



# **Public Open Space Standards and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document**



**Appendix A: Consultation Draft  
Harlow Local Development Plan**

# CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	4
	a. Purpose of the Public Open Space and Biodiversity SPD	
	b. Part 1: Public Open Space Standards	
	c. Part 2: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure in new developments	
2.	Document Structure	8
3.	Objectives of the Public Open Space Standards and Biodiversity SPD	10
4.	National and Local Policy Background	12
	a. National Planning Policy Framework	
	b. National Planning Practice Guidance	
	c. Harlow Local Development Plan	
	d. Design Guide 2011	
	e. Harlow Gilston Garden Town	

## PART 1 – Public Open Space Standards

5.	Implementation of the Public Open Space Standards	17
	a. Applications the standards apply to	
	b. Public Open Space typologies	
6.	Public Open Space, Play Space, Allotments and Sports Facilities Standards	23
7.	On-site provision, off-site contributions and maintenance	29
	a. On-site or off-site provision	
	b. Off-site financial contributions	
	c. Maintenance and commuted sums	
	d. How will contributions be spent	
8.	Design Standards	35
	a. Parks, natural/semi-natural space and amenity spaces	
	b. Allotments	
	c. Playing pitches and other sporting facilities	
	d. Equipped areas of play, local play areas and Multiuse Games Areas	
9.	Submission of a Supporting Statement	40

## PART 2 – Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

10.	Biodiversity including Net Gain Calculations	42
	a. Biodiversity in new developments	
	b. Biodiversity Net-Gain	
	c. Using a Biodiversity Metric to measure BNG	
	d. Off-site measures and Biodiversity Credits	
	e. The Mitigation Hierarchy	
	f. Exclusion of Protected Sites and Species	

g.	The Biodiversity Gain Plan	
h.	Principles and Rules in applying the Biodiversity Metric	
11.	Green Infrastructure in new developments	51
a.	Planning Green Infrastructure in new developments	
b.	Wider Garden Town considerations	
c.	Supporting Green Infrastructure Strategy Statement	

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Recommended minimum sizes for playing pitches/outdoor space	56
APPENDIX 2: Example of BNG Calculation	57
APPENDIX 3: Principles and rules when applying the BNG Metric	58
APPENDIX 4: Acronyms	60
APPENDIX 5: Useful information/links	60

## TABLES

TABLE 1: Residential development typologies and Public Open Space provision
TABLE 2: Public Open Space Typologies
TABLES 3-13: Public Open Space Standards
TABLE 14: Dwelling thresholds for on-site and off-site provision/contributions
TABLE 15: Off-site financial contributions
TABLE 16: Maintenance costs (2021 costs – does not include annual inflation)
TABLE 17: LAP, LEAP and NEAP size/dimensions
TABLE 18: Examples of Biodiversity in new developments
TABLE 19: Green Infrastructure considerations in new developments

## IMAGES and MAPS

IMAGE 1: Four step process to using the Biodiversity Metric
IMAGE 2: Biodiversity Mitigation Hierarchy
MAP 1: Open Space Typologies as of 2013

# CONSULTATION PAGE

The draft Public Open Space Standards and Biodiversity SPD can be viewed in the following locations:

- Online at: [www.harlow.gov.uk/SPD](http://www.harlow.gov.uk/SPD)
- Hard copies are available to view at the Civic Centre reception and in Harlow libraries during normal opening times.

**Responses must be made by 5pm 11<sup>th</sup> February** via either of the following ways:

- Online questionnaire available at: [www.harlow.gov.uk/SPD](http://www.harlow.gov.uk/SPD)
- Email your response to: [openspaceSPD@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:openspaceSPD@harlow.gov.uk)
- If you have chosen to handwrite your response then please hand in to the Civic centre reception for the attention of Forward Planning. Or post to: OSB SPD, Forward Planning, Harlow District Council, Civic Centre, Water Gardens, Harlow, Essex. CM20 1WG.

*All information received during public consultations is held by the Council in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.*



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Public Open Space and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

- 1.1. The Public Open Space and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will replace the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation SPD, that had been adopted in 2007. It reflects the adoption of the [Harlow Local Development Plan \(HLDP\)](#) in December 2020 and the need to take into account new evidence, best practice and updated legislation that has informed the preparation of new public open space and recreational standards and the need to secure Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 1.2. This SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will also inform pre-application discussions on relevant developments. This document has been prepared in accordance with Regulations 8 and 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 1.3. The SPD provides further guidance in respect of the following three specific HLDP policies. The full text of each of these policies can be found in the Local Plan.

**Policy L1** which requires major development<sup>1</sup> to provide or upgrade open space, play space, allotments and sport facilities along with ongoing maintenance and management.

- 1.4. The Implementation Section of Policy L1 states that the 2007 Open Space, Sport and Recreation SPD (or its successor) and the Harlow Design Guide SPD will set out the requirements for the provision and design of open space.
- 1.5. Where it can be demonstrated that provision cannot be met on-site, the Public Open Spaces and Biodiversity SPD will also set out the method for calculating off-site contributions for alternative provision.

**Policy PL8** which sets out requirements for development to incorporate Green Infrastructure and landscaping into new developments.

- 1.6. The Implementation Section of Policy PL8 states that the Design Guide SPD (or any successor document) should be consulted for guidance on appropriate landscaping for development. It also states that a Management Plan may be required with an application to demonstrate how the future maintenance of GI and landscaping would be undertaken.
- 1.7. This SPD provides further information in respect of committed sums and management/maintenance.

---

<sup>1</sup> A definition of Major Development is set out in the HLDP

**Policy PL9** which ensures development contributes to and enhances biodiversity and geodiversity assets and biodiversity net-gain.

- 1.8. The Implementation Section of Policy PL9 states that the Council may require assessments of biodiversity and geodiversity assets to be submitted with an application which identify impacts of development and any necessary mitigation and/or compensatory measures. It also refers applicants to the [Essex Biodiversity Validation Checklist](#) for information. This SPD aims to set out how BNG will be calculated if required by a development.
- 1.9. The Public Open Space Standards and Biodiversity SPD consists of two parts as detailed below.

#### PART 1: Public Open Space Standards

- 1.10. Part one of the SPD sets out the mechanisms that the Council will use to ensure appropriate delivery of public open space, play space, allotment provision and sports facilities in new developments including through the use of on-site facilities and, where appropriate, through off-site upgrades or financial contributions. It provides detail in respect of the future maintenance of public open space, sport and recreation facilities and design guidance for new facilities.

#### **Information Box 1: What is public open space?**

**The National Planning Practice Guidance states that: ‘Open Space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built environment, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development’.**

- 1.11. As per Policy L1 of the Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP), **public open space, play space, allotments and sports facilities are expected to be provided either on-site or through off-site upgrades on major developments only.**
- 1.12. A definition of major development can be found below.

#### **Definition of major development**

Development involving one or more of the following:

- (a) The winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits;

- (b) Waste development;
- (c) The provision of ten or more dwellinghouses, or where the number of dwellinghouses is unknown, the site area is 0.5 hectares or more;
- (d) The provision of a building(s) – floorspace to be built is 1,000 sqm or more;
- (e) Development carried out on a site with an area of 1 hectare or more.

1.13. The specific standards set out in this SPD will apply to the whole of Harlow District and **only applications involving residential development or part (c) in the above information box**. Public open space may be required in association with other types of development but the type and amount will be guided by site specific circumstances.

1.14. **Applicants should also make reference to the [Council's Design Guide Addendum for private amenity space standards](#)** such as garden space standards and private communal areas within developments.

1.15. Further information on implementation of the public open space standards can be found in Chapter 5.

## Part 2: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure in new developments

1.16. Part two of the SPD provides overarching principles and guidance in respect of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in new developments, including implementing Biodiversity Net-Gain (BNG). The SPD also explains how Green Infrastructure (GI) overall could be delivered within new developments. GI should be considered as part of any proposal whether through the provision of formal public open space to the planting of trees and landscaping.

1.17. **This SPD expects all development proposals to have considered and provided some form of GI**. Further details of how to implement GI can be found in Chapter 11 of this SPD and **applicants should also consider the Council's Design Guide SPD** which provides further GI considerations.

### **Information Box 2: What is Green Infrastructure?**

**The Town and Country Planning Association describe it as: 'a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities. It is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands – and also street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and soils. It includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.**

1.18. **Applicants of all types of new development should also consider how they can protect and enhance local biodiversity** through the use of planting, landscaping, habitat creation

such as bird and bat boxes, water features or just by simply retaining and improving what already exists. However

### **Information Box 3: Enhancing biodiversity and improving ecology**

**Biodiversity is a term which describes every living organism within a single ecosystem or habitat, including numbers and diversity of species whereas ecology deals with the relationships of organisms with their environment or ecosystem. The preservation and enhancement of ecosystems can make huge differences in increasing biodiversity. Conversely small changes to ecosystems can have catastrophic impacts on the preservation and diversity of living species. When considering measures which contribute towards providing net-gain in biodiversity, the Council will consider both gains in species diversity and also the enhancements that can be made ecologically.**

- 1.19. The Environment Bill (due to become an Act and form part of a new legal framework for environmental protection) places BNG on a statutory footing, introducing a mandatory requirement for developments to demonstrate a measurable 10% increase in biodiversity.
- 1.20. **For the purposes of justifying a measureable net-gain in biodiversity this SPD supports the use of the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 tool and should be used for development proposals of a certain size as set out below.**

### **Developments which should apply the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric**

- (a) The provision of ten or more dwellinghouses, or where the number of dwellinghouses is unknown, the site area is 0.5 hectares or more;
- (b) All other development types where the site area is more than 0.5 hectares or where floorspace to be built is more than 5,000 sqm

- 1.21. Further details of the document structure can be found overleaf.

## 2. DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

2.1. The structure of this SPD is set out below:

### Objectives and Policy Background

- *Chapter 3: Objectives* – this Chapter outlines the objectives that have been developed to guide the contents of the SPD.
- *Chapter 4: National and Local Policy Background* – this Chapter provides an overview of the national and local policy context in relation to the provision of public open spaces in new developments, biodiversity and GI. It includes information on the Council's Local Plan policies, and other supporting documentation including those prepared by the [Harlow and Gilston Garden Town](#). It also outlines the national policy background and guidance in respect of open space and biodiversity requirements.

### Part 1: Public Open Space Standards

- *Chapter 5: Implementation of the Public Open Space standards* – this Chapter provides further detail in respect of which types of sites the standards will apply to. It also sets out the open space typologies and a description of the function of the open space. This includes equipped play areas.
- *Chapter 6: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Standards* – this Chapter outlines the standards required in new developments, including a quantity and accessibility distance, for each of the public open space typologies set out in Chapter 5.
- *Chapter 7: On-site provision, off-site contributions and maintenance* – this Chapter outlines when on-site provision will be expected, the estimated contributions for off-site public open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and information in respect of long-term management and maintenance of these spaces including likely contribution calculations if relevant.
- *Chapter 8: Design Standards* – the design standards set out in this Chapter refer specifically to the provision of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities including any ancillary buildings or facilities which support those uses.
- *Chapter 9: Supporting Statement* – this chapter provides information as to what will be required with a supporting statement in respect of open space requirements.

### Part 2: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure (GI)

- *Chapter 10: Biodiversity including Net-Gain calculations* – this Chapter provides information on how biodiversity can be delivered in new developments. It also sets out how the Council will calculate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in new developments.

- *Chapter 11: Green Infrastructure in new developments* – further guidance in respect of designing GI into new developments can be found Chapter 11.



### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE STANDARDS AND BIODIVERSITY SPD

3.1. This SPD will help to deliver four of the Council's Corporate Priorities:

- 1) Resilience and Recovery**
- 2) Wellbeing and Social Inclusion;**
- 3) A Clean and Green Environment; and**
- 4) Successful Children and Young People.**

3.2. It is become important, now more than ever, that we protect and provide clean and green spaces and wider Green Infrastructure for the community to access and use. The 'lockdowns' and other restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of GI, including people using local GI to exercise; an increase in the use of private gardens to grow vegetables and flowers; the use of spaces for formal and informal sports activities; and families and friends using outdoor, public spaces to meet where Covid-19 restrictions have prohibited indoor meetings. This has, therefore, highlighted the important contribution GI can play now and in the future, in assisting with both physical and mental health. Furthermore GI including biodiversity is crucial in helping to address climate change and improving air quality for communities.

