important for active and healthy places in Oadby & Wigston?

The GBI network can help to deliver better health outcomes, and positively support physical health and mental well-being for those living and working in the borough. The GBI network can provide green corridors for walking and cycling, as well as deliver spaces for sport, play and recreation, and provide opportunities for rest and recuperation.

4.1 As set out in the Natural England GI Framework, England is suffering a health crisis with diabetes, obesity, dementia and mental health issues rising unevenly across the population. Faced with these challenges, as well as those resulting from Covid-19, there is an increasing focus not just on treating conditions, but also on prevention.

4.2 There is recognition across the health sector that outdoor activity in nature rich spaces can be an alternative or positive complement to other treatments. This applies to mental as well as physical health conditions and can be supported by green social prescribing (which involves referring patients to take part in environment and nature-based activities, such as, walking and cycling, community gardening, food-growing projects and practical conservation tasks such as tree planting). According to Natural England, across a number of studies, access to greenspace has been associated with improved relaxation, increased functioning of the immune system and better sleep patterns.

4.3 This GBI Strategy can help to enable healthy lifestyles both within urban and rural areas, through expanding access to high quality green space, supporting the implementation of off-road active travel corridors and greenways, and improving air quality.

Context

4.4 According to the 2021 census, the Borough's population is predominantly white (approximately 63% of the population). However a significant part of the population (around 28%) are from Asian backgrounds, a growing part of the population. This will result in an increasingly diverse set of needs from, and perspectives on, the GBI network.

4.5 The UK's mapped Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for England shows that, while parts of the Borough are relatively prosperous, there are pockets of deprivation. Concentrations of socio-economic deprivation are evident in particular in South Wigston and Oadby East.

4.6 The results of the 2021 nationwide census found that around 46% of people in Oadby and Wigston have "very good health", a higher figure than neighbouring Leicester and which compares favourably nationwide. Between 4 – 5% of people reported "bad" or "very bad" health in the census, lower than urban areas to the north but slightly higher than areas to the south.

4.7 However these overall figures mask inequalities present within the Borough. In October 2018, a report by Leicestershire County Council on 'Inequalities in life expectancy between Oadby and Wigston' [See reference 12] reported that in 2014-16 the two areas have the fourth largest inequality in male life expectancy at Birth in England (13.5 years). Issues highlighted include higher levels of obesity in Wigston (approx. 27%, compared to 19% in Oadby). While access to nature and green space is not specifically referred to in the report, it recommends continued partnership working to increase the life expectancy of residents living in the most deprived quintile of the Borough.

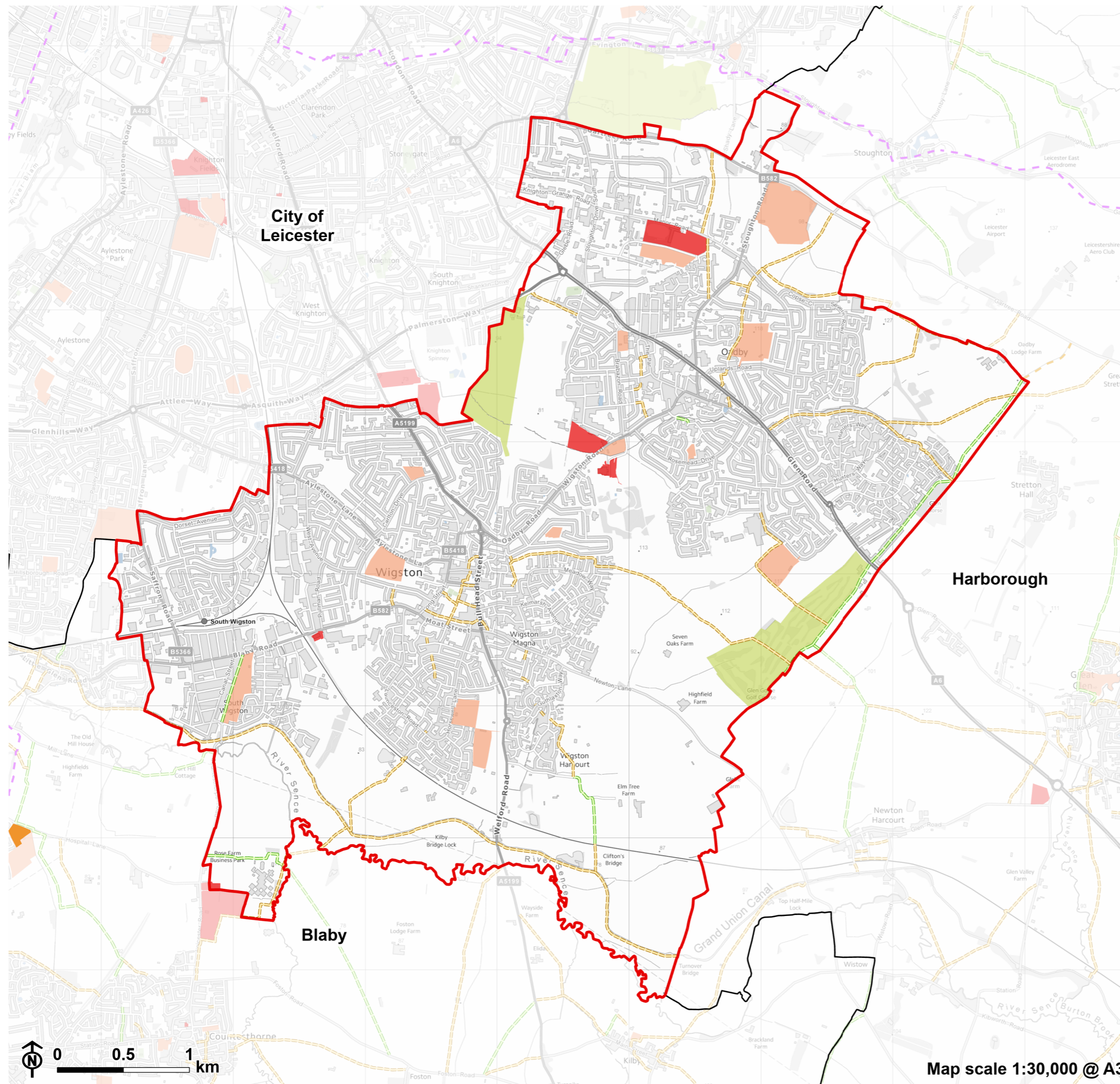
Key GBI assets

4.8 As shown in **Figure 4.1**, the Brock Hills Country Park sits at the heart of the Borough within the Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge and is a flagship recreational asset. Other areas of recreational green space include parks (including at Blaby Road, Uplands Park and William Gunning Park), school grounds, playing pitches and golf courses. The Gallops Golf Course is highlighted in the data as open space but, in the absence of Public Rights of Way (PROW) through the course, access is limited to users only. The Glen Gorse Golf Club (on the Borough's southern boundary) has greater PROW access but could not be described as accessible GBI.

4.9 The Public Right of Way (PROW) network is relatively sparse (given the relatively urbanised nature of the Borough), particularly in the north west of the Borough. Key routes include the PROW alongside the Grand Union Canal in the south west of the Borough.

4.10 There are no routes on the National Cycle Route (NCN) network which run through the Borough itself. However National Cycle Network Route 63 runs just to the north of the Borough.

Figure 4.1: Recreational Assets and PRoW in Oadby and Wigston

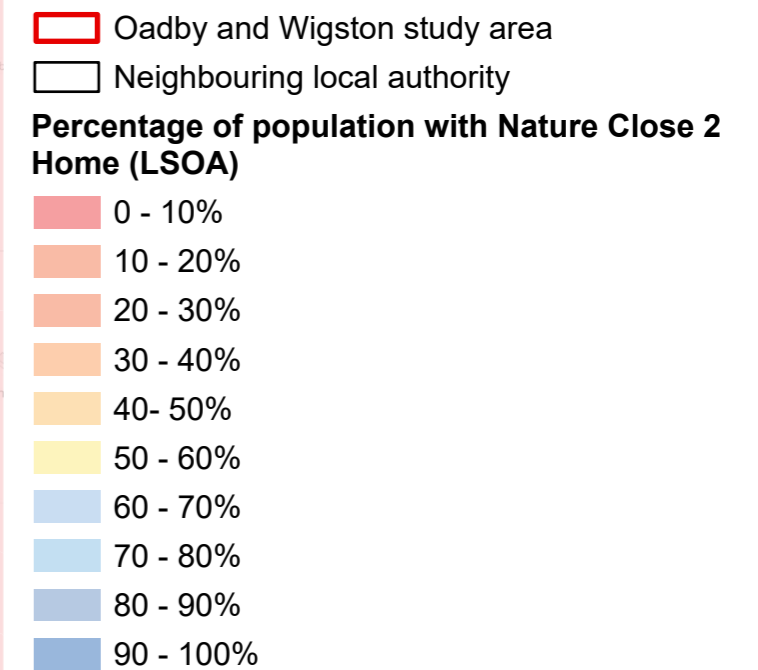
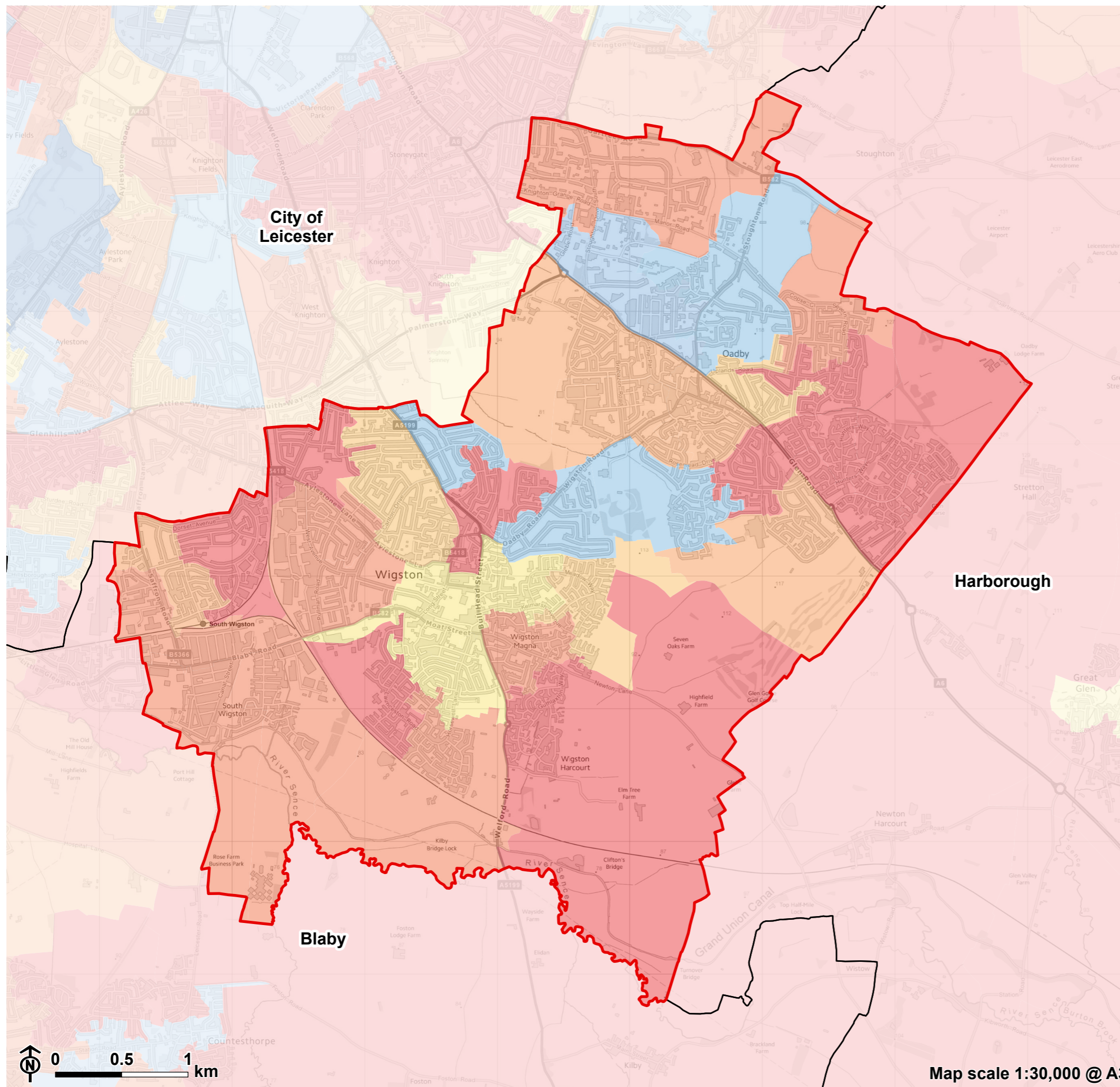


- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- National Cycle Network
- Public Rights of Way**
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Byway Open To All Traffic
- Road Used as Public Path
- Recreation asset**
- Activity Spaces Provision
- Golf Course
- Other Sports Facilities
- Play Space Provision
- Playing Fields
- CROW All areas access

Recreation asset data excluding CROW sourced from OS Greenspace in April 2023.

Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

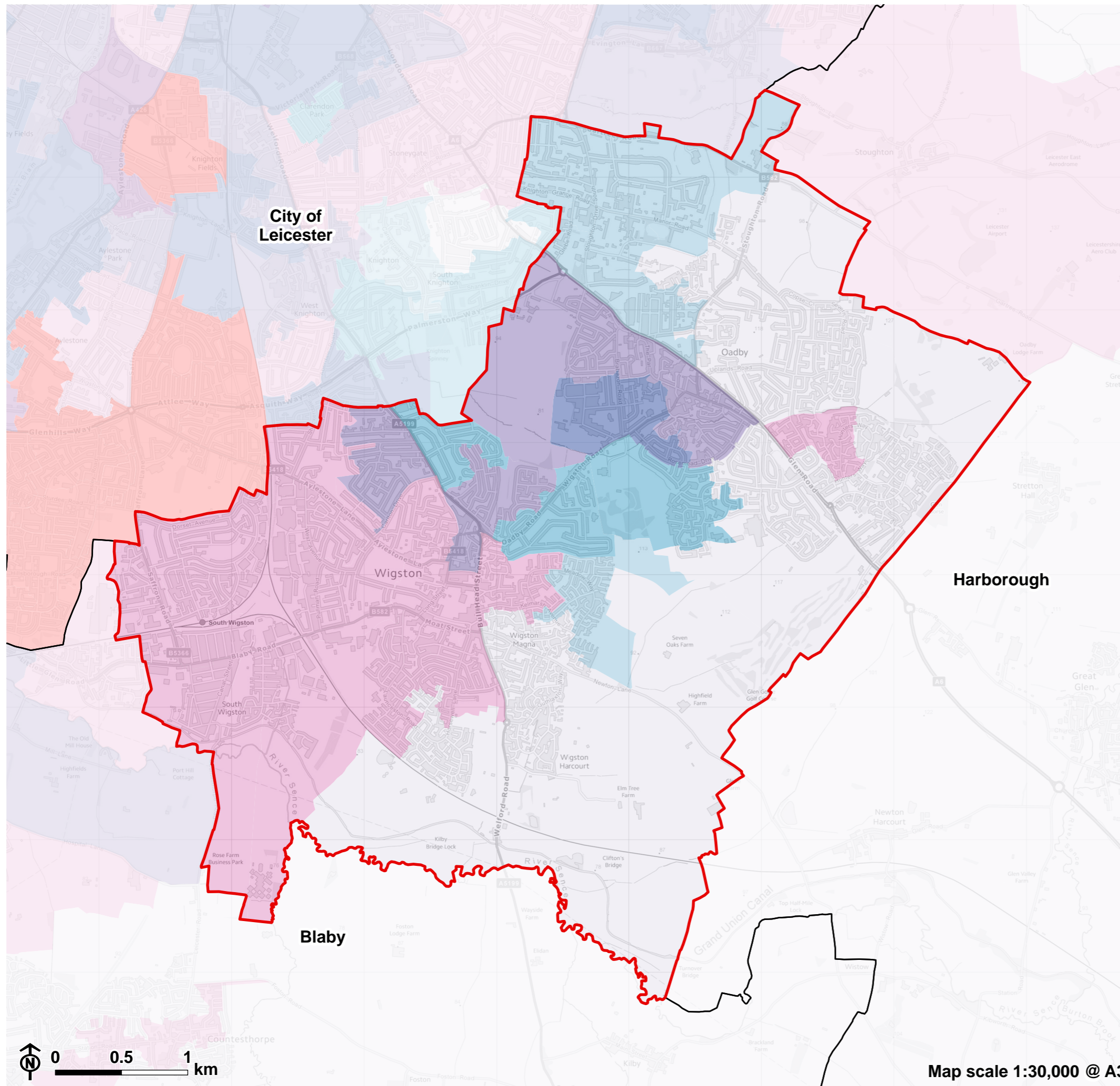
Figure 4.2: Access to Nature "Close to Home" in Oadby and Wigston



Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

Access to Nature Close2Home defined by Natural England:
Assesses locations by a percentage of young people (under 16) and older people (65 and over) who probably live within 300m of a natural greenspace

Figure 4.3: Deprivation and Access to Green Space (Local Buffer, Natural England)



Oadby and Wigston study area
 Neighbouring local authority

Accessible Natural Greenspace Inequality and Deprivation - local buffer coverage (300m) (LSOA)

IMD decile	1-2	L1	M1	H1
	3-8	L2	M2	H2
	9-10	L3	M3	H3
		0-5	5-50	50-100
		ANGSt buffer coverage (%)		

Notes:
L1 = Least favourable scenario, H3 = Most favourable scenario



Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

Key challenges

Health and Wellbeing (including health inequalities)

4.11 There are inequalities in health across the borough. In 2021, approximately 46% of Oadby and Wigston residents described their health as "very good", increasing slightly from 44% in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" fell from 37% to 36% **[See reference 13]**.

4.12 The proportion of the population classified as obese is higher than the average for England. In 2020/21, the percentage of adults who were classified as overweight or obese was lower in the Borough (66.3%) than the East Midlands (66.6%) but higher than the average figure for England **[See reference 14]**.

4.13 There is an identified need to improve levels of physical activity. In 2020/21, the percentage of adults across the Borough who classified themselves as being physically active was 59%, a figure lower than the East Midlands average of 64.5% and the English average of 65.9% **[See reference 15]**.

4.14 In the academic year 2021/22, approximately 46% of child respondents in the Borough were active for an average of 60 minutes plus a day, a percentage that is less than the corresponding figures of 49.6% for the East Midlands and 47.2% for England.

Accessibility to green and open space

4.15 The extent of access to green and open space varies significantly across the Borough. Natural England's GI mapping tool (part of the Natural England GI

Framework) looks at accessibility to green space at various scales, as set out below:

- **Doorstep Green Space.** (at least 0.5ha in size, within 5 minutes or less walking time).
- **Local Natural Green Space.** (at least 2ha in size, within 5-10 minutes walk or a 1-2 minute cycle ride).
- **Neighbourhood Natural Green Space** (at least 10ha in size, within a 15-20 minute walk or a 3-4 minute cycle ride).
- **Wider Neighbourhood Natural Green Space** (at least 20ha in size, within a 35 minute walk or a 6-8 minute cycle ride).
- **District Natural Green Space** (at least 100ha in size, within a 15-20 minute cycle ride).
- **Sub-Regional Green Space** (at least 500ha in size, within a 30-40 minute cycle ride).

4.16 Some of the mapping outputs for Oadby & Wigston are shown in **Figures 4.2 and 4.3** and results can be further explored through Natural England's online GI mapping tool [See reference **16**]. In general, the mapping highlights that:

- None of the Borough is covered by the buffers associated with either district or sub-regional natural green space.
- The majority of the Borough is captured by the buffer associated with wider neighbourhood natural green space (approximately 80%) – *the nearest asset of this scale is Brocks Hill Country Park.*
- Less than half of the Borough is captured by the buffer associated with neighbourhood natural green space (about 30%). The area covered equates to a central belt that extends at a mid-point through the Borough – *the nearest asset of this scale is Brocks Hill Country Park.*

- Access to local neighbourhood green space corresponds with those able to access the Brocks Hill Country Park, Knighton Park and the Harold Martin Botanic Garden.

