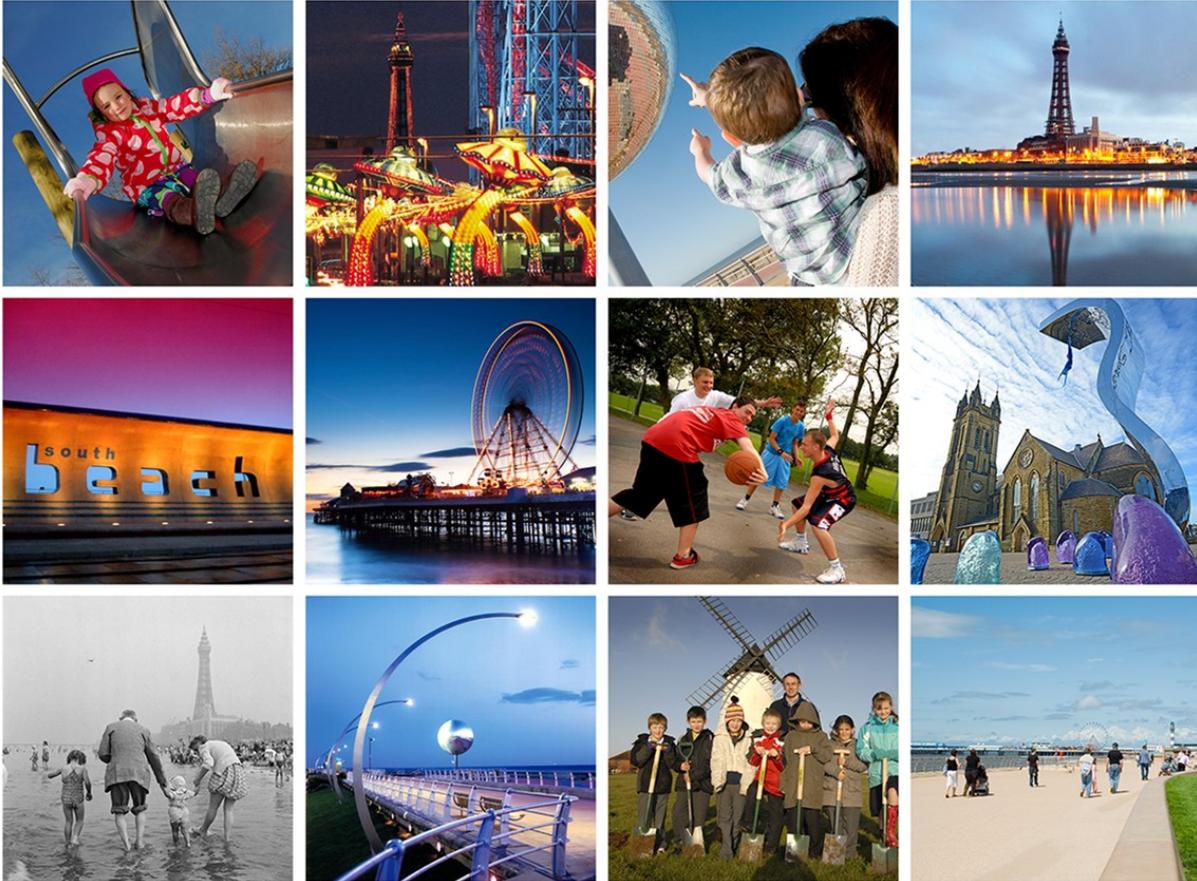


# **Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 Evidence Base**

## **Green Infrastructure Topic Paper**

December 2020

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 This Green Infrastructure Topic Paper has been prepared to assess the national and local policy context for green infrastructure, to inform the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies and forms part of the evidence base. It explains the changes from the Proposals Map (adopted in 2006) and the Publication Policies Map (2021) in terms of green infrastructure.

1.2 The Blackpool Local Plan 2012 – 2027 comprises two parts. Part 1 is the Core Strategy which was adopted in January 2016. This sets out a range of strategic policies for the borough. It sets out the overarching spatial focus for Blackpool and includes a range of policies that aim to safeguard and deliver good quality green infrastructure across the Borough.

1.3 The Local Plan Part 2 is the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document. It is a key planning document which allocates sites for development, or for safeguarding or protecting and sets out a suite of development management policies to guide appropriate development. The development management policies replace the previously ‘saved policies’ in the Blackpool Local Plan (2006).