3.3. It is important that existing open spaces which are of value to their local communities, the wider population and wildlife and biodiversity continue to be protected, managed and maintained. It is also important that new developments provide a variety of well-planned, well-sited and well-managed public open spaces to ensure that there is no pressure placed on existing spaces and facilities and to support the communities that will live there.

3.4. Harlow has many green spaces, of a varying sizes and functions, that together provide a network of Green Infrastructure across the towns. These include:

- the Town Park which provides a significant district wide community space with formal play areas, green spaces and opportunities for communities to meet;
- the Green Wedge, Green Finger and Green Belt network which help to connect communities and neighbourhoods within Harlow, whilst also connecting open and green spaces and providing access to the open countryside around the town;
- Parndon Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest and other Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves which allow residents to engage with nature and support important habitats within Harlow;
- two Registered Parks and Gardens - the Town Park, and the Gibberd Garden, cultivated by Sir Frederick Gibberd, the masterplanner of Harlow New Town; and
- the River Stort which supports water based biodiversity and provides connections to landscapes further afield including the Lea Valley.

- 3.5. This SPD and the guidance and standards contained within it will help to maintain these spaces and the town's Green Infrastructure network, extend them into new developments and conserve and enhance biodiversity in the town.
- 3.6. The following objectives have therefore been developed as the basis for the SPD and have informed the development of the subsequent chapters:

**Public Open Space Standards and Biodiversity SPD Objectives**

- (a) to support the implementation of the Harlow Local Development Plan policies relating to open spaces, recreation, Green Infrastructure and biodiversity
- (b) to meet the open space, sport and recreation needs generated by new development, based on the most up-to-date and locally-justified provision standards
- (c) to protect and enhance the district's Green Infrastructure (GI) and biodiversity
- (d) to ensure that open space, sport and recreation facilities are of a design which is accessible to everyone
- (e) to ensure that appropriate on-site or off-site planning contributions are sought to create or enhance open space, sport and recreation facilities
- (f) to ensure that biodiversity levels are improved in the town through Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)



## 4. NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY BACKGROUND

### National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1. The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. The NPPF sets out three objectives for delivering sustainable development including a social objective that ensures that places are well-designed, beautiful and safe with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support health, social and cultural well-being and an environmental objective which seeks to enhance the natural environment and improve biodiversity.
- 4.2. Chapter 8 of the NPPF promotes healthy and safe communities including enabling healthy lifestyles through for example safe and accessible Green Infrastructure (GI), sports facilities and allotments. It notes that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. It states that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments for open space, sport and recreation including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses, and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed which plans should then seek to accommodate.
- 4.3. Chapter 15 of the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment and states that policies should protect and enhance valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity and minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks. It also states that Plans should not only identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats, as the HLDP has done, but should also identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

### National Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.4. The [National Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\)](#) provides further detailed national planning guidance. It highlights the importance of open spaces and GI for a community. It can help attract businesses by providing high quality environments, can reinforce local landscape character by contributing to a sense of place, improve well-being through recreation, social interaction and exercise, contribute towards mitigating climate change and flooding and facilitate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and ecological networks.
- 4.5. The NPPG states that GI opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision.

- 4.6. In respect of BNG the NPPG describes it as an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand and that net gain should be considered as an umbrella term for both BNG and wider environmental net gain. BNG delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. It can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. Care needs to be taken to ensure that any benefits promised will lead to genuine and demonstrable gains for biodiversity.
- 4.7. The NPPG provides more guidance in respect of BNG which applicants should consider along with this SPD.

### Harlow Local Development Plan

- 4.8. The [Harlow Local Development Plan \(HLDP\)](#) sets out the long-term planning vision for the district and guides future development across Harlow to 2033. It includes a number of policies and sites, allocations for specific uses and land designations such as local wildlife sites.
- 4.9. As part of the overall vision, the HLDP states that by 2033 the overall health and well-being of Harlow's residents will be improved by taking advantage of excellent sporting, leisure and cultural facilities. The district's GI, including green and open spaces will be of consistently high quality, better connected to residential areas and will provide multifunctional opportunities for residents and wildlife. This vision helped to develop two specific objectives in the HLDP: 1) Create and enhance high quality built environments which are well connected to revitalise green spaces; and 2) Provide and enhance sporting, leisure, recreational facilities and cultural opportunities in the district.
- 4.10. Chapter 10 of the HLDP sets out the strategic policies in respect of GI in Harlow including Policy WE2 in respect of Green Belt, Green Wedges and Green Fingers and Policy WE3 in respect of protecting and managing biodiversity and geodiversity assets. These overarching policies are supported by more specific development management policies for applications that may include or impact, either positively or negatively upon GI, landscaping, trees and hedgerows and open spaces. The development management policies also ensure appropriate provision and protection of recreational, sporting, cultural and community facilities, play areas and allotments.
- 4.11. This SPD provides further detailed guidance in respect of these development management policies to ensure that their implementation is understood.

### Harlow Design Guide 2011

- 4.12. The [Harlow Design Guide and addendum](#) aim to provide general guidance on the form that new development should take. This addresses a range of development types from new urban areas through to residential extensions. It also covers the design of employment areas

and strategic and local green spaces. A separate addendum to the Design Guide prepared in 2021 provides additional guidance in respect of amenity spaces and private garden spaces.

- 4.13. The Design Guide includes a section on strategic open space and provides guidance on how to implement the existing GI of Harlow into new developments and how to manage the interrelationship of development with the rural countryside that surrounds the district. The Design Guide also provides guidance on how local open spaces and play spaces could be developed taking into account their function, context, location and size. Applicants should consider both the Design Guide SPD and the Addendum SPD when designing and planning new open spaces within their developments including the provision of private amenity space standards such as private residential gardens and communal areas. The Design Guide and addendum is due to be superseded by a new Design Guide before 2023.
- 4.14. A Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document for the Town Centre is also being developed which includes public realm guidance and GI Framework. Proposals for the Town Centre should also make reference to this document when considering GI.

### Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

- 4.15. Harlow forms part of the [Harlow and Gilston Garden Town \(HGGT\)](#) which comprises new and existing communities in and around Harlow. Set in attractive countryside, with transformative investment in transport and community infrastructure, new Garden Communities to the east, west and south and new villages to the north will be established. The partnership authorities of Harlow, East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest District Councils and Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils are working together to deliver the vision for the HGGT.
- 4.16. This [HGGT vision](#), amongst a range of things, will ensure that the HGGT includes GI that supports a variety of uses, has spaces for food production, provides a good range of active leisure facilities and is biodiverse. At the heart of the vision is the necessity for long term management and stewardship of facilities/spaces in order for them to remain sustainable. The vision sets out overarching principles for the delivery of the HGGT, including spatial considerations for landscaping, GI and biodiversity. These principles have been considered as part of the development of this SPD. The Vision was endorsed by Harlow Council as a material consideration.
- 4.17. The [HGGT Design Guide](#) has been produced to support the HGGT Vision, and sets out the expectations and aspirations for the delivery of high quality and sustainable developments in the Garden Town. The Design Guide is aimed at those involved in the delivery of developments within the Garden Town, including in the context of the growth and regeneration of the new Garden Communities and Harlow Town Centre. The Design Guide was endorsed by Harlow Council as a material consideration.
- 4.18. The HGGT have also developed a [Sustainability Guidance and Checklist](#). The guidance provides practical and technical guidance on how to apply sustainability indicators and

policies (environmental, social, and economic) in the HGGT Vision and partner authorities Plans to new major developments in the Garden Town. This will help applicants meet the Garden Town goals of becoming net zero-carbon by 2030, and, to build strong and integrated communities across new and existing places.

# PART 1: Public Open Space Standards



## 5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

### Applications the standards apply to

- 5.1. As set out in Policy L1 of the HLDP, applicants proposing major developments (subject to demonstrable need) must provide public open space, play space, allotments and sport facilities (see Table 2 for definitions of public open space types). This should be on-site unless it has been demonstrated that an off-site contribution is more appropriate (more details on contributions can be found in Chapter 7).
- 5.2. The definition of a major development<sup>2</sup> is set out below.

#### **DEFINITION OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENT**

Development involving one or more of the following:

- (a) The winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits;
- (b) Waste development;
- (c) The provision of ten or more dwellinghouses, or where the number of dwellinghouses is unknown, the site area is 0.5 hectares or more;
- (d) The provision of a building(s) – floorspace to be built is 1,000 sqm or more;
- (e) Development carried out on a site with an area of 1 hectare or more.

- 5.3. The standards set out in this SPD will apply to the whole of Harlow District and only applications involving residential development. Open space may be required in association with other types of development but the type and amount will be guided by site specific circumstances.
- 5.4. It is considered that residents of all types of new housing, whether market or affordable, will make use of open space in Harlow. Most types of open space will be used by most households, although there will be some exceptions, for example children's play space.
- 5.5. It would need to be demonstrated by applicants that the level of open space contributions, or requirement proposed, in conjunction with affordable housing and any other planning obligations would make their scheme uneconomic, for this provision to be waived.
- 5.6. As a guide, Table 1 below provides examples of the types of residential development and associated open spaces the Council would expect to be provided, linked to or contributed

---

<sup>2</sup> As detailed in the HLDP and The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010

towards. Open space requirements including off-site contributions will not be expected from residential extensions.

- 5.7. The same level of open space provision will be required for applications for change of use from a non-residential use to a residential use unless planning permission is not required.

Table 1: Residential development typologies and Public Open Space provision

<b>Category</b>	<b>Open market and affordable housing</b>	<b>Flats, apartments and maisonettes</b>	<b>Sheltered accommodation and rest homes</b>	<b>Nursing homes</b>
Playing fields (e.g football and cricket, and lawn sports etc)	√	√	√	√
LEAPs	√	√	x	x
NEAPs	√	√	x	x
Allotments	√	√	√	√
Public Amenity Space/Local Parks	√	√	√	√
Local Natural/semi-natural green spaces such as Green Wedges	√	√	√	√
District wide Natural/Semi-natural green spaces such as Parndon Wood	√	√	√	√
District wide Parks such as the Town Park	√	√	√	√

### Public Open Space Typologies

- 5.8. Table 2 sets out the Public Open Space typologies which the standards in Chapter 6 relate to. The table provides a description of what each Public Open Space means and examples in Harlow where appropriate.
- 5.9. The Public Open Space typologies set out in table 2 should be provided on top of the private amenity spaces set out in the Council's Design Guide Addendum. They will however help to underpin a developments Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy.

Table 2: Public Open Space Typologies

---

### **Parks and Gardens**

**This includes the provision of both large scale district size parks and gardens and more locally sized provision. Parks and gardens provide informal recreation and community events for residents. They could include formal garden areas that comprise a range of play areas and water features such as Harlow Town Park.**

**Harlow Town Park is an important open space which serves many residents in both the district and the surrounding area.**

### **Natural and semi-natural green space**

**The purpose of these areas is to provide spaces for wildlife conservation, biodiversity and educational awareness by maintaining or improving the natural landscapes. They can be small scale in size between housing developments or on a larger scale serving the entire district such as Parndon Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest.**

### **Green Corridor**

**These provide access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders whether for leisure purposes or travel. They also provide safe corridors for wildlife migration. They can also include Public Rights of Ways and Bridleways which provide important connections to and through the countryside and wooded areas around Harlow.**

**They also include Green Wedges and Green Fingers which are unique to Harlow and should look to be connected and woven into new developments as part of GI provision.**

### **Amenity Green Space/Other Open Spaces**

**Amenity green spaces provide opportunities for more informal activities to take place either close to home or work.**

**As 'doorstep' green areas, amenity green spaces can provide for casual play by young children close to housing and supervised by adults, and can provide sitting out areas for older persons.**

**These spaces are different to private amenity spaces e.g. residential gardens, shared gardens or balconies.**

---



---

### **Allotments**

Allotments provide opportunities for those wishing to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and inclusion.