4.17 An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace for Leicestershire and Rutland was published in March 2022. The study used the same ANGSt expectations as outlined above but applied ‘bespoke analysis’ to provide “a significantly higher resolution of access to nature including a wider range of national, local and primary datasets”. [\[See reference 17\]](#)

4.18 The study reports that accessible natural green space in the Borough accounted for 4.4% of the local authority’s total area. Headline figures from the profile of Oadby and Wigston note that:

- There is a good provision of sites of more than 2ha in size, within close proximity to urban areas. However, much of the Borough’s population is not being captured by the small site ANGSt criteria.
- Access to medium-size accessible natural greenspace provision (between 20ha and 500ha) is relatively strong across the district. This relies heavily on single sites which serve the entire district, as a result of the Borough’s small size.
- The Borough would benefit from the creation of more small-scale accessible natural green spaces. Existing sites could also become more ‘natural’, helping to provide better access to nature on the doorstep of residents.

4.19 Finally, the Green Space Index (compiled by independent charity Fields in Trust) provides further analysis of green space access in Oadby & Wigston, using Ordnance Survey data. As part of the index, the wider East Midlands region is awarded a score of 0.86, with approximately 30 sqm of green space per person. Approximately 240,000 of the region’s residents do not live within a 10-minute walk of a green space. The Borough of Oadby and Wigston has only three LSOAs (out of a total of 36) which are identified as meeting the minimum requirement for green space provision - these are concentrated in the centre and north east of the borough. [\[See reference 18\]](#)

4.20 In summary, access to green and open space in Oadby and Wigston is unequally distributed across the Borough. Natural England data highlights that deficits in access to green space also tend to overlap with areas of concentrated socio-economic deprivation (see **Figure 4.3**) – notably in the west of the Borough around South Wigston.

Key opportunities

4.21 Based on our policy review, baseline mapping and input from stakeholder engagement, the following were identified as key opportunity areas relevant to our Active and Healthy Places theme:

- To explore extending Brocks Hill Country Park further to the south, as the Borough’s flagship recreational asset, and improve connectivity to the park (and wider Green Wedge) from the west.
- Create a “Wigston Green Wedge access project”, in line with the recommendations of the 2017 Leicestershire GI Strategy, by enhancing GBI assets within the wedge for access to nature and ecological connectivity. Explore the potential to create a new destination for outdoor recreation.
- To prioritise open space provision, enhancements and investment in the west of the Borough around South Wigston, where areas of socio-economic deprivation overlap with deficits in access to open space.
- The need to enhance understanding among communities and key stakeholders on the multiple benefits which can flow from GBI.
- To improve signage - both in terms of waymarking but also by providing better interpretation of natural, cultural and historic features.
- To improve the accessibility of the borough’s GBI, particularly for those who are less mobile or have some kind of disability.
- To improve accessibility, and general connections, with the Grand Union Canal (such as at Ervin’s Lock, South Wigston).

Chapter 4 Theme 2: Active and healthy places

- To improve the connectivity of existing footpaths and bridleways that provide access to GBI (e.g. Cooks Lane).
- To improve the usability and safety of footpaths and bridleways, particularly those in the rural parts of the borough.
- To increase the range of visitor facilities available at the Borough's parks and to ensure they are kept open throughout the day wherever possible.
- To create strong green active travel links to NCN Route 63, which skirts the north eastern boundary of the Borough.

Chapter 5

Theme 3: Thriving and prosperous communities

Why is GBI important for wider thriving and prosperous communities in Oadby & Wigston?

The GBI network defines, and can positively contribute, to the Borough's urban and rural environments. GBI can help to reinforce local distinctiveness and heritage and facilitate regeneration and investment in place.

5.1 GBI can make an important contribution to improving the quality and sense of place – sometimes called 'placemaking'. Placemaking entails improving the public space in a settlement through an understanding of what makes a local community or landscape unique. It should take into account how people use their existing public spaces and what improvements the community would most benefit from. In this sense, GBI can play an important role in boosting a place's visitor economy.

5.2 Heritage features, such as Conservation Areas, are a key part of any GBI network. They help to tell the story of a place, the landscape that surrounds it and how land use has shifted over time. GBI and the landscape again plays an important role in the setting of these places.

5.3 In pure economic terms, GBI also offers a number of economic benefits over the long term. A 2018 study by Green Blue Urban (2018) estimates the total cumulative benefits of trees at 50 years to be either £1,223 (for open grown trees) and £1,060 (for street trees). [\[See reference 19\]](#)

5.4 Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated historic trends in the decline of the traditional high street and town centres generally. There has been substantial growth in online shopping and home working patterns leading to the closure of shops and re-purposing of office space. Against this backdrop, a GBI-led approach to shaping thriving and prosperous places is becoming an increasingly attractive option when reconsidering the changing role and function of urban areas. This is particularly important when looking beyond retail only to a richer mix of uses and a GBI-led regeneration focus.

Context

5.5 The opportunity for a green recovery from the economic and societal impacts of COVID-19 should be driven in part by this Strategy. The network's role in creating attractive places to live, work and invest should be explored at all levels within the Council, particularly within areas of growth and development for both residential and employment spaces.

5.6 Increasing demand for development in Oadby & Wigston will place pressure on the existing GBI network and will require a strategic approach to landscape planning to ensure new GBI is successfully delivered as part of new development. However, in the context of this growth, GBI should be seen as a key placemaking tool in enabling a higher quality of life, attracting residents and businesses to the Borough and helping the Borough meet its wider economic ambitions. Well-planned GBI can also help to create cohesive neighbourhoods.

Key GBI assets

5.7 The type of GBI assets which contribute to thriving and prosperous places are wide-ranging. However, **Figure 5.1** shows some of the assets which collectively contribute to the Borough's GBI network and to quality of place – with a focus on landscape and heritage features.

5.8 Oadby and Wigston's landscape setting is a key part of the quality of life which attracts people to live and work in the Borough. The majority of the borough falls within the **Leicestershire Vales National Character Area (NCA)**, a large, relatively open, uniform landscape composed of low-lying clay vales interrupted by a range of varied river valleys. As the accompanying profile explains, the area's sense of place comes less from its overall landform and more from its visually dominant settlements and views towards surrounding higher ground. [\[See reference 20\]](#)

5.9 Part of the Borough's north eastern corner forms part of the **High Leicestershire NCA** (No. 93). This area is predominantly rural in character and is made up of undulating fields with a mix of pasture on the higher, sloping land and arable farming on the lower, flatter land. [\[See reference 21\]](#).

5.10 The Borough Council, in collaboration with its neighbouring Leicestershire authorities, has designated two Green Wedges (shown in Figure 5.1) that extend into the borough and play an important role in the Borough's sense of place:

- The **Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge** (the central wedge) is a 170-hectare section of a larger (210ha) green wedge that runs north west to south east, from Leicester City out towards the open countryside. In addition to farmland and open countryside, the Wedge accommodates a number of leisure uses including sports grounds and training facilities, a racecourse, a golf course and a country park (Brocks Hill).
- The **Oadby, Thurnby and Stoughton Green Wedge** is larger at circa 467 ha, however only around 93 ha lies within Oadby and Wigston. Land uses

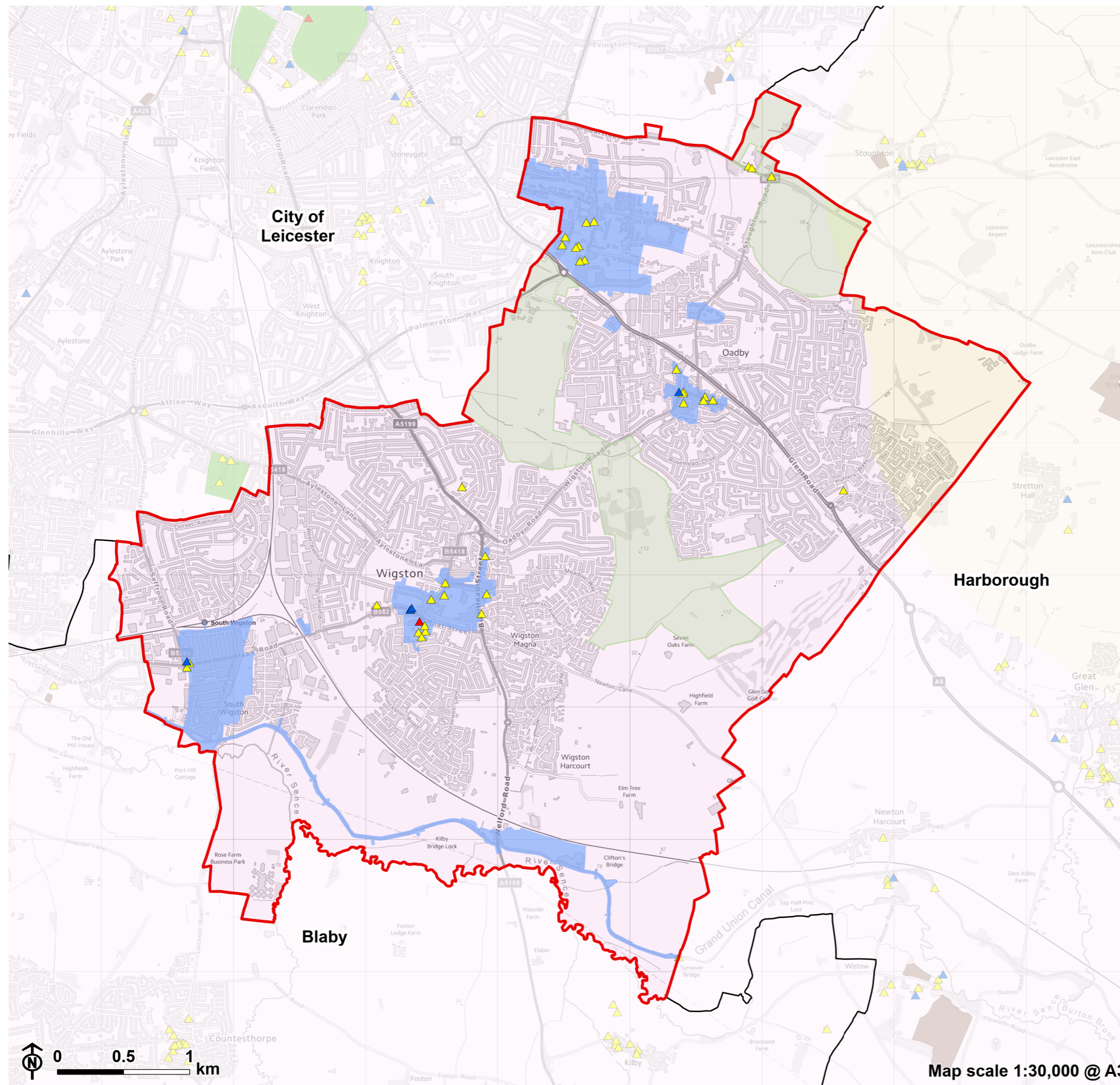
currently situated within the Borough's green wedge area include sports pitches, open fields and a private hospital.

5.11 Figure 5.1 shows that the Borough also benefits from a wide range of heritage assets, including ten Conservation Areas, which recognise locations with special historic character. Whilst built features cannot be considered as GBI, elements of the network (including parks, open spaces, street trees and incidental vegetation) contribute towards their settings, enhance their value as key visitor destinations and help to interpret the county's historic development, heritage, culture and changes in land use over time.

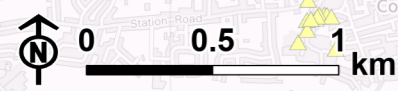
5.12 The Grand Union Canal Conservation Area (designated since 2000) is located along a key blue corridor and GBI feature - a 48-kilometre long linear area extending from Welford to the City of Leicester. As such, it forms a crucial linear feature in the GBI network in the south of the Borough.

5.13 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within Borough. However, Saffron Hill Cemetery is listed as a Grade II* site and lies just outside the western boundary. There are no Scheduled Monuments in the borough, but similarly some lie outside the boundaries.

Figure 5.1: Key Landscape, Heritage and Green Wedge Designations across the Borough of Oadby and Wigston



- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Green wedge
- Listed Building**
- ▲ Grade I
- ▲ Grade II
- ▲ Grade II*
- National Character Area**
- High Leicestershire
- Leicestershire Vales
- Key heritage designation**
- Conservation Area
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument



Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

Key challenges

5.14 The Borough's Green Wedges and open space assets clearly underpin quality of life and wider sense of place in Oadby & Wigston. However Natural England's mapped 'Greenness Grid' (which indicates the % of "manmade" and non-vegetated area across the Borough) highlights the dearth of green and blue features once you enter into the three urbanised centres of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. There is limited street tree cover and no significant provision of features (such as multifunctional surface-level rain gardens) to boost climate resilience and "soften" the urban environment.

5.15 While Oadby town centre benefits from areas of urban greenery and street tree cover along The Parade, South Wigston fares more poorly. However, all town centres in the Borough would benefit from taking an approach to urban greening which is based more on multifunctional GBI value and less on ornamental or aesthetic value.

Key opportunities

5.16 Based on our policy review, baseline mapping and input from stakeholder engagement, the following were identified as key opportunity areas relevant to our Place theme:

- To ensure future policy gives equal weight to the pursuit of GBI, particularly in terms of the design and planning of new development. To ensure green space is properly master-planned into a new development, thereby helping to ensure that spaces are prominent and accessible. This may include requiring 'Building with Nature' assessments for developments across the borough.
- Any active travel (walking/cycling) infrastructure implemented as part of Leicestershire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan should take advantage of combining 'hard' infrastructure with linear features such as

rain gardens or street trees, to boost wider GBI benefits and lift quality of place within urban centres.

- Implement a new approach to the regeneration and enhancement of the Borough's town centres and public realm, taking a GBI-led approach which focusses on GBI functionality over ornamental value. Place GBI at the heart of town centre regeneration and public realm efforts – including any Area Actions plans or successors to the 2009 South Wigston Regeneration Masterplan.
- As set out in the 2017 Leicestershire-wide GI Strategy, there is potential to create better networks of priority habitats (e.g. woodland, meadows and acid grassland) and access corridors within them to address access to nature and also provide sustainable access to some of the interesting heritage destinations including the Canal and medieval villages.
- Focus GBI enhancements along the linear Conservation Area along the Grand Union Canal, creating a place-led GBI corridor and linking together key heritage assets.

Chapter 6

Theme 4: Improved water management

Why is GBI important for enabling improved water management in Oadby & Wigston?

The blue elements of the GBI network can provide a range of functions, including aquatic habitats, natural flood management opportunities, and blue-green opportunities for walking, cycling and habitat connectivity.

6.1 As the Natural England GI Framework sets out, green and blue assets can have both a strategic and local role in positive water management. Planned and delivered correctly, GBI can greatly reduce the speed and volume of water reaching drains, sewers and water courses and put that water to beneficial use.

6.2 It can also play a vital role in improving water quality - for example by introducing vegetation which can help trap, filter out or reduce contaminants released to the environment. The recreational benefits of blue infrastructure are also important aspects. These can range from simple waterside access for walking to active sports such as sailing and canoeing, and their associated facilities.

6.3 Likewise, biodiversity, water and GBI link together to provide not only habitat for aquatic creatures but also strategic stopping points for migratory birds navigating between continents. At all scales, proactive water management can be integrated into multifunctional corridors and networks of green infrastructure.

6.4 It is important that the planning system as a whole takes water management challenges seriously, including having regard to the Water Framework Directive (which forms a part of UK law post-Brexit) and the relevant River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for the location. The planning system has a major part to play in delivering the 'good' status required of rivers by the Water Framework Directive.

Key GBI assets

6.5 **Figure 6.1** illustrates Oadby and Wigston's major blue corridors and their associated Flood Zones. The following provides brief detail on each of the major blue corridors:

The River Sence

6.6 The River Sence is a tributary of the River Soar, the principal river of Leicestershire, which eventually enters the River Anker. Its floodplain is a key blue corridor running along the southern boundary of the Borough. The catchment of the River Soar covers an area of approximately 1,380 km² covering much of the county of Leicestershire. It rises between Hinckley and Lutterworth and flows north towards Leicester, the principle urban area within its catchment. It is joined by the Grand Union Canal before it reaches Leicester. It flows through a predominantly urban catchment, passing through Great Glen, South Wigston and Blaby where it receives urban runoff. Unfortunately, under the Water Framework Directive, the River Sence as it flows through the Borough is currently identified as having 'poor' ecological status.

The Grand Union Canal

6.7 The Grand Union Canal (the longest canal in the country, linking London and Birmingham) also runs close to the Borough's southern boundary, flanked by a towpath. It is popular with boats, walkers, cyclists and anglers. It is

protected for its heritage value as a designated Conservation Area. Between Leicester and the River Trent, the canal coincides with the River Soar.

The Saffron/Wash Brook

6.8 The Saffron Brook/Wash Brook (a major tributary of the River Soar) is another key blue corridor. It runs through the Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge, starting from a rural location to the east of Oadby, later becoming Safford Brook and continuing from Knighton Park before joining the River Soar.

6.9 It has been identified by the Council as a priority area for river restoration for the benefit of people and wildlife. Under the Water Framework Directive, Wash Brook is currently identified as having 'moderate' ecological status (not meeting objectives).

The Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI

6.10 The Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI flows through the south of the Borough. The Canal is under unfavourable condition (as of 2010 data) due to freshwater pollution due to agriculture runoff, with levels of phosphorus over twice as high as it should be to meet favourable condition. It also suffers from siltation and public disturbance.

Key challenges

6.11 In the context of a changing climate, there is a need to protect against flood risk in Oadby and Wigston. As **Figure 6.1** shows, flood risk arises with the key rivers and water courses that extend across the Borough, with land either side of these features falling within Flood Zone 3. Within the Borough, there is a 'Community at Risk of flooding' on the Wash Brook and also a 'Community at Risk of flooding' at Wigston Harcourt, from a tributary of the River Sence.

6.12 In terms of water quality, Oadby and Wigston is covered under the Water Framework Directive within the Soar River Operational Catchment and is covered by the Humber river basin district river basin management plan . As with all rivers across England since 2022, all of the rivers in Oadby and Wigston failed quality standards on chemical status.

6.13 The River Sence (running through the Borough) is a tributary of the River Soar. The Soar Catchment Management Plan (2018) was produced by the River Soar Catchment Partnership. It proposes a 'catchment-based approach' to water management, which promotes a better understanding of the water environment at the local level and encourages local collaboration and more transparent decision making. The Plan highlights key pressures across the catchment area as:

- Diffuse pollution from roads and urban areas.
- Heavily modified river channels and loss of instream habitats.
- Rural point source and diffuse pollution.
- Separation of the river from its floodplain.
- Barriers to fish migration.
- Loss of riparian wetland habitats.
- Litter in the Soar and its tributaries.
- Raised levels of phosphates.
- Risk of properties and roads flooding.
- Land use leading to flashy watercourses.
- Building and development too close to the watercourse.
- Lack of access to the river and conflicts of recreation users in sensitive areas.
- Lack of community awareness and engagement with water and rivers.

6.14 Within the Sence and Wash Brook specifically, the challenges highlighted within the River Basin Management Plan for each include:

- **River Sence:** Diffuse pollution from transport drainage in urban areas, sewage discharge by the water industry, dissolved oxygen and plastic pollutions.
- **Wash Brook:** Impact of phosphates, drainage from transport infrastructure in urban areas and sewage discharge by the water industry.

6.15 According to the Saffron & Wash Brook Restoration Project, historic management works have altered the natural flow of the watercourse, with concrete banks and very little habitat for wildlife. This has limited its potential as a key wildlife corridor linking the centre of Leicester to rural Leicestershire and beyond.

6.16 Chapter 3 of this report (on Nature-Rich and Beautiful Places) provides further detail on the impacts of water quality on habitats within the designated Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI, which are particularly vulnerable to freshwater pollution as a result of agricultural runoff.