1.4 Consultation took place on a Regulation 18 Scoping Document for the Local Plan Part 2 in summer 2017. Consultation took place on a Proposed Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Informal Consultation Paper during January and February 2019.

1.5 The Council has produced a Publication (Proposed Submission) version of the Local Plan Part 2, which has been informed by the earlier consultations and up-to-date evidence and policy guidance.

## 2 What is Green Infrastructure?

2.1 Green infrastructure is the network of green spaces and natural elements that intersperse and connect our cities, towns and villages.

2.2 Green Infrastructure can provide functions and environmental services to communities, such as employment, recreation, physical health and mental well-being, social interaction, contact with nature, drainage and flood management, climate change adaptation and mitigation and pollution control. It spans administrative and political boundaries, it is publicly and privately owned and it may be semi-natural or man-made in its origins.

2.3 The term 'Green Infrastructure' also covers blue infrastructure such as watercourses, canals, ponds, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and rain gardens etc.

2.4 In urban areas, green infrastructure complements and balances the built environment and in rural settings it provides a framework for sustainable economies and biodiversity. In-between, it links town and country and interconnects wider environmental processes.

2.5 The physical components of green infrastructure can range from large-scale areas of public open space such as coastal habitats and countryside areas to smaller scale provision in the form of street trees, allotments, domestic gardens, green roofs and walls and SuDs. Green infrastructure can also include hard-landscaped areas, such as Blackpool's promenade, which forms an integral part of the town's green infrastructure network.

2.6 Green infrastructure typologies include:

- Parks and gardens
- Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces
- Green corridors
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Amenity greenspace
- Provision for children and teenagers
- Allotments
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Accessible countryside areas
- Civic spaces and market squares
- Green roofs, walls and trees
- The beach and Promenade
- Coastal habitats
- Bodies of water
- SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems)

- Road side verges and embankments
- Street trees
- Woodlands
- Domestic gardens

### 3 Planning Policy and Green Infrastructure

#### National planning policy

3.1 National planning policy on green infrastructure is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF defines green infrastructure as **a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities**. Good quality green infrastructure has the potential to deliver net gains for all three sustainable development objectives.

3.2 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF requires local authorities to plan strategically for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

3.3 Paragraphs 91 and 92 talk about achieving healthy, inclusive and safe places and providing the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs and how green infrastructure and open space can contribute.

3.4 The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling. Open space should be taken into account for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space (NPPF paragraph 96).

3.5 Paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that new development should be planned for in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.

3.6 Paragraph 171 confirms that Plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in the Framework, take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

3.7 With regards to pollution, paragraph 181 states that planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas

and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications.

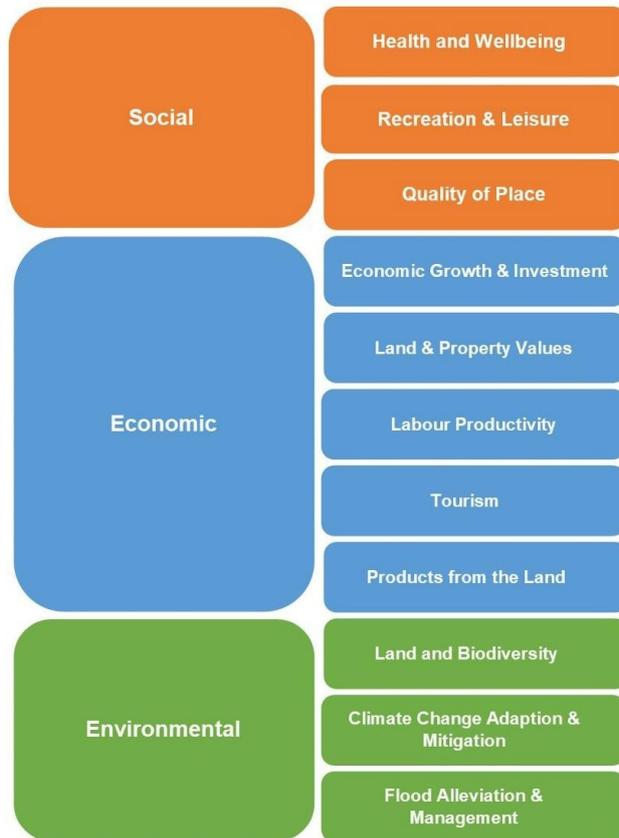


Figure 1 Green infrastructure contribution to sustainable development

3.8 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) amplifies policies in the NPPF and includes chapters on climate change, design, flood risk, green belt, natural environment, open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space, tree preservation order and trees in conservation areas and water supply, wastewater and water quality.

### Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy

3.9 The Core Strategy Spatial Portrait provides a Spatial Portrait of Blackpool's environment and provides the context for the approach taken to green infrastructure and open space in the borough. The Spatial Portrait emphasises that Blackpool has challenging levels of deprivation, particularly in the Inner Area and poor quality housing stock which is linked to poor health, low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment, anti-social

behaviour and transient and vulnerable communities. The Inner Area is very densely populated and has very little in terms of open space and green infrastructure. Beyond the built up area, undeveloped open land in the east of the town is made up of protected public open space, sites of nature conservation value, Green Belt and Countryside Areas. Blackpool's intensely built-up urban area means much of this open land has important landscape, nature conservation and environmental value.

3.10 Key objectives relating to green infrastructure in the Core Strategy include:

- Create well-designed places for people to enjoy with high quality buildings, streets and spaces, whilst conserving and enhancing Blackpool's rich heritage and natural environment.
- Address climate change issues by managing flood risk, protecting water quality, reducing energy use and encouraging renewable energy sources.
- Ensure there is sufficient and appropriate infrastructure to meet future needs.
- Develop sustainable and safer neighbourhoods that are socially cohesive and well connected to jobs, shops, local community services including health and education, culture and leisure facilities.
- Improve the health and well-being of Blackpool's residents and reduce health inequalities by maintaining good access to health care and encouraging healthy active lifestyles, including access to open spaces, the coast, countryside and sport and recreation facilities.
- Secure the necessary infrastructure to enable new sustainable development which integrates with its surroundings, providing choice and convenient access to employment, services and community facilities.

3.11 The Core Strategy includes a range of policies that aim to deliver an appropriate scale and quality of new, enhanced and connected green infrastructure to create more healthy and sustainable communities which are more resilient to climate change and flooding and to increase biodiversity across the town.

3.12 The following are key policies that impact upon the provision of new and enhanced green infrastructure in Blackpool:

#### Policy CS5: Connectivity

This policy sets out the need to improve the interchange between transport modes by providing improved high quality infrastructure and public realm and developing a safe, enhanced and extended network of pedestrian and cycle routes to increase the proportion of journeys made on foot or by bike. This would be done by connecting neighbourhoods, retail centres, employment sites and community facilities and green infrastructure and in providing an enhanced pedestrian environment, will make travel by public transport, cycling and walking safer and more attractive to residents and visitors. Not only will this reduce

road traffic and improve air quality, it will improve health outcomes which is important considering the poor health statistics in Blackpool.

#### Policy CS6: Green Infrastructure

The supporting text to this policy confirms that green infrastructure can range from large scale areas of public open space such as parks and the Promenade, to smaller scale provision in the form of street trees, allotments and SuDS. It states that green infrastructure supports regeneration, adds to the attractiveness of the town as a place to invest, and makes a vital contribution to the health and well-being of residents and visitors. Networks of green infrastructure can safeguard valued landscapes, link habitat and biodiversity networks, protect and improve water quality (including bathing waters), and mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing the urban heat island effect and attenuating flood risk.

The policy sets out that high-quality and well connected networks of green infrastructure in Blackpool will be achieved by:

- Protecting existing green infrastructure other than in exceptional circumstances;
- **Enhancing** the quality, accessibility and functionality of green infrastructure and where possible providing net gains in biodiversity.
- **Creating** new accessible green infrastructure as part of new development and supporting urban greening measures within the built environment.
- **Connecting** green infrastructure with the built environment and with other open space including the creation, extension or enhancement of greenways, green corridors and public rights of way.

CS6 requires all new development to incorporate new or enhance existing green infrastructure of an appropriate size, type and standard. Where on-site provision is not possible, financial contributions will be sought to make appropriate provision for open space and green infrastructure off-site. Measures that seek to preserve, restore and enhance local ecological networks and priority habitats/species will be required where necessary.

#### Policy CS7: Quality of Design

This policy requires new residential development to be well designed and to enhance the character and appearance of the local area and should provide appropriate green infrastructure including green spaces, landscaping and quality public realm as an integral part of the development. Well integrated car parking, pedestrian routes and cycle routes and facilities should also be incorporated.