### **Cemeteries and Churchyards**

These resting places for the deceased provide places for quiet contemplation and can often be linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

### **Civic Space**

These spaces provide a setting for civic buildings and community events. For example the Water Gardens area in the Town Centre provides formal seating areas but also space for Council and other events.

### **Provision for children/young people**

These are areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped areas of play, children's play areas, ball courts such as basketball and tennis, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.

Equipped areas of play include local facilities for young children referred to as Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) and neighbourhood facilities for older children referred to as Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs).

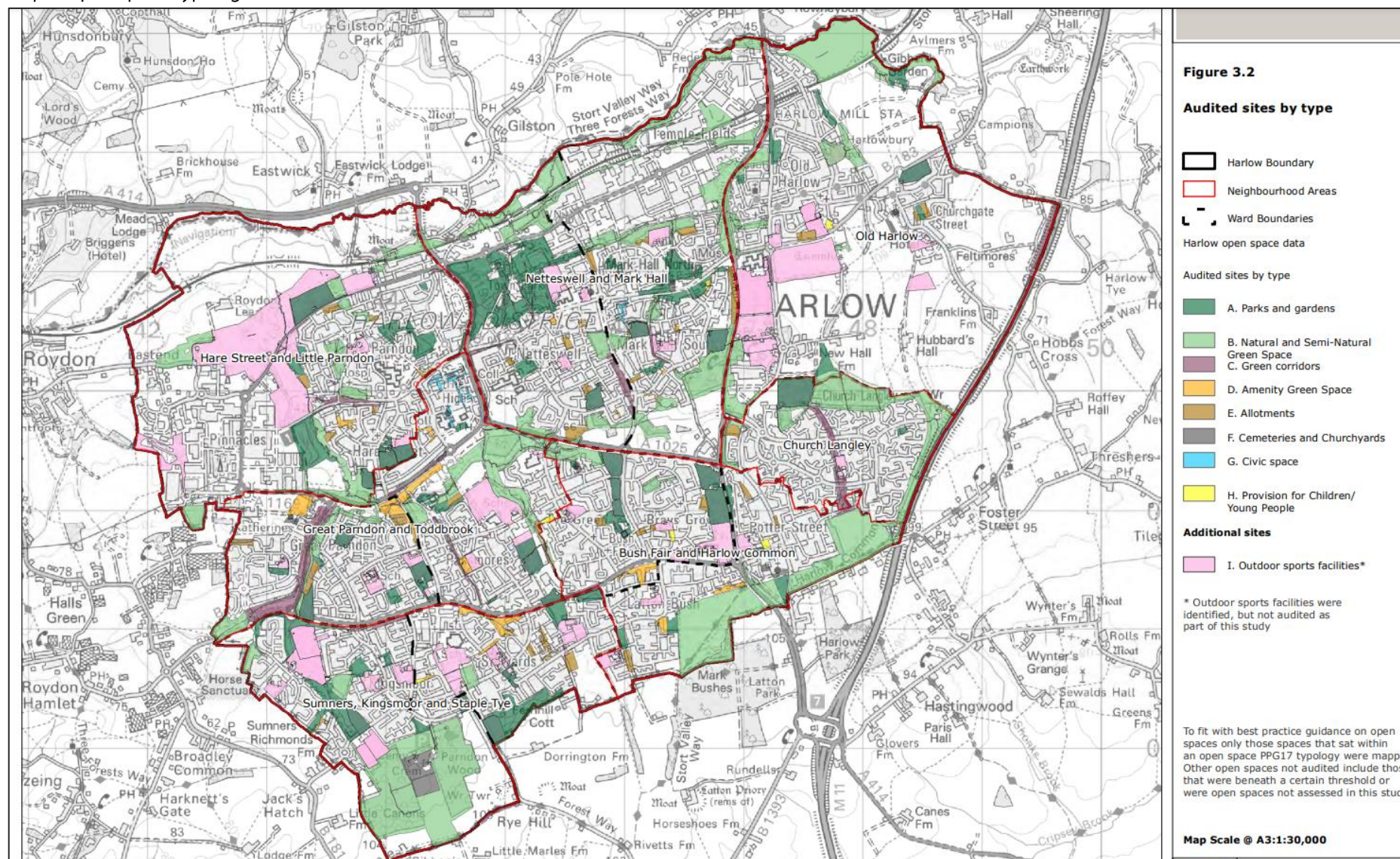
### **Outdoor Sports Provision**

These spaces and facilities support a range of outdoor sports provision including pitch sports (football/rugby/cricket), tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.

---

- 5.10. Where referred to in the table, local sites are generally smaller than 15ha which, according to evidence prepared for the HLDP, are primarily used by people in the local vicinity of the space, whilst District sites are generally greater than 15ha, to which people are prepared to travel further.
- 5.11. The requirement for built facilities such as swimming pools and indoor sports halls is not included in this document. The provision of built facilities or financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision will be dealt with on a case by case basis for each planning application. This will be based on the identified need for new built facilities or the enhancement of existing built facilities and applicants should make reference to the latest iteration of the [Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(IDP\)](#) and [Sports Facilities Study](#) to understand the existing requirements for built facilities. Applicants should also use Sport England's established [Sports Facilities Calculator](#) when determining the need and potential off-site contributions of built facilities.
- 5.12. The map on the following page has been taken from [the Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study](#). It shows the types of open space typologies within Harlow as set out in Table 2. This was undertaken in 2013 and is still relevant, but changes may have taken place since and so **applicants should use this map as a guide only and undertake their own mapping and assessment to ensure that these spaces still remain the same typology.**

Map 1: Open Space Typologies as of 2013





## 6. PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, PLAY SPACE, ALLOTMENT AND SPORTS FACILITIES STANDARDS

- 6.1. Tables 3 to 13 below set out the expected space standards for public open spaces, play space, allotments and sports facilities in Harlow. They have been informed by the [2013 Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study](#) produced to support the HLDP. The study took national standards and compared them with the existing levels of provision, consultation findings undertaken as part of the study and benchmarking against other local authority standards. In some cases the standards have been updated to reflect more recent standards set out nationally.
- 6.2. Accessibility, in respect of the standards, is defined as the maximum distance (in kilometres) residents should be required to travel to use public open space of a specific type. Quantity is defined as the minimum provision of each public open space type (in hectares) which should be provided per 1,000 population. The tables also include an explanation of the individual standards.
- 6.3. They are considered broadly consistent with the main national standards, i.e. the [Fields in Trust<sup>3</sup> standards](#) whilst also reflecting the nature of the GI found in Harlow.

**Table 3: DISTRICT PARKS AND GARDENS (>15ha)**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.5</b>
The accessibility standard above reflects the current maximum distance of the existing Town Park in Harlow and other standards adopted elsewhere in Essex. The quantity standard enables the current level of provision to be maintained, reflecting the district's only Town Park which draws people from a catchment of over 3km.	

**Table 4: LOCAL PARKS AND GARDENS (<15ha)**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>0.4</b>	<b>2</b>
The accessibility standard reflects the demand for open space provision and other benchmark standards as well as demand for local parks and gardens.	
In respect of quantity, this standard enables current provision to be maintained but also helps the Council focus resources on areas where the Open Space and GI Study identified that local parks and gardens are below-average quantity.	

<sup>3</sup> An independent charity which champions and supports parks and green spaces.

**Table 5: DISTRICT NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACE (>15ha)**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>3.2</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The accessibility standard reflects the maximum distance of existing Harlow residents from current provision of district scale natural and semi-natural green spaces. The quantity standard reflects current provision and existing access to sites which is generally good on a district wide scale.</p>	

**Table 6: LOCAL NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACE (<15ha)**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>0.4</b> <b>(including District green space as equivalent provision)</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>The accessibility standard generally reflects the willingness of residents to walk 10 minutes to reach a park or green space, local demand for provision and Natural England's expectations of distances to natural green spaces. The quantity standard is higher than other benchmarked standards and reflects current provision in Harlow, i.e. the high existing provision of Green Wedges, and local needs. It is lower than existing provision in Harlow but higher than most other benchmark standards to help maintain high standards of GI through the Green Wedge/Green Finger network.</p>	

**Table 7: GREEN CORRIDORS**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<p>There are no specific accessibility standards for green corridors as they act as 'green' access routes, rather than a destination to which residents should have good access. Instead applicants should refer to policies in the HLDP which explain the roles of Green Fingers in particular in respect of providing links, wildlife corridors and footpaths/cycleways, etc., and Part 2 of this SPD in relation to GI. The HLDP policies also provide criteria for GI and landscaping in new developments.</p> <p>There are also no specific quantity standards for green corridors, although it must be noted that there is at least one green corridor, whether that is a Green Wedge, Green Finger or other open space, that runs through each neighbourhood in Harlow. The HLDP requires Green Fingers and Green Wedges to be retained and protected and, where possible, that new ones should be designated.</p>	

**Table 8: AMENITY GREEN SPACE/OTHER OPEN SPACES**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<p>The above accessibility standard applies to both amenity green spaces as described in Chapter 5 above, as well as parks and gardens which also serve as important amenity spaces whilst also offering other functions and features. The standard reflects other benchmarking undertaken and reasonable distances residents are willing to travel to reach an amenity space.</p> <p>The quantity standard reflects broadly the national benchmark standards of 0.6ha but has been reduced slightly, to reflect the level of provision already in the area including the higher requirement for parks and gardens in Harlow. Together, amenity green space and local parks/gardens provide more than national standards (2.4ha compared to 1.4ha).</p> <p><b>These standards only apply to public amenity areas and public open spaces. Private amenity space standards can be found in the Design Guide Addendum e.g. private garden space, or private shared garden space for flats.</b></p>	

**Table 9: ALLOTMENTS**

Accessibility standard (km)	Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)
<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.25 (or 20 plots)</b>
<p>There is no nationally recommended standard for access to allotments, however it is broadly accepted that allotment should be accessed either on foot or bike and therefore proximity to residential areas is important. The proposed standard, although less than some other benchmarked sites, is considered achievable in Harlow and reflects the original design of the New Town and aspirations to reduce car-dependency.</p> <p>The quantity standard reflects roughly the existing provision in Harlow including new sites to be provided and which have been allocated through the HLDP.</p> <p>The <a href="#">National Allotment Society</a> standards suggest approximately 20 allotments per 1,000 households. This equates to 0.125 ha per 1,000 population based on an average plot size of 250 square metres, however this is the total area of allotment plots only.</p> <p>The measurements in the table above are based on the total size of each allotment site and also allow ancillary infrastructure, paths, communal areas, etc. In neighbourhoods where there is demand for allotments which cannot be met in the short term, the Council will consider reducing the plot size of allotments.</p>	

**Table 10: PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE)**

<b>Accessibility standard (km)</b>	<b>Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)</b>
<b>0.4 (Local Area of Play or LAP or Local Equipped Area of Play or LEAP)</b> <b>0.8 (Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play or NEAP)</b>	<b>1 LEAP per 2,000 population</b> <b>1 NEAP per 10,000 population or</b> <b>0.25ha of equipped areas of play per 1,000 population (Fields in Trust Standards)*</b>
<p>The accessibility standards set out above reflect benchmark standards and a willingness of residents to walk approximately 10 minutes to access children's play facilities. The quantity reflects broadly the existing provision and also the requirement to address gaps in provision across Harlow, particularly through new strategic developments allocated in the HLDP.</p> <p>*The 0.25ha is taken from the Fields In Trust standards and should be used as a guide for providing equipped play areas. The 0.25ha can consist of LAP, LEAPs, NEAPs and MUGAs. Chapter 8 provides specific dimensions for these types of equipped areas as referenced by Fields In Trust which should be used when designing developments.</p>	

**Table 11: CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS**

<b>Accessibility standard (km)</b>	<b>Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)</b>
<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<p>There are no specific standards for cemeteries and churchyards, although it is expected that some form of recreational function is provided through any extensions to the existing crematorium in Harlow as allocated on the HLDP Policies Map.</p>	

**Table 12: CIVIC SPACE**

<b>Accessibility standard (km)</b>	<b>Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)</b>
<b>3.2 at district-scale</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<p>The accessibility standard reflects the function of civic space as providing a central meeting place which is already well provided within the town centre. The 3.2km distance threshold is adopted as this reflects the whole town of Harlow, which the existing civic space serves. There are no quantity standards for civic space as provision of civic space is provided for the whole town. It is also not appropriate to develop a quantity standard for civic space, as its function is not related to quantity.</p>	

- 6.4. For playing pitch requirements, applicants should consider the findings of the Council's Sports Facilities Study or any subsequent updated evidence to determine whether there is a surplus or deficit in the particular area and what type of playing pitch may be required, e.g. football pitches, cricket pitches.
- 6.5. If new pitches are required to be provided on-site the Fields In Trust standards will be used as the benchmark standard (see table 13 below). This should not be treated as a minimum or maximum and further discussion should be held with the Council prior to the submission of a planning application.