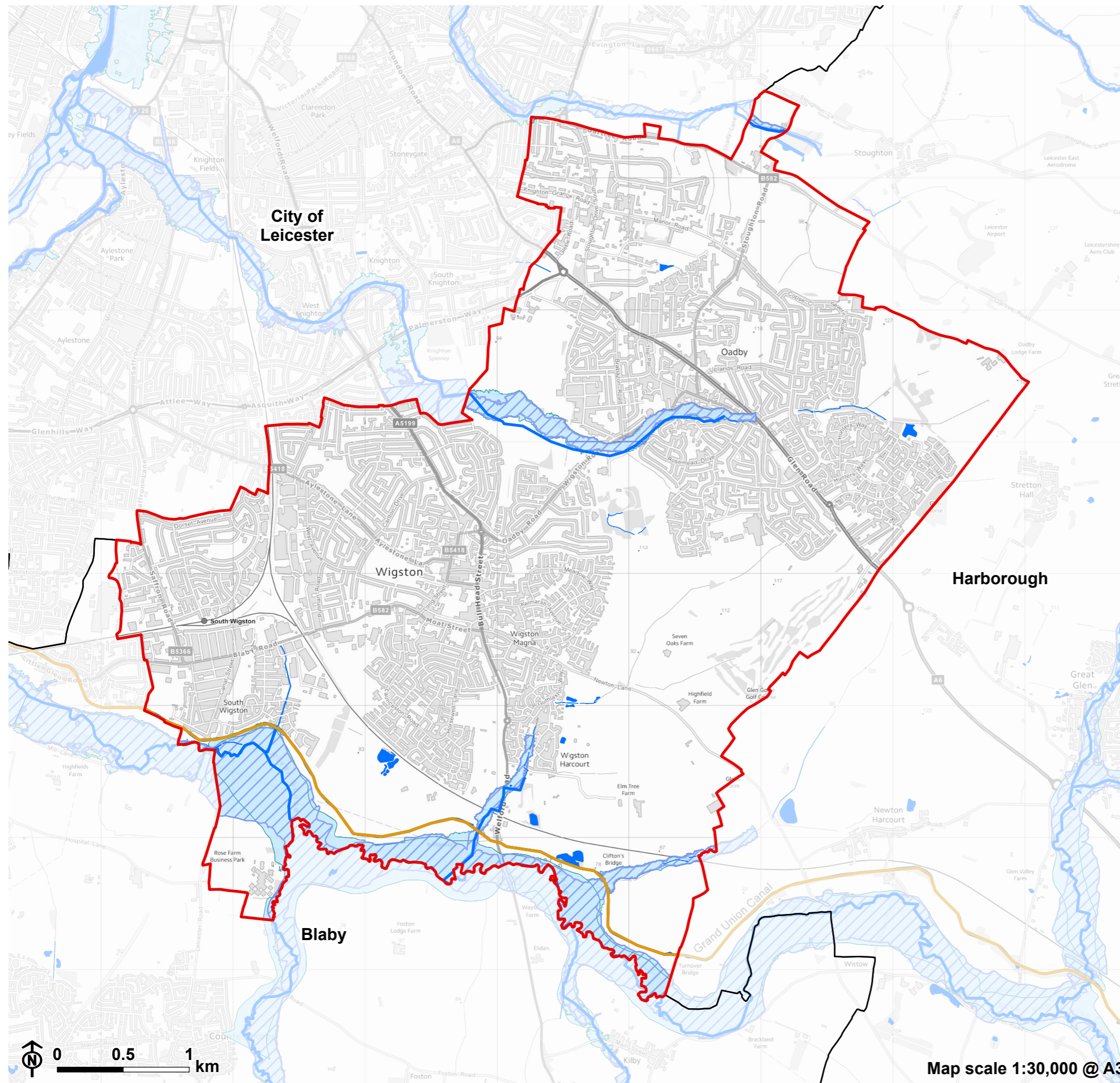
Key opportunities

- **Natural Flood Management:** To pursue natural flood management and nature-based solutions as central planks of the Borough's response to building climate resilience. This should include schemes to protect existing infrastructure from flooding, including Bridge Road at Crow Mills.
- **Flood storage:** To increase flood storage in and around locations sensitive to flooding (such as at Evington to the north of Oadby and to the two communities that are named at risk from flooding at Wash Brook and Wigston Harcourt).
- **Waterway buffers:** To ensure existing water courses are protected by designating and maintaining buffers and extend the valuable ecological networks provided by the waterways by restoring natural wetland habitats along the Sence, Soar and tributaries. The Sence river corridor was recognised in the 2017 Leicestershire GI Strategy as an opportunity for

restoring grazing marshes and fens along the river, extending into Balby. This would also help to intercept agricultural runoff and prevent pollution to the SSSI.

- **Saffron/Wash Brook restoration:** Implement future stages of the restoration project, in collaboration with all project partners, including the Trent Rivers Trust. This should focus on restoring river ecosystems through re-naturalisation work to create diverse natural habitats. This should focus on the stretch of river linking Knighton Park (just outside Borough's northern boundary) with Brocks Hill Country Park.
- **SuDS:** Linear, nature-rich SuDS ("rain gardens") alongside road infrastructure to capture and filter runoff, reducing flood risk and protecting water quality. High quality, multifunctional SuDS should be incorporated into all new development sites.
- **Catchment Based Approach:** A catchment-based approach should be followed to improve water quality and manage flood risk, in close collaboration with the Soar Catchment Partnership. Ensure that this approach is fully integrated into the wider planning process.

Figure 6.1: River corridors and Flood Zones in Oadby and Wigston



- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Grand Union Canal
- Waterbodies
- Flood zone 2
- Flood zone 3

Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

Chapter 7

Theme 5: Resilient and climate positive places

Why is GBI important for creating a more resilient and climate positive Oadby & Wigston?

An effective GBI network can help to make places more resilient and adaptive to climate change, as well as help meet zero carbon and air quality targets. Well-performing GBI can act as a carbon sink for climate change mitigation, through woodland creation and other habitat types. In terms of the GBI network itself, assets should be designed to adapt to climate change to ensure long term resilience.

7.1 A functioning GBI network provides the opportunity to mitigate and adapt to climate change. However, consideration is required to understand the impacts on the network which are set to amplify due to climate change, such as the increased frequency and magnitude of extreme weather.

7.2 The effective delivery of GBI can form part of a positive response to the climate emergency. This is because the GBI network will play a vital role in climate change adaptation because of the functions it provides for surface water and flood management, reducing the 'urban heat island' effect and provision of habitats to help wildlife adapt to changing temperatures. GBI can also proactively support the wider decarbonisation agenda in the Borough by

sequestering carbon in appropriate habitats and promoting greenways for active travel to reduce car dependency.

7.3 Links to climate change are referred to throughout this Strategy, but the key emphasis relates to:

- The role of woodland and trees in sequestering carbon, improving air quality, alleviating flooding and providing shade.
- Ensuring habitats (and associated wildlife) are resilient to the impacts of climate change and restoring habitats to help adapt (e.g. hedgerow and wetland restoration).
- The large extent of agricultural land which can be used in ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change, but also may be impacted by drought and flooding.
- Enhancing the water environment – water quantity and quality, as well as mitigating flood and drought risk, and the associated impacts on agriculture (see also Theme 4).
- Urban greening to help settlements store carbon and adapt e.g. providing shade and SuDS to reduce surface water flooding (see also Theme 4).
- Reducing transport emissions by encouraging sustainable active travel (see Theme 2).

Key GBI assets

7.4 Oadby and Wigston's Environment Strategy and Action Plan (2019) sets out how the Council will contribute towards reducing carbon emissions. This is both in terms of actions that it can take as an organisation in its own right and in terms of the Council role in influencing local residents and businesses and encouraging a partnership approach involving a range of stakeholders.

Key challenges

7.5 As of 2021, carbon emissions *per kilometre* squared in Oadby and Wigston stood at 8.8 kilo tonnes (significantly above the England Average of 2.3 kilo tonnes). However as of the same year, carbon emissions *per capita* stood at 3.6 tonnes in Oadby and Wigston, lower than the national average of 5.5 tonnes **[See reference 22]**.

7.6 Nevertheless, given the importance of transport-related emissions within Oadby and Wigston's wider carbon profile, it will be important to use the GBI network to discourage car dependence and provide alternative means of transport, particularly for short journeys and to access GBI assets (see more within Theme 2).

7.7 Beyond reducing emissions alone, how land is used in future will play a role in removing (or "sequestering") some of the emissions that are produced. Oadby and Wigston currently has very low woodland cover, limiting its potential as a carbon store as part of these climate mitigation efforts - ONS data shows that only 3% of Oadby and Wigston is covered by woodland, significantly lower than the UK average of 13% **[See reference 23]**, possibly in part due to its compact, urban form. The UK government has set a statutory target of reaching 16.5% tree and woodland cover by 2050, by planting 30,000 hectares of woodland annually.

7.8 Mitigating against the inevitable impacts of ongoing climate change will mean tackling recognised flood risk, which will be exacerbated as the climate continues to change. While engineering solutions will likely always be part of the response to flood risk challenges, nature-based solutions should be pursued wherever possible due to their potential to deliver multiple GBI benefits alongside flood risk mitigation, including recreational value, sense of place and habitat creation (see Theme 4 for further detail).

7.9 As temperatures rise, GBI can be used to combat the 'urban heat island' effect in built-up areas of Oadby and Wigston. The current limited tree cover

(see above) will need to be addressed before the GBI network can successfully fulfil this function. Given increasingly dry summers, tree planting must focus on drought-tolerant tree species.

Key opportunities

- **General approach:** The need to better emphasise the links between the provision of GBI and efforts to combat climate change.
- **Expand woodland cover:** Within existing green spaces, to work upwards from 3% woodland cover. This should initially focus on buffering and connecting existing areas of woodland along key corridors (including riparian cover along watercourses) to create linear corridors of habitat.
- **Expand street tree cover within urban areas:** Prioritise investment on key movement corridors, high streets and areas highlighted as being particularly 'grey' on Natural England's 'greenness grid'. A further area of focus should be where this overlaps with concentrations of socio-economic deprivation.

Chapter 8

A Vision for GBI in Oadby and Wigston

8.1 The following overarching Vision (which was tested during the stakeholder workshop) provides a high-level sense of direction that should guide the delivery of the GBI Strategy:

To deliver a multifunctional and connected green and blue network to guide sustainable growth and support interconnectivity for wildlife and communities within and beyond the Borough, for the benefit of present and future generations.

8.2 This Vision is supported by a series of Strategic Objectives (SOs). Each SO is linked to one of the Strategy's study themes, which provides a useful framework to understand and plan for GBI. The strategic objectives will aim to help deliver enhancements to the GBI network and form the basis for monitoring its success.

Strategic objectives

- SO1: To reverse biodiversity decline and support the designated site network, including by expanding and strengthening a network of “bigger, better and more joined up” habitats of all kinds.
- SO2: To ensure the Borough is meeting open space provision at all scales and evenly across the Borough (as set out by Natural England) and ensure that the GBI network plays a central role in a more prevention-centred healthcare system.
- SO3: To use multifunctional green and blue assets at all scales as a central plank of GBI-led regeneration of town centres, to enhance the setting of the Borough's heritage assets.

Chapter 8 A Vision for GBI in Oadby and Wigston

- SO4: To expand the nature-based solutions to increasing flood risk, use a catchment-based approach to water management within and beyond the Borough, and fully align the planning process with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive .
- SO5: To build a more resilient Borough by significant expanding tree cover inside and outside urban areas and using GBI features to complement the expansion of the active travel network.

8.3 It is anticipated that the GBI Vision and Objectives will be reflected in the emerging Local Plan Vision and Spatial Objectives

Chapter 9

Strategic GBI Opportunity Areas

9.1 We have split the Borough up into the following four broad ‘Opportunity Areas’ (Figure 9.1). Within each of these areas, we then identify a series of priorities which need to be pursued through future development. The opportunity areas are:

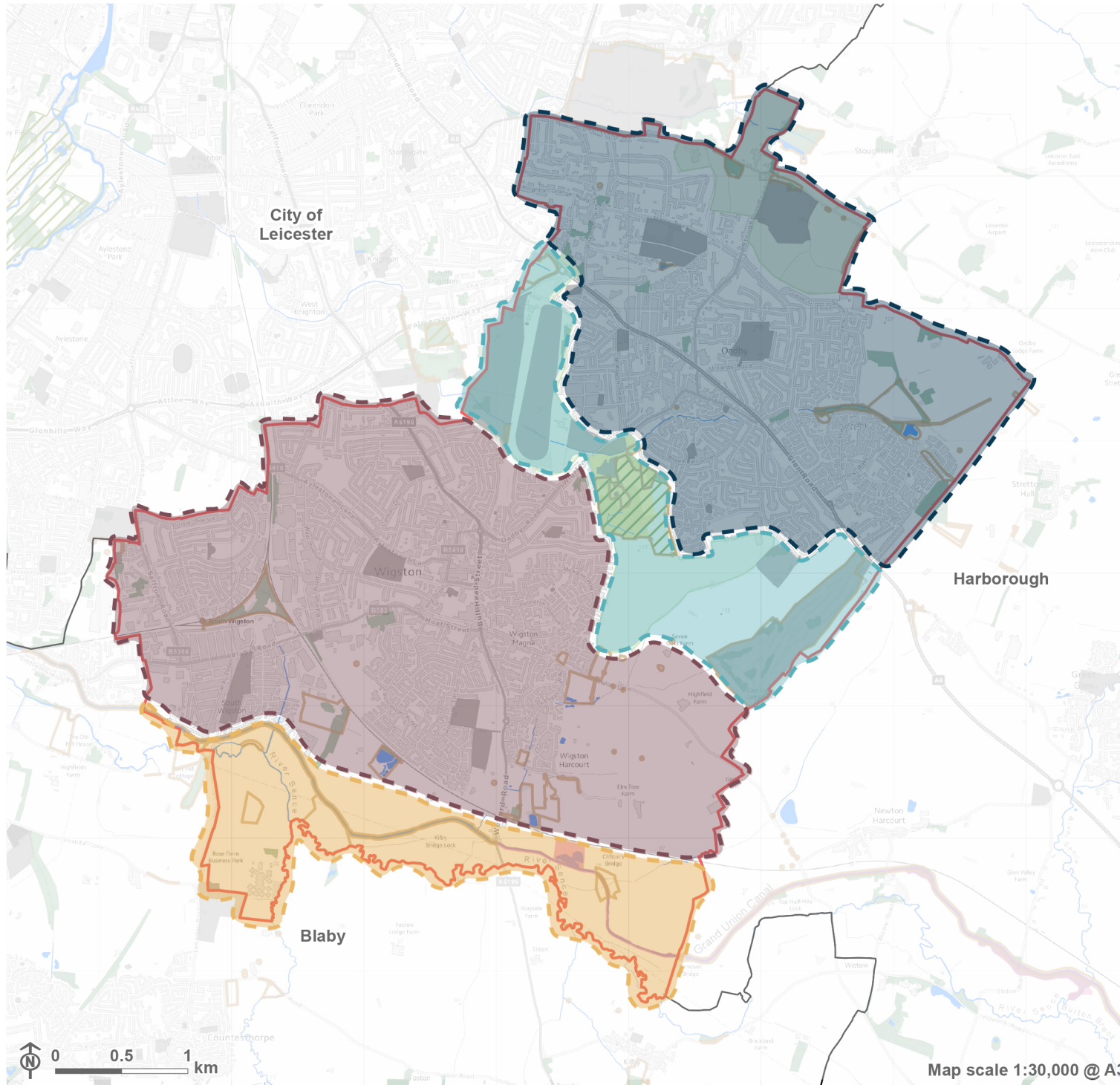
1. Oadby urban area
2. Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge
3. Wigston/South Wigston urban area
4. Grand Union Canal/ Sence corridor

9.2 For each Area, this Chapter first provides a summary of the GBI assets within that area and the challenges faced. It then sets out a series of priorities for enhancements, rooted in the baseline analysis carried out in Chapters 3-7 of this report.

9.3 Any GBI network will require a multi-partner approach to fully build out, including all kind of organisations from community groups up to the Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, Rivers Trusts and Catchment Partnerships. However, this Chapter (and this Strategy more broadly) focuses specifically on how development coming through the planning process can contribute to the GBI network. This might be through the form of the development sites themselves (including compliance with BNG requirements) or enhancements delivered off-site as part of planning gain (or as offset BNG requirements).

9.4 See **Chapter 10** for more detail on Delivery of the GBI network. When new development comes forward in any of the four Opportunity Areas below, proposals should take account of and contribute to the opportunities laid out here.

Figure 9.1 Opportunity Areas



- Oadby and Wigston study area
- Neighbouring local authority
- Green wedge
- Water bodies
- Biodiversity Asset**
- Local Wildlife Site
- Local Nature Reserve
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Country Park
- Woodland cover (NFI)
- Recreation asset
- Oadby Urban Area
- Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge
- Wigston / South Wigston Urban Area
- Grand Union Canal / Sence Corridor

For further details of Local Wildlife Site typology see figure 3.1. For further details of recreation asset typology see figure 4.1.



Map scale 1:30,000 @ A3

9.5 The following table provides an overview of the projects and ‘areas of focus’ identified in each of the Opportunity Areas:

Table 9.1: Summary of projects and ‘areas of focus’ identified within Oadby and Wigston

Opportunity Area	Priority project/area of focus
OA1: Oadby Urban Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban greening in central areas. • Greener walking and cycling infrastructure • Expand canopy cover • Nature-rich management of existing green spaces • Nature-based solutions to water management + enhancements to Oadby Nature Reserve
OA2: Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat connectivity, connecting three key LNRs • Green Wedge access project • River corridor restoration and naturalisation • Woodland cover • Regenerative agriculture in south of the Wedge • Nature-rich management of golf courses • Wildlife-rich private gardens
OA3: Wigston/South Wigston Urban Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GBI-led town centre regeneration • Wildlife-rich private gardens • Expand tree canopy cover • Nature-rich management of existing green spaces • Open space provision • Improved access to River Sence/Grand Union Canal corridor • Greener walking and cycling infrastructure • SuDS
OA4: Grand Union Canal/Sence corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment-based approach • Wetlands and de-culverting • Multifunctional enhancements to the entirety of the Grand Union Canal

Opportunity Area	Priority project/area of focus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="632 304 1235 371">• Enhancing networks of priority habitats along the Grand Union Canal<li data-bbox="632 376 1177 409">• Ecological buffers along the Sence<li data-bbox="632 414 1038 448">• Agricultural management<li data-bbox="632 452 1062 486">• Natural flood management

Opportunity Area 1: Oadby Urban Area

Vision: To support Oadby town centre and its active travel agenda through enhanced urban greening and canopy cover in priority areas of need and to use existing green space and the Wash Brook corridor to create valuable 'stepping stone' habitats through a heavily urbanised area.

Summary of existing assets

9.6 The Oadby urban area is one of more prosperous areas of the Borough compared to areas to the west (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation or IMD) and where health challenges are less severe. However, there are pockets of higher deprivation in the neighbourhoods surrounding Longmoor Primary School (see Theme 2).

9.7 This area lies between the two designated Green Wedges which overlap with the Borough. As such, it has reasonably good access to open space, in quantitative terms, compared to the south of the district. There is access to doorstep-scale, neighbourhood scale and wider neighbourhood-scale green spaces, from access to the Green Wedges and the Country Park to the west and to smaller-scale spaces like Uplands Park and the University of Leicester Botanic Gardens. There is also a network of Public Rights of Way (and some public access along Wash Brook) reaching into open land to the south.

9.8 There is also a relatively high proportion of private gardens in urban areas (Natural England data) compared to urban areas in the west.

9.9 Compared to other parts of the Borough (notably in South Wigston) built up areas of Oadby have relatively high-quality public realm with more areas of urban greening.

9.10 Wash Brook runs through southern areas of Oadby and connects into open areas to the southeast and to the Green Wedge to the west (but is culverted in parts).

9.11 The only site protected for nature in this part of the Borough is the Oadby Nature Reserve Local Wildlife Site (LWS), along the course of Wash Brook.

Summary of challenges facing the area

- **Flood risk:** There are areas of flood risk evident along Wash Brook throughout Oadby as it flows out of the Green Wedge into built-up areas (see Theme 5).
- **Deficits in urban greening:** While the east of the Borough is generally ‘greener’ than the west, Natural England’s ‘greenness grid’ highlights significant deficits within the centre of Oadby in land lying between the racecourse and Harborough Road, as well as around the ASDA superstore. This is due to significant expanses of hardstanding and under delivery of urban greening.
- **Canopy cover:** The Woodland Trust’s Tree equity score shows limited coverage (and a high priority for new planting) to the east of Leicester Road/Harborough Road – particularly when compared to areas such as Knighton and Clarendon Park to the north.

Priority areas of focus / projects

1. Urban greening in central areas

9.12 This Strategy proposes a new, GBI-led approach to the enhancement of the Borough’s town centre which focusses on GBI functionality (i.e., see “What is GBI?” in chapter 1) over ornamental value. This should focus on those areas highlighted as having low levels of greening by the ‘greenness grid’.

9.13 This should include increased street tree planting, combined with long term management for full GBI benefits.

2. Greener walking and cycling infrastructure

9.14 In November 2023, Leicestershire County Council published the Phase 1 report for the South of Leicester Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). **[See reference 24]** As new active travel routes come forward under the LCWIP in Oadby, the 'hard' infrastructure should be always accompanied with linear features such as rain gardens or street trees, to boost wider GBI benefits and lift quality of place within Oadby.