#### Policy CS9: Water Management

CS9 requires development to reduce flood risk, manage the impacts of flooding and mitigate the effects of climate change, requiring all new development to incorporate appropriate mitigation and resilience measures to minimise the risk and impact of flooding from all

sources. This policy encourages the use of appropriate SuDS where surface water run-off will be generated.

#### Policy CS11: Planning Obligations

This policy sets out that development will only be permitted where existing infrastructure, services and amenities are already sufficient, or where the developer enters into a legal undertaking or agreement to meet the additional needs arising from the development. Where appropriate, planning contributions will be sought in connection with a development to ensure that the particular facilities required for the proposed development, including the provision of necessary infrastructure, services and community facilities and any damaging impact on the environment or local amenity arising from the proposed development can be overcome.

#### Policy CS12: Sustainable Neighbourhoods

CS12 confirms that the Council will support development and investment which creates a healthy, safe, secure and attractive environment and public realm, which promotes local pride and a sense of place and addresses the need for a balanced provision of resident and visitor parking alongside streetscape enhancement.

#### Policy CS15: Health and Education

This policy confirms that development will be supported that encourages healthy and active lifestyles and addresses the Council's health priorities. This includes co-located, more integrated health and education facilities, increasing community access and participation, and reducing the need to travel.

#### Policy CS17: Blackpool Town Centre

Policy CS17 seeks to re-establish the town centre as the first choice shopping destination for Fylde Coast residents and to strengthen it as a cultural, leisure and business destination for residents and visitors. New development, investment and enhancement will be supported which helps to re-brand the town centre by enhancing the quality of buildings, streets and spaces and connecting the different areas of the town centre, including the seafront, to improve pedestrian movement and improve connections with adjoining resort and residential areas.

#### Policy CS22: Key Resort Gateways

This policy confirms that proposals will be promoted and pursued for further improvement, remodelling and environmental enhancement of Central Corridor as a key strategic gateway to Blackpool and attractive point of arrival, including:

- Improved vehicular, pedestrian and cycling linkages through the Corridor and extending the network of green infrastructure;
- Improved parking and reception facilities;
- Enhanced landscaping, signage, lighting and security.

Proposals for improvement and development will be supported to regenerate Central Drive, Lytham Road, Dickson Road and Talbot Road as prominent and attractive gateways to the resort and town centre, including:

- High quality public realm, landscaping, signage, lighting and security;
- Traffic calming and improved public transport, pedestrian and cycling provision

### Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

3.13 Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 11 (SPG11) – Open Space, was adopted in 1999 and sets out public open space requirements for new housing developments and the calculations for developer contributions for off-site public open space.

3.14 The emerging Greening Blackpool Supplementary Planning Document (GBSPD) will supersede SPG11, and sets out green infrastructure requirements for all development, with a shift in emphasis away from purely focusing on public open space. The GBSPD requires tree planting on and off-site and other ‘greening’ measures such as encouraging the use of natural SuDS, green roofs and walls, amenity spaces and prioritises the use of native species.

### Evidence Base

3.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires planning policies to be based on robust and up-to date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision.

3.16 Blackpool Council commissioned The Environment Partnership (TEP) in 2018, to update [Blackpool’s Open Space Assessment](#) [PDF 13,159KM] and to prepare a targeted Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. TEP have produced the Open Space Technical Report and the Green and Blue Infrastructure Technical Report, Strategy and Action Plan in order to inform the Local Plan Part 2 and other Council departments about the green infrastructure needs and priorities across Blackpool and to introduce standards according to the identified needs.



Figure 2 Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework taken from the Open Space Technical Report

3.17 The Open Space Assessment notes that approximately 74% of Blackpool is developed and that there is limited open space in Blackpool, with some wards having the lowest provision in the UK.

3.18 165 areas of open space are identified in Blackpool, from Parks, natural and amenity greenspace, play facilities and sports facilities. Only 1% of those sites (1 site) is assessed as being of excellent quality and 13% (13 sites) are assessed as being of poor quality.

3.19 The existing provision in Blackpool is 4.3 ha per 1,000 population compared to 5.05 ha per 1,000 population national benchmark standards.

3.20 The study makes the following key recommendations:

- Maintain, and where possible improve, the current provision standard of 4.3 ha of open space per 1,000 population;
- Promote the usage of open spaces to enhance quality of life, social inclusion and promote healthy living;
- Protect and enhance the biodiversity of open space, increase natural landscaping, and support opportunities for urban greening;
- Establish a prioritised programme of improvements to the quality of open spaces; and
- Maintain a good distribution of high quality open spaces which meet the needs of the community and addresses any deficiencies in provision.

