

THEME 2b: A BEAUTIFUL AND HISTORIC CITY – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Vision

4.63 Durham City's natural green spaces and networks of greenery will be protected and enhanced for the leisure, health, economic and environmental benefits they provide for residents, visitors and people working in the City.

Objectives

4.64 The objectives of this theme are:

1. To protect and enhance the green infrastructure in Our Neighbourhood;
2. To protect and enhance the green assets of the World Heritage Site, and its inner setting, and of the character areas of the Durham City Conservation Area;
3. To address deficiencies of green infrastructure within Our Neighbourhood.

Context

Definition of green assets

4.65 Green infrastructure is the network of green assets (multi-functional green spaces and natural resources) within the City (PPG 'Natural environment' para. 027). Green assets cover a range of spatial scales and types of use. They include:

- the River and riverbanks, streams, ponds (i.e. blue infrastructure);
- open spaces (see Table 1 below);
- wildlife sites and wildlife habitats;
- woodland;
- parks and botanic gardens;
- public, community and private gardens;
- green landscaped areas;
- the grounds of the University, colleges, schools, hospitals, businesses and business parks;
- highway verges and railway embankments;
- footpaths and cycle paths;
- green corridors (a narrow strip of land containing enough habitat to support wildlife and connecting wildlife populations and habitats separated by human activities or structures (such as buildings or roads). They include riverbanks, cycle paths and footpaths, road verges);
- dark corridors (unlit strips of land (e.g. footpaths, verges and riverbanks) that provide wildlife with protection from artificial lighting and routeways between larger, unlit areas of habitat);
- cemeteries and churchyards;
- allotments and community gardens;
- sports and playing fields;
- amenity green spaces;
- designated Local Green Spaces;
- the Green Belt;
- trees, hedgerows, grass, vegetation;
- built structures such as green roofs, green walls, natural or artificial water features, bird and bat boxes and roosting sites.

4.66 The above list includes open spaces. An open space is defined as any open piece of land that is undeveloped (i.e. has no buildings or other built structures on it): it can be both public or private (with or without public access allowed). Open spaces can be green or hard, or a bit of both. A typology of open spaces (Department for Communities and Local Government, nd, Annexe) is given in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Topology of open spaces

Green Open Spaces	Mixed Spaces (including both green and hard areas)	Hard Open Spaces
Natural / semi- natural spaces (such as wildlife sites, woodland)	Civic spaces with soft landscaping (e.g. grass, trees, flowerbeds, water features)	Civic spaces (hard) (such as town squares, public seating areas)
Green corridors (including riverbanks, cycle paths and footpaths, road verges)		Play spaces (for children and young people)
Waterways (including rivers, streams)	Outdoor sports facilities (with grass surfaces)	Outdoor sports facilities (including playing fields, open air courts) (with hard surfaces)
Parks and gardens	Roundabouts (with soft landscaping)	Roundabouts (with hard surfaces)
Churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds (open or closed to burials)	Amenity green spaces (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas - including informal recreation spaces, green spaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens)	
Allotments and community gardens	Road verges	
	Vacant lot (with vegetation)	Vacant lot (with hard surfaces)

4.67 An assessment of open spaces in Our Neighbourhood has been undertaken (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2018).

4.68 The City's attractiveness and character is enhanced by the natural open spaces and networks of greenery which are valued throughout the year by residents, visitors and those working in the City. This green infrastructure serves a variety of purposes: the character setting of the World Heritage site and conservation areas, attractive open spaces and footpaths for recreation and connections between communities, beneficial effects on people's health, an attractive setting which encourages new businesses and new residents to move to the City, visitor and tourist attractions, beneficial habitats for biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change. (PPG 'Natural environment' para. 008, 028, 030)

4.69 Table D1 in Appendix D lists landscape and natural environment assets and open spaces in Our Neighbourhood, describing the context as known at the time of writing (March 2019). This identifies many resources, however it cannot be used as a comprehensive list.

Justification

4.70 This justification refers to the Green Infrastructure theme as a whole. Additional, specific justification for an individual policy is given with the policy itself.

4.71 The Forum's priority survey (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015) identified that local people valued highly the green infrastructure of the City. One of the highest rated aspects was the riverbank setting and riverside walks. In addition they rated the woodland 'wedges' which bring green space into City, pedestrianised areas, Council flower displays and tree plantings, parks and nature areas. One of their priorities is to protect green spaces/green belt and the environment. In the Forum's study of the views of young people (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2016a), one of their priorities included the River. The young people all enjoyed the river and the river walks, and felt that even more could be made of the riverbanks to improve access and leisure opportunities.

4.72 An environmental objective is one of the three objectives in achieving sustainable development (NPPF para. 8). The NPPF covers green infrastructure in a number of chapters:

- Chapter 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); ... d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures" (NPPF para. 170);
- Chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities, e.g. "through the use of ... high quality public space ... [and] the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities ... allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling" (NPPF para. 91)
- Chapter 13. Protecting Green Belt land
- Chapter 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, e.g. managing risks "through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure" (NPPF para. 150)