9.15 These GBI features should also seek to support strong green active travel links to National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 63, which skirts the northeastern boundary of Oadby.

Figure 9.2: Extract from the emerging Leicestershire LCWIP

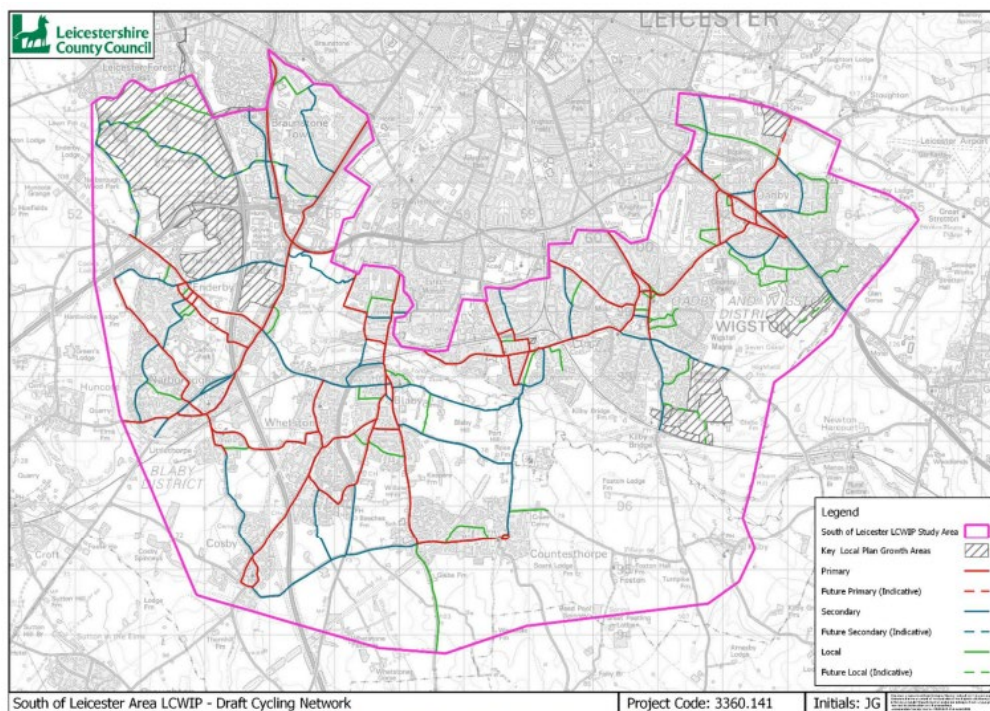


Figure 27. Draft Cycling Network Map

3. Expand canopy cover

9.16 Expand canopy cover across the Oadby urban area (including both street trees and woodland cover within existing soft landscaping), starting with those areas highlighted as the highest priority by the Tree Equity Tool. [\[See reference 25\]](#)

9.17 This should also include a focus on key movement corridors (see LCWIP) and high streets, in order to support high environmental quality in these areas and wider strategic Council aims. From a biodiversity perspective, woodland habitats through urban areas can also play a vital role as ‘stepping stone’ habitats supporting connectivity beyond the designated site network.

4. Nature-rich management of existing green spaces

9.18 Shifting from ‘business as usual’ to more wildlife-friendly management practices in existing managed green spaces in Oadby, such as Ellis Park, Uplands Park and Coombe Park (noting that the Leicestershire Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2019-2029 commits to creating and enhancing habitats and species richness within those habitats).

9.19 This might also include the ‘rewilding’ of key road verges across the Borough, including along the A6 and within amenity grassland along residential streets such as Brabazon Road. This would help to create important “pollinator highways” and support the nature recovery agenda.

9.20 All of this will require close coordination with the parks and open spaces team to ensure a new approach to maintenance. However, it may also benefit from planning gain receipts from new development coming forward for initial upgrades. Maintenance regimes within new developments coming forward should also demonstrate that they have been designed with nature recovery in mind.

5. Nature-based solutions to water management & enhancements to Oadby Nature Reserve

9.21 Nature-based solutions to flooding and ‘holding’ water in the townscape/landscape should be explored in areas at high risk from flooding in Oadby, and in areas with large expanses of hardstanding and impermeable surfacing.

9.22 This may include linear, nature-rich SuDS (“rain gardens”) alongside road infrastructure to both reduce surface water flooding but also to capture and filter runoff, assisting in tackling wider water quality challenges locally.

9.23 It may also include river corridor restoration, where possible, along Wash Brook as it flows through Oadby. In general, the river body is tightly constrained here by urban development (and in part culverted), however opportunities to re-naturalise the waterbody and expand riparian habitats (including riparian tree cover) to boost the health of the water body should be explored where possible. This can build on ongoing projects focussing on the Wash/Saffron Brooks throughout the Borough.

Opportunity Area 2: Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge

Vision: To build on the strengths of the Green Wedge as a key area of land for progressing the nature recovery agenda within the Borough, while enhancing access from urbanised areas to the west and restoring the health of the linear blue corridor of the Saffron/Wash Brook.

Summary of existing assets

9.24 The Oadby and Wigston Green Wedge lies at the heart of the Borough, lying between the major urbanised areas, and plays an important role in both providing access to nature close to where people live and as a foundation for nature recovery –it is the most significant area for wildlife and biodiversity in the Borough.

9.25 The flagship recreational asset of the 67-acre Brocks Hill Country Park LNR is owned by the Borough Council and lies within the Green Wedge, as does the adjacent Lucas Marsh LNR (managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and recognised for its habitat value in the Leicestershire BAP). There is also a concentration of local wildlife sites (LWS) in this area, along with traditional orchards.

9.26 Access to nature ‘close to home’ (see Figure 4.2) varies across this opportunity area, with particularly poor provision in the south. However, access to private gardens (as in the majority of the Borough) is strong here – cumulatively these make up a significant portion of the GBI network in Oadby.

9.27 The Saffron Brook/Wash Brook (a major tributary of the River Soar) is the key blue corridor running through the wedge.

Summary of challenges facing the area

- **Urbanisation pressures:** The Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge is the most significant area for wildlife and biodiversity in the Borough, but currently suffers from urbanisation pressures such as disturbance.
- **Intensive management of agricultural land:** Our ecological analysis (Chapter 3 and Appendix A) highlights that farmland in the south is generally managed in a way which causes habitat fragmentation.
- **River water quality:** Under the Water Framework Directive, Wash Brook is currently identified as having 'moderate' ecological status (i.e., not meeting objectives). The Saffron/Wash Brook corridor has been identified by the Council as a priority area for river restoration for the benefit of people and wildlife.
- **Historic modifications to river corridor:** According to the Saffron & Wash Brook Restoration Project, historic management works have altered the natural flow of the watercourse, with concrete banks and very little habitat for wildlife. This has limited its potential as a key wildlife corridor linking the centre of Leicester to rural Leicestershire and beyond.

Priority areas of focus / projects

1. Habitat connectivity, connecting three key LNRs

9.28 This area (including the green wedge) presents a strategic opportunity to create a natural corridor connecting the three LNRs of Knighton Spinney, Brocks Hill Country Park and the neighbouring Lucas Marsh. The corridor would encompass valuable priority habitats inventory, including the only lowland fens in the Borough and most of the remaining traditional orchards. It would also help to mitigate against any habitat fragmentation resulting from new development sites.

2. Green Wedge access project

9.29 As proposed in the 2017 Leicestershire GI Strategy, interventions should focus on a Green Wedge ‘access project’, with a focus on improving connectivity to Brock Hills Country Park (and the wider Green Wedge) from the west, where access to nature is poorer (see **Figure 4.2**).

9.30 This could involve improved wayfinding, trails and upgraded/extended PROW into the Green Wedge. This will also provide opportunities for better interpretation of surrounding natural, cultural and historic features through both signage and public art made from natural materials at key gateways.

9.31 Land ownership is likely to be fragmented in this part of the Borough and a multi-partner approach would be required to take this intervention forward.

3. River corridor restoration and naturalisation

9.32 The Saffron/Wash Brook presents an opportunity to restore the natural water corridor and provide benefits for both people and wildlife. This should include reinstating natural processes (“re-meandering”) to restore biodiversity and providing the diversity of habitats required for a healthy river ecosystem. Where not possible this might include in-stream enhancements such as adding woody material, marginal vegetation or deflectors.

9.33 The appropriate river restoration technique will be dependent on the river type, modification extent and adjacent restrictions such as infrastructure – this would require further investigation but should include the implementation and funding of future stages of the Saffron/Wash Brook restoration project, in collaboration with all project partners including the Trent Rivers Trust.

4. Woodland cover

9.34 While Brocks Hill Country Park benefits from significant tree cover, there is an opportunity to expand tree/woodland within the green wedge, with an initial focus on buffering and connecting existing areas of woodland along key corridors (including riparian cover along the Saffron/Wash Brook) to create linear corridors of habitat.

5. Regenerative agriculture in south of the Wedge:

9.35 More nature-rich forms of agricultural management should be pursued within agricultural land to the south. This is likely to be largely achieved through Defra's ongoing post-EU Agricultural Transition Plan, to enable farming to contribute to environmental goals through better environmental land management. [\[See reference 26\]](#)

9.36 The upcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) being taken forward by Leicestershire County Council will help to guide such improvements.

6. Nature-rich management of golf courses

9.37 In collaboration with the Greener Golf Group (a county-based group of clubs brought together by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust), support the enhancement of land at Leicester Golf Centre to ensure that golf can be played in greater harmony with wildlife. [\[See reference 27\]](#)

7. Wildlife-rich private gardens

9.38 Schemes to encourage wildlife-rich gardens and to discourage paving over of gardens and use of artificial turf, through awareness and educational campaigns (including with school children).

Opportunity Area 3: Wigston/South Wigston urban area

Vision: To pivot toward GBI-led regeneration of the town centre and integrated urban greening and natural features throughout the urban fabric to address poor access to nature and to improve climate resilience. It will also be key to enhance access links between this urban area and the green-blue corridor immediate to the south and west.

Summary of existing assets

9.39 The Wigston and South Wigston area is highly urbanised and contains two town centres and two Conservation Areas. Substantial areas of open space include Aylestone Lane Park, Blaby Road Park and a series of playing fields.

9.40 Figure 4.3 highlights that this is a part of the Borough where relatively higher levels of deprivation (compared to Oadby) overlap with relatively poor access to the open space network. In general this area (as with the whole Borough) has strong access to private gardens, which cumulatively add up to a significant portion of GBI provision. The exception is the area of terraced housing to the south of South Wigston Station.

9.41 There are no major blue corridors running through this opportunity area. However, at its southern and western extents lies the River Sence/Grand Union Canal Corridor (see Opportunity Area 4). Wigston/South Wigston has an important (but perhaps under-developed) relationship with this blue-green corridor to the south. Much of this area also lies within the 'impact risk zone' for the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI while lies to the south.

9.42 This opportunity area has low woodland cover, with several areas indicated by the Tree Equity Score mapping (see Theme 5) as ‘high priority’ or ‘highest priority’. However, there are small areas of deciduous woodland Priority Habitat, which is mostly isolated within the local wildlife site (LWS) set within rail infrastructure to the east of South Wigston station and elsewhere along railway lines.

9.43 There are few assets designated for their biodiversity value within this Opportunity Area. However, there are a cluster of local wildlife sites (LWS) along the southern boundary of the urbanised area (see Figure 2.1).

Summary of challenges facing the area

5. **Low tree canopy cover:** Several areas have been identified as a priority for tree planting within the Tree Equity Score data. None of the woodland areas are easily accessible to the public.
6. **Deficit in urban greening:** Natural England’s ‘greenness grid’ (see Theme 3) highlights expansive areas of hard surfacing and lack of greenery particularly within and around Wigston town centre and within South Wigston. This indicates a deficit of urban greening features, exacerbating surface water flood risk and the urban heat island effect, and having a fragmenting effect on surrounding habitats. This also undermines the wider ‘sense of place’ and quality of the public realm within this Opportunity Area.
7. **Some areas of flood risk:** There is a ‘community at risk of flooding’ at Wigston Harcourt, due to risk from a tributary of the River Sence on the edge of the area.

Priority areas of focus / projects

1. GBI-led town centre regeneration

9.44 Implement a new approach to the regeneration and enhancement of Wigston's town centres and public realm, taking a GBI-led approach which focusses on GBI functionality over ornamental value. Place GBI at the heart of town centre regeneration and public realm efforts – including any Area Actions plans or successors to the 2009 South Wigston Regeneration Masterplan.

2. Wildlife-rich private gardens

9.45 Schemes to encourage wildlife-rich gardens and to discourage paving over of gardens and use of artificial turf, through awareness and educational campaigns (including with school children).

3. Expand tree canopy cover

9.46 Prioritise investment on key movement corridors, high streets and areas highlighted as being particularly 'grey' on Natural England's 'greenness grid'. A further area of focus should be where deficits overlap with concentrations of socio-economic deprivation (see Tree Equity Score data).

4. Nature-rich management of existing green spaces

9.47 To shift from 'business as usual' to more wildlife-friendly management practices in existing managed green spaces, recognising them as important corridors and 'stepping stones' in a GBI network (The Leicestershire Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2019-2029 commits to creating and

enhancing habitats and species richness within those habitats). This could include the “re-wilding” of key verges across the borough (such as along sections of Leicester Road).

5. Open space provision

9.48 Prioritise open space provision, enhancements, and investment in the west of the Borough around South Wigston, where areas of socio-economic deprivation overlap with deficits in access to open space.

6. Improved access to River Sence/Grand Union Canal corridor

9.49 To improve accessibility, and general connections, with the Grand Union Canal (such as at Ervin’s Lock, South Wigston). This may involve improving the usability and safety of footpaths and bridleways.

9.50 In particular, the PROW network connecting the urban area to the Grand Union Canal (including Barford Close footbridge over the railway) should be upgraded with improved surfacing, wayfinding, and interpretation to encourage recreational use of surrounding GBI.

7. Greener walking and cycling infrastructure

9.51 Any active travel (walking/cycling) infrastructure implemented as part of Leicestershire’s Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) should take advantage of combining ‘hard’ infrastructure with linear features such as rain gardens or street trees, to boost wider GBI benefits and lift quality of place within urban centres.

8. SuDS

9.52 Linear, nature-rich SuDS (“rain gardens”) should be installed alongside road infrastructure to capture and filter runoff, reducing flood risk and protecting water quality. High quality, multifunctional SuDS should be incorporated into all new development sites.

Opportunity Area 4: Grand Union Canal/ Sence corridor

Vision: To protect and enhance this high value green-blue corridor with a focus on catchment-based approaches to improving water quality, nature-based solutions to flood risk and sensitive access improvements which make the most of the heritage features along the route.

Summary of existing assets

9.53 This opportunity area follows the green-blue corridor of land lying to the west of Wigston/South Wigston close to the boundary with neighbouring Blaby. This area forms an important multifunctional GBI corridor within reach of urban areas – largely because it follows the two important blue corridors of the River Sence (and tributaries) and the Grand Union Canal. The latter is also a designated Conservation Area and has significant place value as the longest canal in the country, linking London and Birmingham. It is flanked by a towpath and is popular with boats, walkers, cyclists, and anglers.

9.54 Other than the northern section where the canal runs alongside urbanised parts of Wigston, there are very few impermeable surfaces here and the area has significant nature value, with a concentration of local wildlife sites interconnected with the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI. This configuration offers an excellent opportunity to establish a wildlife corridor, leveraging the natural connectivity facilitated by watercourses.

9.55 . The Clifton Bridge local nature reserve (LNR) is located alongside the Grand Union Canal and provides important habitat for grass snakes and farmland birds. The wider area is also home to the Borough's single Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGS) at Kilby Bridge Quarry, which sits within the larger Barn Pool Meadow LWS.

9.56 This area plays an important role in Oadby and Wigston's extensive network of wetlands. The south of this area (and crossing the boundary with neighbouring Harborough) is a Natural England 'habitat network enhancement zone 2' (see Figure 3.3), which indicates 'land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats' where action that 'improves biodiversity value through land management changes and/or GBI provision' should be targeted.

[See reference 28]

Summary of challenges facing the area

9. The entirety of Oadby and Wigston lies within a Nitrate Vulnerability Zone, which emphasises the importance of habitat restoration efforts along the SSSI and the Grand Union Canal as crucial for improving the filtration of nutrients from agricultural runoff originating in the surrounding farmland, together with reduction of nutrients at source.
10. The type of habitat found at the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI (for which it was designated) is associated with slow-flowing lowland rivers and is under increasing threat due to hydrological modification of many of the Leicestershire's natural catchment systems. All the units of the site are under unfavourable condition (as of 2010) due to freshwater pollution because of agricultural runoff. Levels of phosphorus are over twice as high as they should be to meet favourable condition. The canal also suffers from siltation and public disturbance.
11. Under the Water Framework Directive, the River Sence as it flows through the Borough is currently identified as having 'poor' ecological status.
12. Natural England data shows that the urbanised areas to the north and east of this blue-green corridor have relatively poor access to natural green space, which may be affected by the severance caused by the railway line which separates the two. This may be a missed opportunity for providing inclusive access to opportunities to engage with the natural world for these communities.
13. Figure 6.1 highlights that large areas of this corridor are at significant flood risk from the River Soar. Without further action, this risk is likely to be

exacerbated in future by the effects of climate change and changing weather patterns.

Priority areas of focus / projects

1. Catchment Based Approach

9.57 A catchment-based approach should be followed to improve water quality and manage flood risk, in close collaboration with the Soar Catchment Partnership. It will be important to ensure that this approach is fully integrated into the wider planning process.

2. Wetlands and de-culverting

9.58 To provide additional wetland habitats by de-culverting existing channels and water courses in urbanised areas to the north (e.g. at South Wigston). This could also include wetlands to help filter pollution in order to protect the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI.

3. Multifunctional enhancements to the entirety of the Grand Union Canal

9.59 To be concentrated along the linear Conservation Area, creating a place-led GBI corridor and linking together key heritage assets. This could involve public art and interpretation panels to tell the story of the corridor.

9.60 Enhancements should focus on providing (sensitively designed) access to the corridor from those areas of South Wigston where socioeconomic deprivation overlap with deficits in access to natural space. This project should also seek to provide sustainable (car-free) access to key heritage destinations

including the canal itself and medieval villages alongside it. Wherever possible, design should provide access to residents and visitors with reduced mobility.

4. Enhancing networks of priority habitats along the Grand Union Canal

9.61 As set out in the 2017 Leicestershire-wide GI Strategy, there is potential to create better networks of priority habitats (e.g. woodland, meadows and acid grassland) around the SSSI and wider blue corridor to improve ecological connectivity. This would deliver on the proposals for the Natural England Network Enhancement Zone 2.

9.62 Improvements along this blue corridor should carefully balance visitor access (given the heritage and recreational value of the corridor) with the need to protect the integrity of the designated habitats.

5. Ecological buffers along the Sence

9.63 Action is required to ensure that existing water courses are protected by designating and maintaining buffers and extending the valuable ecological networks provided by the waterways by restoring natural wetland habitats along the Sence, Soar and tributaries.

9.64 The Sence river corridor was recognised in the 2017 Leicestershire GI Strategy as an opportunity for restoring grazing marshes and fens along the river, extending into Blaby. This would also help to intercept agricultural runoff and prevent pollution to the SSSI.

6. Agricultural management

9.65 The impact of agricultural management in this part of the Borough is having a noted effect on the condition of the SSSI and wider corridor. While agricultural management lies outside the planning system (and with Defra), agri-environmental schemes across the borough should be supported and prioritised, with a key focus on the land between the River Sence and the Grand Union Canal). This should also seek opportunities to expand woodland cover and connect existing blocks of woodland/other habitat as relevant.

9.66 The upcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) being taken forward by Leicestershire County Council will help to guide such improvements.

7. Natural Flood Management

9.67 Given significant fluvial flood risk in this corridor, projects should pursue natural flood management (NFM) and nature-based solutions (NBS) as central planks of the Borough's response to building climate resilience. This should include schemes to protect existing infrastructure from flooding, including Bridge Road at Crow Mills.

Chapter 10

Policy recommendations

10.1 Planning policy can play a critical role in the delivery of GBI, by setting clear expectations for it as part of long-term development plans. The Borough Council has a duty to act on climate change, generate employment, maintain healthy functioning ecosystems, maximise physical and mental wellbeing, and protect and promote cultural and heritage assets.