3.21 The Open Space Technical Report also covers outdoor sports facilities but should be read in conjunction with the updated Playing Pitch Strategy (draft Published December 2020) for a clear picture of the balance between the local supply of, and demand for, playing pitches (Football, Cricket, Rugby and Artificial Grass Pitches) in Blackpool.

3.22 The vision in the Playing Pitch Strategy is to ensure Blackpool has the appropriate provision of playing pitch community facilities to promote active sport and provide exercise opportunity for all.

3.23 The Strategy explains that the existing position for all sports pitches is current demand is being met for grass pitches with some small levels of spare capacity for some sports. There is a need for additional 3G provision to meet FA requirements; there is a small quantitative shortfall in the future for 5v5 mini football pitches; and some qualitative issues related to overplay and overmarking of pitches. Therefore there is a need to protect existing currently used playing field sites to meet current and future demand, maximise the use of sites where there is capacity to mark out additional pitches; and secure community access of sites where this does not currently exist; and create access to new provision such as school playing fields where there is a need to do so.

3.24 The aims of the Strategy are:

**Objective 1** - To **protect** the existing supply of playing pitches where it is needed for meeting current and future needs

Recommendations:

- a. Protect playing field sites through local planning policy where they are needed for meeting current and future needs to 2027.
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so.

**Objective 2** - To **enhance** playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites

Recommendations:

- d. Improve and sustain quality of pitches
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) for the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.

**Objective 3** - To **provide** new playing pitches and ancillary provision where there is current or future demand to do so

Recommendations:

- g. Rectify quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock.

- h. Identify opportunities to add resilience to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

3.25 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is a 10 year plan to invest in Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure, to enhance existing parks and open spaces and deliver new high quality green spaces and public realm. The Strategy commits the Council to ensure that Green and Blue Infrastructure forms part of all decision making and supports future proofing the town.

3.26 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan have been developed following comprehensive consultation and review of evidence and the Strategy will guide the Council's actions, large and small, to build a town nationally known for the quality of its open spaces and green infrastructure.

3.27 The Strategy identifies six strategic goals and implementation priorities for Blackpool's green and blue infrastructure:

**Goals and Priorities:**

- Engaging People in Health and Wellbeing
- Enhancing the Visitor Experience
- Greener Housing and Infrastructure
- Enabling Productive Businesses and Workers
- Promoting a Green Image and Culture
- Improving Habitats and Benefitting Pollinators

The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan identify 4 key objectives to tackle the town's lack of trees and green infrastructure, which will provide environmental and health benefits to Blackpool.

**Objective 1 – Protect and enhance**

- Stanley Park
- Enhance GBI functionality of the outer estates at Mereside, Grange Park
- Invest in parks to bring them Green Flag status
- Enhance Promenade headlands and GBI on the Promenade
- Enhance GBI on road verges along key gateways
- Encourage hedgerows and shrubs to the front of properties

**Objective 2 – Create and restore**

- Embed GBI in the Town Centre
- Incorporate GBI in the tram extension route between North Pier and Blackpool North Train Station
- Incorporate GBI around the Conference Centre using civic space

- Incorporate GBI in the Leisure Quarter development
- ‘Green’ the Winter Gardens
- Work with local businesses to retrofit GI to their buildings using green roofs and walls
- Incorporate GBI into Talbot Gateway Phase 2
- Increase tree canopy to 10% by planting 10,000 trees by 2027
- Create new open space in the Inner Area
- Create open spaces in the Enterprise Zone
- Create a ‘Green Line’ between Blackpool South Train Station and the Town Centre
- Plant trees on key transport gateways – Yeadon Way, Progress Way, Westcliffe Drive and Talbot Road
- Incorporate SUDS in new development
- Require GBI contributions from new development
- Restore elements of the landscape that contribute to character and biodiversity in Green Belt and Countryside Areas
- Create allotments in the north of Blackpool

### **Objective 3 – Connect GBI**

- Include GBI when tendering for contracts
- Create/upgrade Blackpool Activity Trail
- Cross boundary GBI provision working with Fylde and Wyre

### **Objective 4 – Promote the benefits of GBI**

- Provide GBI information to communities, telling them about their local green spaces and how to get involved and volunteer
- Ensure planning applications for car parking in front gardens, maintains GBI
- Encourage local businesses to take stewardship of local green spaces
- Identify green gyms, cook and eat opportunities and green prescriptions
- Establish a Men in Sheds Network for Blackpool
- Encourage community led environmental stewards, Friends Groups, Beach Guardians, Tree Wardens
- Promote the use of GBI by schools

3.28 These documents along with the Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan Part 2 identify that Blackpool has the lowest tree canopy cover in the country, alongside Fleetwood.