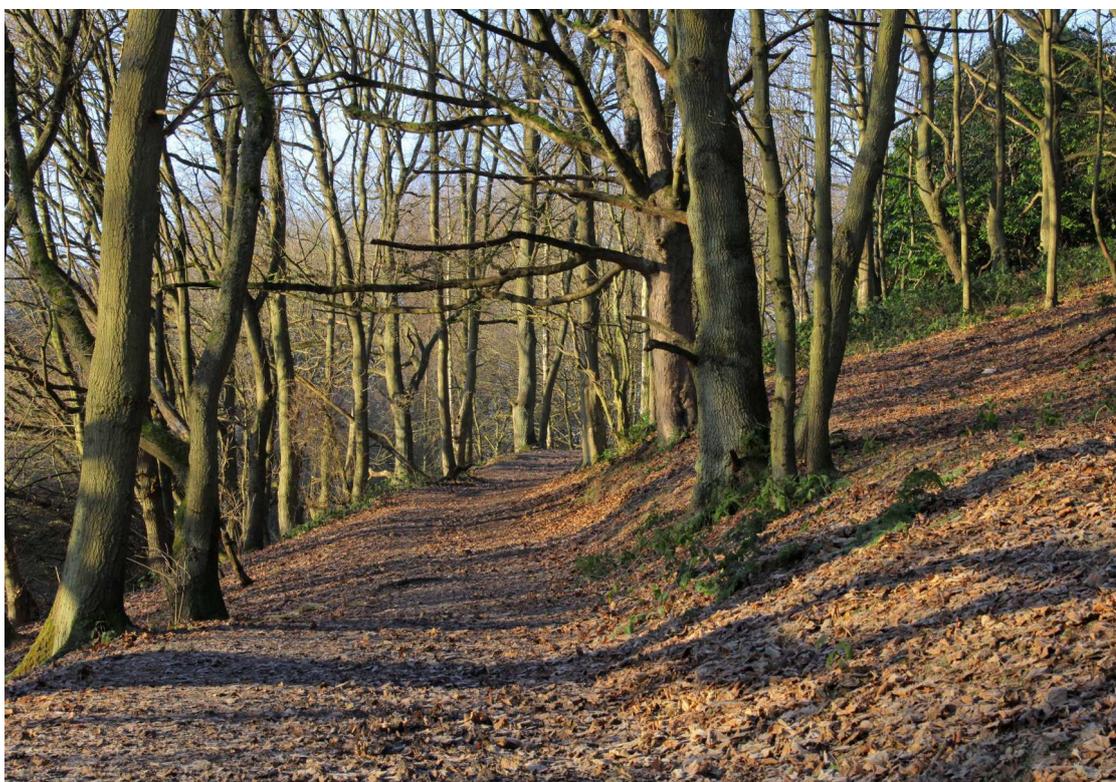
4.73 'The Natural Choice' (the natural environment white paper: UK Government, 2011) emphasises that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal well-being. The biodiversity strategy (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2011) builds on the natural environment white paper. Its mission is to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

4.74 The Natural Capital Committee (2018) was set up to provide the UK Government with independent advice on protecting and improving natural capital, i.e. green assets, land, minerals and water. It is currently working on developing a 25 year Environment Plan to implement the 'Natural choice' White Paper (UK Government, 2011). The goals they

recommend include providing everyone with access to local green space, restoring and enhancing wild species populations and habitats, and managing developments so that there is an overall net increase in natural habitat.

4.75 The 'Green Infrastructure Guidance' (Natural England, 2009) provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of green infrastructure, signposts to other relevant information, and maps out wider policy priorities and drivers for green infrastructure. Its aim is to drive forward green infrastructure planning and delivery.

4.76 More than 70 organisations from across multiple sectors have joined forces to create a 'Charter for Trees, Woods and People' with the aim of guiding UK policy and practice. It sets out ten principles "for a society in which people and trees can stand stronger together".



4.77 A number of Durham County Council strategies and documents are relevant to green infrastructure. The Green Infrastructure Strategy (Durham County Council, 2012a, p.5) identified a number of policy recommendations relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *existing public open spaces and rights of way should be protected; new development should contain sufficient open space for new and existing residents' needs; open spaces and rights of way should be good-quality, attractive and functional ...*
- *designated sites and other ecologically valuable assets will be protected from the direct or indirect impacts of development; new green spaces will retain, reinforce*

or create links to the existing GI network; green spaces, roofs and walls will be encouraged ...

- *GI will be used as an [economic] asset ...*
- *healthy lifestyles will be supported by the protection and enhancement of open spaces and the public rights of way network. Landscape – designated landscapes and landscape conservation areas will be protected and managed ...*
- *sites of historic interest, and their settings, will be protected and enhanced; the use of green infrastructure as a design feature will be required where appropriate; green infrastructure features which contribute to townscape will be protected ...*
- *the creation of new woodlands will be supported; ... urban trees will be protected.*

4.78 Durham County Council (2018c) has produced a 'Durham Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework'. One of their delivery priorities is: "Enabling local communities to engage in the enhancement and creation of GI in their area within their Neighbourhood Plans".

4.79 The Sustainable Communities Strategy for County Durham 2014-2030 (County Durham Partnership, 2014) has a section 'Altogether greener' with the aim of maximising the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 placed an obligation on local authorities to produce and maintain a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for County Durham 2015–2018 (Durham County Council, 2015d) The 'opportunities' (essentially the policies) identified in the plan include an aim that paths are provided and improved as part of developments, and that gateway sites to public green spaces are improved.

4.80 Durham City falls within The Wear Lowlands character area of the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy (Durham County Council, 2008a,b). The strategy for the Wear Lowlands is: "To conserve the character of the valley landscapes of the Wear while enhancing those areas which have been most affected by development" (Durham County Council, 2008b, p.104). These documents contain detailed contextual information and numerous objectives. Baseline information on biodiversity and geodiversity is available in the Council's Technical Paper No. 12 (Durham County Council, 2009).

4.81 A number of the saved policies from the City of Durham Local Plan cover green assets (E1,2,2A,5,5a,10,14 to 20,25,26; R1 to 3,5,11 to 13; T21; Q5,6).

4.82 The Durham City Regeneration Masterplan (Durham County Council, 2014) and its update (Durham County Council, 2016c) has a number of implementation projects and actions relevant to the green infrastructure of Our Neighbourhood (a subset of the Durham City area covered by the Masterplan), i.e. 'Keeping Durham Green' by e.g. care of the River Wear banks, adding to existing green spaces.

4.83 Local strategies and initiatives emphasise the importance of the green infrastructure within the City, in particular the Durham City Conservation Area Appraisal (Durham County Council, 2016b) and the Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site

Management Plan (Durham World Heritage Site, 2017). The Durham City Conservation Area comprises “the pre-1900 expansion of the city and the majority of the natural ‘bowl’ (the upper slopes of which present a largely rural backdrop to views of the Cathedral), the important green wedges of open countryside and other significant green areas which contribute to and enhance the setting of the historic buildings and the city as a whole” (Durham County Council, 2016b, Executive Summary, p.2). Management proposals for each character area are available, which include management, conservation and enhancement of green assets. Most of Our Neighbourhood falls within the area covered by the World Heritage Site and by its inner setting (see Maps 1 and 2). The immediate context of the river and the tree lined river banks is a key component of the World Heritage Site's Outstanding Universal Value. The inner setting of the World Heritage Site, and protection of views to and from the World Heritage Site, is another key component.

4.84 Durham County Council (on behalf of a Steering Group of the main landowners of the Durham riverbanks) commissioned Blue Sail Consulting Ltd (2017) to produce a development and management strategy for the Durham riverbanks, focussing on the Peninsula riverbanks. It recommends a number of projects to revitalise this area. These riverbanks projects intersect with the Emerald Network policy G3. (See also relevant initiatives in the companion document 'Looking Forwards: Durham as a Creative and Sustainable City').



