



Borough of Telford and Wrekin Cabinet

Thursday 15 December 2022

Declaration of Further Green Guarantee Sites

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy – Cabinet Member: Climate change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment and Cultural Services
Lead Director:	James Dunn – Director: Prosperity and Investment
Service Area:	Development Management
Report Author:	Stuart Dunlop - Ecology & Green Infrastructure Specialist
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Cabinet – 15 December 2022

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1.1 Approve the declaration of 107 new Green Guarantee Sites;
- 1.2 Delegate authority to complete the declaration process to the Director: Prosperity and Investment and Director: Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment and Cultural Services.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report proposes the extension of the Council's existing Green Guarantee protection to an additional 107 sites in Council ownership within the borough.

2.2 The Green Guarantee provides added security for green spaces of local importance which are in the ownership of the Council and safeguards these from future development or disposal.

2.3 The protection is recognised in the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan which confirms the Council’s commitment to the provision of locally accessible green spaces and to meeting the needs of local communities. The sites are valuable to the wildlife they support and the opportunities they provide for leisure and recreation and the positive impacts they bring to health and wellbeing.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Green Guarantee Strategy is part of the Council’s overarching commitment to promote accessible green space. Approximately 90% of the borough is composed of ‘Green Infrastructure’ with only 10% comprising buildings, roofs, roads, footpaths, town squares and car parks. Telford Green Network covers approximately 2500ha and is described as “one of the largest scale, visually beneficial and informal recreation assets of any town in the country”, which is a lasting legacy of the original landscape structure plan designed for the New Town in 1971.

3.2 Within this Green Network sits a hierarchy of statutory and non-statutory sites comprising:

- c. 108 ha of SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
- c. 410 ha of Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- c. 195 ha of proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- c. 513 ha of Local Wildlife Sites (some of which overlap with LNRs), and
- c. 557 ha of existing Green Guarantee sites

3.3 The selection of sites has been made using the experience and knowledge across the Council. The Council have applied a set of criteria based on the value of the site to local communities, biodiversity value and leisure and recreational value evidence work undertaken as part of the Local Plan in accordance with the set criteria:

	Criteria	Explanation	Evidence Base
1	Ownership	The site must be owned by Telford and Wrekin Council	Telford and Wrekin land ownership datasets
2	Green Network	Is the site within the Green Network (as defined in the emerging Local Plan)	Green Network mapping 2018 as shown on the policies map within the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan
3	Local Support	Has the community been involved in the site in the past? E.g. community events, litter picking, tree planting etc... .	Council knowledge
4	Ecological Value	Does the site have ecological value evidenced by:	a) All species records from the Shropshire Ecological Data Network April 2015

		<p>a) Historical species records from the Shropshire Ecological Data Network</p> <p>b) Natural or Semi-natural habitats present on site</p> <p>c) Potential for wildlife to be present</p>	b) Council knowledge and interpretation
5	Ecological Corridor/Stepping Stone	Does the site form part of the Ecological Corridor or Stepping Stone as defined by the Lawton Report ¹	Telford & Wrekin Council Ecological Network Mapping Technical Paper & mapping 2014
6	Friends Group	Is there an active 'Friends of' group involved on the site	Council knowledge
7	Passive Recreation	Is the site used for passive recreation? E.g. dog walking, informal play etc... .	Council knowledge
8	Active Recreation	Is the site used for active recreation? E.g. formal sport and more formal play including use of formal play areas, pitches and games areas etc... .	Council knowledge
9	Cultural/Events Potential	Does the site have potential to be used for small scale community events?	Council knowledge

3.4 Protection of the Green Guarantee sites is afforded by the Council's ownership and ensures that any disposal of, or change of use of a Green Guarantee site is considered by Cabinet. Previous Cabinet Reports set out that certain works that are in the community interest and do not impose any unbudgeted financial commitment on the Council can be authorised by the Director. Such works are regarded as being wholly consistent with the Green Guarantee strategy and would include:

- Proposals intended to enhance the recreational or leisure value of Green Guarantee sites for the communities they serve
- Proposals directly related to the management of the site for its current use
- The removal and/or replacement of existing structures or apparatus where there had been public engagement and where the local Parish Council are in agreement with the proposal
- Proposals for the creation or management of below ground easements and wayleaves with full re-instatement following the proposed works

- Leases which are in the community interest, which safeguard the land for uses which align with the Green Guarantee strategy and which include appropriate protection from development within their terms.