<b>Table 13: PLAYING PITCHES</b>	
<b>Accessibility standard (km)</b>	<b>Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>ALL OUTDOOR SPORTS</b>	
<b>Accessibility standard (km)</b>	<b>Quantity standard per 1,000 population (ha)</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>
The 'All outdoor sports' quantity standard includes 'Playing pitches'. The additional 0.4ha encompasses courts and greens comprising natural or artificial surfaces.	

- 6.6. The standards set out in tables 3-13 above indicate that approximately 2ha of space is required for play areas, allotments and playing pitches per 1000 population. A further 5ha is required for local natural/semi-natural green space, local park provision and amenity space per 1,000 population and a further 4.5ha of district wide park and natural/semi-natural green space per 1,000 population.
- 6.7. Applicants should use the latest quantitative evidence (2013 Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study and 2017 Sports Facilities Study) or their own assessment, if considered appropriate by the Council, to determine the existing level of public open space provision within the area. This will identify whether the existing provision is sufficient to meet the needs of the new residents of the development taking account of the increase in population and subsequent impact this may have on the existing and future level of local provision and facilities.
- 6.8. The Information Box below provides a summary of how to calculate the impact of a development proposal.

**Information Box 4: Calculating the impact of development on public open space provision**

- 1) Estimate the population of the proposed new housing development (using the**



**Harlow average household of 2.44 people if an outline application or the occupancy rates set out in paragraph 6.11 for Full/Reserved applications – or any other updated figures)**

- 2) Adding this to the latest ward population figures derived from government statistics (e.g. the Office for National Statistics)**
- 3) The existing provision for each public open space type is then divided by the new estimated population figure**
- 4) This is compared against the standards above**
- 5) The assessment will use this information to determine the effect on the future level of provision and whether the increase in population will result in a new quantity deficiency.**

6.9. New provision will normally be required if the existing amount of public open space, play space, allotments or sports facilities in the area is insufficient, either from a quality perspective or accessibility perspective, to cater for the needs generated by residents of the new housing development.

6.10. In some cases applicants may need to consider the multi-functionality of open spaces both within their site and in the local area when determining their correct level of provision. For example playing pitches and play areas can be provided within local park areas or amenity spaces. This will still need to consider the accessibility requirements set out in tables 3 to 13 and other planning policies and design guidance set out within the HLDP and this SPD.

## 7. ON-SITE PROVISION, OFF-SITE CONTRIBUTIONS AND MAINTENANCE

### On-site or off-site provision

- 7.1. Applicants should use the standards set out in tables 3 to 13 to determine what is required by the resulting development population and calculate if there is a deficit or surplus in the area. Where there is a surplus then neither on-site or off-site contributions are required although it is expected that, in accordance with the HLDP, all developments should provide amenity green space on-site either through some form of landscaping, green buffers/strips.
- 7.2. This is in addition to private amenity space standards set out in the Design Guide Addendum, e.g. private gardens or shared private gardens/balconies and fulfil the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements of this SPD.
- 7.3. When considering whether or not public open space is to be provided on-site the Council will initially consider the following circumstances:
  - The level of deficit in the area and therefore the level of provision needed for public open space, play space, allotments or sports provision
  - The viability of the site to accommodate provision
  - The suitability of the site in terms of size, location etc. and whether this can accommodate on-site public open space
  - What public open space may already be available on the site and whether this could be improved/enhanced/made public and therefore used as additional provision.
- 7.4. When considering whether off-site contributions are required, this should initially be discussed with the Council as it will be dependent on the impact of the development on existing provision, the level of deficit in the immediate area and the viability of the site.
- 7.5. If it is agreed by the Council that on-site provision and off-site contributions should be dealt with in accordance with this SPD then applicants should use the dwelling thresholds set out in table 14. This is regardless of whether the development is a new housing site or conversion of an existing building.
- 7.6. The table is based on the standards set out in tables 3-13, the likely number of residents a site would need to generate to deliver the requirement as well as benchmarking. Contributions will only be sought for developments of 10 or more dwellings or 50 in respect of allotments which is the number required to generate one plot.

Table 14: Dwelling thresholds for on-site and off-site provision/contributions

Category	Minimum number of dwellings required to provide on-site open space	Minimum number of dwellings required to provide off-site financial contributions
Playing fields	600 +	10 +
LEAPS	50 +	10+
NEAPS	500 +	10+
Allotments	500 +	50+
Amenity Green Space (can include a LAP)	Must be provided on-site in all developments	Must be provided on-site
Local Parks and Gardens and Local Natural/Semi-Natural Green Space	100 +	10+
District Parks and Gardens and District Natural/Semi-Natural Green Space e.g. Town Park/ Parndon Wood	N/A	10+

- 7.7. Amenity space must be provided on site either through Green Fingers, landscaping or grass verges. If this is not viable then only in exceptional circumstances will an off-site contribution be considered in accordance with table 15.
- 7.8. There may be exceptional cases where it would be preferable to focus on the enhancement of an existing area instead of providing new open space on-site even when the proposed development is for more than the threshold. This would be discussed during pre-application discussions on a case by case basis, based on the particular circumstances of the site and character of the development proposal. It might also be the case that due to the size of development, both an off-site contribution and on-site provision is required.
- 7.9. If the provision of open space, including any necessary sports provision, play area or allotment site, cannot be provided in part or full on a development site due to site constraints and/or site location, then provision may exceptionally be provided off-site where it is located within the accessibility distance from the development site or relevant part of it to the open space. Off-site provision means land not included within the planning application red line boundary.
- 7.10. Where the open space is to be provided by the developer, the Council will expect the developer to provide the site for the open space and either; 1) design and build the facility to the quality standards defined by the Council; or 2) make a payment using a planning

obligation so that the Council can make arrangements to design and construct the facility. The Council would normally prefer the second of these options.

### Off-site financial contributions

- 7.11. Financial contributions towards off-site provision are based on providing new facilities, or upgrading existing facilities within the local catchment. For locally equipped play areas (LEAPs), neighbourhood equipped play areas (NEAPs), and allotments this is the relevant ward area. For playing pitches, a District-wide catchment may be appropriate given existing patterns of travel to use such facilities. The costs given in table 15 are based on the average costs of new or upgraded provision using resources such as Sport England costs (Q2 2021), Fields In trust, National Allotment Society and costs taken from building similar facilities in Harlow. They do not include maintenance but have considered site preparation, external works and fees.
- 7.12. The off-site contribution may be less than what is stipulated in the table if some provision already exists to serve the development or if some on-site provision is being made. As smaller dwellings are less likely to be occupied by families, the occupancy levels of the proposed dwellings will also be taken into account by the Council in calculating the off-site financial contribution for provision for children and young people, e.g. 1 bed dwellings are less likely to generate a lot of children. As a guide the occupancy rates in the Information Box should be used.

#### **Information Box 5: Occupancy rates for calculating off-site contributions**

- **1 bedroom – 1.5 persons per dwelling**
- **2 bedroom – 2.4 persons per dwelling**
- **3 bedroom – 3.5 persons per dwelling**
- **4 or more bedrooms – 4.5 persons per dwelling**
- **Average persons per dwelling in Harlow (2011 census) – 2.4 persons per dwelling**

Table 15: Off-site financial contributions

<b>Type of public open space</b>	<b>Sq m per person</b>	<b>Provision cost per square metre £</b>	<b>Contribution per person</b>
Playing fields (average based on FiT standards)	14	£15	£210
LEAPs	1.75	£200	£350
NEAPs	1.75	£100	£175
Allotments	2.5	£20	£50
Amenity Space/Other Open Spaces	4	£10	£40
<b>Total</b>			<b>£825 person</b>

Town Park (District Wide Park)	Subject to the latest costs from Town Park Management Plan. Reference should also be made to the HGGT IDP for schemes.
Local natural/semi-natural green spaces and Local Parks and Gardens	Please contact the Council in regards to the latest information in respect of GI projects across Harlow including any improvements to the Green Wedge/Finger network, the River Stort or other green spaces. Reference should also be made to the HGGT IDP for schemes.

- 7.13. District wide provision of natural/semi natural green spaces and district wide parks/gardens (tables 3 and 5 in Chapter 6) will be provided by means of off-site financial contribution only. This cost will be determined on a case by case basis in accordance with the relevant management plan or GI strategy in the area or relevant open space. For example contributions may be sought towards the most up to date Town Park management plan or towards projects which manage and enhance Parndon Wood.
- 7.14. If the Council were to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), this will replace the costs set out in table 15. Costs will be reviewed frequently and where appropriate increased to reflect inflation in accordance with the Retail Price Index (RPI).

#### Maintenance and commuted sums

- 7.15. The developer is responsible for securing acceptable means for the future management and maintenance of open space on-site and needs to provide the Council with full details of these arrangements before a planning application is determined for the lifetime of the development.
- 7.16. It is anticipated that on-site open space will be transferred to a management company for maintenance, future management and inspections as covered in a planning obligation Section 106 Agreement. Responsibility must also be shared between residents. The developer needs to ensure the costs imposed on residents are reasonable and remain so for the lifetime of the development.
- 7.17. The council expects the on-going management and maintenance arrangements to be sufficient to ensure that areas of open space remain in a high-quality condition. This is intended to avoid open spaces becoming neglected and deteriorating to an extent that their appearance, public enjoyment and functionality are affected.
- 7.18. In exceptional circumstances the Council may adopt and maintain open space within new housing developments subject to the provision of a commuted sum to cover maintenance costs. Likewise if open space is to be provided off-site through existing provision then a commuted sum for its maintenance may be required. Table 16 provides a current estimation of the likely maintenance costs but the Council may consider a different cost if site circumstances dictate.

- 7.19. Financial contributions towards off-site provision or enhancement to existing facilities will include a 20-year maintenance period to ensure that the costs will not lead to an increasing maintenance burden for the council in the short to medium term. These costs will be reviewed frequently to take inflation into account.

Table 16: Maintenance costs (as of 2021 – does not include annual inflation)

Public open space type	Cost per sq m /£	Commuted payment for 20 year period
Playing fields (football and cricket)	£1.35 sq m	£27 sq m
LEAPs	£5.00 sq m	£114 sq m
NEAPs	£3.80 sq m	£76 sq m
Allotments	£1.20 sq m	£24 sq m
Amenity Open Space	£1.20 sq m	£24 sq m
District and Local Parks/Gardens, Natural/Semi-Natural Green Space Spaces (e.g. Town Park/ Parndon Wood)	To be negotiated on a one off basis in relation to large sites.	

#### How will contributions be spent?

- 7.20. Planning Obligations in the form of S106 Agreements will be used to secure the types of open space necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. The terms of a planning obligation will depend on the development proposal but may include financial contributions, requirements, development, management and maintenance. Existing studies and strategies will help inform the spending of financial contributions, including the 2013 Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study and the 2017 Sports Facilities Study which identify deficiencies in existing and future provision. The Council will also consider the latest HGGT IDP and any other strategies or projects identified for Harlow's GI/sports facilities.
- 7.21. Since some off-site projects, funded through financial contributions, are not always ready to commence at the time the relevant contribution is received, the Council would expect to retain contributions for a period of 5 years from the date of payment. If the Council introduces a CIL then contributions will be collected in accordance with the latest CIL regulations.
- 7.22. The Council will ensure that:
- financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision will be spent within the vicinity of the development, usually within the accessibility distance standards set out in in this SPD, or if this is not practical then primarily within the ward boundary based on the facilities mostly likely to meet the needs of the development or wider if appropriate, e.g. improvements to the wider Green Wedge network or district wide playing pitch provision.