Planning Policies and Proposals for Land Use

4.85 The policies related to this theme are:

- Policy G1: Protecting and Enhancing Green Infrastructure
- Policy G2: Designation of Local Green Spaces
- Policy G3: Creation of the Emerald Network
- Policy G4: Enhancing the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

Policy G1: Protecting and Enhancing Green Infrastructure

Protecting and enhancing green assets

(defined in para. 4.65 and 4.66, and Table 1)

Regarding development proposals for housing sites more than 0.4 hectares or 10 housing units, or for other types of development sites more than 0.4 hectares:

Such proposals should not result in the loss of existing green assets unless:

- a) the affected asset does not have a significant recreational, heritage, cultural, ecological, landscape or townscape value; or
- b) the affected asset can be demonstrated to be surplus to local requirements

If the loss is unavoidable, a compensatory amount of green assets of an equivalent or better quality must be provided within in, or adjacent to, or nearby Our Neighbourhood, with easy access via walking, cycling or public transport.

Where feasible, such development proposals should provide additional good quality green assets on site for new and existing residents' needs, with regard to deficiencies of green assets within Our Neighbourhood, and with regard to the Emerald Network.

Green assets provided should be appropriate to the context, having regard to the landscape, townscape and ecology of the locality and where appropriate the setting of heritage assets.

Development proposals for housing of 0.4 hectares or 10 housing units, or under, or for other types of development sites of 0.4 hectares, or under, will be supported if they:

- c) do not result in the loss of existing green assets within the site that have visual or environmental value; and
- d) provide additional green assets. Such green assets would include trees, private gardens, communal gardens, and where space is at a premium, innovative solutions such as green roofs, green walls, natural or artificial water features, bat or bird boxes and roosting sites.

Protecting footpaths

Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or deterioration in the local distinctiveness and quality of, existing footpaths will not be permitted, unless it can be demonstrated that the deterioration or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefit that outweighs the deterioration or loss. If the loss of a footpath route is unavoidable, appropriate mitigation measures, such as an equivalent alternative should be included in the proposal.

Development proposals should maximise opportunities to connect to the network of footpaths, public rights of way and bridle paths in Our Neighbourhood.

Proposals for improving existing footpaths, or providing new footpaths, to provide access for people with disabilities, and for people with push chairs, will be supported where this would not cause damage to heritage assets and to green assets.

Protecting green corridors

(defined in para. 4.65 and 4.66, and Table 1)

Development proposals must not adversely impact on ecological connectivity.

In considering development affecting green corridors:

Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or deterioration in the quality of, green corridors within the site will not be permitted, unless the remaining elements of the green corridors are enhanced to maintain their continued functioning and connectivity, or alternative routes are provided or enabled.

Development proposals that are adjacent to, or encroaching upon, green corridors must maintain or enhance their functionality and connectivity.

Development proposals should contribute to the network of interlinked green routes that connect built up areas with nearby destinations and the open countryside and reduce the fragmentation of green corridors or habitat by:

- e. creating green routes within the development site that connect to green routes outside the site; or
- f. contributing to improvements in green routes outside the development site but within, or adjacent to, or nearby Our Neighbourhood.

Protecting biodiversity, habitats, protected species and geological features

Where wildlife habitats, protected species, or features of ecological, geological and geomorphological interest have been identified on development sites, proposals that would cause irreversible or serious damage to such habitats, or species or features will be refused unless:

- g. acceptable mitigation measures to minimise these adverse effects are provided on site; or
- h. compensation measures to offset any harm which cannot be completely avoided or mitigated are provided off site.

In order to enhance the nature conservation value of Our Neighbourhood and provide net gains for biodiversity, development proposals that:

- restore damaged habitats; or
- re-create lost habitats; or
- create new wildlife habitats, particularly habitats supporting local protected and priority species

will be encouraged and supported.

Protecting trees and hedgerows

In considering development affecting trees and hedgerows:

Development proposals should retain areas of woodland, groups of trees, copses and individual trees and hedgerows wherever possible. Where loss is unavoidable, an equivalent number of trees and hedgerows should be planted, in, or adjacent to, or nearby Our Neighbourhood.

Protecting and enhancing the banks of the River Wear

Development proposals which restrict, or result in a loss of, existing access to the banks of the River Wear will be refused. Existing footpaths, cycle paths, green corridors and dark corridors must be retained.

Proposals for existing developments to provide additional access points to the banks of the River Wear, where feasible and desirable in relation to public safety, ecology and heritage impacts, will be supported.

New developments, or redevelopments, next to the banks of the River Wear in Our Neighbourhood should incorporate where possible a safe pedestrian path along the riverbank. Opportunities should be maximised to create a green corridor and cycle access, in that order of priority. Such provision must not adversely impact on existing heritage assets and green assets.

Protecting dark corridors

New lighting proposals must be wildlife friendly in siting and design and not adversely impact on existing dark corridors.

4.86 A definition of green assets (including open spaces, green corridors and dark corridors) and a typology of open spaces is given in para. 4.66 and Table 1.

Justification for Policy G1

4.87 This justification is additional to that provided at the start of this theme.

4.88 Public authorities have a duty to have regard for conserving biodiversity and part of the way to achieve this is through the planning system (NPPF para. 8, PPG para. 007, 008, 017 to 020). The NPPF states the importance of access to high quality open spaces for the benefits to health and well-being (NPPF para. 96 to 98). Saved policies of the City of Durham Local Plan are also relevant (E5, Q8, R1). The County Durham Green Infrastructure Strategy (Durham County Council, 2012a) recommends that existing public open spaces should be protected, new development should contain sufficient open space for new and existing residents' needs and open spaces should be of good-quality, attractive and functional.

4.89 A key document is the Open Space Needs Assessment 2018 (Durham County Council, 2018d). This document assesses open space, sport and recreation facilities in County Durham by: identifying local needs; auditing local provision and assessing this against quality, quantity and access standards. It identified an under supply in all types of open space in the Durham City Assessment Area (which includes Our Neighbourhood but covers a wider area).

4.90 The complementary 'Playing Pitch Strategy' (Durham County Council, 2011a, 2012b) contains an audit of provision and aims to ensure that the quantity and quality of playing pitches and accessibility of playing pitches meets the needs of the local population now and in the future. It includes policy recommendations for the Durham City Area Action Partnership (which is wider than Our Neighbourhood) covering safeguarding and enhancing of provision.

4.91 Public open spaces are used by a range of different people for different purposes. A well-designed open space should be located near to the community it serves, have connectivity, be accessible, flexible in meeting different needs, adaptable to meet future needs, welcoming, safe and secure, clean and well maintained. (CABE Space, 2007) CABE, The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, was the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space from 1999 to 2011.