3.5 The Council also intends that highways infrastructure works will be acceptable on land protected under the Green Guarantee.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 This report proposes the extension of the Green Guarantee protection to an additional 107 which meet the criteria set out in paragraph 3.3 and are therefore in accordance with the declaration of sites over several phases since 2015.

4.2 The new proposed sites are set out in a list in Appendix 1 with site maps provided in Appendix 2.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 The Council is committed to recognising and protected locally accessible green space and has already protected 198 Green Guarantee sites alongside extensive areas of Local Nature Reserve.

5.2 These additional 107 sites are worthy of inclusion in the Green Guarantee under the criteria set out for the declaration through earlier cabinet reports. This would bring the total number of Green Guarantee sites within the borough to 306.

5.3 The established alternative route for protecting small areas of green space is the Local Green Space designation set out under paragraphs 101 – 103 of National Planning Policy Framework. This route is only available at the time of adopting a new Local Plan or making a Neighbourhood Plan. The Council has, in its adopted Local Plan, left the Local Green Space route available for use during the Neighbourhood Plan making process and has determined that it will use the Green Guarantee process set out in cabinet reports since 2015 to protect these kind of spaces in its ownership.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 Internal consultation with relevant officers has taken place and the sites proposed meet the established criteria for inclusion in the Green Guarantee protection. No other key risks have been identified associated with the proposal which seeks to protect the land from disposal or development and change of use but proposes no other changes to access arrangements or usage.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The inclusion of existing land under the Green Guarantee plays an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and green infrastructure.

7.2 Research has shown that the public health benefits derived from living close to accessible green spaces are considerable and include decreased levels of obesity,

heart disease and diabetes as well as lower levels of stress. Access to green spaces is also seen as an effective treatment for clinical depression and regular walking has been shown to increase life expectancy. Provision of accessible green spaces can help to reduce costs on some local NHS services.

- 7.3 It is increasingly recognised that we are facing three challenges linked to the natural environment:
- The impacts of a changing climate,
 - The impacts of current declines in biodiversity, and
 - The increasing need to strengthen the connections between people and the natural world.

The protection of additional areas of Green Guarantee land, as part of a wider suite of sites across the borough, will help to address these challenges at a local level.

- 7.3 The Council recognises the role each site, both small and large, plays in increasing local resilience to a changing climate. The Green Guarantee sites play a supporting role to the larger core sites (including Local Nature Reserves and SSSIs) and the protection ensures residents will have continued access to accessible green space on their doorstep allowing them to create meaningful connections to the natural environment as well as helping people improve their health and wellbeing by engaging in healthy activities locally. The Council is not simply providing these spaces but working actively to ensure they are participatory. Telford's green spaces are cared for by a combination of Council services and just under 30 individual 'friends of' groups, many of which are affiliated with The Telford Green Space Partnership.

