

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	20 OCTOBER 2026
Report Title:	DRAFT BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE / DRAFT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND HOUSING CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	JACK DANGERFIELD PRINCIPAL STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to consult on both the draft Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and draft Green Infrastructure (GI) SPG documents. Subsequent adoption of these SPGs will enable effective implementation of the biodiversity and GI policies contained within the adopted Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), the Council's statutory land-use planning document.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to consult on both the draft Biodiversity and GI SPG documents (**Appendices 1 & 2**).

2. Background

- 2.1 The adopted RLDP (March 2024) plays a key role in enabling sustainable, mixed and balanced communities, including in the protection and enhancement of GI and biodiversity.

- 2.2 GI is the network of multifunctional green spaces, natural and semi-natural features, such as trees and hedgerows, rivers, and woodlands that intersperse and connect places. GI functions at different scales which, together, support natural ecosystems. Individual GI elements/assets, such as parks, trees or sustainable drainage systems, can be designed and managed to provide multiple benefits or 'functions' for people and wildlife, such as (but not limited to):
- Climate change mitigation;
 - Climate change adaptation;
 - Biodiversity/Environmental protection;
 - Access, recreation, play, movement and leisure;
 - Reducing health inequalities;
 - Supporting food sustainability; and
 - Enhancing opportunities for active travel.
- 2.3 Biodiversity relates to the variety of living organisms, including plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, together with the habitats and ecosystems they form. It underpins and supports natural environmental systems. Strengthening biodiversity is essential to maintain the stability, resilience, and health of the natural environment.
- 2.4 The RLDP seeks to maximise the benefits provided by high-quality multifunctional GI and help reverse the decline of biodiversity through new development. The effective integration of GI into new development, together with the implementation of measures to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, can help to ensure that a 'Net Benefit for Biodiversity' (NBB) is achieved. Developments are required to follow a 'step-wise' approach to this end, which is a decision-making hierarchy outlined in national planning policy that guides developers and authorities on how to avoid, minimise, mitigate, and compensate for environmental impacts.
- 2.5 The existing *SPG 19: Biodiversity and Development* was adopted in July 2014 and was prepared to supplement policies contained within the previous Local Development Plan. There have since been significant changes to Planning Policy Wales (PPW), alongside the adoption of the new RLDP. These changes have necessitated a review and update of the SPG to ensure that it provides current and appropriate supplementary guidance on biodiversity and GI.
- 2.6 The Development Control Committee was informed of the need to revise SPG 19: Biodiversity and Development on 23rd July 2026. The proposed GI and Biodiversity SPGs will together replace this existing SPG by providing additional planning guidance to support adopted RLDP policies. By separating the existing SPG into two documents, this complex policy area will be more accessible to the public, planning applicants, officers and elected members. The draft SPGs attached to this report (**Appendices 1 & 2**) represent the culmination of this workstream.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The draft Biodiversity SPG (**Appendix 1**) aims to support and provide further direction on the implementation of RLDP policies SP17, DNP5 and DNP6, which relate to the protection and enhancement of habitats and environments. It outlines how development proposals should protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity, and secure NBB in accordance with the requirements of the RLDP and national planning policy. Its purpose is to clarify how applicants, developers, and decision-makers should interpret and apply the policies' requirements relating to biodiversity throughout the planning, design, assessment and delivery of development proposals.
- 3.2 The draft Biodiversity SPG provides specific guidance on:
- Applying the biodiversity requirements of the RLDP to development proposals;
 - Applying the step-wise approach (mitigation hierarchy) to avoid, minimise, restore and, where necessary, compensate for unavoidable impacts on biodiversity;
 - Protecting, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, including habitats, species, and ecological networks;
 - Delivering NBB through good design and multifunctional GI;
 - Applying the DECCA framework (Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Adaptability of ecosystem resilience) to help create more resilient, better connected and climate-adapted ecosystems; and
 - Preparing and submitting ecological information and evidence required to support planning applications and demonstrate policy compliance.
- 3.3 The draft GI SPG (**Appendix 2**) aims to provide additional detail on how Policy DNP8 should be interpreted and applied in practice. It clarifies the policy's requirements and details how proposals will be assessed to ensure they protect existing GI and integrate new high-quality GI throughout the county borough.
- 3.4 The GI SPG provides specific guidance on:
- The principles of GI, including what it is, why it is important, and the range of assets and features that contribute to GI networks;
 - The strategic and DM policy framework for GI; including the requirements of Policy DNP8 of the RLDP;
 - Planning requirements for new development, including how to:
 - Develop a detailed understanding of existing GI assets within and adjacent to a site;
 - Understand, integrate, protect and maintain existing GI assets and features within and adjacent to development sites;
 - Enhance and strengthen the extent, quality, connectivity and multifunctionality of GI through development proposals; and
 - Mitigate and compensate for unavoidable impacts on, or loss of, GI assets and features;
 - Produce a GI Statement (template provided).