4.92 Darkness is important to wildlife and to the special setting of the World Heritage Site and the Durham City Conservation area, and provides health benefits to people of relaxation, tranquillity and appreciation of the night sky. Though an urban area, this Neighbourhood Plan considers that parts of Our Neighbourhood should be treated as Zone E1 or E2 for the provision of lighting (Durham County Council, Neighbourhood Services, 2014; Durham County Council, Regeneration and Local Services, 2016), e.g. the World Heritage Site, along the riverbanks and along the traditional footpaths criss crossing Our Neighbourhood. This would entail either restricting lighting, or providing minimal intensity lighting with a full horizontal cut off. Darkness contributes to the outstanding universal values (OUV) of the World Heritage Site (Durham World Heritage Site, 2017, p.62)

4.93 Consultants have produced a suggested light and darkness strategy for Durham (Speirs and Major Associates, 2007). The environment was included as one of the key lighting design criteria to be observed.

Policy G2: Designation of Local Green Spaces

Green spaces within Our Neighbourhood that are of significant environmental, landscape or historical value are designated as Local Green spaces. These areas, as shown on the proposals map, comprise:

1. The River Wear corridor within Our Neighbourhood, comprising that in the areas of the Peninsular Woodlands, the Racecourse and the Sands; and
2. Observatory Hill and Bow Cemetery and two fields on the south side of Potters Bank; and

3. Flass Vale Local Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve and North End allotments and leisure gardens; and
4. St Margaret's Cemetery plus St Margaret's allotments; and
5. DLI grounds; and
6. Woodland on the south side of the City, comprising Maiden Castle Wood, Great High Wood, Hollinside Wood, and Blaid's Wood; and
7. Battle of Neville's Cross: the undeveloped area of the registered battlefield site within Our Neighbourhood.

Development proposals that cause harm or loss to the characteristics that make these sites important and special to local people will be refused, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated where the loss or harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the loss or harm. If this loss or harm cannot be avoided, then appropriate mitigation measures must be included in the proposal.

Proposals for improving footpaths, or providing new footpaths, or providing access for people with disabilities, will be supported. Such provision must not adversely impact on the characteristics of the site.

4.94 The NPPF (para. 99-101) provides for neighbourhood plans to designate Local Green Spaces allowing "communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them" (PPG para. 'Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space' 005 to 021). Policies for managing development in a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts (NPPF para. 101)

4.95 An assessment of open spaces in Our Neighbourhood has been undertaken for this Neighbourhood Plan (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2018) As a result of that assessment, the areas in the policy above (see Proposals Map 2) have been designated as Local Green Spaces for the following reasons:

- G2.1: The river and river corridor of the River Wear as it meanders through the City's floodplain and cuts through the rocky gorge of the peninsular is the most significant landscape feature of the City. Its important contribution to the setting of the World Heritage Site and the City cannot be overestimated. The river and riverbanks are an important component of the Durham City Conservation Area in all five character areas (Durham County Council, 2016b). Respondents to the Forum's priority survey (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015) listed the riverbank setting and riverside walks as the second highest attribute of what is good about Durham City. The river paths are well used for walking and leisure activities, and provide an important wildlife corridor linking the character areas of the City Conservation Area to each other and to the wider countryside within Our Neighbourhood. Protection of the river corridor was included in the City of Durham Local Plan saved policy E5 on protecting open spaces within Durham City. And a River Wear Walkway was proposed in policy R13. A draft

development and management strategy for the riverbanks has been drawn up for Durham County Council with the aim of revitalising the riverbanks. The current report (Blue Sails Consulting Ltd, 2017) focuses on the Peninsular Riverbanks. Later work will look at the wider riverbanks. The particular sections of the riverbanks within the City centre comprising this Local Green Space are in the areas of: (i) the Peninsular riverbanks, (ii) the Racecourse, and (iii) the Sands. The Peninsular riverbanks are a key part of the green setting of the World Heritage Site, providing iconic views to and from the Cathedral and Castle. They are of historic value, with historic riverbank gardens and walks, forming part of an 18th century designed landscape. They have high community value as a walking area and a location for events, e.g. Lumiere. They are a key tourist attraction, accessible by public rights of way. The Racecourse has high community value as a recreational site for walking, accessible by public rights of way, and for a range of sporting venues. It is a site for events, particularly the historic and iconic Durham Miners Gala and the Durham Regatta. It provides iconic views to World Heritage Site. The Sands have historic value as one of the few areas of common land left in Our Neighbourhood. It is a grassed area with recreational value and providing a venue for events, e.g. the annual Easter Fair. The rest of the riverbanks in Our Neighbourhood are protected by Policy G1 which seeks to retain existing, and support new, footpaths, green corridors, dark corridors and cycle paths along the river where the physical space allows.

- G2.2: Observatory Hill and Bow Cemetery and two fields on the south side of Potters Bank. Observatory Hill, adjoining Potters Bank and near to Durham School, is within both the inner bowl of the World Heritage Site and the City Conservation Area. Its elevated site makes it very visible from the centre, and it contributes to the green and rural landscape setting for the World Heritage site and the City centre. It is well used by local people, and has been for countless years, for access for walking, dog walking, exercise, sitting, picnics, sledging in winter, photography, etc - all the types of purposes for which open green space is used. There are footpaths criss crossing the area (though not all are PROW). It provides important views towards and the World Heritage Site, and if developed would blight the views in that direction from the World Heritage Site as the Hill is so high, and mitigation by masking by trees would not be effective or feasible. Observatory Hill has City-wide esteem, with iconic status for a thousand years and more. It was included in the City of Durham Local Plan saved policy E5 on protecting open spaces within Durham City. Bow Cemetery and the adjacent fields (one at the bottom of Potters Bank North West of St Mary's College (within the Durham City Conservation Area) and one falling down from Elvet Hill / St Aidan's College South of Potters Bank) provide one of the key 'green fingers/wedges' that are an important characteristic of Durham City, leading towards the World Heritage Site. In the Forum's priority survey (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015) respondents had high regard for the 'woodland' wedges bringing green space into the City. Bow Cemetery provides a beautiful wildlife feature adjacent to Bow Cottage, a Grade II listed building which was the old Cemetery lodge. Bow Cemetery is still occasionally used for burials.