- financial contributions to improve the quality of existing provision will normally be used to enhance the nearest open space, usually within the accessibility walking time/distance standards set out in this SPD, which is identified through the council's existing studies or strategies as requiring or having opportunities for improvement. If this is not practical, consideration will be given to existing facilities within the ward boundary which are mostly likely to meet the needs of the development or wider if appropriate, e.g. improvements to the wider Green Wedge network or district wide playing pitch provision.
- financial contributions towards new or enhanced playing pitch provision will be considered in relation to existing needs and future demand identified in the council's Sports Facilities Study or its successor, or the HGGT IDP.
- appropriate community consultation is undertaken as part of the planning application process.

## 8. DESIGN STANDARDS

- 8.1. The Council will expect that the design of public open spaces and sports facilities will be of high quality, durable and appropriate for the typology being provided. That includes the size and provision of play equipment, ancillary facilities for sports uses and the parking provision, accessibility and overall layout of the space. This chapter provides some overarching design principles for open spaces, play facilities, sporting uses and allotments.
- 8.2. Where new public open spaces are to be provided or existing facilities improved, they should be designed to take into account a wide range of disabilities when planning for their design and layout. A Design and Access statement and Health Impact Assessment should support and accompany a planning application detailing how this has been taken into account. It must consider the relevant legislation and Building Regulations and discussions should also be held with the relevant sporting associations, local clubs and other relatable charities/groups to discuss the relevant needs and requirements.
- 8.3. The location and layout of new spaces is particularly important when considering the safety and security of people. Every design and layout of open space, sport and recreation facility must take account of any community safety issues, and avoid creating potential opportunities for crime and vandalism such as areas that are unobserved, poorly lit or underutilised, which can feel threatening to users, create a perception of crime and attract anti-social behaviour. All design submissions should demonstrate how community safety and crime prevention measures have been considered in line with 'Secure by Design' standards.
- 8.4. The specific design standards expected for open spaces and sports facilities are set out in more detail below. In some cases they will use standards and design guidance set out by a body or organisation such as Fields In Trust, Sport England or the National Allotment Society. In particular applicants should consider Sport England's Active Design Guide which was produced in conjunction with Public Health England to help new developments create the right environment to help people get more active.

### Parks, natural/semi-natural space and amenity spaces

- 8.5. New parks in Harlow should take cues from existing parks, whether that is the Town Park or more local neighbourhood parks. They should provide a welcoming accessible place that all park users can enjoy with entrances and boundaries which are well defined and in good condition.
- 8.6. Parks should provide a range of active and passive recreation with play equipment for a range of ages and sporting provision. However they should also consider the provision of habitats which support local biodiversity. They must be readily accessible by public transport and include cycle storage facilities as well as other supporting amenities such as litter bins, signage, seating and, if large enough, toilet facilities and a café.



- 8.7. Natural and semi-natural green spaces provide a more informal recreational space and should be designed to connect people with wildlife whilst also seeking to improve local biodiversity. They can also act as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The layout of semi-natural spaces should be planned in a way that guides the community around the space through the use of footpaths and cycle paths, planned grass cut areas, woodland walks and maintained trails with appropriate signage. The landscaping should be managed to allow this movement to happen but to also enable local biodiversity to flourish through, for example, un-managed wild flower meadows, grasslands, hedgerows and streams/water features. Where appropriate these green spaces should still have areas for seating, litter/dog bins and signage as well as more formal cycle paths, and well-lit footpaths/bridleways.
- 8.8. Natural green spaces however should develop more naturally from existing landscape features where there is an already important biodiverse space. They should be maintained and woven into new developments and as much as possible be untouched and unmanaged. Some of the District's Green Wedges and Fingers already provide a natural or semi-natural open space and applicants should consider these spaces as part of their landscaping and GI strategy.
- 8.9. Amenity spaces should be planned into new developments in order to create 'door step' green spaces. These not only provide informal seating areas and play space but also provide some natural landscaping and green buffers. There is no formal design guidance for the provision of amenity spaces in new development but applicants should consider the size, location and provision of green spaces in the context of the whole application site, the individual residential areas and streets and the adjoining green spaces around the site. Landscaping, including the use of paths, grass, trees, hedgerows and other planting should also be considered for each amenity space.

### Allotments

- 8.10. When choosing the location and site for an allotment it is important that the land has soil that can be cultivated and isn't hindered by rubble or contaminated by chemicals. It must not be prone to flooding or some other form of nuisance. Sites which are level and able to receive sufficient sunlight, in particular south-facing sites, are preferable.
- 8.11. The provision of ancillary facilities for an allotment may be dependent on the size and location of the site but in general it should include:
- Concrete/hard-surfaced or flat main pathway with individual pathways to the allotment plots
  - Surrounding hedges or fences to provide safety and protection
  - Reliable water source
  - Secure cycle parking and, if appropriate, a small parking area although every effort should be made to promote walking and cycling to the site
  - Storage facility for each allotment plot, large enough to store tools such as spades

- 8.12. Consideration should also be made for the provision of toilet facilities and a clubhouse, community shed and community meeting areas.
- 8.13. Allotment layout and design should also consider a variety of potential users including those with physical or mental disabilities. Allotment plots should therefore have a flexible layout that provides a variety of bed heights, accessible layouts and paths/tracks, and the provision of shelters.

### Playing Pitches and other sporting facilities

- 8.14. Fields In Trust have developed guidance and a specific table which sets out the recommended minimum sizes for formal outdoor spaces including size and dimension requirements for a range of grass-field and non-grass related sports e.g. football, rugby, athletics, hockey, tennis courts and bowling greens. Applicants should use these standards in the first instance when designing and planning the layouts of different sports facilities on their sites. The latest copy can be found in Appendix 1, but applicants should ensure they are using the most recent version.
- 8.15. Applicants should also refer to the latest guidance prepared by Sport England for the provision of sports facilities including changing facilities, toilets, clubhouses and pavilions, artificial lighting and sports hall/swimming pools.

### Equipped Areas of Play, Local Play Areas and Multiuse Games Areas

- 8.16. Fields In Trust have developed size standards for play areas including dimensions of play areas and the actual activity zone within them. These are set out in Table 17 below and should be used as a guide to help develop Local Areas of Play (LAP), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). It also includes indicative buffer zones between the play area and nearby dwellings which ensure that facilities do not enable users to overlook neighbouring properties, reducing the possibility of conflict between local residents and those at play.
- 8.17. For NEAPs, the minimum activity zone of 1,000 sqm should comprise an area for play equipment and structures and a hard surfaced area of at least 465sqm which is the minimum needed to play five-a-side football. Buffer zones for Multiuse Games Areas (MUGAs) may need to be increased for activities such as skateboarding.

Table 17: LAP, LEAP and NEAP size/dimensions

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Minimum Sizes</b>	<b>Minimum dimensions</b>	<b>Buffer Zones</b>
<b>LAP</b>	0.01ha	10x10 metres (minimum activity Zone of 100 sqm)	5 metre minimum separation between activity zone and nearest property containing a dwelling
<b>LEAP</b>	0.04ha	20x20 metres (minimum activity zone of 400 sqm)	20 metre minimum separation distance between activity zone and the habitable room façade of

			dwellings
<b>NEAP</b>	0.1ha	31.6x31.6 metres (minimum activity zone of 1,000 sqm)	30 metre minimum separation distance between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling
<b>MUGA</b>	0.1ha		30 metre minimum separation distance between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling

8.18. LAPs are primarily for children up to the age of 6 and should be designed to allow for informal observation and supervision and primarily function to encourage informal play and social interaction. A LAP requires no play equipment as such, relying more on demonstrative features indicating that play is positively encouraged. Like LEAPs and NEAPs set out below they are best positioned beside a pedestrian route and should occupy a well-drained, reasonably flat site surfaced with grass or a hard surface. Depending on location it may have a guard rail, low fence or planting around the perimeter.

8.19. A LEAP is intended primarily for children who are beginning to go out and play independently and should be designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that should include equipment and structures that support a number of movements, play and textures. The number and nature of equipment will be agreed on a site by site basis but as a guide they should contain at least five pieces of play equipment. There should also be adequate space within the area to allow children to be generally active and freely move around.



8.20. LEAPs may need to contain perimeter fencing, if close by to roads, with self-closing gates. Seating and litter bins should also be provided and ideally there should be areas which are shaded by, for example, large trees or canopy areas.

8.21. NEAPs are primarily used by older children who normally have the freedom to range further from home. Like LEAPs, these areas should contain equipment and structures that support a range of movement, play, textures and creativity but also areas for ball games and wheeled activities. The number and nature of equipment will be agreed on a site by site basis but as a guide they should contain at least nine pieces of play equipment. There should also be adequate space within the area to allow children to be generally active and freely move around.

- 8.22. Like LEAPs, these larger areas may require perimeter fencing, self-closing gates or possibly a barrier, seating, litter bins and areas of shade. They may also require a small car parking area or at least cycle storage facilities.
- 8.23. When considering MUGAs or multi-use games areas, the following should be considered: 1) the predominant sporting uses; 2) the degree of intensity of use; 3) the sports performance and playability characteristics; and 4) the intended lifespan.
- 8.24. MUGAs serve as play facilities for children both formally and informally. They should be marked out for a range of activities, robustly made with ease of maintenance in mind and be free to use. Sites should avoid steep gradients and slopes, unstable ground and very exposed terrain and ideally be located on a flat surface within a sheltered area. A site will need to provide cycle parking provision and if appropriate provide or be situated close to car parking facilities. It is critical that access to emergency vehicles is also provided. The provision of floodlighting should be discussed with the Council depending on the location of the MUGA within or close to built-up areas.

## 9. SUBMISSION OF A SUPPORTING STATEMENT

- 9.1. Applicants will be required to submit a statement setting out how they have complied with the policies in the HLDP and in particular the standards and requirements set out in this SPD. The statement should include, but is not limited, to the following:

### Information Box 6: Supporting Statement Information

- Any calculations which show the deficit or surplus of public open space in the area using the standards set out in this SPD
- Information on the size of any proposed public open space, play space or sports facilities in hectares (ha)
- Details of supporting ancillary facilities where appropriate, such as changing facilities, storage or parking areas or the types of equipment to be provided, e.g. ball courts
- Location of the proposed public open space, sports facilities or recreation facility within the development and how it will be accessed by residents
- Design of the facility/ public open space in accordance with this SPD, Design Guide and other legislation including where appropriate the National Model Design Code
- Any loss of existing public open space including size and type
- Information on the management and maintenance of the facility or open space
- Any necessary mitigation – this may include financial contributions to enhance routes to existing open space or to improve the space
- Where it has been agreed that off-site contributions are required, the facility or open space that the contribution will be paid towards including location.

- 9.2. Where a development proposes a loss of open space, play space, allotment or sports facility/use, the statement should demonstrate that it has satisfied the requirements of Policy L2 of the HLDP.
- 9.3. A Design and Access Statement and/or a Health Impact Assessment should set out how the development can be accessed by all members of the community including those with disabilities and how it contributes towards improving the health and wellbeing of residents. Sport England's Active Design guide also includes a checklist which can support the submission of a planning application.

# PART 2: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure



## 10. BIODIVERSITY INCLUDING NET GAIN

10.1. Biodiversity should be considered at the earliest stages of planning new developments to encourage wildlife and help reverse habitat decline. Nature adds character and quality of place and helps improve the liveability of that place. Existing natural features retained within the development footprint, be they veteran trees, old hedgerows, or ponds provide a context and character for the development. Incorporating them into the landscape scheme ensures continuity of that character. At the same time, doing so ensures more opportunities for wildlife than if starting from scratch, and provides enjoyable recreational space, through which the value of homes can be increased.