3.29 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2020 identifies areas at risk of flooding, including as a result of climate change and advocates the provision of green infrastructure in new development to reduce flood risk both on site and elsewhere.

3.30 In June 2019, Blackpool Council declared a [climate change emergency](#) [PDF 204KB]. The principle commitments in the declaration are to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030 and achieve 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by the same date; and that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030.

### Sustainability Appraisal

3.31 It is a legal requirement to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to support the Local Plan. SA is a process for assessing the social, economic and environmental impacts of a plan. A SA aims to ensure that sustainable development is at the heart of the plan-making process. Where necessary, mitigation measures are recommended to mitigate adverse effects and maximise beneficial effects. SA's must also comply with the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which is required under EU law by the SEA Directive.

3.32 Arcadis Consulting have undertaken SA of the policies and allocations in the Local Plan Part 2. This is an iterative process and is being undertaken alongside the plan making process. A SA Scoping Report was produced in 2017 and the Local Plan Part 2 Informal Consultation Paper has also been subject to SA.

3.33 The SA process has informed the policies and allocations that are included in the Publication version of the Plan. The SA recommended the following measures to the Council relating to green infrastructure, which have been incorporated into the Local Plan Part 2:

- Ecological surveys of some sites may be appropriate prior to development being granted permission as the sites contain existing structures such as trees or hedgerow and could potentially be of a high biodiversity value. This has been included in the relevant site allocation proformas.
- Where development proposals incorporate GI elements, proposals should demonstrate how this GI would be comprised of a diverse range of native species (where feasible) and how it is connected to the GI and ecological network extending throughout the Borough and beyond into neighbouring authorities. This measure has been incorporated into Policy DM21: Landscaping.
- Proposals should demonstrate that they will adopt best practice measures for sustainable soil management during the construction phase in order to avoid any unnecessary excavation, erosion, contamination, or compaction of soils and where possible, proposals should seek to enhance environmental conditions. This measure has been incorporated into Policy DM36: Controlling Pollution and Contamination.

## Habitats Regulation Assessment

3.34 The Council is required under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (and Regulation 102 of the Habitats Regulations) to assess whether the Local Plan Part 2 may give rise to significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site (also known as a 'European site'). These designated sites form part of the Natura 2000 network, which is a network of areas designated to conserve natural habitats and species that are rare, endangered or endemic within the European Community. This includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Candidate SACs, Ramsar Sites and potential SPAs should also be considered in this process.

3.35 The overarching aim of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is to determine, in view of a site's conservation objectives and qualifying interests, whether a plan or project, either in isolation and/or in combination with other plans or projects, would have a significant adverse effect on the European site. If screening concludes that significant effects are likely, then Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken to determine whether there will be adverse effects on the site's integrity.

3.36 Arcadis Consulting have produced a Screening Report on behalf of the Council for the Local Plan Part 2. This considers all European sites within 20km of the Borough boundary which may be affected by development allocated in the Local Plan Part 2. The Screening exercise concluded that none of the policies or associated allocation sites were considered to have a likely significant effect on any of the European sites alone, or in combination.

## Viability Assessment

3.37 The NPPF requires plans to be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable. Policies within a plan should not undermine its deliverability. A Viability Assessment of the Local Plan Part 2 has been undertaken by Lambert Smith Hampton.

3.38 The Assessment confirms that the provision of public open space and appropriate landscape works are a long standing objective of the planning system. Such costs are therefore factored into the development market. With regards to the provision of green infrastructure, the Assessment recommends that a suitable allowance must be made within the development appraisals for the provision and / or improvement of green infrastructure, either through a dedicated cost or an adjustment to the external works costs. Further detail is found in the Local Plan Viability Assessment.

## 4 Green Infrastructure in Blackpool

4.1 As demonstrated above, at both national and local level, greater emphasis and urgency is being given to climate change and the associated challenges we will all face in the coming decades. It is increasingly acknowledged that trees and other green infrastructure will play a vital role in fighting climate change and mitigating its effects such as increased flood risk, rising temperatures and the loss of species. Green infrastructure naturally captures carbon, filters out some common pollutants and can absorb flood water whilst also providing habitats to our most vulnerable species. Green infrastructure also has many benefits to human physical and mental health and is no longer a 'nice to have' but a 'must have'.