The remains of Scottish soldiers, who were imprisoned and died in Durham following the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, were laid to rest here in 2018. The two fields provide unimproved grassland / rough pasture habitat (although they have been recently ploughed in 2018). The field falling down from Aidan's College provides an iconic view of the World Heritage Site, and would in its upper levels damage views from the World Heritage Site if it were developed. The two fields form part of the Mount Oswald-Elvet Hill Parkland Landscape Area designated in saved policy E5.2 of the City of Durham Local Plan.

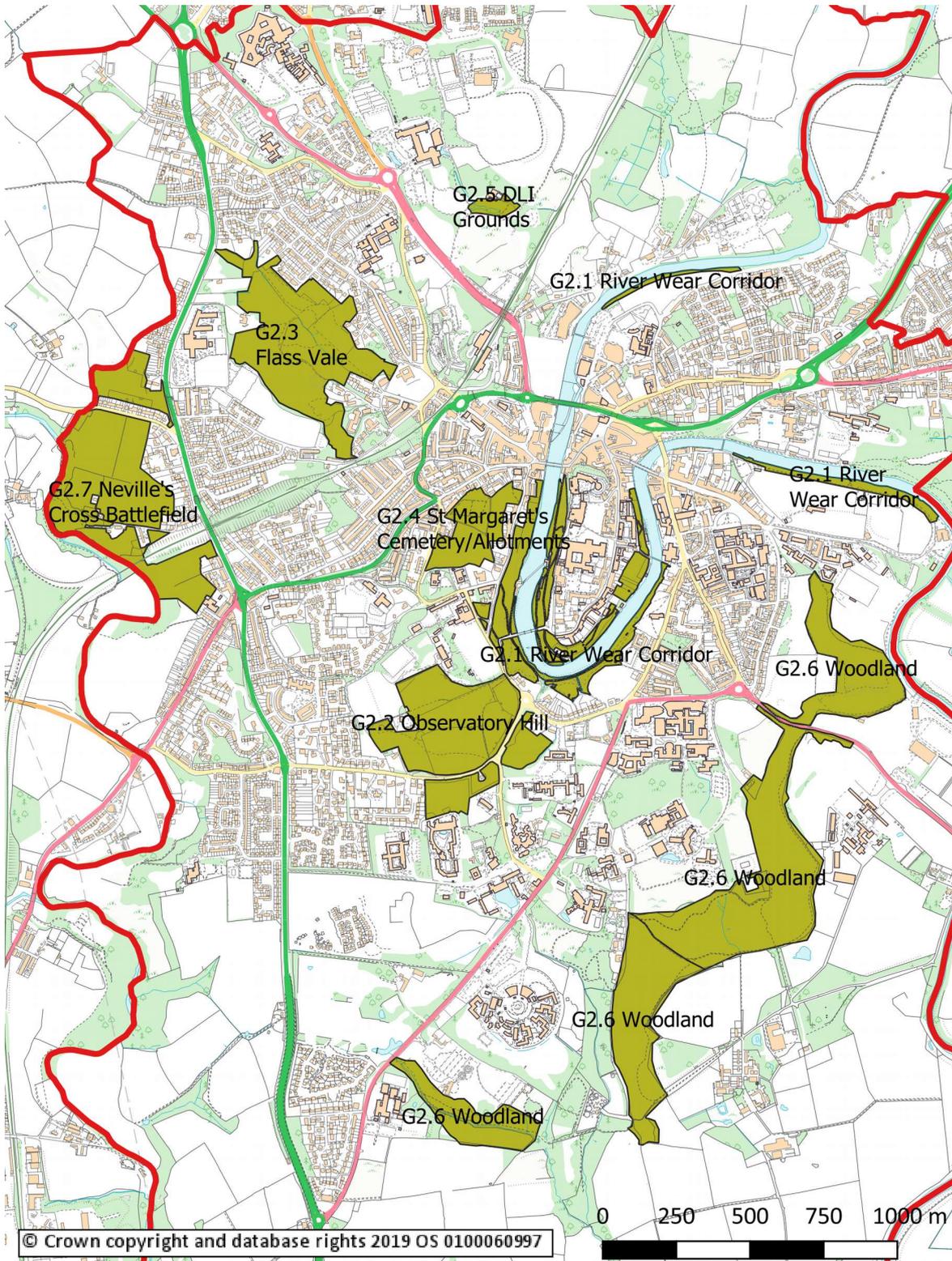
- G2.3: Flass Vale Local Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve and North End allotments and leisure gardens. Flass Vale is an historic area of woodland lying within the Green belt. Its wildlife value has been recognised by designation as a Local Wildlife Site; part of the site is registered as Common Land and part is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. Maiden's Bower, a Bronze Age round cairn and scheduled ancient monument, is located in Flass Vale. Local legend says Maiden's Bower was the site of a vigil held during the battle of Neville's Cross. The North End allotments and leisure gardens that lie to the North East of the site are an integral part. Such a central site is always under threat of development, and new permitted developments have 'nibbled away' at the edges of this site. The local importance of this site is demonstrated by the active group the 'Friends of Flass Vale' who manage and care for the site.
- G2.4: St Margaret's Cemetery plus St Margaret's allotments, between Crossgate and South St, provide an important green space in the centre of the City. The Cemetery provides a wildlife refuge, a place for walking and quiet contemplation as well as being of historic value (St Margaret's Church is one of the earliest churches in the City, dating from the 12 century). The Cemetery abuts onto the allotments. The allotments provide for gardening and leisure, as well as a wildlife resource, and are of historic value (the site has been cultivated since the middle ages, and was once the Cathedral's vegetable garden and fish ponds; it is thought that the old quarry in the allotments was the source of the stone used to build the Cathedral). It was included in the City of Durham Local Plan saved policy E5 on protecting open spaces within Durham City.
- G2.5: DLI grounds. The DLI grounds are within the Green Belt. They have wildlife and recreational value, with areas of the site providing views of the City centre. The significance of these grounds as a resting place for the ashes of members of the DLI Regiment makes this a site of huge importance and value to local people. Part of these grounds could be made into a Memorial Garden. The DLI grounds could function in association with the refurbished Wharton Park by providing a safe and secure picnic area, particularly for parents and children: the current DLI car park providing necessary car parking for people using these grounds and facilities.
- G2.6: Woodland. Maiden Castle Wood, Great High Wood, Hollinside Wood and Blaid's Wood have been in existence since at least the 19th Century, though

replanting has occurred in the 20th Century. Parts of these woods show the remnants of old railway embankments, and interpretation boards in Great High Wood give visitors information about the railway and mining historical background. Maiden Castle is an Iron Age promontory fort and is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Hollinside Wood, Great High Wood and Blaid's Wood are designated as Areas of High Landscape Value, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and Sites of Ecological Value. All these woods provide a near continuous block of woodland with public access. They are used by the public for walking, cycling and leisure activities. The woods are renowned for their display of English bluebells in the Spring. As Durham University says: "The number of designations covering the woodlands reflect their importance in terms of landscape, amenity, and conservation." (Durham University. Biodiversity Policy)