10.2 The GBI opportunities identified in this Strategy will help achieve these aims and create a pleasant and resilient borough. GBI will also form part of the overall mitigation for planned site allocations and other future development that comes forward for determination. However, despite the recognised multiple benefits of GBI, it can often be difficult to deliver policy expectations due to competing policy priorities and concerns about viability. As such, GBI is often treated as a lower tier requirement. On the contrary GBI should be seen as a vital part of the infrastructure needed to support new development

10.3 This chapter sets out a series of recommendations to ensure that the principles of a GBI approach to land-use planning are embedded as a cross cutting theme in the policies and objectives of the new Oadby and Wigston Local Plan.

Embedding GBI into Local Plan Policy – “Mainstreaming GBI”

10.4 The protection, enhancement, creation, and linking of GBI assets should thread throughout the Borough’s new Local Plan (and any other document that might contribute to form the development plan for the Borough). It is important to ensure that GBI is fully embedded within the Local Plan rather than dealt with through an isolated policy alone. A dedicated GBI policy should be

complemented by a wider Local Plan which ‘mainstreams’ GBI by weaving references to GBI throughout other policy areas. This will allow GBI to move outside any environmental policy ‘silo’ and interact with other agendas including health, economic, and social policy areas.

10.5 As a starting point, GBI should be referenced in the plan’s vision, and then form the basis of a specific objective that will help to frame the composition of the broader plan. This approach will enhance the social, environmental, and economic benefits of GBI across the borough.

10.6 This section of the GBI strategy identifies the existing suite of policies, as included in the Borough’s existing Local Plan for the period 2011 to 2031 (as adopted in April 2019). For each of these, we suggest additional enhancements that we feel would help to strengthen the Borough’s position with respect to developing an integrated and multi-functional GBI network. Collectively, the suggestions will assist the Borough in protecting, enhancing, and managing GBI assets in an integrated and coherent manner. These assets include those that are existing, as well as the additional GBI assets that this strategy has helped to identify.

Alignment with emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy

10.7 Leicestershire County Council is the responsible authority for taking forward the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) covering Oadby and Wigston. LNRS are a new mandatory system of strategies coming forward under the Environment Act 2021 to ensure that opportunities to recovery nature are joined up. They are primarily aimed at landowners, farmers, local authorities and environmental groups and will be an important tool in promoting nature through the planning system.

10.8 At the time of publishing, the Leicestershire LNRS is a work in progress and is expected to be completed by early 2025. The final product is set to guide

local planning policy initiatives, including biodiversity net gain (BNG) by informing the delivery of biodiversity offsetting. It will also help to attract funding for environmental improvement and growth.

10.9 Together with BNG, the system of LNRS will allow the planning system to play a more proactive role for nature and the environment. However, at the time of publishing there is also not yet full clarity on how the LNRS system will align with Local Plans and the wider planning system – the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) requires all tiers of planning to ‘take account of LNRS’. There is a requirement in the Environment Act 2021 for the Secretary of State to issue guidance to local planning authorities as to how they must have regard to the LNRS – however it is unclear so far what precise weight or status they will have in the system.

10.10 Within Oadby and Wigston’s planning system, from 2025 the GBI Strategy and Leicestershire LNRS will co-exist and should work together to promote GBI and nature recovery through planning policy. When developing schemes for a particular site, both will be expected to be consulted in detail to ensure that GBI and spatial nature recovery priorities are fully met by forthcoming development.

10.11 We also note that the GBI Strategy has a broader scope beyond the LNRS overarching focus on biodiversity and will play an important role in providing weight in particular to those elements of the GBI network which promote access to nature for community health benefits (Theme 2) and in supporting wider prosperity (Theme 3). Future iterations of this GBI Strategy should draw clearly on the contents of the Leicestershire LNRS, particularly in relation to Theme 1 (Nature-rich and Beautiful Places), especially given the explicitly spatial focus of the LNRS and the priorities identified in different parts of the Borough.

Definitions

10.12 Although the Borough's replacement Local Plan can refer to this GBI strategy as an important source of evidence and direction, the replacement Local Plan should still seek to introduce, and explain, the role for GBI across the Borough in both policy and supporting text. Essentially, the Local Plan should:

- define what GBI is
- define what constitutes GBI across the Borough, and
- refer to the wide range of ecosystem services that GBI can support.

10.13 While reference can be given to the definitions and support presented through the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* and *Planning Practice Guidance*, reference should also be made to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, and to the resources that are included within it. We seek to make these links through our policy suggestions.

10.14 A commonly-used definition for GBI is included within the glossary to the NPPF. We referred to this earlier, but essentially this defines GBI as:

A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

10.15 Beyond providing a definition, it would also be useful to define what the GBI network, in the context of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, comprises. Our strategy can again be used as a reference point, but the replacement Local Plan should explain how the network comprises high-quality open spaces, parks, amenity spaces, woodlands, nature reserves, community allotments, trees, green roofs, green walls, gardens, hedgerows, waterways and waterbodies. As our strategy has explained, the GBI network also encompasses

sites designated for their biodiversity value as well as wild, semi-natural and developed environments. It also includes the routes and corridors that link these sites, such as the Grand Union Canal and the Borough's river systems and their associated floodplains.

10.16 With respect to defining the arising ecosystem services, a successfully managed and protected GBI network can positively support:

- Biodiversity management and enhancement.
- Flood and water quality regulation / sustainable drainage.
- Carbon capture / local climate regulation.
- Food, timber and other primary production.
- Air quality and noise regulation.
- Recreation and tourism.
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing / social inclusion.
- Economic development.
- Promoting the setting of, and facilitating access to, cultural heritage assets.
- Encouraging environmental education and awareness.
- Enhancing visual amenity and sense of place.

10.17 These ecosystem services broadly align with the five 'benefit' principles that contribute to the broader suite of 15 principles that permeate across Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework. These benefit principles form the basis of the five GBI themes used to structure this Strategy of:

- Nature rich beautiful places.
- Active and healthy places.
- Thriving prosperous places.
- Improving water management.

- Resilient and climate positive places.

10.18 The following sections of this chapter present our suggested enhancements, with the text following the structure of the Borough's existing Local Plan.

Vision and plan objectives

Existing vision

10.19 By 2031, the vision of the adopted Local Plan envisages that the Borough of Oadby and Wigston will:

Be a safe, clean, and attractive place in which to live, work and visit. The Borough and its assets will be accessible to all through sustainable modes of transport. It will have a resilient and prosperous economy, secure environment, vibrant centres and healthy empowered communities. The Borough will be continuing to promote sustainable economic growth, as well as making the best use of its natural and heritage assets. Growth will contribute to people's health, happiness and well-being in the Borough through the timely delivery of well-designed and high quality development. High quality development will continue raising the level in terms of environmental standards, quality of life and local distinctiveness. Residents in the Borough will have the opportunity to enjoy peaceful, harmonious, high quality and healthy active lifestyles in communities that offer a range of; quality new housing which meet local needs; job opportunities; and other important services and facilities. Residents will be able to enjoy a variety of open landscapes including parks, sporting facilities and the open countryside with its elements of natural beauty and wealth of wildlife areas where biodiversity has been conserved and enhanced.

10.20 Although the existing vision text refers to how “residents will be able to enjoy a variety of open landscapes”, this could be amended to refer to how “residents will be able to access and enjoy multi-functional blue and green spaces, including parks, sporting facilities and the open countryside”. The existing vision text connects with three of Natural England’s five ‘benefit’ principles, namely those that seek to ensure that places are nature rich, active and healthy, and thriving and prosperous (themes 1-3 of this Strategy). However, there is potential to give greater emphasis to the remaining two, namely those that seek to improve water management, and to create resilient and climate positive places (themes 4-5). Specific reference to the term green and blue infrastructure should be added.

Existing objectives

The Borough’s existing Local Plan is underpinned by 14 strategic objectives:

- Spatial Objective 1: Regeneration of town and district centres.
- Spatial Objective 2: Wigston town centre.
- Spatial Objective 3: Oadby district centre
- Spatial Objective 4: South Wigston centre.
- Spatial Objective 5: Improved employment opportunities.
- Spatial Objective 6: Accessible transport links.
- Spatial Objective 7: Growth of the Leicester PUA.
- Spatial Objective 8: A balanced housing market.
- Spatial Objective 9: Healthy lifestyles
- Spatial Objective 10: High quality and sustainable design.
- Spatial Objective 11: Conserving and enhancing green (including water assets) infrastructure.
- Spatial Objective 12: Enhancing local heritage.
- Spatial Objective 13: Green Wedges and the Countryside.

- Spatial Objective 14: Kilby Bridge regeneration.

10.21 While the majority of these objectives will help to support the protection, management and enhancement of the Borough's GBI network, spatial objective 11 has direct relevance. The objective is worded as follows:

11. All development should be respectful to the natural environment and landscape (including Local Green Spaces, ancient woodland and veteran trees), as well as conserving and enhancing the Borough's biodiversity. Both green and water assets will be protected, managed and enhanced. Due to the predominately urban nature of the Borough, enhancement of the landscape and biodiversity will consist of, for example the planting of trees and woodlands (where possible), and the creation of ponds and other natural habitats to improve species resilience to climate change. Provision of a network of multi-functional green spaces which secure a net gain in biodiversity will be sought.

10.22 We believe that the wording of this objective remains relevant and necessary and is in line with the ethos presented via Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework. We would therefore strongly recommend that strategic objective 11 be retained and be incorporated into the replacement Borough Local Plan. to ensure that a robust link is provided to the emerging Leicestershire LNRS it may be prudent to explicitly include the terminology of "nature recovery" within the objective.

Local Plan Policies

10.23 Through this section, we consider the type of policy goals that should be presented through the Borough's replacement Local Plan. In doing so, we start by considering the policies that are included the Borough's existing Local Plan for the period 2011-2031. For the sake of clarity, the chapter reproduces the

text of these individual policies. We then comment on their adequacy for the replacement Local Plan and make suggestions for where we feel policy wording can be strengthened.

Green Infrastructure Policy

10.24 Policy goals relating to a particular theme, such as GBI, should extend across a whole Local Plan, rather than be restricted to a single, potentially siloed, policy. While the current Local Plan follows this practice by promoting GBI through a multitude of different policy channels, it does include a specific policy (Policy 8) that is explicitly focused on green infrastructure. We believe this is a sensible approach since it gives visibility to the policy goal and helps to give it comparable weighting to other policy goals. The wording of the existing policy is as follows:

Existing Local Plan Policy 8: Green Infrastructure.

The Council will seek a net gain in Green Infrastructure through the preservation and enhancement of open spaces and assets that comprise the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its network. Where relevant, all new development resulting in a net gain in residential dwellings and / or other forms of development, such as employment, retail and commercial floor space must contribute towards achieving this net gain. Green Infrastructure assets will be created, preserved, managed and enhanced by:

- safeguarding and enhancing existing Strategic Green Infrastructure assets / corridors;
- contributing towards the creation of new multi-functional areas of green space;
- seeking opportunities to link fragmented habitats, protect vulnerable habitats and integrate biodiversity within communities;

- seeking the creation of new strategic and / or local Green Infrastructure assets / corridors within all new development;
- actively promoting the restoration, re-creation and enhancement of existing Green Infrastructure assets / corridors and the biodiversity that they support;
- not allowing development that compromises the integrity of the existing overall Green Infrastructure network;
- protecting and conserving species and sites of ecological and geological significance;
- facilitating off-site improvements to existing Green Infrastructure assets / corridors, particularly their quality and accessibility;
- where relevant, working in partnership to enhance the value of Strategic Green Infrastructure assets / corridors that are also of significance outside of the Borough, such as the Grand Union Canal and River Sence (including their riparian habitats).

10.25 In terms of enhancements to the **policy text**, and to ensure that the policy can help to maximise the potential of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, we would suggest:

- Relabelling the policy title so that it refers to Green and Blue Infrastructure, rather than just 'Green Infrastructure'.
- Stating, up-front, how GBI plays an integral role in making the Borough sustainable, healthy and attractive, and in helping to meet [other] Local Plan objectives.
- Stating how all development proposals should adopt an approach that is environment and landscape-led, so as to maximise the beneficial provision of GBI for nature, people and place.
- Stating how, in planning for major development, priority will be given to the role of GBI in responding to climate change, managing flood risk, protecting and enhancing heritage assets, supporting sustainable transport

options, supporting biodiversity and the natural environment, and ensuring open space for sport and recreation is secured for the community.

- Stating how all proposals for major development should be checked against the design checklist included in this GBI strategy (as presented below).
- Stating how development proposals for major development should be accompanied by an acceptable GBI plan for the site. This plan should outline the GBI to be retained and protected and the GBI to be created. The GBI plan should also outline stewardship arrangements for not less than 30 years to cover maintenance, management, and funding arrangements.
- Stating how, under certain circumstances, an endowment sum and / or revenue contributions may be sought via a S106 agreement to help support GBI maintenance.
- Stating how contributions will be sought to help pay for local GBI projects, as presented through this GBI strategy, where projects are related to the development, or where the project can help to mitigate the impacts of new development.
- Stating how all major developments must:
 - Demonstrably take a design-led approach that seeks to ensure that GBI is considered and well-integrated into developments at an early stage of the design process.
 - Ensure that GBI is multi-functional, accessible to all, and designed to meet local needs, taking into account the views of key stakeholders.
 - Avoid the loss and fragmentation of existing GBI features and networks, as presented via this GBI strategy. Development proposals must integrate, and seek to enhance where appropriate, existing landscape, geological or archaeological features, water courses, and habitats into the scheme.
 - Protect, and stop any identified deterioration, of irreplaceable habitats.

- Demonstrate, where applicable, that the integrity of the Borough's green wedges, and the objectives that are set for them, will not be compromised.
- Integrate Sustainable [urban] Drainage Systems, as appropriate, and ensuring that any such intervention can deliver multi-functional benefits for biodiversity, recreation and aesthetic value.
- Consider connectivity to be a core principle of GBI, integrating active travel and recreational routes which connect with open space which meets accessibility, quantity and quality standards for all users, and provide onward connections to existing communities and local facilities and services. Appropriate greening should be integrated into these routes and provide and improve connections to adjacent priority habitat networks especially where this would contribute to wider nature recovery.
- Protect existing trees and hedgerows both during and after construction, with appropriate measures being put in place.
- Maximise opportunities for increasing tree canopy cover through new planting. New planting should use native species and take account of biosecurity challenges, for example by controlling non-native invasive species, and ensuring all plant stock is free of pests and disease and non-native species.
- Demonstrate, where adverse impacts are identified, how the benefits of the development clearly outweigh any adverse impact on the Borough's GBI network and its functions.

10.26 Existing policy 8 is supported by some **explanatory text**. Currently this defines GBI and outlines the various benefits that it can give rise to. Consequently, the text currently accords with the principles expressed through paragraph 1.7 above. The existing explanatory text refers to the Borough's existing green infrastructure study, and in doing so, refers to some key GBI corridors that extend across the Borough. As part of this, the text refers to a selection of GBI assets, and refers to the wide-ranging benefits that these give rise to. For example, reference is made to the contribution provided by protected wildlife sites, and the contribution that these give to supporting

vulnerable habitats and species. The existing text refers to a need, and outlines significant potential, for incorporating GBI into the 'Direction for Growth Allocations', and identifies how these locations can positively reinforce the Borough's GBI network. Lastly, the explanatory text refers to the particular role played by the Borough's Green Wedges.

10.27 As it stands, the explanatory text is already supportive to the aims of the policy. However, in terms of enhancing the explanatory text, we would suggest:

- Referring specifically to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF), and to the 15 principles that underpin it. Referring to the five benefit principles would be particularly helpful.
- Referring to the additional resources that comprise the GIF, in particular the Planning and Design Guide that includes detailed guidance about how GBI can be incorporated into different types of environment. The guide also provides specific advice concerning the design and implementation of specific GBI interventions, such as green walls and rain gardens [See [reference 29](#)].
- Referring to this updated GBI strategy. Updated text could refer to some of the conclusions arising from the baseline audit, as well as the strategic opportunities that have been identified.

Signposting to some of the other policies that the Local Plan currently includes (or will include) for GBI would be useful to help 'mainstream' GBI across the Local Plan.

Green Wedges

10.28 As noted through this strategy, and through Policy 8 above, the Borough's Green Wedges make an important contribution to the Borough's GBI network. The adopted Local Plan includes the following policy for the Borough's wedges:

Existing Local Plan Policy 42: Green Wedges.

Green Wedges protect important areas of green land within the Borough and the Council will retain these areas as open and undeveloped. The objectives of all Green Wedges situated within the Borough are to:

- Prevent the merging of settlements;
- Guide development form;
- Provide a 'green lung' between the urban area and the countryside; and
- Act as a recreational resource.
- Due to the open and undeveloped nature of the Green Wedges, the Council will allow uses that are consistent with the following.
- Agriculture, horticulture and allotments and associated development necessary to facilitate and support these uses;
- Outdoor leisure, recreation and sporting facilities and associated development necessary to facilitate and support these uses;
- Forestry and bodies of water and associated development necessary to facilitate and support these uses;
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways; and,
- Burial grounds and associated development necessary to facilitate and support these uses.

The Council will support proposals that retain and enhance public access into the Borough's Green Wedges, as well as proposals that retain and enhance the role that the Green Wedges play in the Borough's Green Infrastructure Network and its biodiversity. Road proposals or dedicated public transport routes within the Borough that are evidenced as being required will only be acceptable where it has been proven that there are no alternative routes outside of the Green Wedge. Any proposal that has an

adverse impact on the Green Wedge will only be permitted where there is a justifiable need which outweighs these impacts and where a Landscape Character Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that all detrimental impacts that a development may cause have been addressed and can be mitigated.

10.29 We recognise that separate strands of work have been undertaken to inform the direction of Policy 42. Given the importance of the Green Wedges to the Borough's GBI network, the protective nature of Policy 42 is correct and it is clearly important to maintain the wedges, and the focus of the policy, into the replacement Local Plan. Notwithstanding the potential updates that could arise in response to the latest evidence, we believe the current policy could be enhanced by specifically referring to the multi-functional benefits that the wedges give rise to.

Local Green Space

10.30 The adopted Local Plan includes a specific policy relating to Local Green Space. The wording of this policy is as follows:

Existing Local Plan Policy 45: Local Green Space.

In areas designated as Local Green Space, new development that would cause harm to the local significance of the Local Green Space will not be permitted except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless it can be demonstrated that the harm to the local significance of the Local Green Space is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Proposals put forward to the Council for Local Green Space designation will be assessed against the criteria set out within national planning policy.

10.31 Essentially Policy 45 gives enhanced protection to a set of specially defined places, adding additional protection to the broader collection of spaces that form the Borough's GBI network. While we are supportive of the increased importance directed to these spaces, care needs to be taken to ensure that the policy does not undermine the importance of the broader network. As for wording, we believe the policy is clear, although consideration should be given to the allocation of new Local Green Spaces across the Borough. These might include existing spaces, as well as those arising through new development.

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities

10.32 In addition to the adopted Local Plan's policy on the Borough's GBI network, there is a separate policy relating to open space, sport and recreation. The wording of this policy is as follows:

Existing Local Plan Policy 9: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities

In relation to open space, sport and recreation facilities, the Council will protect existing sites from development where; there is a demand to retain them; they contribute towards the Green Infrastructure in the Borough; and the equivalent cannot be provided elsewhere. New development will contribute either physically or financially to the provision or improvement of open space, sport and recreation facilities. The quantity requirements, the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy and the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document will be used in relation to the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities provision within the Borough, to satisfy need and allow every resident access to adequate, high quality, accessible open space and play areas. Provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities must:

Be located close to their intended population catchment areas;

Be accessible by a choice of transport modes other than the private car;

Be of an appropriate scale and design; and

Seek positive impacts to landscape form.

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, must not be developed or lost unless:

An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements;

The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; and

The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

10.33 Again, we are mindful that additional evidence has been prepared to support the wording and direction of this policy in the replacement Local Plan. Notwithstanding the revisions that might arise with this work, we believe it would be worth stating, in the policy's explanatory text, that these resources are an important contributor to the Borough's GBI network. We recognise that accessibility to sports facilities varies across the Borough so opportunities to address these imbalances should be taken through new development where possible.

Countryside

10.34 In line with national policy, the adopted Local Plan includes the following policy to protect areas of countryside within the Borough:

Existing Local Policy 43: Countryside.