### Biodiversity in new developments

10.2. Applicants of all types of new development should consider how they can protect and enhance local biodiversity through the use of planting, landscaping, habitat creation such as bird and bat boxes, water features or just by simply retaining and improving what already exists. Below are some examples of how applicants can help improve biodiversity in their schemes. Applicants should consider the [NHBC, Barrett Homes and RSPB 2021 publication 'Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities'](#) which is also a helpful guide.

Table 18: Examples of Biodiversity in new developments

---

#### **Boundaries and buffers**

**New boundary and buffer features, including hedgerows, drystone walls and verges should be designed to maximise wildlife value by forming connective corridors so that, as well as providing food and shelter, they enable wildlife to move to occupy new habitats. Meanwhile, vegetation contributes to climate resilience, especially when incorporated into SuDS.**

---

#### **Drainage systems and water features**

**Drainage Systems mimic natural processes in managing rainfall using landscape form and vegetation such as trees, shrubs, flowering plants and grassland. They can be designed and landscaped to increase opportunities for wetland wildlife in urban areas and links to the wider landscape, e.g. swales may be improved for invertebrates and amphibians.**

---

#### **Planting and landscaping**

---



The careful use of planting in a landscape design creates opportunities to increase value for wildlife. Structural landscaping and tree planting within developments should consider location, density and species mix to attract a variety of wildlife.

## Structures, buildings and materials

Opportunities can be sought to reuse materials to provide new habitats such as through site clearance. Consideration of bringing habitats and wildlife into the built elements of a scheme can support multiuse of such structures, e.g. green walls (or planting within walls), green roofs, bat friendly areas/roof bricks close to buildings.

- 10.3. These are just some of the ways development can introduce and support wildlife and local biodiversity. It is important that applicants set out in a supporting statement how they have considered protecting, enhancing and supporting biodiversity and geodiversity within their development proposals as per Policy PL9 of the HLDP. Applicants should make use of the Essex Biodiversity Validation Checklist to support their submission.

### Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 10.4. Where appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will be required. as set out in the following section. BNG in planning terms is an approach to development that aims to leave biodiversity in a better state than beforehand. The planning system already seeks to minimise impacts on and secure improvements to biodiversity, but the Environment Bill (due to become an Act and form part of a new legal framework for environmental protection) places BNG on a statutory footing, introducing a **mandatory requirement for developments to demonstrate a measurable 10% increase in biodiversity.**

#### Information Box 7: What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

**Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected in such a way it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.**

- 10.5. Achieving net gains for biodiversity rather than just stemming further losses is essential to counteract its long term decline. Net gain for biodiversity is achieved by land management practices or 'interventions' that deliver more or better habitat for biodiversity through habitat creation or enhancement on an identified piece of land. Improvements could arise



from the way the land is managed, for example maintaining natural wildflower areas in public parks, or through the provision of additional habitat such as ponds, hedgerows or woodland.

- 10.6. Biodiversity improvements can be delivered on-site, through a combination of on-site and off-site measures, or in some circumstances entirely off-site where developers pay a levy or tariff for habitat creation or improvement elsewhere.

#### Using a Biodiversity Metric to measure BNG

- 10.7. In order to demonstrate that the mandatory requirement of a 10% increase in biodiversity is delivered, biodiversity losses and gains associated with development and land management practices must be measured in a consistent, robust, and transparent way. The Biodiversity Metric 3.0 is a spreadsheet-based tool designed to measure biodiversity losses and gains using habitat as a proxy for biodiversity. The Environment Bill specifies that this metric (or any successor) must be used by developers to demonstrate how they will meet their requirement to deliver 10% BNG.
- 10.8. Biodiversity losses and gains are calculated through the assessment of habitat and its quality. The metric quantifies the existing biodiversity value of habitats on a piece of land, and then calculates the losses and gains in biodiversity associated with a proposed development and any related habitat creation, restoration or enhancement. Information from habitat surveys of the site before development, and for habitats proposed within the development plus any off-site habitat improvement, is used to populate the metric spreadsheets.
- 10.9. The metric translates the habitat distinctiveness, condition, size and strategic importance into a score, which is then converted into measureable biodiversity units.
- 10.10. To achieve net gain, a development must have a higher biodiversity unit score after development than beforehand.

#### Stage 1: Baseline for Assessing BNG

- 10.11. The existing biodiversity value of a development site or 'baseline' is assessed at the point that planning permission is applied for, although if any harm to this biodiversity value has taken place in the recent past (for example through hedge or tree removal), this would need to be accounted for to ensure that proposals achieve genuine BNG.
- 10.12. The site is surveyed, mapped and divided into parcels of distinct habitat types present using either of the recognised 'Phase 1' or the new 'UKHAB' habitat classification systems. All surfaces present including built surfaces are included. The biodiversity 'value' of a habitat parcel is evaluated on the basis of its area in hectares and the relative quality of its habitat. Quality is determined by three components:

- **Distinctiveness:** A score based on the type of habitat present. Habitats are assigned to 'distinctiveness' bands based on an assessment of their features including species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national and international level), and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats. The distinctiveness band of each habitat is pre-assigned based on whether the habitat is of high (e.g. native broadleaf woodland) or low (e.g. improved/amenity grassland) value to wildlife.
- **Condition:** Based on the quality of the habitat, whether the habitat is a good example of its type. For example whether a woodland is in peak condition (which might mean it can better support rare species) or whether it predominantly contains invasive species or is overcrowded and under stress.
- **Strategic significance:** Strategic significance relates to a landscape scale approach based on whether the location of the development and/or off-site work has been identified locally as significant for nature.

10.13. The metric operates by applying a score to each of these elements for a habitat parcel. A calculation using the scores and the area of the habitat gives a number of biodiversity units that represents the biodiversity value of that habitat parcel. The initial calculation determines the 'baseline' value in biodiversity units.

#### Stage 2: Post-Development Calculation of BNG

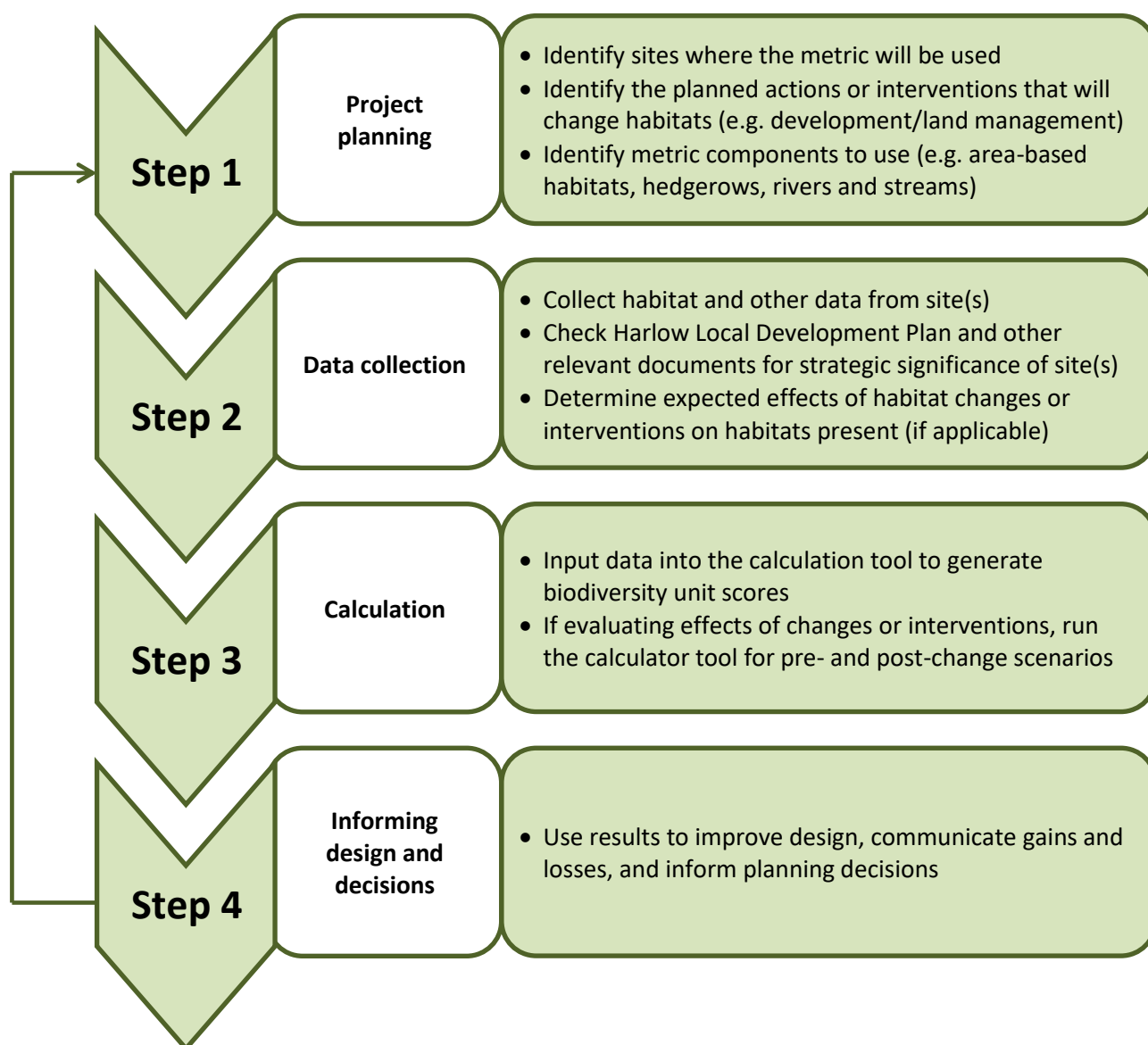
10.14. The process is repeated using a 'post development' scenario to account for the impact of the development including any on site measures to retain, enhance or create biodiversity. Additional factors to account for the risk associated with the creation, restoration or enhancement of habitats are incorporated within the metric:

- **Difficulty of creating or restoring a habitat:** This component recognises the difficulties in creating or restoring some habitat types, and the related uncertainty of the outcome this creates. Uncertainty in achieving the target outcome for each habitat is addressed by a habitat-specific 'difficulty' multiplier.
- **Temporal risk:** If there is a gap between a negative impact on biodiversity and compensation habitat reaching the required quality or level of maturity, there will be a loss of biodiversity for a period of time. This issue can be managed by the creation of compensation habitat ahead of the impact taking place. Even where the management to create compensation habitat starts in advance, the time taken for habitats to mature means that there is almost always a time lag. Where a time lag occurs, a 'Time to target condition' multiplier is applied to take account of it.
- **Spatial Risk:** This component reflects the fact that habitat created at a great distance from the site of habitat losses carries a risk of depleting local areas of natural habitats, and of depriving communities experiencing development of the associated benefits. The

multiplier should be applied as a rule but with the discretion of the Council (for example, where a development creates compensatory habitat locally, but technically in a separate planning area).

- 10.15. The value of biodiversity units 'post development' is deducted from the baseline value to quantify the extent of change. If net gain can be achieved on site there is no need to consider off site measures.
- 10.16. If the calculation does not result in a sufficient net gain in biodiversity units the development proposal can be revisited to improve the number of biodiversity units obtained or, if there is no scope for additional on-site compensation or enhancement, off-site measures will need to be considered.
- 10.17. New or restored habitats should result in an improvement in the extent or quality of the habitat affected. They should achieve a higher distinctiveness and/or condition than those lost. Compensation measures should not result in "trading down", for instance in the replacement of a habitat of high distinctiveness with creation or restoration of a greater amount of habitat of a lower distinctiveness. Losses of habitat of a high distinctiveness are expected to be compensated on a "like for like" basis.
- 10.18. An example of a BNG calculation can be found in Appendix 2.

Image 1: Four step process to using the Biodiversity Metric



### Off-site measures and biodiversity credits

10.19.If off site measures are required, the same assessment process has to be undertaken to establish biodiversity unit values on the offsite land 'pre intervention' and 'post intervention' to calculate how many units that land can contribute as compensation. The change in biodiversity units on site is then added to the change in units off site to provide a total change in biodiversity units for the development. The total change in units needs to be sufficient to ensure a 'Net Gain' is achieved.