- G2.7: Nevilles Cross Battlefield: the undeveloped area of the registered battlefield site within Our Neighbourhood, including land lying on both sides of the registered public footpaths forming part of a boundary walk around the edge of the Battlefield site to the immediate west of Crossgate Moor. The battlefield is of national significance. The battle of Neville's Cross, between Scottish and English forces, took place on 17th October 1346, on moorland just to the west of Durham. This was a significant battle as the Scots were comprehensively defeated, and this loss led to English occupation of parts of Scotland south of the Forth and Clyde rivers. It was over a century before the Scots could recover this land. The battlefield where the armies assembled before the battle is largely undeveloped. The remains of a Cross commemorating the battle is sited in the built-up area of Nevilles Cross and is a scheduled ancient monument. The battlefield is registered in the Register of Historic Battlefields (UK Battlefields Resource Centre, nd). A copy of the map is available to view at <http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/media/401%2Epdf>

4.96 It should be noted that the Neighbourhood Plan can only cover areas that are within its boundary. One of the Local Green Spaces - Nevilles Cross Battlefield - also crosses over into neighbouring parishes. Future co-operation with the neighbourhood plan in this parish could hopefully result in the whole of this important area becoming a Local Green Space.

Proposals Map 2: Local Green Spaces



Justification

4.97 Some of the areas designated here as Local Green Spaces also possess other types of designation, e.g. being within the Green Belt or a conservation area or being a wildlife site or heritage asset. National Planning Practice Guidance states that land that is already protected can be designated as a Local Green Space if there is additional local benefit (PPG 'Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space' para. 010 and 011). Different types of designation achieve different purposes. The areas listed here are of particular importance to the local community as the reasons given above demonstrate. Additionally, these areas are not as secure as their existing protections would imply. The development pressure in a small constrained area such as Our Neighbourhood is high. There is recent history of planning approvals for large scale developments in the Green Belt with predicted future plans for much more development in the Green Belt. In the Forum's priority survey (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015) respondents had high regard for the 'woodland' wedges bringing green space into the City, were concerned about loss of / lack of open and green spaces and threat to green belt, and wanted to protect green spaces/green belt and the environment.

4.98 New sites might become available in Our Neighbourhood that might merit designation as Local Green Spaces. This would require amendment of the Neighbourhood Plan. One such site is Mount Oswald. This formed part of an area of open space protected under saved Policy E5.2 of the City of Durham Local Plan. The Mount Oswald site, previously a golf course, was land that had not been built on since the Middle Ages when it was agricultural land. It therefore contains assets of wildlife value including mature trees and a pond containing protected species. The current housing development on this site needs to be placed within the context of a long battle by local residents to retain this green space. The Mount Oswald site is currently being developed to a level greater than provided for in the City of Durham Local Plan. Open spaces retained within that development, including a complex of interconnected parks and open spaces (which retains and adds to the existing green assets) are therefore of particular importance to the local community and likely to warrant designation as a Local Green Space. As areas of open space in this development are being defined through a series of reserved matters applications, it isn't possible to finalise boundaries at this time. Inclusion, and enhancement, of existing green assets within new developments is the aim of Policy G1. New residential areas might include green areas that were planned as part of the development. Such green areas might be designated as Local Green Space if they are demonstrably special and hold particular local significance. (PPG 'Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space' para. 012).

Policy G3: Creation of the Emerald Network

An Emerald Network is proposed which comprises sites of wildlife interest within Our Neighbourhood linked by public rights of way or pavements. These sites are:

1. Observatory Hill; and
2. Flass Vale; and
3. Wharton Park; and
4. Aykley Heads; and
5. Hoppers Wood; and
6. The Sands riverbanks; and,
7. St Margaret's cemetery and allotments; and
8. Peninsular Woodlands; and
9. The Racecourse riverbanks; and
10. Pelaw Wood (the part that lies in Our Neighbourhood); and
11. Houghall/Maiden Castle; and
12. Hollinside Wood, Great High Wood, Little High Wood, Blaid's Wood, dene connecting to Low Burnhall Wood; and
13. Durham University Botanic Gardens; and
14. Low Burnhall Wood; and
15. Farewellhall Wood (the part that lies in Our Neighbourhood); and
16. Baxter Wood (the part that lies in Our Neighbourhood).

Proposals for improving the biodiversity and amenity of sites or footpaths in the Emerald Network, particularly if for the benefit of people with a disability, will be supported.

Development proposals that would result in a deterioration in the wildlife value of a site in the Emerald Network, or that would damage the connectivity of sites in the Emerald Network, will be refused, unless there are substantial public benefits that outweigh the loss or harm. If this loss or harm cannot be avoided, then appropriate mitigation measures must be included in the proposal.

4.99 The purpose of the Emerald Network is to encourage people (residents, visitors and tourists) to visit key wildlife sites in Our Neighbourhood for the leisure and health benefits they provide. These sites comprise designated wildlife sites (such as Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, and Ancient Woodland Sites), key green sites (such as parks and gardens), and the River Wear and the riverbanks. This policy does not confer extra designations on these sites and should be contrasted with Policy G2 which does convey an additional designation on a small number of very special sites. The Emerald Network is only part of the green infrastructure within Our Neighbourhood.

4.100 The Emerald Network sites are shown on Proposals Map 3. The Emerald Network also links to a number of sites of wildlife interest that lie immediately adjacent to Our Neighbourhood. These comprise: part of Baxter Wood, part of Farewellhall Wood, Old Durham Gardens, part of Pelaw Wood, Frankland Wood and Kepier Wood. The sites are

connected by public rights of way or pavements. Durham County Council provides a 'Definitive Public Rights of Way' map online. Other Local Wildlife sites in Our Neighbourhood have not been included in the Emerald Network as they are not accessible by public rights of way, e.g. Moorhouse Wood and Borehole Wood.