- 3.5 These two SPGs together provide a clear, practical and step-by-step framework for members of the public, planning applicants, officers and elected members to follow, supporting the consistent interpretation and effective implementation of what can be a complex policy area.
- 3.6 Prior to seeking Council approval for adoption of each of these SPGs, they will be subject to a public consultation exercise. This will be enabled by utilising the Council's online consultation portal, direct targeting of stakeholders (including all elected members and town and community councils), and a social media campaign. Consultation responses will be sought to influence and shape the final versions of the SPGs. Consultation reports for each SPG will then be presented back to Cabinet, and then to Council. These reports will document a general summary of comments, the issues raised and the local planning authority's responses, while detailing how those comments have influenced the final versions of each SPG. Once adopted, the final SPGs will add weight to the interpretation of the policies contained within the RLDP, provide more detailed advice to planning applicants, and will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The SPGs aim to enable development while protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the benefits delivered by GI for people and wildlife. The SPGs will support the delivery of sustainable development and contribute towards Local Well-being Objective One: "A prosperous place with thriving communities".
- 5.2 The SPGs will also contribute to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
- *A prosperous Wales* – The SPGs will support this goal by promoting sustainable resource use, climate action, resilient ecosystems and low-carbon development.
 - *A resilient Wales* – The SPGs will support this goal by protecting and enhancing biodiversity, strengthening ecological networks and promoting resilient, multifunctional ecosystems that can adapt to climate change.
 - *A more equal Wales* – The SPGs will support this goal by promoting equitable access to high-quality GI and green and semi-natural spaces, helping to reduce inequalities in access to healthy and sustainable environments.
 - *A Healthier Wales* – The SPGs will support this goal by promoting access to high-quality natural and semi-natural green spaces that encourage physical activity, support mental well-being and contribute to healthier communities.

- *A Wales of cohesive communities* – The SPGs will support this goal by promoting attractive, well-connected and multifunctional green spaces that contribute to the quality, safety and connectivity of communities.
- *A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh Language* – The SPGs will support this goal by promoting high-quality green spaces and natural environments that provide opportunities for recreation, sport and community participation.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 The draft Biodiversity and GI SPGs support the Council's response to climate change by providing guidance on how biodiversity and GI should be protected, enhanced and integrated into development proposals. The protection, enhancement and creation of habitats, ecological networks and connected, multifunctional GI can contribute to both climate change mitigation and adaptation. This includes through carbon storage and sequestration, supporting biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, reducing surface water runoff, providing shade, and improving the resilience of the natural environment to the impacts of climate change. The SPGs therefore support the delivery of more resilient, healthy and attractive places and contribute to the Council's wider objectives for addressing climate change.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent implications from this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- (a) Approve a public consultation period of 6 weeks on the draft Biodiversity SPG (**Appendix 1**) and draft GI SPG (**Appendix 2**);
 - (b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director - Communities and Group Manager - Planning and Development Services to make minor presentational changes, typographical or factual corrections as necessary prior to public consultation;
 - (c) Note that the results of the public consultations will be presented back to Cabinet for approval to send the final form SPGs to Council for adoption.

Background documents

None.