10.20.Where off-site measures are needed to meet the 10% biodiversity net gain uplift requirement, it is expected that the off-site habitat enhancement or creation will be local to the development site, preferably in the same ward. It should as a minimum be comparable to the habitat that has been lost. The Council will be looking to prepare a biodiversity gain

register with HGGT partners to set out which sites or spaces may be suitable for net gain improvements. This will not however preclude other sites coming forward or being considered. All enhanced and new habitats will need to be maintained for a minimum of 30 years secured by a S106 Agreement or Conservation Covenant.

10.21. In the absence of any suitable local sites there will also be the opportunity for developers to purchase biodiversity credits from the Secretary of State from an offsite habitat market to help them meet their biodiversity gain requirements. Operated through Natural England, funds from the purchase of biodiversity credits would be used to fund off-site habitat enhancements, purchase interests in land with a view to carry out enhancement works, or undertake the operation and administration of enhancement works. If biodiversity net gain credits is the only solution to enabling BNG for a site then applicants should discuss this with Natural England and the Council prior to the submission of a planning application.

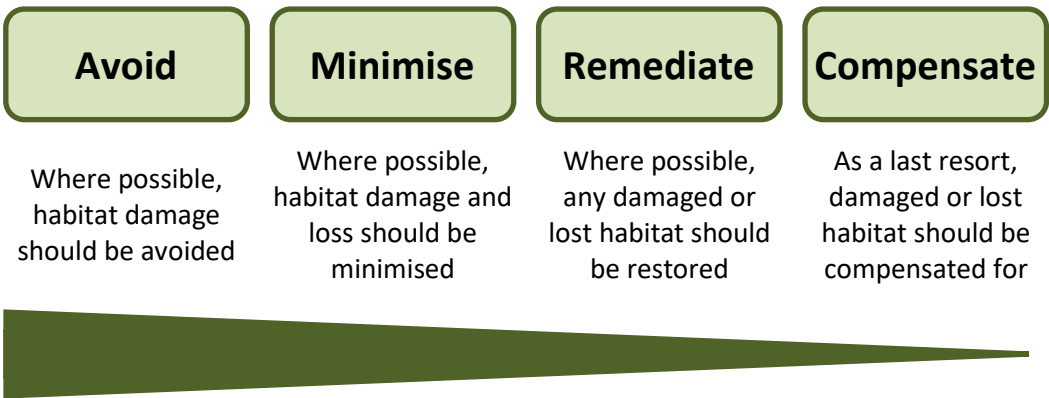
The Mitigation Hierarchy

10.22. The effective operation of the BNG regime relies on the principles of and adherence to the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy established in national planning policy, to avoid, minimise, remediate, and compensate for losses of biodiversity. BNG is in addition to the application of the mitigation hierarchy, not instead of.

10.23. Application of the hierarchy means retaining habitats on site or avoiding habitat damage in the first instance. BNG is easier to achieve where habitat impacts are avoided due to the way that risks associated with habitat creation or enhancement are accounted for in the Biodiversity Metric.

10.24. BNG is not a justification for on-site biodiversity losses simply compensated for by the payment of a levy for habitat improvement elsewhere. The Mitigation Hierarchy must be applied, and development schemes are still expected to comply with relevant planning policies requiring the protection and enhancement of ecological features such as trees, hedgerows and streams within the application site boundary, and incorporate green infrastructure and open space within development design.

Image 2: Biodiversity Mitigation Hierarchy



## Exclusion of Protected Sites and Species

10.25. Internationally and nationally designated sites are excluded from BNG. The potential impact of new development on a protected site outside the development site boundary has to be considered in the usual way in accordance with statutory obligations. Any compensation or mitigation that may be required in this respect would not count as contributing towards BNG.

10.26. The Biodiversity Metric quantifies biodiversity outcomes based on habitat alone; it does not account for the presence of specific species on the site. They will need to be assessed and carefully considered separately in any ecological evaluation. Compensation and mitigation needed to comply with legislation in connection with protected or priority species would not count as contributing towards BNG.

10.27. A thorough understanding of a site's habitat, the presence of protected and priority species, and the potential impacts arising from proposed development including on biodiversity outside the application site is all needed, and for which ecological expertise is required.

## The Biodiversity Gain Plan

10.28. To demonstrate how the BNG requirement is to be achieved as part of each development, the Environment Bill requires developers to submit a *Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP)* to the Council for approval as a pre-commencement condition of planning approval. Incorporating information obtained using the biodiversity metric the plan is expected to include:

- The steps taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the on-site habitat, demonstrating the application of the mitigation hierarchy;
- The baseline (pre-development) biodiversity value of the site;
- The post-development biodiversity value of the site;
- The biodiversity value of any off-site biodiversity gain allocated to the development;
- Any biodiversity credits purchased for the development;
- A demonstration that the 'post-development' biodiversity value of the development is greater than 'pre-development' biodiversity value by at least 10 per cent.

## Principles and Rules in applying the Biodiversity Metric

10.29. Appendix 3 contains two tables which set out a series of principles and rules that applicants should consider when using the Metric, as stipulated by Natural England.

## 11. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- 11.1. Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of multi-functional green spaces and linkages in the countryside in and around towns. GI can include areas such as parks, gardens, woods, nature reserves and water-bodies (or Blue Infrastructure) with or without public access; linkages include linear features such as off-road paths, highways, rivers, streams or hedgerows, which can provide dispersal corridors for wildlife and connect people to open spaces. GI planning is a key mechanism for delivering sustainable communities and quality of life benefits within growth areas. Having different types of GI close to people's homes, places of work or education, or along transportation routes is likely to maximise the potential ways in which people benefit.
- 11.2. GI can also help to tackle climate change by reducing carbon dioxide and air pollution through for example the use of tree planting, rain gardens and urban drainage systems. It can protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity assets and provide spaces for both formal and informal recreation such as sports pitches, allotments, amenity spaces and private garden space. GI can also assist in providing cooling and shading to reduce air temperature in hot weather.
- 11.3. Much of the GI in Harlow is a legacy of Sir Frederick Gibberd's original masterplan and provides the overarching and distinctive green character of the district. The HLDP policies aim to continue this legacy by seeking opportunities to enhance the district's Green Wedges, Green Fingers, other open spaces, Green Belt and the River Stort and protect them from inappropriate development. Policies also state that new GI must be planned into new developments regardless of scale, and where possible link to the District's existing GI. Landscaping, trees and hedgerows will also be protected and enhanced.

### Planning Green Infrastructure in new developments

- 11.4. New development should be landscape-led from the start, and GI should be high quality and multifunctional, i.e. provides movement and ecological connectivity, addresses social and wellbeing needs, provides opportunities for play, water space and carbon mitigation measures.
- 11.5. Applicants should firstly identify the characteristics of GI within or close to the site such as existing parks and open spaces, the Green Wedge/Finger network, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves or areas of particular biodiversity and geodiversity. Applicants should consider the standards set out within this SPD and the expected development needs. For example this could include Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), flood alleviation, sports pitches, allotments or play areas. Applicants should then investigate opportunities for delivering GI benefits such as trees and landscaping, linking spaces through cycle paths, footpaths or bridleways, improvements to biodiversity, mitigating climate change, provision of sporting facilities or the general appearance and setting of the scheme.

11.6. Applicants should consider the below GI benefits and the examples of how this could be implemented when developing their own GI Strategy. Applicants may also want to consider other tools when developing GI including the Natural Capital Tool, Ecometric, Building With Nature and the Green Flag Award.

Table 19: Green Infrastructure considerations in new developments

GI benefits	Examples of how this could be implemented
<b>Does the GI connect green spaces and routes?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical connections</li> <li>• Visual connections</li> <li>• Pleasant and safe pedestrian, cycle and bridleway routes</li> <li>• Improvements to rights of way network</li> <li>• Consideration and improvement of radial routes</li> <li>• Use of shared space</li> <li>• Tree lined streets</li> <li>• Multi-function streets</li> <li>• Landscape buffer zones</li> <li>• Provision of a linear park</li> </ul>
<b>Does it improve the setting and quality of a place?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing social gathering spaces</li> <li>• Enhancing landscape setting</li> <li>• Responding to the site context and local landscape character</li> <li>• Providing street trees</li> <li>• Drawing up a maintenance/management plan for long term success of scheme</li> </ul>
<b>Does it encourage activity and enjoyment and improve health and wellbeing?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing places for meeting and events such as a community park</li> <li>• Providing shelter</li> <li>• Providing areas for play in a natural setting</li> <li>• Education and interpretation opportunities</li> <li>• Sports facilities</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Cycle storage</li> </ul>
<b>Will it assist in adapting to changes in climate and mitigating flood risk?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood mitigation measures and sustainable drainage systems such as wetlands, green swales, balancing ponds, ditches and ponds</li> <li>• Tree planting</li> <li>• Green roofs and walls</li> <li>• Ground cover plants on steep slopes to reduce run off and erosion</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permeable surfaces and paving</li> <li>• Soakaways as an alternative method of water retention</li> <li>• Reedbeds and rainwater harvesting system</li> <li>• Use of GI to lower high air temperatures in hot weather</li> </ul>
<b>Will it help support growing local food?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allotments and community orchards</li> <li>• Schools and food projects</li> </ul>
<b>Does it protect and enhance heritage and nature?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development relates to local character and safeguarding of existing views</li> <li>• Good integration of existing and proposed features</li> <li>• Opportunities to create new views and vistas</li> <li>• Protection and enhancement of key priority habitats and species</li> <li>• Alleviate pressure on existing sensitive wildlife sites through provision of alternative access to nature</li> <li>• Improvement of species movement</li> <li>• Community involvement and participation in habitat creation and on-going maintenance and management</li> <li>• Design planting areas to create benefits for the microclimate and to minimise maintenance requirements</li> <li>• Undertake soil survey to allow for planting of appropriate, non-invasive species.</li> </ul>

### Wider Garden Town Considerations

11.7. Applicants should also make reference in their GI Strategy to the principles set out in the HGGT Vision in relation to GI, landscape led masterplanning, biodiversity, climate resilience and food production. Amongst other masterplan and design principles the Vision includes the following GI related values.

#### **Information Box 8: HGGT Vision Principles relating to GI**

- **Masterplans will identify and design open space that expands the existing Green Wedge network across the Garden Town and connects out to the wider countryside and Stort Valley.**
- **New development that adjoins the Green Wedge network will enhance the**

**quality and recreational value of Green Wedges and Green Fingers**

- **New Green Wedges will be an appropriate size and character to maintain the individual identity of new and existing neighbourhoods and villages.**
- **Green Fingers running through residential areas will be multi-functional spaces, accommodating play areas, a local park or village green.**
- **New neighbourhood development will have a positive relationship with the enhanced Green Wedge network with front doors and windows facing onto green spaces where appropriate.**
- **Green Wedges between villages will be rural in character using farmland and woodland to reinforce the separation of development and maintain existing village ways of life.**
- **The open space network will support active lifestyles and good health through excellent walking and cycling routes, connecting all parts of the Garden Town and the wider countryside.**
- **New development should identify appropriate locations for playing fields, adventure spaces, play areas, running trails and bridleways to support new and existing residents.**
- **The long-term maintenance and stewardship of open spaces will be secured; committed to achieving high quality such as the Green Flag standard for local parks and green spaces.**

11.8. The HGGT have also developed a Sustainability Guidance and Checklist. The guidance provides practical and technical guidance on how to apply sustainability indicators and policies (environmental, social, and economic) in the HGGT Vision and partner authorities Plans to new major developments in the Garden Town. This will help applicants meet the Garden Town goals of becoming net zero-carbon by 2030, and, to build strong and integrated communities across new and existing places.

11.9. The Guidance includes a section on Green Infrastructure which applicants should consider as part of their proposals and as part of their wider GI Strategy Statement as set out in more detail below.

### Supporting GI Strategy Statement

11.10. Having considered the above, applicants should set out how they have developed their GI Strategy including future maintenance and management within a supporting statement such as a Health Impact Assessment, a Sustainability Statement or separate GI strategy. Applications should also consider completing the HGGT Sustainability Guidance and Checklist in respect of GI.