Justification

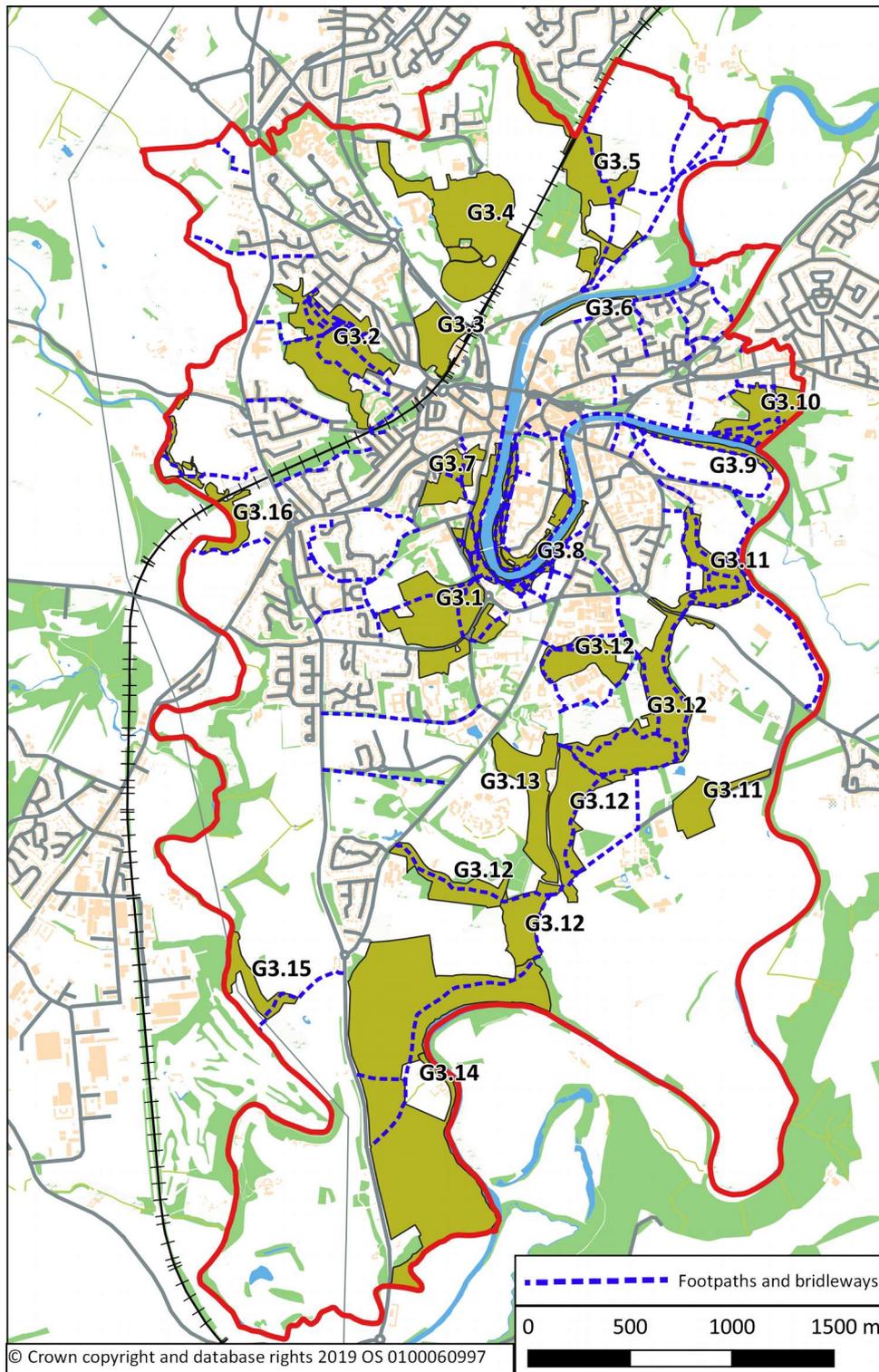
4.101 The idea for an Emerald Network developed from discussion between the Forum and the Friends of Flass Vale (comprising a membership of 250 people). It builds on policy R13 'River Wear Walkway' from the City of Durham Local Plan saved policies and incorporates policies E5, E26 and T21. Policy R13 was developed by the Council into the idea of a Necklace Park but this idea was never implemented.

4.102 The Emerald Network will create a network of sites having wildlife interest lying within or adjacent to Our Neighbourhood. Existing rights of way will be used to develop corridors between the sites so as to enhance biodiversity and connectivity between them. The benefits of the Emerald Network include:

1. improving the image of the City by providing an extra tourist attraction
2. providing a leisure asset for local people, and thus improving their well being
3. counteracting the fragmentation of wildlife habitat within the City: fragmentation has been shown to reduce plant and animals populations to levels where they risk becoming extinct
4. promoting and improving access rights and the Public Rights of Way network through the City
5. maintaining links with the wider countryside and seeking to improve wildlife corridors to designated sites such as the Deerness Valley, Bearpark and Croxdale Woods and Brasside/Low Newton wetlands.

4.103 The Emerald Network would complement other trails being set up by Durham County Council or other organisations.

Proposals Map 3: Emerald Network. The boundary of Our Neighbourhood is indicated and shows which sites are in the Network and which adjacent sites the Network links to.