Land outside of the Leicester PUA, defined limits to development, direction for growth allocations and Green Wedges will be defined as Countryside. The openness and intrinsic qualities of the Countryside will be protected. The Borough Council will promote good management of the Countryside whilst allowing it to adapt to the identified needs of the community. Some forms of development may be required in the Countryside. Development justified as necessary in the Countryside must be appropriate in terms of layout, scale, height, materials, form, impact and siting. Development must not adversely affect landscape, wildlife, the ecological, geological, environmental, archaeological or historic resources of the specific site and the surrounding areas.

10.35 We agree with the general direction of the policy, particularly in view of the important contribution that the countryside makes to the Borough's GBI network. The policy could be enhanced by making this function more explicit. Although the policy sets expectations relating to built development, the policy text could be enhanced by providing support and encouragement to proposals that involve extending, or restoring, the functions of this countryside land. These proposals might arise in response to government-funded programmes, such as environmental land management (ELM) schemes [See reference 30] and programmes like the Sustainable Farming Incentive. Proposals for enhancement may also arise with respect to biodiversity net gain and proposals to deliver off-site interventions.

10.36 While certain projects could arise in response to individual landowner decisions, consideration should be given to how the replacement Local Plan can seek to offer strategic direction in order that the benefits of specific interventions can be maximised. Encouraging landowners with sites that could help to reinforce and extend the Borough's GBI network should be prioritised where possible.

Green Infrastructure and New Development

10.37 In order to meet the Borough’s development needs in the period to 2031, the adopted Local Plan identifies two ‘Direction for Growth’ allocations at Wigston (Policy 20) and at Cottage Farm (Policy 21) to the south east of Oadby. Both policies outline an optimum scale of development and specify a series of interventions for enabling each area to support “*sustainable, well designed and high-quality development that is sensitive to its surroundings and will not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding Green Wedge and Countryside*”. It is understood that a similar approach to identifying locations for growth will be taken in the replacement Local Plan. While we consider the existing wording of these allocations to be acceptable and could be re-applied to new areas (as appropriate), we would suggest inserting a link, in relevant policy text, to the direct and positive contribution that these strategic sites can make to the Borough’s GBI network.

10.38 Notwithstanding this suggested enhancement, the suggested changes to the overarching policy for GBI, as outlined above, provide stronger direction to the role that major development can play in protecting and creating new GBI assets. The requirement for developers to submit a Green Infrastructure Plan, as per the direction of Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework, should also help to raise the ambitions for delivering successful and sustainable GBI.

Landscape Character

10.39 With regards to landscape character, the adopted Local Plan includes the following policy:

Existing Local Plan Policy 44: Landscape and Character.

All development proposals within the Borough will be determined against the need to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscapes in the Borough. The Council will ensure that all development proposals reflect the prevailing quality, character and features such as settlement patterns, important views, open spaces and significant natural habitats.

Development proposals will only be permitted where it is in keeping with the area in which it is situated. Development proposals that are contrary to the policy guidance as set out within the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, the Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Document and / or the Conservation Area Appraisals will not be approved.

Development proposals that have a potential adverse impact on nationally designated areas or features of landscape and cultural significance will not be permitted.

10.40 While the Borough Council may decide to update this policy in response to other evidence studies, we believe the general direction of this policy remains sound. There is potential, however, for the policy text to acknowledge the role of GBI with respect to positively enhancing the landscape character of the Borough.

Biodiversity & Geodiversity

10.41 The adopted Local Plan includes the following policy on biodiversity, which also emphasises the importance of geodiversity too:

Existing Local Plan 37: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The Council will look to support development proposals that proactively seek a net gain and:

- Conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity through minimising loss of valued features in the landscape, such as, hedgerows, woodland, trees, ponds and wetland.
- Conserve and protect irreplaceable woodland, such as ancient woodland or veteran trees.
- Mitigate for any loss of valuable assets through applying measures for reinstatement, replacement or on / off site compensatory work that will enhance or recreate those habitats in circumstances when loss of the original habitat is unavoidable through development; and,
- Explore opportunities to restore, enhance, create or connect with established natural habitats as an integral feature of the proposed scheme.

Where development will have known detrimental impacts or cause lasting harm to the natural habitats in that location, the Council will compensate for that loss through effective conditions in the planning decision or by seeking developer contributions to contribute towards off-site mitigation measures. Working in collaboration with developers, as well as local and national agencies with ecological and geological expertise, the Council will identify, conserve, protect and enhance natural assets, so that habitats and species can thrive and help to create rich biodiversity within the Borough for future generations to enjoy.

The Council will also protect trees with Tree Preservation Orders associated to them. All proposals must also take account of the guidance set out in the Council's Tree Strategy.

10.42 Since the adoption of the Local Plan, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has become a statutory requirement and this represents an important driver for creating the type of 'nature-rich places' that Natural England's GIF envisages. There is therefore a need to recognise the role of BNG, both within the policy

text, as well as in the explanatory text alongside. Rather than referring to how the 'Council will look to support' favourable proposals for biodiversity net gain, the policy can therefore be more demanding (at least for qualifying development). To enhance the existing policy text, we would suggest stating that:

10.43 All proposals for qualifying development, which are not exempted through regulations, must provide 10% biodiversity net gain.

In addition, the policy should insist that all development proposals must:

- Demonstrate the pre-development biodiversity value of the site and the post-development biodiversity value of the proposal.
- Demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate), as set out in the NPPF, has been strictly applied.
- Provide net gain on or adjacent to the application site, wherever possible.
- Provide off-site biodiversity net gain units locally within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, at sites that would positively support the existing, and planned expansion, of the GBI network. The policy could give particular support to those locations that host, or are close to, protected wildlife sites, and other irreplaceable assets.
- Use biodiversity credits from Natural England as a last resort, with explanation given as to why on-site and/or off-site biodiversity units cannot be secured.

10.44 The existing policy can also be enhanced by stating how development proposals must be accompanied by a management and monitoring plan. This plan should explain how the assets being created, enhanced, or restored can be secured for a minimum of 30 years. As an extension of this, the policy could also outline a requirement for developers to provide details of an appropriate funding mechanism that could be used to support the Council in the long-term monitoring of the assets arising with this policy.

Trees

10.45 Local Plan Policy 37 refers to trees at the end of the policy text. While the policy refers to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders, we feel that the policy can be enhanced by extending protection to cover the Borough's broader stock of trees. An enhanced position could be applied by extending the text of existing Policy 37, or by creating a new policy on trees.

10.46 This extended policy could outline the Borough's position for supporting development that retains, protects and appropriately manages existing trees, hedgerows or woodland that has biodiversity, landscape or amenity benefit. The policy could also outline a range of expectations, with development proposals being expected, for example, to:

- Assess the potential impact of proposals on trees, hedgerows and woodlands.
- Incorporate trees as an integral part of scheme design, including using ward level canopy data.
- Use an appropriate mix of climate and disease resistant tree species.
- Protect existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands to be retained before, during and, where appropriate, after any construction work.
- Ensure the appropriate long term management, maintenance and protection of existing and newly planted trees, hedgerows or woodlands.
- Direct offsite tree planting in line with local priorities, including those outlined via this GBI strategy.

Sustainable Drainage and Surface Water

10.47 As noted above, Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework identifies the ability of GBI to provide for integrated water management. The adopted Local Plan already makes appropriate provision in this area, with Local Plan Policy 39 stipulating a need for the following:

Existing Local Plan Policy 39: Sustainable Drainage and Surface Water

The Council will require all proposals, including refurbishments (11 or more residential units or 1,000+ square metres of floor area) to incorporate appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems in accordance with the latest National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems and in agreement with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Leicestershire. All schemes must be informed by specific catchment and ground characteristics, and they will be required to establish the wider ranging issues relating to long-term management, adoption and maintenance of SuDS. Where development proposals are received in areas known to be susceptible to surface water flooding issues, appropriate management and mitigation schemes will be required. Developers will be encouraged to submit proposals that incorporate solutions to reduce the risk of flooding from the outset.

10.48 We recognise that separate evidence is being prepared to support this policy, and this could lead to enhancements being identified. However, we believe there would be merit in referring to the role that GBI can play in fulfilling this policy goal. Making reference to Natural England's Planning and Design Guide, amongst other sources, would also be useful.

Green and blue infrastructure standards

10.49 In addition to the above policy recommendations, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council may also wish to consider the integration of a robust set of quantitative Green Infrastructure Standards. The GI Framework launched by Natural England earlier this year sets out five different standards for local planning authorities to consider imposing on new development (with thresholds set based on local evidence) through their local plans. These standards vary in

their applicability and complexity and require individual consideration, but all provide the opportunity to set clear and specific requirements for GI provision to developers, with easily measurable outcomes:

S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard.

S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard.

S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard.

S4: Urban Greening Factor Standard.

S5: Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard.

10.50 Each of these standards is outlined below, along with considerations required before their potential inclusion in the Borough's policy approach to green infrastructure. Recommended policy wording is provided.

S1: Green infrastructure strategy standard

10.51 This standard aims to ensure that GI is strategically planned within the context of a local area to ensure it will achieve maximum benefits for local communities. For major developments **[See reference 31]** this means that developers are required to submit a GI plan, potentially integrated into their design and access statement, setting out how the development will meet the GI principles within the framework plus Local Policy requirements, standards and design guidance. This plan should ensure that GI is managed, maintained and monitored for a minimum of 30 years.

10.52 The suggested amendments to the Borough's overarching GBI policy (as described above) includes a requirement for developers to provide a Green Infrastructure plan. The suggested policy amendment also includes the expectation of the standard that maintenance plans cover a 30-year period.

S2: Accessible greenspace standard

10.53 This standard aims to ensure that everyone has access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for their health and wellbeing and to encounter nature. It sets out quantity, size and distance criteria for greenspaces close to people’s homes, which operates at five levels. **Figure 1.1** shows the five levels that the accessibility standard works to.

Figure 10.1: The five levels of Natural England's Accessibility Standard.

	Minimum size	Maximum distance	Maximum journey
Sub-regional Greenspace	500 ha	10 km	30-40 min cycle
District Greenspace	100 ha	5 km	15-20 min cycle
Wider Neighbourhood Greenspace	20 ha	2 km	35 min walk
Neighbourhood Greenspace	10 ha	1 km	15 min walk
Local Greenspace or Doorstep Greenspace	2 ha 0.5 ha	300 m 200 m	5 min walk under 5 min walk

15 min walk target

All greenspaces should be accessible by public transport or safe active travel routes

10.54 This standard could be adopted by the Borough for the amount, size and location of greenspace to be provided within or in proximity to a new development. Given the likely scale of new development within the Borough, we would suggest adopting the Neighbourhood scale standard of 2ha of accessible greenspace within 1km (or a 15-minute walk).

10.55 This standard could be accompanied by a green space capacity criteria which would assist in the identification of the quantity of greenspace to be provided within a new development, taking into account the anticipated number

of greenspace users. The Fields in Trust standard of 2.4ha per 1,000 population could be an appropriate quantity standard to adopt.

10.56 Whilst the abovementioned quantitative standards may not be achievable for all sites, they would set a clear standard and put the onus on the developer to demonstrate where this is not achievable.

10.57 Standards for access and quantity should be supported by a quality standard to ensure that greenspaces provide a safe and pleasant environment with facilities that meet the needs of local communities. Many Councils have chosen to adopt the Green Flag Award criteria as their quality standard for greenspaces. It is recommended that the identification and adoption of this or another quality standard is done through the development of an Open Space Audit and Strategy which assesses the type, quantity and quality of provision against local needs.

10.58 Proposed **additional** wording that could be incorporated into the overarching green infrastructure policy, as presented above, could comprise:

‘All major new residential development must include access for residents to at least 2.4ha of good quality accessible greenspace per 1,000 population and this must meet the accessible greenspace neighbourhood standard, being within a 15 minute walk (or 1km) of people’s homes (unless, in specific cases there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why these standards would not be deliverable)’.

S3: Urban nature recovery standard

10.59 This standard aims to increase the proportion of green infrastructure that is designed and managed for nature recovery, with the exact proportion based on a locally defined baseline which takes into consideration local needs, opportunities, and constraints. For major development the standard requires

developers to identify within their green infrastructure plans their contribution to nature recovery and the creation and restoration of wildlife rich habitats which can contribute to the delivery of local nature recovery targets.

10.60 To adopt this standard there is no requirement that an exact proportion be set and instead the requirement is on developers to clearly set out how GI will contribute to nature recovery. This should be done through the identification of opportunities drawing on the best available data on existing habitats and species.

10.61 Once the Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been adopted, it is recommended that developers are advised to refer to this to assist in the identification of priority actions for nature recovery.

10.62 The over-arching policy for GBI, as discussed above, already provides scope for nature recovery and the enhancements we propose seek to extend these opportunities.

S4: Urban greenspace factor

10.63 The Urban Greenspace Factor (UGF) is a tool to increase the amount of green land cover within urban environments. The adoption of this standard for major development would involve setting a target UGF score for new development and sharing the calculation method. The target score can be set locally (informed by local context and GI needs) but Natural England recommend setting a score of 0.3 for commercial development, 0.4 for residential development and, where appropriate, 0.5 for residential greenfield development. The total UGF score for a development is calculated based on multiplying UGF scores for different land cover types by the spatial area covered by each and then dividing the total by the total site area [See [reference 32](#)]. Natural features such as street trees and hedgerows achieve higher scores than amenity grassland and permeable paving, which have a higher score than tarmac roads.

10.64 The UGF standard can be used alongside BNG, and where the existing biodiversity value is low (and hence a 10% or even 20% BNG uplift delivers limited additional habitat) it can help to ensure that there is still good provision of nature-rich greenspace within development.

10.65 The value of a UGF in improving the amount and quality of GI within a development has been evidenced. However, it has largely been applied in urban areas in England to date, having been adopted within the London Plan in 2021. Before applying a UGF in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston, it is recommended that locally based evidence is gathered, potentially through an empirical study evaluating the amount and type of greenspace provided in recently permitted developments. Such a study could calculate the UGF score of these sample schemes, comparing them to the recommended target scores proposed by Natural England, and where the total scores fall short it could explore if it would have been feasible to achieve the UGF score by specifying additional urban greening measures. It would be important that this study also consider any potential impacts on viability so that a robust justification for its adoption can be made.

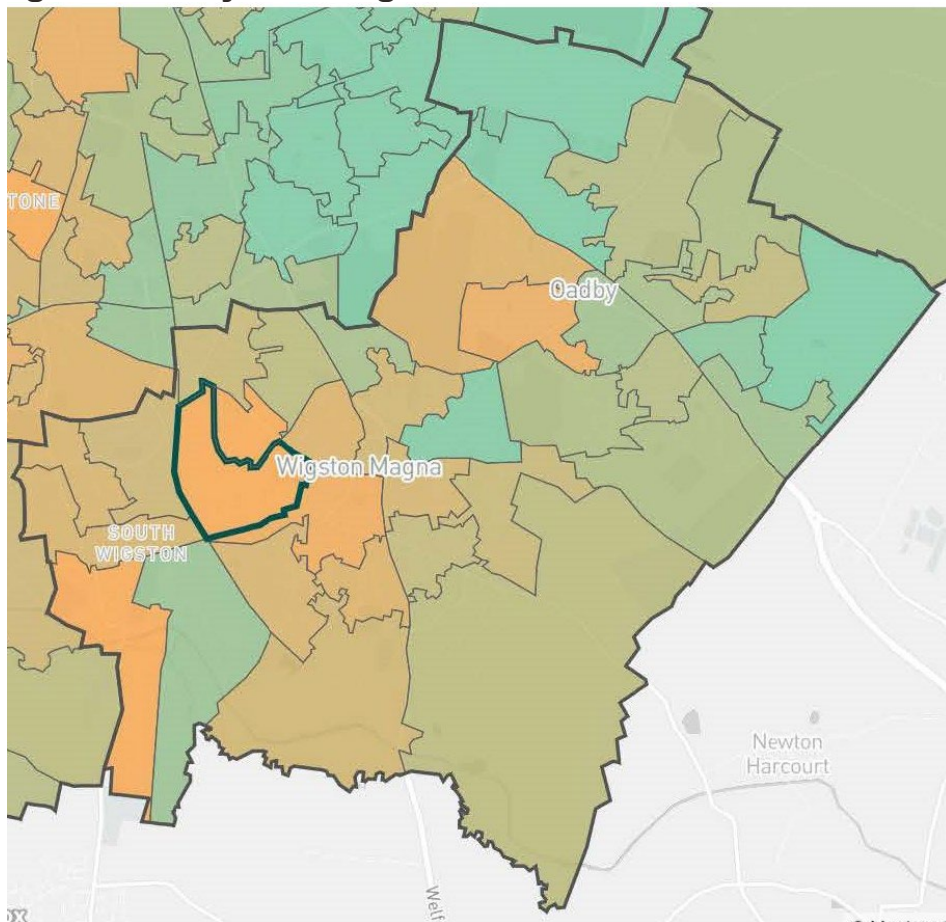
S5: Urban tree canopy cover standard

10.66 This standard aims to increase urban tree canopy cover by an agreed percentage based on a locally defined baseline and taking into account local needs, opportunities and constraints. Adoption of this target into planning policy would mean that all applicable development would be designed to meet the identified target.

10.67 Tree Equity Score UK is a map-based application that has been created to help address disparities in urban tree distribution by identifying the areas in greatest need of people-focused investment in trees [See reference 33]. Equity scores are available by Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), with scores extending from 0 (the lowest) to 100 (the highest). The Tree Equity Scores for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston are varied. Three areas have the highest possible score of 100 (E01025973; E01025974; and E01025982) with these

Lower Super Output Areas being to the north of the Borough (north of Oadby). Three areas have equity scores of 70 and below, namely areas E01025989 (70); E01025997 (67); and E01025994 (62). These are located in and around Wigston. Figure 1.2 shows the scores visually. The highest performing areas are coloured green, with the lowest areas being coloured orange.

Figure 10.2: Visual summary of the Tree Equity Scores for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston



10.68 The Borough's Environment Strategy and Action Plan [\[See reference 34\]](#) includes a commitment to increasing tree planting (PW1), in partnership with others, across the Borough.

10.69 The NPPF (paragraph 131) already states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that streets are tree-lined, opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments and existing trees are retained

where possible. We anticipate there will also be a policy on trees in the new local plan which specifies something similar. The council therefore needs to consider if, in addition to such requirements, it is also useful to set a tree canopy cover standard for certain types of new development. Benefits of such an approach include setting a clear target for developers and enabling monitoring of delivery, although there will be competing demands to balance and any specified target may not be deliverable on all sites (though this is arguably the case for all policy requirements in our discretionary planning system). The Woodland Trust has advocated for a minimum 30% tree canopy cover on all development sites [\[See reference 35\]](#) so this figure could be a potential starting point. The Tree Equity Score programme also uses a canopy goal cover of 30%, with this being presented as the minimum “*required to deliver the requisite benefits of trees to a neighbourhood*” [\[See reference 36\]](#).

10.70 The council is advised to undertake some research to help determine what target would be deliverable on allocated sites.

Monitoring processes

10.71 It is important that the implementation of the Green Infrastructure Policy and any Standards within the adopted Local Plan are monitored and evaluated to ensure their effectiveness in protecting, enhancing, and maintaining the Borough's GBI network during the plan period.

10.72 Evaluation of the adopted policy and standards can be carried out at two levels:

- **Development level:** to assess whether the design, delivery and maintenance of Green Infrastructure was carried out in accordance with the policy and standards
- **Policy level:** to assess the cumulative benefits of the policy and standards across the Borough.

10.73 An effective monitoring and evaluation process requires the production of a set of indicators which can be used to measure progress. When designing indicators it is important that these are both locally relevant, to monitor progress against local need, and specific to the policy and standards set.

10.74 The monitoring and evaluation processes established to evaluate performance should be carried out at an appropriate frequency and dovetailed into other review processes (e.g. for Biodiversity Net Gain) where possible to avoid the duplication of effort and provide more joined up results. Any learning from monitoring and evaluation should be directly addressed and lead to adaptations to policy and standards and their management.

Chapter 11

Delivering GBI in Oadby and Wigston

Overview of GBI delivery

11.1 As touched on in Chapter 10, GBI has historically been challenging to deliver when in competition with other infrastructural priorities. However, the increasing recognition of its importance for the multiple benefits it can bring in the context of the twin climate and biodiversity emergencies means ensuring its delivery has never been more vital.