11.11. It will be expected that all new developments should provide information on the GI Strategy relevant to the scale and nature of their proposal. This could be the appropriate private garden space and landscaping for a single new dwelling or the development of various GI typologies for a major housing development. Commercial developments should also consider how they can improve, connect and enhance GI either within their developments or outside their proposals.

- 11.12. Applicants for larger schemes should actively engage with their local communities, in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, and the Council prior to the submission of an application to understand the needs and desires of GI to ensure it is suitable for their particular scheme.
- 11.13. GI strategies that impact positively or negatively on trees, either through removing or new provision, must provide an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Method Statement and Tree Survey and Management Plan in accordance with Policy PL7 of the HLDP.

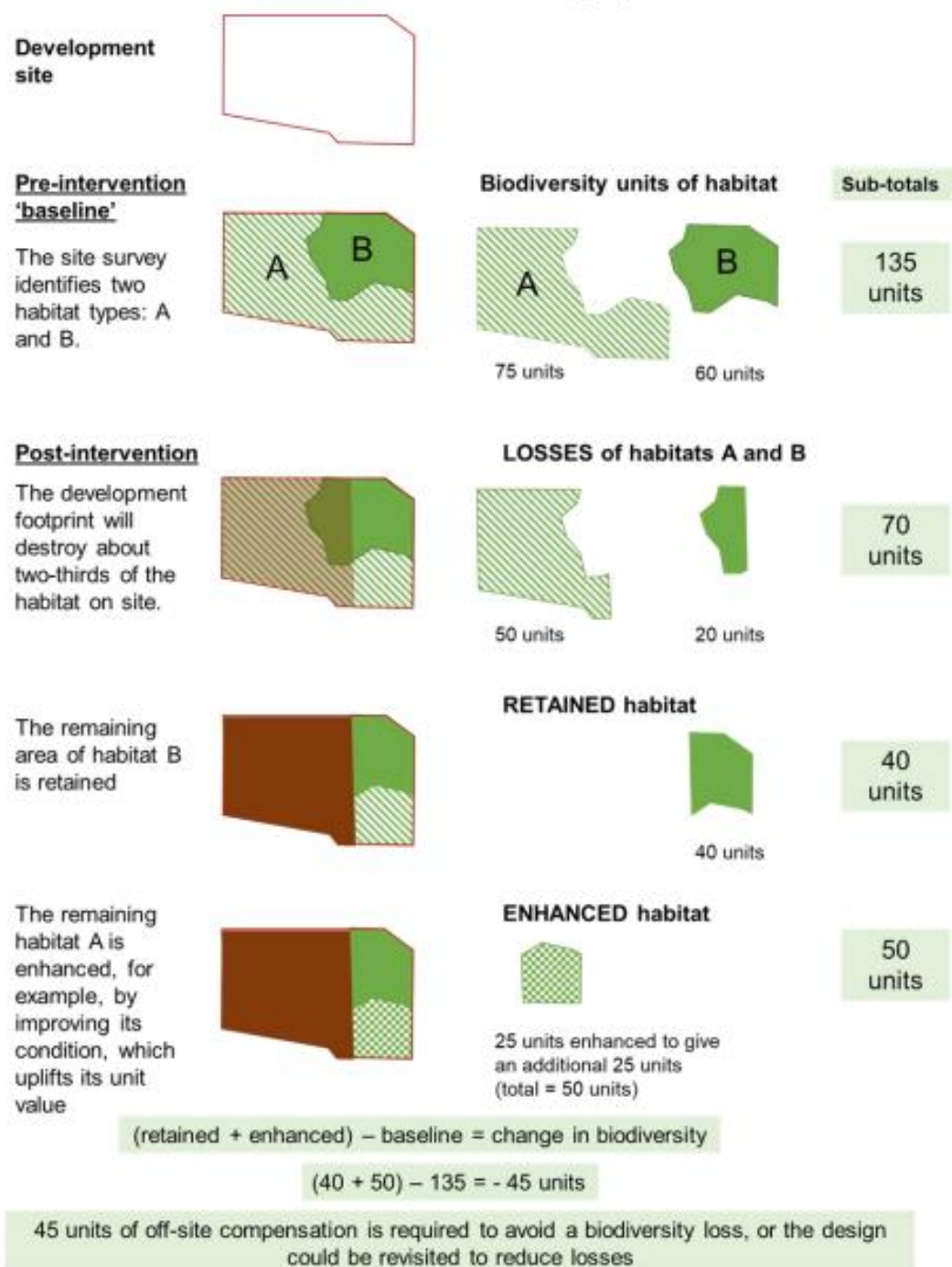
## APPENDIX 1: Recommended minimum sizes for playing pitches/outdoor space

(Fields In Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard England)

Open space typology	Minimum sizes		Minumum dimensions
Playing pitches	<b><u>Association football</u></b>		
	Adult soccer	0.74ha	106 x 70 metres
	Mini soccer U7/U8 pitch	0.14ha	43 x 33 metres
	Mini soccer U9/U10 pitch	0.25ha	60 x 42 metres
	<b><u>Rugby Union</u></b>	0.70ha	100 x 70 metres
	<b><u>Hockey</u></b>		
Other outdoor (non-pitch) sports	Mini Hockey	0.31ha	65 x 48 metres
	<b><u>Lacrosse</u></b>	0.66ha	100 x 60 metres
	<b><u>Cricket</u></b>		
	Senior recreational 12 pitch	1.43ha	111.56 x 128.04 metres
	<b><u>Athletics</u></b>		
	6 lane track	1.51ha	172.03 x 87.64 metres
	<b><u>Tennis courts</u></b>		
	1 recreational court	0.06ha	34.75 x 17.07 metres
	2 recreational courts	0.11ha	34.75 x 31.70 metres
	For each adjacent court	0.05ha	34.75 x 14.63 metres
	<b><u>Bowling greens</u></b>		
	Flat green	0.12ha	34.4 x 34.4 metres
	Crown green	0.08ha	27.4 x 27.4 metres

## APPENDIX 2: Example of BNG Calculation

(Natural England's Biodiversity Metric User Guide)



## APPENDIX 3: Principles and rules when applying the BNG Metric

(Natural England's Biodiversity Metric User Guide)

**Principle 1:** The metric does not change the protection afforded to biodiversity. Existing levels of protection afforded to protected species and habitats are not changed by use of this or any other metric. Statutory obligations will still need to be satisfied.

**Principle 2:** Biodiversity metric calculations can inform decision-making where application of the mitigation hierarchy and good practice principles<sup>14</sup> conclude that compensation for habitat losses is justified.

**Principle 3:** The metric's biodiversity units are only a proxy for biodiversity and should be treated as relative values. While it is underpinned by ecological evidence the units generated by the metric are only a proxy for biodiversity and, to be of practical use, it has been kept deliberately simple. The numerical values generated by the metric represent relative, not absolute, values.

**Principle 4:** The metric focuses on typical habitats and widespread species; important or protected habitats and features should be given broader consideration.

- Protected and locally important species needs are not considered through the metric, - they should be addressed through existing policy and legislation.
- Impacts on protected sites (e.g. SSSIs) and irreplaceable habitats are not adequately measured by this metric. They will require separate consideration which must comply with existing national and local policy and legislation. Data relating to these can be entered into the metric, so as to give an indicative picture of the biodiversity value of the habitats present on a site, but this should be supported by bespoke advice.

**Principle 5:** The metric design aims to encourage enhancement, not transformation, of the natural environment. Proper consideration should be given to the habitats being lost in favour of higher-scoring habitats, and whether the retention of less distinctive but well-established habitats may sometimes be a better option for local biodiversity. Habitat created to compensate for loss of natural or semi-natural habitat should be of the same broad habitat type (e.g. new woodland to replace lost woodland) unless there is a good ecological reason to do otherwise (e.g. to restore a heathland habitat that was converted to woodland for timber in the past<sup>15</sup>).

**Principle 6:** The metric is designed to inform decisions, not to override expert opinion. Management interventions should be guided by appropriate expert ecological advice and not just the biodiversity unit outputs of the metric. Ecological principles still need to be applied to ensure that what is being proposed is realistic and deliverable based on local conditions such as geology, hydrology, nutrient levels, etc. and the complexity of future management requirements.

**Principle 7:** Compensation habitats should seek, where practical, to be local to the impact. They should aim to replicate the characteristics of the habitats that have been lost, taking account of the structure and species composition that give habitats their local distinctiveness. Where possible compensation habitats should contribute towards nature recovery in England by creating 'more, bigger, better and joined up' areas for biodiversity.

**Principle 8:** The metric does not enforce a mandatory minimum 1:1 habitat size ratio for losses and compensation but consideration should be given to maintaining habitat extent and habitat parcels of sufficient size for ecological function. A difference can occur because of a difference in

quality between the habitat impacted and the compensation provided. For example, if a habitat of low distinctiveness is impacted and is compensated for by the creation of habitat of higher distinctiveness or better condition, the area needed to compensate for losses can potentially be less than the area impacted. However, consideration should be given to whether reducing the area or length of habitat provided as compensation is an appropriate outcome.

**Rule 1:** Where the metric is used to measure change, biodiversity unit values need to be calculated prior to the intervention and post-intervention for all parcels of land / linear features affected.

**Rule 2:** Compensation for habitat losses can be provided by creating new habitats, or by restoring or enhancing existing habitats. Measures to enhance existing habitats must provide a significant and demonstrable uplift in distinctiveness and/or condition to record additional biodiversity units.

**Rule 3:** 'Trading down' must be avoided. Losses of habitat are to be compensated for on a "like for like" or "like for better" basis. New or restored habitats should aim to achieve a higher distinctiveness and/or condition than those lost. Losses of irreplaceable or very high distinctiveness habitat cannot adequately be accounted for through the metric.

**Rule 4:** Biodiversity unit values generated by biodiversity metric 3.0 are unique to this metric and cannot be compared to unit outputs from version 2.0, the original Defra metric or any other biodiversity metric. Furthermore, the three types of biodiversity units generated by this metric (for area, hedgerow and river habitats) are unique and cannot be summed.

**Rule 5:** It is not the area/length of habitat created that determines whether ecological equivalence or better has been achieved but the net change in biodiversity units. Risks associated with creating or enhancing habitats mean that it may be necessary to create or enhance a larger area of habitat than that lost, to fully compensate for impacts on biodiversity.

**Rule 6:** Deviations from the published methodology of biodiversity metric 3.0 need to be ecologically justified and agreed with relevant decision makers. While the methodology is expected to be suitable in the majority of circumstances it is recognised that there may be exceptions. Any local or project-specific adaptations of the metric must be transparent and fully justified.

## APPENDIX 4: Acronyms

SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
HLDP	Harlow Local Development Plan
GI	Green Infrastructure
BNG	Biodiversity Net-Gain
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
HGGT	Harlow Gilston Garden Town
BGP	Biodiversity Gain Plan
LEAP	Local Equipped Area of Play
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play
MUGA	Multiuse Games Area
LAP	Local Area of Play
IDP	Infrastructure Delivery Plan
KM	Kilometres
SQM	Square Metres
HA	Hectares

## APPENDIX 5: Useful Information/Links

Policy Background	Evidence Base	Registered Groups/Bodies website	Biodiversity	GI
<a href="#">Harlow Local Development Plan</a>	Harlow Open Space and GI Strategy <a href="#">Part 1</a> <a href="#">Part 2</a>	<a href="#">Fields in Trust</a>	<a href="#">Biodiversity Metric 3.0</a>	<a href="#">Natural Capital Tool</a>
<a href="#">NPPF</a> and <a href="#">NPPG</a>	Harlow Sports Facilities Study <a href="#">Part 1</a> <a href="#">Part 2</a> <a href="#">Part 3</a>	<a href="#">Sport England</a>	<a href="#">Essex Biodiversity Validation Checklist</a>	<a href="#">Ecometric</a>
<a href="#">Harlow Design Guide SPD</a>		<a href="#">National Allotment Society</a>	<a href="#">NHBC, Barrett Homes and RSPBs 2021 publication 'Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities'</a>	<a href="#">Building With Nature</a>
<a href="#">HGGT Garden Town IDP</a>		<a href="#">Natural England</a>		<a href="#">Green Flag Award</a>
<a href="#">HGGT Vision and Design Guide</a>				