### People

4.2 In 2018, Blackpool was the seventh most densely populated area in England outside of Greater London. The population is heavily concentrated in Blackpool's Inner Area, which is intensely compact. This is a consequence of rapid growth of the resort at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century giving rise to a significant amount of development including dense holiday guest houses and small hotels in a grid-iron pattern of terraced streets behind the seafront. However, with the decline of overnight visitors which started in the 1970's and 80's a reflection of changing consumer demand, guest house/hotel owners sought alternative income through converting and sub-dividing their properties to permanent residential use. This has resulted in very dense and grey urban environments, particularly in the Inner Area of Blackpool.

4.3 At the heart of Blackpool is the Town Centre and Resort Core which has little green cover and elsewhere in the Inner Area, there is very little open space apart from the Promenade and beach. The Town Centre is the main retail and cultural centre for the Fylde Coast and employs over 6,000 people and generates a retail turnover of around £300 million per annum. However, the Town Centre is under performing as a sub-regional retail centre.

4.4 Employment in Blackpool is generally seasonal, low skill with minimum wage. Blackpool attracts low income and vulnerable households which, when concentrated within certain areas, has a negative effect on forming stable and cohesive communities. The high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, worklessness and low educational attainment coupled with significant transience presents one of the most testing social and economic challenges in the country.

4.5 The health of people in Blackpool is generally worse than the national average. The town records one of the lowest life expectancy rates nationally and there are inequalities by deprivation and gender. Health priorities in Blackpool include alcohol and drug misuse,

mental health, smoking and obesity. A high percentage of working age residents claim Incapacity Benefit (over 12%), which is almost double the national average. Public Health in Blackpool is within the remit of Blackpool Council.

4.6 Nine out of the 21 wards in Blackpool fall significantly short of the national standard of 4 hectares of open space per 1,000 population<sup>1</sup> (or 40 square metres per person) as recommended in the 2018 Open Space Assessment, including Claremont, Talbot, Brunswick, Tyldesley, Victoria, Waterloo (all in the Inner Area), Hawes Side, Highfield and Squires Gate. The 2018 Open Space Assessment confirms that there are few opportunities for providing additional open space in the Inner Area due to the high density of development.

4.7 Green infrastructure has a vital role to play in Blackpool's development, for example enhancing the quality of arrival for visitors, providing places for cultural events, providing a high quality setting for the towns heritage buildings and conservation areas, increasing physical activity, creating opportunities for community activity, tackling stress and mental health problems and enhancing biodiversity and landscape quality.

## Biodiversity

4.8 Blackpool has the lowest tree canopy cover in the UK at just 4.4%<sup>2</sup> (2016 data), despite the Council having recently planted 3,000 trees in streets and parks and in creating woodland at Low Moor Road, Mossom Road, Deerhurst Road and Kingscote Park. The national average for an authority is around 16% tree canopy cover.

4.9 There are no biological sites of international importance in Blackpool.

4.10 At present there is only one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Blackpool which is Marton Mere, which covers 39 hectares of land in the east of the town. Marton Mere is also a designated Local Nature Reserve.

4.11 Biological sites (BHSs) are the name given to the most important non statutory wildlife sites in Lancashire. There are 14 in Blackpool:

- Salisbury Garden, Woodside Drive
- Island in Stanley Park Lake (North)
- Broad Oak Lane Field ponds
- Blackpool South Railway Line – Squires Gate Station to Lytham Road Bridge
- Herons Reach Golf Course, Marton Mere, Habitat Complex
- Field pond west Bispham Road

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<sup>1</sup> [GOV.UK Performance Indicator 30 \(PI 30\)](#) (opens a new window)

<sup>2</sup> [Urban Tree Cover in Blackpool](#)

- Bispham Marsh
- Queens Promenade Coastal Grassland – North Shore Boating Pool to Little Bispham
- Carleton Cemetery pond cluster
- Robins Lane Pond Cluster
- Heron Way Pond Whitemoss. Heron Way pond is no longer considered to be of BHS quality as per Lancashire County Council Assessment 2004.
- Holyoake Reed Bed, Warbreck (Now forms part of Carleton Cemetery Pond Cluster)
- Rough Heys, North of Yeadon Way. Now lost to development but one individual of the significant plant species still survives and is likely to continue to do so. Planning permission was granted before designation
- Field off Chapel Road

4.12 There are 2 further BHSs close to the Blackpool administrative boundary:

- Wood House Farm, Swamp and Adjacent Ponds, Poulton Le Fylde
- Garstang Road West Field Pond

4.13 Further information about biodiversity in Blackpool can be found in the [Blackpool Nature Conservation Statement 2012](#) [PDF 5,860KB].