11.2 The planning system, and local authority resources, cannot be relied upon alone to deliver the requirements and aspirations of this GBI Strategy - particularly in a context of significant fiscal constraints and reductions in public funding. Much of the new and improved GBI will be taken forward, funded and maintained by a range of partners external to the Council, working in multi-partner arrangements.

11.3 However, the planning system does remain a powerful mechanism for delivering new and improved GBI as part of development sites coming through the Local Plan - particularly with the advent of policy tools such as biodiversity net gain (BNG) and the emerging LNRS (see chapter 10). As part of the evidence base for the local plan, this chapter focuses on delivery of GBI through the planning system, with the final section of this Chapter (Delivering GBI beyond the planning system) providing an overview of potential delivery mechanisms beyond the planning system.

Delivering GBI through the planning system

Planning system delivery mechanisms

Validation checklist for planning applications

11.4 The Borough Council is advised to set clear requirements for developers with respect to submitting information on their GBI proposals. As noted above, the suggested enhancement to the overarching GBI policy outlines a need for developers, who are submitting applications for major development, to submit a Green Infrastructure Plan. This plan can either be submitted as a separate document or be provided as part of a Design and Access Statement.

11.5 It is noted that the Borough Council does not have a bespoke list of local requirements relating to the submission of planning applications. Developing such a list would be helpful and would support the implementation of the policies included in both the existing and replacement Local Plans. Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework provides general advice on what a Green Infrastructure Plan should contain via its Process Guide for Developers and Design teams [\[See reference 37\]](#). Further guidance from Natural England is expected in 2024.

Biodiversity Net Gain

11.6 Biodiversity Net Gain became a mandatory requirement for all new major development in February 2024 [\[See reference 38\]](#). The requirement for all new development to meet at least 10% BNG should assist in the provision of multi-functional benefits through GBI in new development. Further advice and guidance on BNG for LPAs is provided on the Planning Advisory Services website [\[See reference 39\]](#).

11.7 The new Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), due in 2025 (see Chapter 10) will agree the priorities for nature recovery in the strategy area and map proposals for where these priorities can be delivered through the creation and improvement of habitats. This mapping can then be used to determine the 'strategic significance' score in the BNG metric, which gives additional unit values for habitats in preferred locations. Once the LNRS is produced, it will enable BNG offsetting to contribute to strategic (bigger, better, more joined up) nature recovery, through the 15% uplift in the metric for offsetting delivered on sites identified by the LNRS.

11.8 In the absence of the LNRS, this GBI Strategy can be used to identify biodiversity priorities across the Borough, for the purposes of mandatory BNG.

Building with Nature standard

11.9 Building with Nature (BwN) [\[See reference 40\]](#) is an additional evidence-based standard that defines high quality GBI based on a set of 12 standards. It seeks to raise the bar for industry by showing clearly what 'good' GBI looks like at each stage of the development process.

11.10 The Standard could be adopted by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council as a benchmark for assessing and accrediting the quality of GBI delivered as part of development. Developers could be signposted to use the BwN standards as a checklist to ensure appropriate consideration has been given.

11.11 The Borough Council could also encourage, or require, successful achievement of a BwN Award as a preferred mechanism for demonstrating a commitment to design and build quality. A BwN Award is an external verification that reassures a range of stakeholders that the benefits of high-quality green infrastructure will be more effectively secured at each stage of development, including implementation and post-construction, and by requiring evidence of effective arrangements for long-term management and maintenance. Training is available if the Council wanted to develop in-house BwN expertise, or there is a UK-wide BwN approved assessor network.

Planning Conditions and Obligations (Section 106/CIL)

11.12 Local planning authorities are required to consider whether otherwise unacceptable development can be made more acceptable using planning conditions and obligations. Planning obligations are the powers contained within Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations.

11.13 Planning conditions and obligations could be used to fund the provision of, or ongoing maintenance and management of GBI assets. It would be useful to monitor the use of conditions and obligations for this purpose as part of plan monitoring.

Planning for ancient woodland

11.14 The Woodland Trust's Planning for Ancient Woodland provides practical guidance on a range of planning issues relating to ancient woodland and veteran trees [See reference 41]. This includes ensuring there is sufficient clarity and detail on the protection of ancient woodland in local plans, providing definitions, supplying guiding principles such as the avoidance of harm and evidence of need and benefits and encouraging good practice such as the identification of impacts, implementation of mitigation measures and the provision of adequate buffers.

Checklist for new development

11.15 A checklist for new development has been developed which provides a concise set of questions to be asked of any new development seeking planning permission. It will be most relevant to larger sites involving a masterplan process. The checklist questions are contained in **Appendix C**.

Delivering GBI beyond the planning system

11.16 As noted at the beginning of this Chapter, in recent years, there has been a significant reduction in the resources available for funding green and blue infrastructure - traditional models of the past whereby local government funded and maintained the network are increasingly not viable. This is leading to a visible disconnect between the needs of the GBI network to address climate change and support nature recovery, and the financing mechanisms available to do so.

11.17 In terms of improvements proposed to areas of agricultural land within Oadby and Wigston, the role of Defra and the system of Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes will be particularly central to strengthening GBI outside urban areas.

11.18 Otherwise, outside the planning system, there are a range of tools and delivery mechanisms which various partners (including Councils) can use to deliver multifunctional GBI. There has been significant interest recently in exploring alternative financing mechanisms for green space and other GBI.

[See reference 42]

11.19 In 2021 a coalition of public and private partners (SWEEP) produced a report named Alternative Funding Mechanisms for Green Space. It is designed to assist individuals, organisations and authorities in delivering and managing green spaces. **[See reference 43]**

11.20 For more information on the various funding mechanisms, the application of mechanisms, and successful case studies, the full report provides further details.

11.21 An overview of alternative financing mechanisms for funding GBI (taken from 2021 SWEEP report) suggests:

- Income-generated opportunities and loans and taxation:

Chapter 11 Delivering GBI in Oadby and Wigston

- Sponsorship/naming rights
- Events of special uses
- Concessions
- Rental charges
- Bonds
- Alternative management structures:
 - Endowments
 - Community asset transfers
 - Non-profit distribution organisations (NDPOs)
- Planning and development opportunities:
 - Property assets/investment portfolios
 - Private sector
 - Land sales
 - Section 106 planning gain/CIL
- Charitable giving and voluntary sector involvement:
 - Subscription schemes
 - Investment crowdfunding
 - Donations/philanthropic partnerships
 - Community/volunteer groups
 - Corporate volunteering
- Ecosystem development/payment for ecosystem services:
 - Renewable energy tariffs
 - Utility and rights-of-way leasing
 - Offsetting
 - Water management

- Multi-agency opportunities:
 - Grant funding
 - Innovative use of public budgets
 - Shared-use agreements
 - Special designations

Green flag award

11.22 The Green Flag Awards set the benchmark for well managed parks and green spaces [See reference 44]. Spaces that meet the benchmark can be entered for a Green Flag Award. Developers could be encouraged to apply for this award, thus ensuring that all new GBI provided in new developments meets a recognised quality standard.

11.23 Brocks Hill Country Park, and the Peace Memorial Park, are already Green Flag Award Winners but there would be merit in exploring whether other potentially eligible sites exist. These sites could include both existing and new sites. As noted above, Natural England refer to the achievement of Green Flag status as part of their commitment to increase the quality of sites, as part of their S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard [See reference 45].

Appendix A

Full analysis of Priority and Notable Habitats in Oadby & Wigston

Irreplaceable Habitats

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines 'irreplaceable habitats' as “Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity”. These ecosystems often involve intricate ecological relationships and cannot be readily replicated once lost, underscoring the importance of prioritizing their conservation for biodiversity. Examples of such habitats include ancient woodlands, peatlands, lowland heaths, species-rich grasslands, and internationally significant wetlands.

A.1 Whilst there is no ancient woodland in the Borough, the 2017 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, highlighted the high quantity of veteran trees present, and the number of additional specimens that potential to become veteran in the near future. Stoughton Grange, to the north of the Borough, was identified as having particularly good examples of veteran and potential veteran trees, outside of the LWS network.

Priority Habitats Inventory (PHI)

A.2 The predominance of urban and farmland habitats in this area has led to a relatively limited coverage of Priority Habitats Inventory (PHI) habitats (see

Figure 3.3 within the report for mapping of these habitats). This underscores the significance of locally important habitats, as evident in the designated network outlined above.

A.3 The majority of the PHI, is comprised of deciduous woodlands situated in and around urban areas and the Green Wedges. Notably, remnants of traditional orchards are found within the Wigston urban area, with the largest orchard located in the green wedge. Additionally, a substantial expanse of lowland fen within the wedge holds particular recognition, being designated both as a LNR and LWS. All in all, these habitats play a vital role in extending and supporting connectivity beyond the designated site network; nevertheless, there exists a substantial potential for habitat enhancement and creation in this regard.

Woodlands

A.4 There are areas of deciduous woodland PHI in the Borough. More widely in Leicestershire and Rutland, only 1.8% of the area is covered by mature broadleaved woodland.

A.5 Notably, only one Local Wildlife Site (LWS) has been designated due to the habitat's significance. This is Flude's Lane & Spinney, which reflects the relatively lower significance of woodland habitats in the Borough compared to grassland habitats (see "Grasslands" heading below). Flude's Lane & Spinney serves as a linear woodland connecting Oadby to the wider countryside, under the management of the Council. Additionally, the council oversees the management of Clifton Bridge and Pochin's Bridge in South Wigston. These areas represent a blend of young woodland and grassland adjacent to the Grand Union Canal.

A.6 Complementing the woodland habitats, traditional orchards are found in Wigston and the Oadby & Wigston Green Wedge. Notably, the orchard in the Oadby & Wigston green wedge is part of the Brocks Hill Country Park, designated as both a LNR and LWS.

Hedgerows

A.7 The 2017 Habitat Survey recorded 85km of hedgerow within the Borough, with nearly 7km being species-rich. Hedgerows offer important habitat in themselves, bringing permeability through areas of intense land use such as urban, peri-urban or agricultural. By their linear nature hedgerows provide important connect areas of woodland and, in mosaic with other habitats such as trees, scrub, grassland, ditches and ponds, may be of heightened value.

Grasslands

A.8 The extent of grassland-related PHI habitats within the Borough is relatively small and includes high-quality semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows. This stands in stark contrast to the predominance of mesotrophic grassland LWS, highlighting how these sites project locally important habitats. It should be recognised that the strategic significance of these grasslands for bird assemblages is closely tied to the prevailing arable land cover in the vicinity of the Borough. Hence, this landscape plays a vital role in supporting various bird species.

The water environment

A.9 The Borough has an extensive network of wetlands – from canals to flowing rivers and streams (brooks) and flushes, to lakes and ponds (eutrophic and mesotrophic standing water), and other wetlands, such as floodplain wetlands, springs and flushes. The Borough counts with the following water environment assets:

- The River Soar is the principal river of Leicestershire. Starting from the River Trent, the Soar flows southwards, travelling to the west of Leicester and to a position to the east of Sharnford. In the context of the Borough, the river flows to the west of South Wigston. The Soar was made

Appendix A Full analysis of Priority and Notable Habitats in Oadby & Wigston

navigable during the 18th century, initially between Loughborough and the River Trent, and then through to Leicester. Alongside the river, the Soar presents different major concerns, mostly related to biodiversity impacts and water quality in upper and lower Soar, and additional impacts on disadvantaged communities and flooding in its passage through Leicester.

- The River Sence flows from the Soar, from a location to the north-west of Narborough, to the west of the Borough. The river flows eastwards to the south of the Grand Union Canal beyond the southern boundary of Borough. Eventually it enters the River Anker. A number of tributaries flow into the Sence, including the Saint and Tweed. // Flows westwards from its source in Leicestershire to its confluence with the River Soar, downstream of Narborough. It flows through a predominantly urban catchment, passing through Great Glen, South Wigston and Blaby where it receives urban runoff.
- The Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI flows through the south of the Borough. The Canal is under unfavourable condition (data 2010) due to freshwater pollution due to agriculture runoff, with levels of phosphorus over twice as high as it should be to meet favourable condition, siltation, and public disturbance
- The Grand Union Canal LWS, that officially came into being in 1929, flows south towards Birmingham and then onto London. Between Leicester and the River Trent, the canal coincides with the River Soar.
- Saffron Brook/Wash Brook is a major tributary of the River Soar. Wash Brook starts from a rural location to the east of Oadby. It flows westwards, under the A6, to the south of Oadby, through the northern tip of the Brocks Hill Country Park, and onto Knighton Park. It then becomes Saffron Brook that continues from Knighton Park and flows in a north-westerly direction towards the Saffron Lane estate before it joins the River Soar near the gasworks on Aylestone Road.

A.10 The 2017 Habitat Survey identified 83 ponds across the Borough, with the majority of these being in the rural areas. Field ponds, once a common feature in the Leicestershire and Rutland landscape, were excavated wherever natural water sources for livestock. Nowadays, remaining ponds are BAP habitats and

are ecologically important as they provide both connectivity for species dispersal and contribute to the overall biodiversity by enhancing the landscape's mosaic of habitats. They provide habitats to 41 notable species in Leicestershire and Rutland including the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), other amphibian species, and many invertebrates associated with field ponds. The main pressures on field ponds are eutrophication from fertiliser application to surrounding land, excessive scrub development around margins and silting up and filling in due to land use conversion from grazing to arable farming.

A.11 Several strategic documents and projects underpin the water-related improvement opportunities and recommendations for the Borough. In the absence of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), these can be key contributing strategies for Oadby and Wigston:

- Oadby and Wigston sits in the Soar catchment, which is governed by the Soar Catchment the Management Plan (2018) , elaborated by the Soar Catchment Partnership, which is hosted by the Trent Rivers Trust. This strategy describes the issues that need to be tackled and the evidence approach used to support the areas and project identified for future development. Within this catchment, the River Sence sub-catchment encompasses Oadby and Wigton, characterized as a rural catchment, with the most important issue identified being water quality. To address this issue, the Saffron Brook & Wash Brook Catchment Project was developed aiming to restore the river ecosystems along the brook through re-naturalisation works to create diverse natural habitats.
- The Soar catchment also counts with a Natural Flood Management Plan that aims to showcase how strategic investments in natural flood management can reduce flooding by utilizing natural solutions, ultimately building more resilient communities.
- The Sence within Oadby and Wigston forms part of the Soar and Wreake Valley Living Landscape , a Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust initiative for rewilding, focusing on restoring the Soar and Wreake floodplains to function more naturally.

Appendix A Full analysis of Priority and Notable Habitats in Oadby & Wigston

A.12 The entire Borough, as well as the broader Leicestershire area, is situated within a Nitrate Vulnerability Zone. This emphasises the importance of habitat restoration efforts along the SSSI and the Grand Union Canal as crucial for improving the filtration of nutrients from agricultural runoff originating in the surrounding farmland, together with reduction of nutrients at source.

A.13 There is a 'Community at Risk of flooding' on the Wash Brook and also a 'Community at Risk of flooding' at Wigston Harcourt, from an ordinary watercourse and which is a tributary of the River Sence.

A.14 The Severn Trent Water area has been classified as an 'area of serious water stress' for water resources. Insufficient water availability can degrade aquatic habitats, impacting species relying on stable water conditions. This stress extends to terrestrial plant communities, affecting growth and composition. Migration patterns may be disrupted, leading to population declines, and overall ecosystem functioning can be compromised. Preserving biodiversity in this context requires urgent measures, including sustainable water management practices and community involvement, to mitigate the adverse impacts of water stress on the region's ecosystems.

Appendix B

Summary of stakeholder consultation

Introduction

B.1 This chapter summarises the outputs of the stakeholder engagement processes carried out as part of the development of the Oadby and Wigston GBI Strategy.

B.2 The strategy rested on three strands of engagement:

- An online survey distributed to stakeholders.
- A review of the comments received on the Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan review (September 2021).
- An in-person workshop which took place on 6 September 2023.

Online Survey

B.3 An online survey was launched in April 2023, it ran for one month, however some comments were received after this point. Consultants who were working on the emerging Oadby and Wigston Local Plan evidence base were also asked whether they would like to participate in a short meeting to provide an opportunity for additional input on the project. The survey was sent to a number Borough Councillors at a later point due to local elections and purdah.

B.4 The following organisations were sent the online survey:

- Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (various)
- LUC

Appendix B Summary of stakeholder consultation

- Tetra Tech Ltd
- Jeremy Benn Associates Ltd (t/a JBA Consulting)
- Nexus Planning Ltd
- Ove Arup and Partners Ltd
- Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP)
- Leicestershire County Council
- Blaby District Council
- Harborough District Council
- Leicester City Council
- Sport England
- University of Leicester Botanic Gardens Group
- Active together
- Active together
- Leicestershire Integrated Care Board
- East Midlands Public Health
- North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College
- Leicestershire County Council
- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership
- Leicestershire Police
- Historic England
- Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust;
- Local Nature Partnership
- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership
- CPRE (Leicestershire)
- Leicester & District Ramblers;

Appendix B Summary of stakeholder consultation

- Pride of the Borough;
- Pride of the Borough;
- Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL),
- Natural England
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission;
- The Canal and River Trust;
- The Woodland Trust;
- Severn Trent Water
- RSPB (Leicester Group)
- National Trust
- Network Rail Property (Eastern)
- Wigston Civic Society
- Wigston Business Group
- Oadby Town Centre Association
- South Wigston Chamber of Trade and Commerce
- East Midlands Chamber of Commerce
- Voluntary Action Leicestershire
- Canal and River Trust
- University of Leicester (Botanical Society)
- University of Leicester
- Canal and River Trust

B.5 Stakeholders were asked for their views on:

Appendix B Summary of stakeholder consultation

- How GBI is performing as a whole across Oadby and Wigston Borough Council.
- What are the key challenges GBI needs to address?
- What are the key areas of opportunity?
- What are the barriers to delivering better GBI?

B.6 In total, 33 responses were received to the online survey. The key threats to GBI identified in the survey included:

- the lack of funding for maintenance.
- difficulties in developing robust governance structures to deliver joined up working.
- educating contractors and staff and members in effective public-engagement and communications.
- a perceived lack of political willingness to prioritise health and wellbeing in GBI delivery.

B.7 Key opportunities to improve GBI in the Borough included:

- having robust policy and a local plan which influences master planning and urban design to allow for GBI that goes beyond the minimum requirements.
- considering how such spaces can be used to reduce health inequality within the Borough.
- using targeted work to help to improve the poor deprivation outcomes in the Borough.

B.8 There was contention over whether some spaces should be prioritised over others.

B.9 The majority of participants felt that the Borough's GBI was performing at an 'average' level in respect to providing nature rich beautiful places, active and

Appendix B Summary of stakeholder consultation

healthy places, prosperous and healthy places, water managed places and resilient and climate positive and places.

B.10 The vast majority of respondents ranked the following statements as 'neither agree or disagree':

- The Borough of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network is multi-functional.
- The Borough of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network is varied.
- The Borough of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network is connected.
- The Borough of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network is accessible.
- The Borough of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network responds to local character.
- To what extent do you feel there is sufficient evidence to understand the performance of Oadby and Wigston's GBI network?

B.11 Review of the Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan review (September 2021)

B.12 A high level review of the comments received during the 2021 Issues and Options consultation stage of the Local Plan review was undertaken to inform the team's analysis and baseline assessment. Comments were received from a range of stakeholders in relation to the following:

- Protecting the green wedges
- Balancing GI aspirations with housing need
- Recognising the role of water (including the river and canal) in the context of GI
- Emphasising the broader benefits that GI can give rise to (including improved health outcomes)
- The role of GI in tackling flood risk (with there being Communities at Risk of flooding at Wash Brook and Wigston Harcourt)

Appendix B Summary of stakeholder consultation

- The potential use of Building with Nature to improve the outcomes of major development
- The potential to use BNG
- The need to provide for more green space
- The need to extend tree coverage

B.13 In-person workshop (September 2023)

B.14 The final strand was an in-person workshop held at the Borough Council offices. The workshop was attended by representatives from:

- Leicestershire County Council
- Active Together
- Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust
- Pride of the Borough
- NHS Leicester
- Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
- Seven Trent Water
- Blaby District Council
- Environment Agency
- Leicester University
- Harborough District Council

B.15 Participants were given a presentation on the strategy and emerging findings. They were then asked to comment on the draft vision and objectives which had been prepared utilising the results of the initial stakeholder reengagement (survey and responses review). They were also asked to ‘sense check’ the emerging SWOT analysis of the GBI network, and discussion was held regarding the potential strategic opportunities.

