



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 15 October 2026

Telford & Wrekin Green Guarantee Scheme Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability
Lead Director:	Ross Cook - Executive Director: Place
Service Area:	Prosperity & Investment
Report Author:	Stuart Dunlop - Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 384144 Email: Stuart.Dunlop@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Cabinet – 15 October 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approve the declaration of 14 new Green Guarantee Sites, the extension of two existing sites and a boundary amendment to one existing site.
- 1.2 Delegate authority to complete the declaration process to the Executive Director of Place and Director of Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report proposes the extension of the Council's existing Green Guarantee protection to add an additional 14 sites in Council ownership within the borough,

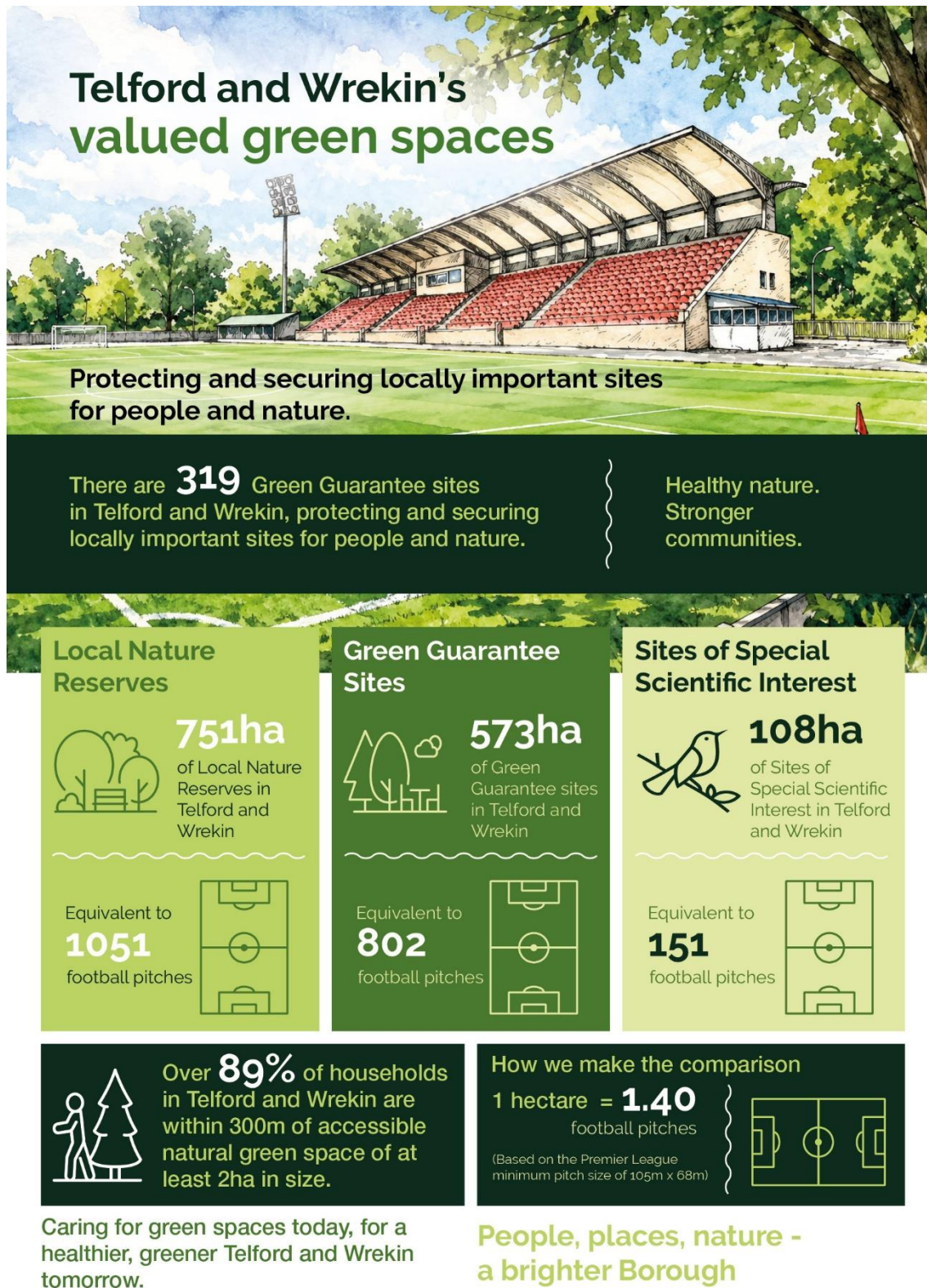
extending two existing sites and amending the boundary of one existing site. The proposal will increase Green Guarantee protection from 305 to 319 sites, securing an additional 16.21 hectares of council-owned green space at no additional revenue cost taking the total coverage of Green Guarantee sites to 573ha. This is the equivalent of over 802 Premier League football pitches.