4.14 It is important that the Local Plan Part 2 supports the Core Strategy and the local and national efforts to protect, enhance and connect sites with biological importance and to create further habitats and green infrastructure, to provide net gains for biodiversity.

## 5 Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies – Green Infrastructure Requirements

5.1 Given the identified need for more, enhanced and connected green infrastructure at national level and in the evidence base, the Local Plan Part 2 includes a range of development management policies which will complement the strategic policies in the Core Strategy and sets out the requirements for green infrastructure in development, in different settings.

### Policy DM1: Design Requirements for New Build Housing

DM1 outlines certain design standards for new build housing, including the requirement to provide amenity space, landscaping, water butts and rainwater harvesting in flat developments.

### Policy DM10: Promenade and Seafront

This policy seeks to improve the appearance and economic function of the Promenade and Seafront, including the provision of high quality public realm, landscaping and green infrastructure.

### Policy DM17: Design Principles

This policy requires all development to be of high quality and to have regard to landscape features and include landscaping where possible.

### Policy DM21: Landscaping

DM21 is the principle policy relating to green infrastructure in Part 2 and confirms that development proposals are expected to contribute towards green and blue infrastructure. It requires that the design and layout of a development site retains and protects the distinguishing landscape features, trees and hedgerows and wherever possible enhances them through increased tree and shrub cover including soft edge and transitional areas of planting, prioritising the use of native species. It resists the loss of trees (category A, B or C of BS 5837) and requires at least two replacement trees of a suitable species and level of maturity for each tree felled, over and above other tree planting requirements. Where replacement trees would be inappropriate on site, a contribution towards the provision of trees off-site will be required. The policy requires landscape buffers and screening which prioritise native species and/or green walls and roofs, wildlife friendly boundary treatments and a demonstration of how the green infrastructure connects to wider green infrastructure and ecological networks in Blackpool and neighbouring authorities and resists the hard surfacing of more than 50% of residential gardens.

Where the provision of green infrastructure isn't possible, developer contributions will be required to create and enhance green infrastructure off-site.

#### Policy DM31: Surface Water Management

This policy requires the sustainable management of surface water and encourages the use of SuDS, which can form green infrastructure.

#### Policy DM35: Biodiversity

DM35 seeks to protect, enhance and create habitats to provide net-gains to biodiversity including protected species. It confirms that development would not be permitted where it would adversely affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a County Heritage Site – biological or geological, including ponds, protected animals or plant species.

#### Policy DM41: Transport Requirement

This policy requires new development to provide convenient, safe and pleasant pedestrian access and cycle routes.

## 6 Local Plan Policies Map

6.1 The 2006 Local Plan Proposals Map identifies large areas of green infrastructure that are then specifically allocated with an associated policy. These are:

- public open space
- playing fields
- open land meeting community and recreational needs
- allotments
- green belt
- countryside areas
- nature reserves
- sites of nature conservation value and urban greenspace.

6.2 The NPPF was first published in 2012 and recognises such allocations above under one all-encompassing umbrella: Green Infrastructure. The glossary provides further explanation - 'A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.'

6.3 The Local Plan Publication Policies Map (January 2021) therefore identifies all green infrastructure across the Borough and refers to the associated adopted strategic policy - CS6: Green Infrastructure. This aligns with the NPPF and includes most green infrastructure in the public realm, from street trees, embankments, grass verges, the Promenade, small amenity spaces as well as the more traditional assets such as parks and public open spaces. Identifying green infrastructure at a strategic level helps inform decision making and give visual cues, making it easier to influence development, regeneration and environmental projects to ensure the successful delivery of green infrastructure.

6.4 This approach will assist in identifying opportunities to connect green infrastructure as well as areas where green infrastructure should be prioritised, such as in the Town Centre and the Inner Area. It will also identify opportunities to create green corridors along cycle routes and busier pedestrian routes to encourage cycling and walking.

6.5 The policies in the Local Plan Part 2 along with the Policies Map and the Greening Blackpool SPD, will provide the tools with which development can contribute towards a greener, healthier and more biodiverse Blackpool and will assist in delivering the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.