Appendix B Summary of stakeholder consultation

B.16 Comments on the vision and objectives highlighted the importance of recognising connections within and outside of administrative boundaries. The emerging SWOT analysis was generally supported with further additions suggested. Maintenance and connectivity were common themes which came up frequently in discussion of existing GBI. Comments specific opportunities have been worked into the final version of this document.

Appendix C

Developer Checklist

C.1 This checklist provides a concise set of questions to be asked of any new development seeking planning permission. It will be most relevant to larger sites involving a masterplan process. It should be read alongside other available guidance, including the Planning and Design Guide that forms part of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework [See reference 46]. The National Design Guide [See reference 47] and National Model Design Code [See reference 48] are also relevant sources.

C.2 Amongst other issues, these sources provide further guidance on the process to follow in designing GBI as part of a development scheme. This includes the need to engage widely with stakeholders and analyse data on existing GBI assets and local environmental, social and economic challenges and needs. Further clarity on the structured approach that we want developers to follow is arguably required – further advice on this is provided in the section on other tools for supporting the GBI planning and design process below.

C.3 Key overarching principles for informing GBI design are set out in Natural England's GI Framework and provide a useful starting point. GBI should be:

- **Multifunctional:** GI delivers multiple functions and benefits for people, nature and places, addresses specific issues and meets their needs.
- **Varied:** GI includes a mix of types and sizes that can provide a range of functions and benefits to address specific issues and needs.
- **Connected:** GI connects as a living network for people and nature at all scales, connecting provision of GI with those who need its benefits.
- **Accessible:** GI creates green, liveable places where everyone has access to good quality green and blue spaces routes and features.
- **Responsive to an area's landscape and character** - so that it contributes to the conservation, enhancement and/or restoration of

landscapes; or, in degraded areas, creates new high-quality landscapes to which local people feel connected.

Eight key GBI questions to ask of development schemes are set out below:

1. Has the landscape led the production of the masterplan?

C.4 High quality placemaking should take the landscape context as the starting point, and should “work with” the landscape to create distinctive places. This means that features such as topography, drainage patterns and protection of existing landscape features such as woodland and hedgerows should demonstrably guide the very earliest design stages, including the layout of roads and buildings, rather than being retrofitted later.

2. Has nature led the masterplan and does the site relate to wider ecological networks?

C.5 An understanding of existing habitats and BNG opportunities, informed by existing habitat and species data (see GI Study mapping) and early ecological surveys, should inform the masterplan. This should include careful consideration of how environmentally sensitive areas or high value habitats (e.g. veteran trees and ancient woodlands [\[See reference 49\]](#)) will be protected and enhanced.

C.6 Proposals for new development should include a map of local habitat connectivity opportunities and provide evidence of how the development strengthens rather than weakens these networks; and how access to nature is improved for all. Habitats should be integrated throughout developments,

including by using features such as street trees, hedges and micro-habitat features (e.g. bird and bat boxes/bricks), rather than being limited to key greenspaces.

C.7 BNG requirements will be an important mechanism for delivering new habitats. However, it is important that multi-functional GBI features are delivered on-site wherever possible, both to create and restore habitats and to maximise co-benefits to address local needs such as health and wellbeing and flood resilience.

3. Has consideration of water and drainage led the masterplan?

C.8 The layout of development should take into account the opportunities and constraints posed by existing waterways and water bodies, maximising the amenity and biodiversity benefits of both existing and new 'blue infrastructure' and seeking to improve water quality. Opportunities to enhance and create new water bodies should be maximised, given their significant amenity and biodiversity benefits and noting that ponds are a priority habitat.

C.9 Where evidence indicates flood risk is significant, high-quality sustainable drainage (SuDS) measures should be designed into all new development - to be delivered as a network of measures as appropriate, including raingardens, permeable paving, swales, SuDS tree pits and wetland areas - rather than a single-function 'hole in the ground'. These should be designed to maximise benefits for amenity and biodiversity as well as flood risk management. Access should be provided where it is safe to do so. By slowing flows and encouraging infiltration (where appropriate) SuDS can also help to capture and hold water and replenish aquifers, contributing to reduced water stress. They can also help to filter out water pollution, improving water quality.

C.10 Opportunities to capture and store water for reuse for non-potable uses such as irrigation of gardens should also be maximised.

C.11 Detailed design should be guided by the CIRIA SuDS Manual [See reference 50].

4. Does the development meet local open space and green space standards in a coordinated manner?

C.12 Developments should meet local open space standards (e.g. for play space and sports pitches) and address any existing deficiencies in access to greenspace (see mapping in GI study). All green spaces should have clear functions. They should also ensure open spaces are designed to cater for diverse needs, ensuring inclusive access for all.

5. Does the development support active travel, linking up with active travel routes beyond the site boundary?

C.13 All development proposals should include a clear context map that illustrates how the proposed development will link into the wider active travel network (e.g. walking and cycling routes) and identify ways the development can strengthen the network, taking into account key destinations (e.g. schools, workplaces, public transport) that people will want to travel to both within the existing area and within the new development.

C.14 The planning of safe and convenient active travel routes and GBI delivery should be integrated to support the creation of attractive, green active travel routes that are appealing to users as well as providing wider benefits.

6. Is tree canopy cover across the site significantly expanded?

C.15 Increasing woodland cover is important for mitigating climate change and can also provide a wide range of benefits for nature and people. Natural England's GI Framework encourages LPAs to set tree canopy targets, the Woodland Trust has advocated for a minimum 30% tree canopy cover on all development sites, and the NPPF (paragraph 131) states that planning policies and decisions should:

- ensure all streets are tree lined (unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate)
- ensure opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments
- retain existing trees wherever possible.

C.16 Applicants should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users. Appropriate measures must be put in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees.

7. Does the masterplan address the design of GBI to meet wider needs?

C.17 Opportunities to design GBI to meet wider needs beyond those referred to above should also be fully explored. For example, is there an unmet local need for food growing space and if so how can this be designed into the masterplan? Or are there opportunities to use dense barriers of woodland or hedgerows to reduce noise from nearby roads or reduce the spread of air pollution from busy roads into the development?

8. How will the site be maintained in the long-term?

C.18 Long-term stewardship of GBI should be discussed at the earliest stages of design, to ensure stewardship in perpetuity. Models such as partnerships with the Land Trust or other charitable or community-led bodies should be explored. Maintenance arrangements, responsibilities and long-term funding arrangements must be clearly defined as part of all planning applications.

Appendix D

Glossary

Term	Description
Biodiversity	The variability among all living organisms - terrestrial and aquatic - and the ecosystems that they are part of. Biodiversity includes the diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.
BNG	<p>Biodiversity Net Gain - Percentage increase in the quality and/or quantity of habitats in comparison to the original condition or baseline i.e., enhancement over and above the level required to mitigate or compensate for the detrimental impact, or which is otherwise prescribed or committed to happen (e.g., as part of pre-existing planning consent).</p> <p>A minimum 10% increase in biodiversity units is mandated by the Environment Act 2021. LPAs can set the requirement higher than 10% in their local policy.</p> <p>Measured as 'biodiversity units' using a 'biodiversity metric'. Commitment illustrated in a 'Biodiversity Gain Plan' as part of a planning application submission.</p>
Blue infrastructure	Green infrastructure relating to aquatic habitats such as rivers and canals.
Ecosystem services	Benefits provided to people by natural capital (ecosystems and the biodiversity they contain).
ELMs	Environmental Land Management Scheme - Founded on the principle of "public money for public goods", ELMS will be the cornerstone of agricultural policy since the UK has left the EU. The Agriculture Act 2020 provides the underpinning legislative framework for the ELMS. ELMS will provide farmers, foresters, and other land managers with an opportunity to secure financial reward in return for delivering environmental benefits.

Appendix D Glossary

Term	Description
	ELMS is currently undergoing testing but is anticipated to be in place in 2024.
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GBI	Green and Blue Infrastructure
Local Nature Partnerships	Originally established in the vision of the Government's 2011 'Natural Environment White Paper', LNP bring together local organisations, businesses and people who want to improve their local natural environment.
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Sites
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies - A system of locally produced, spatial strategies, mandated under the Environment Act 2021. It is anticipated that c.50 LNRS will cover the country. Together, they will deliver the Nature Recovery Network (see below).
NCN	National Cycle Network
NNR	National Nature Reserve
Natural capital	"The elements [or 'assets'] of nature that directly and indirectly produce value or benefit to people" i.e., ecosystem services. Natural capital may include "ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and fluctuations" (NCC, 2016 [See reference 51]).
Nature-based solutions	Defined by the IUCN as "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptably, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits." [See reference 52] Nature-based solutions may be considered 'system thinking' in contrast to site-focused solutions, such as the sustainable management of uplands through low/er intensity grazing and environmental land management interventions to manage water quality and quantity downstream within the catchment in place of intensive or engineered solutions.
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework

Appendix D Glossary

Term	Description
Nature Recovery Network (NRN)	<p>Identified in the identified in the 25 Year Plan (2018) to address the three challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and wellbeing; the NRN will provide an integrated approach to nature recovery.</p> <p>An expanded, enhanced, and better-connected network of places that are rich in wildlife and resilient to climate change. Key to delivering the Government’s ‘Nature Strategy’ outside of designated sites, the NRN delivery is led by NE through Local Nature Recovery Strategies (see above).</p> <p>“It comprises a core network of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and adjoining areas that function as stepping stones or wildlife corridors, areas identified for new habitat creation and up to 25 nature recovery areas [at landscape or catchment scale] for targeted action” (MHCLG, 2019 [See reference 53]).</p>
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
Rain Gardens	<p>Rain gardens are a type of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) composed of surface and sub-surface layers that maximise water storage and infiltration. They are “shallow landscaped depressions that reduce rainfall runoff [capturing] rainfall before it enters the piped network and either releases it slowly into the network or allows it to infiltrate into the ground. Rain gardens can help improve surface water management whilst performing a range of other functions such as [public] amenity, [mitigating the impact of pollution], [reducing flood risk], and [improving water quality and] biodiversity.” [See reference 54]</p>
Re-wetting	Gradual re-wetting, the process of restoring natural water flow and saturating peatland
RPG	Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest in England
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SANGs	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace – areas created as enhanced and attractive green spaces that provide an enjoyable natural environment for recreational use (provided as an alternative to sensitive ecologically designated sites).
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Appendix D Glossary

Term	Description
Social prescribing	<p>A holistic approach to healthcare that brings together the social and medical models of health and wellness. Provides a formal pathway for health providers to address the diverse determinants of health, using the familiar and trusted process of writing a prescription. Connects people to community groups and to statutory services for practical and emotional support.</p> <p>GI provides space within which this approach can be delivered.</p>
SuDS	<p>Sustainable Drainage Systems - GI interventions designed to manage stormwater locally (as close to its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and to encourage its infiltration, attenuation, and passive treatment.</p> <p>Natural surface-level SuDS can contribute to the reinstatement of natural processes and ecosystems.</p> <p>These should not however be provided in place of interventions to manage surface water within built development, such as porous pavements which can alleviate flood risk at source.</p>
Tree pits	<p>Tree pits are a type of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) that involve creating a pit (e.g., at the side of a pavement) with enough room to encourage roots to grow downwards. Tree pits manage surface water through interception, transpiration, and infiltration – utilising the tree canopy, roots, and capturing higher volumes of water in the soil. They “...can play a valuable role in flood management [as] the rainwater run off can be diverted from ending in drainage systems to providing nourishments for trees.” [See reference 55]</p>
Social prescribing	<p>Tree pits are a type of a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) that involve creating a pit (e.g., at the side of a pavement) with enough room to encourage roots to grow downwards. Tree pits manage surface water through interception, transpiration, and infiltration – utilising the tree canopy, roots, and capturing higher volumes of water in the soil. [See reference 56] They “...can play a valuable role in flood management [as] the rainwater run off can be diverted from ending in drainage systems to providing nourishments for trees.”</p>
UGF	Urban Greening Factor

References

- 1 Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (2018) Green Infrastructure Plan [online]. Available at: https://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/files/documents/green_infrastructure_plan_2018/LP9.08%20Green%20Infrastructure%20Plan%202018.pdf
- 2 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities [DLUHC] (2021) National Planning Policy Framework [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>
- 3 House of Lords (2022) Making the Most out of England's Land. Report of the Land Use in England Committee [online]. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldland/105/105.pdf>
- 4 Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Framework [online]. Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>
- 5 Natural England (2023) Process Journey for Local Planning Authorities [online] Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Process%20Journey%20for%20Local%20Planning%20Authorities.pdf>
- 6 Natural England (2023) Process Journey for Developers and Design Teams [online] Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Developers%20and%20Design%20Teams%20Process%20Journey.pdf>
- 7 Natural England (2023) Process Journey for Neighbourhood Planning Groups [online] Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Process%20Journey%20for%20Neighbourhood%20Planning%20Groups.pdf>
- 8 Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Framework [online]. Available at:

References

- <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>
- 9 Landscape Sensitivity and GI Study for Leicestershire (2017)
<https://www.llstrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/the-plan/stage-two/developing-the-evidence-base/landscape-sensitivity-green-infrastructure-study-leicester-leicestershire/>
 - 10 Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Framework [online]. Available at:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>
 - 11 See Botanical Value map (2021), via Natural England. Available at:
<https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/4d41e66ef17d450ca168987f267ba0d0/explore?location=52.856236%2C-1.158547%2C12.78>
 - 12 Leicestershire County Council (2018) Inequalities in Life Expectancy between Oadby and Wigston [online]. Available at:
<https://moderngov.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/documents/s18773/Appendix%20%20-%20Inequality%20in%20Life%20Expectancy%20between%20Oadby%20Wigston%20Full%20Report.pdf>
 - 13 Office for National Statistics (2023) How life has changed in Oadby and Wigston: Census 2021 [online]. Available at:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000135/>
 - 14 Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2023) Local Authority Health Profile for Oadby and Wigston [online]. Available at:
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/ati/101/are/E07000135>
 - 15 Ibid.
 - 16 Natural England (2021) Green Infrastructure Map [online]. Available at:
[Green Infrastructure Map \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx)
 - 17 FPCR Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace for Leicestershire and Rutland (2022) [Accessible Natural Greenspace for Leicestershire and Rutland report - March 2022](#)

References

- 18 Oadby & Wigston 010D, Oadby and Wigston 03A and Oadby & Wigston 003C.
- 19 Green Blue Urban (2018) Street Tree Cost Benefit Analysis [online]. Available at: https://www.treeconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/GBU_Street-Tree-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-2018.pdf
- 20 Natural England (2014) NCA Profile: 94 Leicestershire Vales (NE532) [online]. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4900422342934528?category=587130>
- 21 Natural England (2013) NCA Profile: 93 High Leicestershire (NE497). Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5911470780973056?category=587130>
- 22 [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#) (2023) UK Local Authority and Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions National Statistics, 2005 to 2021 [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2021>
- 23 Office for National Statistics (2021) Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Woodland Coverage Where You Live [online]. Available at: [Carbon dioxide emissions and woodland coverage where you live - Office for National Statistics](#)
- 24 Leicestershire County Council (November 2023). South of Leicester Area LCWIP: Phase 2 report – Network Planning for Cycling and Walking. Available at: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/South-of-Leicester-Area-LCWIP-Phase-1-Report-Network-Planning-for-Cycling-and-Walking.pdf>
- 25 Tree Equity Score UK (2023) Tree Equity Score UK [online]. Available at: <https://uk.treeequityscore.org/>
- 26 Defra (January 2024). Policy Paper: Agricultural Transition Plan update January 2024. Available at:

References

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024/agricultural-transition-plan-update-january-2024#summary>
- 27** Greener Golf website (accessed January 2024). Available at:
<https://greenergolf.co.uk/>
- 28** Natural England (2020). National Habitat Network Maps: User Guidance v.2. Available at:
https://magic.defra.gov.uk/Metadata_for_magic/Habitat%20Network%20Mapping%20Guidance.pdf
- 29** Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide [online]. Available at:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Design%20Guide%20-%20Green%20Infrastructure%20Framework.pdf>
- 30** Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2023) Future of farming in England [online]. Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/future-of-farming-in-england>
- 31** Major housing development is 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.
- 32** Natural England (2023) Greenspace Factor User Guide [online]. Available at:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Urban%20Greening%20Factor%20for%20England%20User%20Guide.pdf>
- 33** Tree Equity Score UK (2023) Tree Equity Score UK [online]. Available at:
<https://uk.treeequityscore.org/>
- 34** Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (2022) Environment Strategy and Action Plan [online]. Available at: https://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/files/documents/environment_strategy_and_action_plan/Environment%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20third%20year%20review%20V2.pdf

References

- 35 Woodland Trust (2020) Emergency tree plan for the UK [online]. Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/47692/emergency-tree-plan.pdf>
- 36 Tree Equity Score UK (2023) Tree Equity Score UK [online]. Available at: <https://uk.treeequityscore.org/>
- 37 Natural England (2023) Process Journey for Developers and Design Teams [online] Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Developers%20and%20Design%20Teams%20Process%20Journey.pdf>
- 38 <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/12/get-ready-for-new-biodiversity-net-gain-legislation/>
- 39 Planning Advisory Service, Biodiversity Net Gain for Local Authorities (2023), Online, Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/topics/environment/biodiversity-net-gain-local-authorities>
- 40 Building with Nature Standards Form. Available at: <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/standards-form>
- 41 Woodland Trust, Planners manual for ancient woodland and veteran trees (2019), Online, Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/06/planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland/>
- 42 See NESTA, Rethinking Parks (available at: <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks/>)
- 43 De Bell, S., Abrahams, R., Lovell, R. and Wheeler, B. (2021) Alternative funding mechanisms for green space (SWEEP Report) [pdf]. Available at: <https://sweep.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/AFM-Report.pdf>
- 44 Green Flag Award (2023) Green Flag Award Scheme [online]. Available at: https://www.greenflagaward.org/?utm_source=&utm_medium=kbt-website
- 45 Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Standards for England - Summary Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for

References

- England [online]. Available at:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Green%20Infrastructure%20Standards%20for%20England%20Summary%20v1.1.pdf>
- 46** Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide [online]. Available at:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/DesignGuide.aspx>
- 47** Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019) National Design Guide [online]. Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>
- 48** Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Model Design Code [online]. Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>
- 49** UK Government, Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions (2022), Online, Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions>
- 50** Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRA) The SuDS Manual (C753F) [online]. Available at:
<https://www.ciria.org/ItemDetail?iProductCode=C753F&Category=FREEPUBS>
- 51** NCC (2016) Natural Capital Protocol. Natural Capital Coalition, London, UK www.naturalcapitalcoalition.org/protocol
- 52** Website available at: [https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-ecosystem-management/our-work/nature-based-solutions#:~:text=Nature%2Dbased%20Solutions%20\(NbS\),%2Dbeing%20and%20biodiversity%20benefits%E2%80%9D](https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-ecosystem-management/our-work/nature-based-solutions#:~:text=Nature%2Dbased%20Solutions%20(NbS),%2Dbeing%20and%20biodiversity%20benefits%E2%80%9D)
- 53** MHCLG (2019) Planning Practice Guidance: Natural Environment – How do local ecological networks relate to the Nature Recovery Network?
www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance

References

- 54** Urban Design London (n.d.) Designing Rain Garden: A Practical Guide
https://www.urbandesignlondon.com/documents/85/UDL_Rain_Gardens_for_web_0vwx1Ls.pdf
- 55** GCL Products (2022) Tree Pits: All you need to know
<https://www.gclproducts.co.uk/blog/tree-pits-all-you-need-to-know/>
- 56** Edinburgh Government (n.d.) Sustainable Rainwater Management Guidance. W1 – SuDS trees in streets
<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/30098/sustainable-rainwater-management-guidance-factsheet-w1-suds-trees-in-streets>

Report produced by LUC

Report produced by LUC

Bristol

12th Floor, Colston Tower, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 4XE
0117 929 1997
bristol@landuse.co.uk

Cardiff

16A, 15th Floor, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 0EB
0292 032 9006
cardiff@landuse.co.uk

Edinburgh

Atholl Exchange, 6 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG
0131 202 1616
edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Glasgow

37 Otago Street, Glasgow G12 8JJ
0141 334 9595
glasgow@landuse.co.uk

London

250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD
020 7383 5784
london@landuse.co.uk

Manchester

6th Floor, 55 King Street, Manchester M2 4LQ
0161 537 5960
manchester@landuse.co.uk

landuse.co.uk

Landscape Design / Strategic Planning & Assessment
Development Planning / Urban Design & Masterplanning
Environmental Impact Assessment / Landscape Planning & Assessment
Landscape Management / Ecology / Historic Environment / GIS & Visualisation