- 7.4 The response to the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for our communities to have access to local green space and has shown that there are inequalities in the levels of local green space provision and accessibility. At the height of the pandemic in 2020 the UK's People and Nature survey found that nearly 50% of adults surveyed had spent more time in the natural environment than before the pandemic. However, it was also found that people's ability to access local green space was strongly linked to their socio-economic status. People living in areas of high deprivation, on low incomes or without a current job were less likely to be visiting local green spaces. Similar trends were also found for older people, minority ethnic groups and those with long term illness.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Council will continue to manage and maintain the sites at its current budget levels. S106 funding and other infrastructure investment funding will be used to refurbish play and sport facilities and other site infrastructure where it has been secured against a particular need in that area – this is in line with the previous Cabinet Reports which set out circumstances, including site improvements in the public interest, which are acceptable under the Green Guarantee.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Council has determined that it will use the Green Guarantee process set out in cabinet reports since 2015 to protect locally accessible green space.
- 9.2. Cabinet is the decision-making body in respect of management of Council owned land. These powers can be delegated to officers who can exercise these powers without the need to seek Cabinet approval by way of a formal report.
- 9.3. Cabinet has already decided that it should retain the decision-making responsibility for all significant decisions relating to those areas included in the Council's Green Guarantee list.
- 9.4 This report recommends arrangements which helpfully clarify when officers are able to exercise their delegated powers in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member in respect of these sites without having to seek Cabinet authority.
- 9.5. There are no HR implications.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The designation of the areas as Green Guarantee will deliver borough wide benefits and specific impacts in multiple wards.
- 10.2 The designation of the Green Guarantee sites contributes to several priorities, including:
 - Ensuring that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained
 - Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and addressing health inequalities.
- 10.3 The provision of accessible green spaces contributes to supporting the delivery of the Borough's public health priorities encouraging people of all ages to remain active.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 In 2010 Natural England published 'Nature Nearby' setting out the recommended standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace:

"Everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural greenspace:

 - Of at least 2 ha in size, no more than 300 metres from home;
 - At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home; and
 - One accessible 500 ha site within 10km of home; plus
 - A minimum of one hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population"
- 11.2 The larger Green Guarantee sites contribute to the borough achieving this standard and the smaller sites contribute too, sometimes providing a green walking route by which residents can access a larger site and sometimes simply providing a green view or a tiny oasis within the built up area bringing people into

closer contact with green spaces and nature and providing opportunities, of varying kinds, for exercise, reflection, relaxation and engagement.

- 11.3 Health inequalities are often linked to individuals' access to nature. It has been shown that living close to accessible green spaces can promote public health and reduce levels of obesity, heart disease, reduce stress and levels of depression.
- 11.4 Access to high quality green space is important to health and wellbeing at all stages in life. Learning through natural play is a key part of developing imagination, physical fine motor skills and improves a child's ability to deal with stress and adversity in life. Activities in nature can have a significant impact on reducing social isolation and symptoms anxiety and depression in adults.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 The Council, working with parish and town councils, friends groups and local environmental organisations has made a commitment to address the inequalities in physical, cultural and social access to the natural environment and this reflects even more positively given the changes seen through the pandemic.
- 12.2 Volunteering through Friends of Groups is an established and effective way of engaging a wide range of people and provides opportunities for maintaining and improving physical health as well as providing social opportunities. These groups also offer opportunities for local people to be involved in site management and decision making processes through the steering groups on which Telford & Wrekin Council, town and parish councils and local people work together for the good of the site. Friends of Groups can be established for sites of varying sizes, many smaller green spaces have active volunteer groups engaged in their maintenance and use.
- 12.3 Telford & Wrekin Council is also delivering Live Well Telford, an online community directory which signposts local people to a range of services across the borough. Volunteering opportunities at green spaces are made available on this directory.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 The green and open spaces in the borough hold a considerable resource of biodiversity which the Council is making a baseline assessment of biodiversity value in 2022 and 2023. The Council will identify potential for increasing biodiversity value across these sites, through amending and altering management, and determining how those increases are funded in the long term.
- 13.2 Protecting sites and maintaining them as green spaces provides a range of ecosystem services including urban cooling, flood storage and carbon sequestration.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Cabinet Report 15 October 2015 entitled Green Guarantee and associated minutes

- 2 Cabinet Report 29 January 2016 entitled Donnington Recreation Ground Centenary Fields and associated minutes
- 3 Cabinet Report 31st May 2018 entitled Green Guarantee and the big green vote & associated minutes
- 4 Cabinet Report 6th January 2021 entitled Green Guarantee Review and associated minutes

15.0 Appendices

- 1 Site List – New Sites
- 2 Site Maps – New Sites

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	19/10/2022	21/10/2022	JD
Finance	19/10/2022	25/10/2022	AEM
Legal	19/10/2022	02/11/2022	SH
SDM	19/10/2022	03/11/2022	VH