Policy G4: Enhancing the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

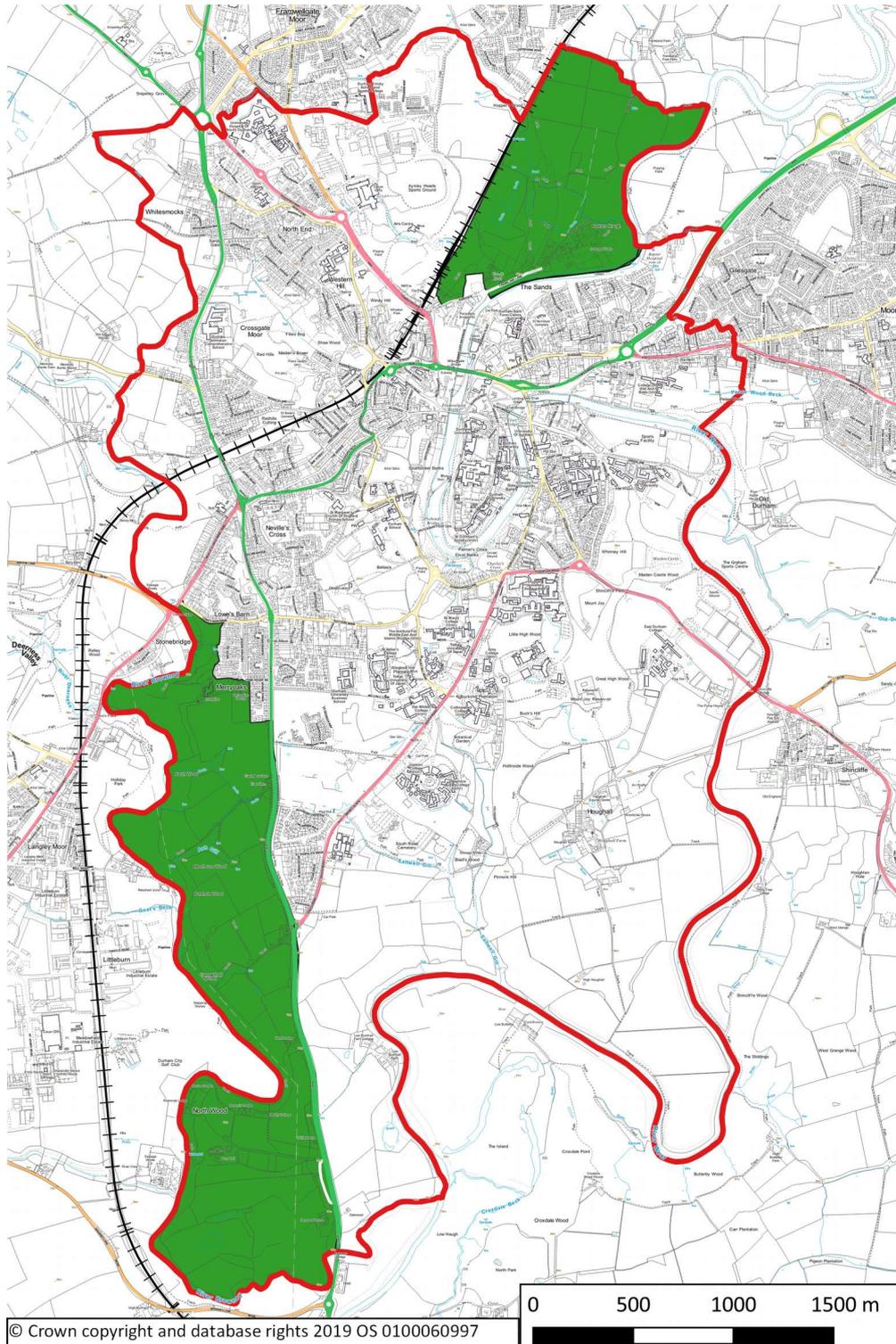
Proposals within the Green Belt land in the Sidegate and Frankland Lane area of Our Neighbourhood for improving access (particularly for people with disabilities), green corridors, landscape, or biodiversity, or for enhancing visual amenity, will be encouraged and supported where such proposals:

- a) enhance the inner bowl setting of the World Heritage Site, and the Durham City Conservation Area, and:
- b) do not impair the overall quality of the Green Belt environment.

Proposals within the Green Belt land in the area of Our Neighbourhood West of the A167 from Browney Bridge to Nevilles Cross for improving access, particularly for people with disabilities will be encouraged and supported, where such proposals:

- c) do not have a negative impact on the outer bowl of the World Heritage Site, and:
- d) do not impair the overall quality of the Green Belt environment.

Proposals Map 4: Green Belt - areas for improvement



Justification

4.104 The NPPF (Chapter 13) attaches great importance to the Green Belt and to its protection from development. Local people, as shown by responses to the Forum's priority survey (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015) and by the existence of community bodies such as 'The Friends of Durham Green Belt', place great value on the Green Belt within Our Neighbourhood. The Green Belt is particularly important to Our Neighbourhood because of one of its purposes "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns" (NPPF para. 134). Saved policies of the City of Durham Local Plan are relevant to the Green Belt (E1).

4.105 There is the opportunity to enhance the Green Belt. The NPPF (para. 141) states that: "Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land."

4.106 The areas of Green Belt within Our Neighbourhood are shown in Map 5. They comprise land at: Aykley Heads, Franklands, Sidegate, Kepier, The Sands, Pelaw Wood, Riverbanks, Racecourse, Whinney Hill, Maiden Castle, Mountjoy, Houghall, Great High Wood, Little High Wood, Hollinside Wood, Howlands, Blaid's Wood, Low Burnhall, West of the A167 to the River Browney (covering Burnhall, Merryoaks, Lowesbarn), West of the Nevilles Cross Bank and West of the A167 (covering Nevilles Cross, Quarry House Farm and Whitesmocks), Plass Vale.

4.107 Most of this land is covered by policies in this theme that aim to provide further protection and enhancement; generally by Policy G1, and specifically:

- As Local Green Spaces (Policy G2): the River Wear corridor comprising that in the areas of The Sands and the Racecourse; the DLI grounds area at Aykley Heads; woodland on the south side of the City comprising Maiden Castle, Great High Wood, Hollinside Wood, Blaid's Wood; West of the Nevilles Cross Bank and West of the A167 (covering Nevilles Cross, Quarry House Farm, Crossgate and Whitesmocks, i.e. the Nevilles Cross Battlefield site).
- As sites within the Emerald Network (Policy G3): Plass Vale; Aykley Heads; Franklands, i.e. the accessible part of Hopper Wood; The Sands riverbanks; Racecourse riverbanks; Pelaw Wood; Maiden Castle; Houghall; Great High Wood, Little High Wood, Hollinside Wood, Blaid's Wood; Low Burnhall, i.e. Low Burnhall Wood; West of the A167 to the River Browney, i.e. Farewellhall Wood; West of the Nevilles Cross Bank and West of the A167 (covering Nevilles Cross, Quarry House Farm, Crossgate and Whitesmocks, i.e. Baxter Wood).

4.108 This leaves Green Belt land at Sidegate and Franklands Lane and West of the A167 from Browney Bridge to Nevilles Cross not covered by additional policies in this neighbourhood plan.

4.109 Green Belt land at Sidegate and Franklands Lane lies in the Durham City Conservation Area and the inner bowl of the World Heritage Site. It is important that views within the inner bowl to and from the World Heritage Site are protected (Durham World Heritage Site, 2017, p.74). This is covered by Policy H1 in this Plan. Additionally this land would benefit from improved access, particularly for people with disabilities, and improvement to the wildlife value and visual amenity of the land and the green assets upon it.

4.110 The Green Belt land West of the A167 from Browney Bridge to Nevilles Cross is mostly agricultural land. It lies within the outer bowl of the World Heritage Site. It is important that any developments in the outer bowl do not have a negative impact on the setting of the World Heritage Site (Durham World Heritage Site, 2017, p.19). This is covered by Policy H1 in this Plan. The wooded and wildlife value areas could have improved access as most are not accessible by public rights of way.

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