- 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. 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 In August 2026 an independent appraisal of '*The best places to raise a family across the UK*' by Money Super Market ranked Telford and Wrekin as the number one Local Authority area to raise a family in England. Telford and Wrekin scored highly in several areas, including 11.7 out of 12 in the 'Environment' category which assessed the boroughs accessibility to natural green space and is based on data held and presented in the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework. Similarly, in Money Super Market's '*UK Playground Index*', published in September 2026, Telford and Wrekin also ranked as the number one local authority area for access to outdoor play, averaging more than six accessible parks or playing fields within 1km of home. This is testament to the focus that the Local Authority puts on appropriate application of Green Infrastructure guidance and policy into its forward planning, and the golden thread of maintaining and enhancing its wider Green Network for the benefit of people and nature.
- 3.3 Within this Green Network sits a hierarchy of statutory and non-statutory sites. Including but not limited to:
- c.108ha of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - c.666ha of Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
 - c.82ha of proposed Local Nature Reserve

- c.557ha of existing Green Guarantee sites
- c.16.2ha of proposed Green Guarantee sites



- 3.4 The selection of new Green Guarantee sites has been made using Officer experience and local knowledge across the Council including from elected members. 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 2025 as shown on the policies map within the Emerging 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) Historical species records from the Shropshire & Telford Environmental Record Centre b) Natural or Semi-natural habitats present on site c) Potential for wildlife to be present	a) All species records from the Shropshire & Telford Environmental Records Centre – August 2026 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

¹ Sir John Lawton. Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network (2010).

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

3.5 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, but are not limited to:

- Proposals intended to enhance the recreational or leisure value of Green Guarantee sites for the community they serve;
- Proposals directly related to the management of the site for its current use;
- The removal and/or replacement of existing structure 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 reinstatement following the proposed works; and
- Leases which are in the community interest, which safeguard the land for used which align with the Green Guarantee strategy and which include appropriate protection from development within their terms.

3.6 The Council also intends that highways infrastructure works will be acceptable on land protected under the Green Guarantee. This includes general maintenance works which preserve the function and integrity of the site for the public, such as replacement of bins, signage, lighting columns, drains and traffic lights. Proposals to establish new highways or to remove naturalised habitat in lieu of developed surfaces are not included within the scope of allowed works.

3.7 The Council's Vision 2032 strategy has four key ambitions:



The Telford & Wrekin Green Guarantee scheme actively contributes to three of the four ambitions.

Ambition 1: protection of locally significant open spaces valuable recreation sites safeguards meeting places and community use areas for current and future generations within the local areas, preventing the loss of these areas through development or significant change of use which can impact the local community.

Ambition 2: protecting open spaces and valuable recreation sites directly contributes to local resident's ability to access healthy spaces for physical and mental wellbeing, as well as providing connected, safe areas through which residents can travel between local areas or access public transport routes.

Ambition 4: protection of Green Guarantee sites from disposal or change of use under Council ownership without Cabinet consultation directly relates to Ambition 4 by reducing the developable potential of these sites and providing a long-term commitment to managing the site. By seeking to maintain and enhance its ecological and biodiversity value, the Council is enhancing the ecosystem services provided by these sites to their local communities.

- 3.8 In addition to the above, the Telford & Wrekin Council Green Pledge scheme is currently accepting applications and has been designed to compliment and support the ongoing declaration of Green Guarantee, and other protected sites. Green Pledge will allow the Council to begin working to safeguard land owned by other public bodies or in private ownership which has the same value and characteristics as its owned land against similar pressures, increasing the overall coverage of managed and protected sites in the borough.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 This report proposed the extension of the Green Guarantee protection to an additional 14 sites 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. The new proposed sites are set out in a list in Appendix A with site maps provided in Appendix B.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council is committed to recognising and protecting locally accessible green space and has already protected 305 Green Guarantee sites alongside extensive areas of Local Nature Reserve.
- 5.2 These additional 14 sites are worthy of including in the Green Guarantee under the criteria set out for the declaration in paragraph 3.3 and in previous Cabinet reports. This would bring the total number of Green Guarantee sites to 319.
- 5.3 The established alternative route for protecting small areas of green space is the Local Green Space designation set out under Chapter 16; Policy HC2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (*August 2026*). This route is only available at the time of adopting a new Local Plan or making a Neighbourhood Plan. The council, 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.

- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 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.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Council will continue to manage and maintain the sites at its current budget levels. Section 106 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 Green Guarantee Scheme is a Council policy through which designated Council-owned green spaces are afforded additional protection from future development. The Scheme supports the Council's wider environmental and planning objectives and is recognised within the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan.
- 9.2 The Scheme does not create statutory protection equivalent to, for example, designation as a Local Nature Reserve or Village Green but represents a policy commitment by the Council in relation to the future management and disposal of relevant land. Therefore, 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.
- 9.3 Any proposals relating to Green Guarantee land must continue to comply with the Council's constitutional requirements, including the Scheme of Delegation. 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 formal Cabinet approval.
- 9.4 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. Significant decisions relating to Green Guarantee sites include any decision which would result in the Council relinquishing control of the site, or disposing of the site, or allowing the site to be considered for a development proposal. Any decision which would result in the site no longer meeting the criteria for Green Guarantee selection would also be considered significant.
- 9.5 This report recommends arrangements which 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 approval from full Cabinet.
- 9.6 The proposals contained in this report can be delivered using existing resources

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The designation of these additional 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 These additional designations also contribute toward Ambition 4 of the Telford & Wrekin Council's Vision 2032 strategy: the environment is protected for the benefit of everyone.
- 10.4 The provision of accessible green space contributes to supporting delivery of the Borough's public health priorities encouraging people of all ages to remain active.



Figure 1. Stirchley BMX track: a proposed Green Guarantee site providing both biodiversity value for birds, reptiles, bats and mammals as well as an integral recreation and sports facility for the local communities of Stirchley, Holmer Lake and Brookside. It is understood that a range of arboricultural works are proposed for this site to encourage use of the facilities as the site is closed off from public roads and paths due to tree cover.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

Health and Mental Wellbeing

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 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.



Figure 2. Lawley Village Play Area and Village Green: two proposed Green Guarantee sites providing recreation value to the local communities of Lawley and Overdale, as well as opportunities to access open green space for both physical and mental wellbeing.

Access to Greenspace Close to Home

- 11.3 In 2023, Natural England published the National Green Infrastructure Framework (NGIF) which provided an update to the Accessible Greenspace Standards. These are now:

“Within 15 minutes’ walk:

EITHER a Doorstep OR Local Accessible Greenspace

- *A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, or*

- *A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.*

AND

- *A medium sized neighbourhood natural greenspace (10ha) within 1km.*

AND, beyond 15 minutes' walk:

- *A medium/large wider neighbourhood natural greenspace (20ha) within 2km. and*
- *A large district natural greenspace (100ha) within 5-km. and*
- *A very large subregional greenspace within (500 ha) within 10 km."*

11.4 In 2016 the Marches Ecosystem Assessment revealed that 89% of households within Telford and Wrekin are within 300m of accessible natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size.

11.5 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. These sites bring people into closer contact with green spaces and nature and providing opportunities, of varying kinds, for exercise, reflection, relaxation and engagement.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The Council, working with parish and town councils, friends of groups and local environmental organisations have 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 and mental health, as well as providing social opportunities. These groups also offer a chance 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, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

Natural Capital

- 13.1 In 2020 a government review collated and assessed our current understanding of the economics of biodiversity. The study sets out how we rely on the natural environment to provide us with food, water and shelter and how the natural systems we are part of regulate our climate, maintain nutrient cycles and oxygen production. The review sets out how, as individuals or as communities, the natural environment can enhance our physical health and mental wellbeing providing us with opportunities for spiritual fulfilment, recreation and recuperation. The study highlighted how the natural systems we are part of also absorb the waste products we produce including carbon dioxide, plastics and other forms of waste that, in some instances, can be polluting or disruptive to the way the natural systems we are part of work.
- 13.2 The natural environment has an intrinsic worth. However, our natural environment can also be viewed as an asset in the same way that roads, buildings and factories or health, knowledge and skills are assets. The natural environment has 'value' and delivers 'economic good'.
- 13.3 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 through 2026 and beyond. 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.
- 13.4 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 31 May 2018 entitled Green Guarantee and the big green vote and associated minutes
- 4 Cabinet Report 6 January 2021 entitled Green Guarantee Review and associated minutes
- 5 Cabinet Report 15 December 2022 entitled Declaration of further Green Guarantee Sites and associated minutes

15.0 Appendices

- A Site List – New Green Guarantee Sites
- B Site Maps – New Green Guarantee Sites

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	24/08/2026	15/09/2026	RC
Legal	24/08/2026	15/09/2026	SH
Finance	24/08/2026	17/09/2026	TD
DM	24/08/2026	16/09/2026	VH