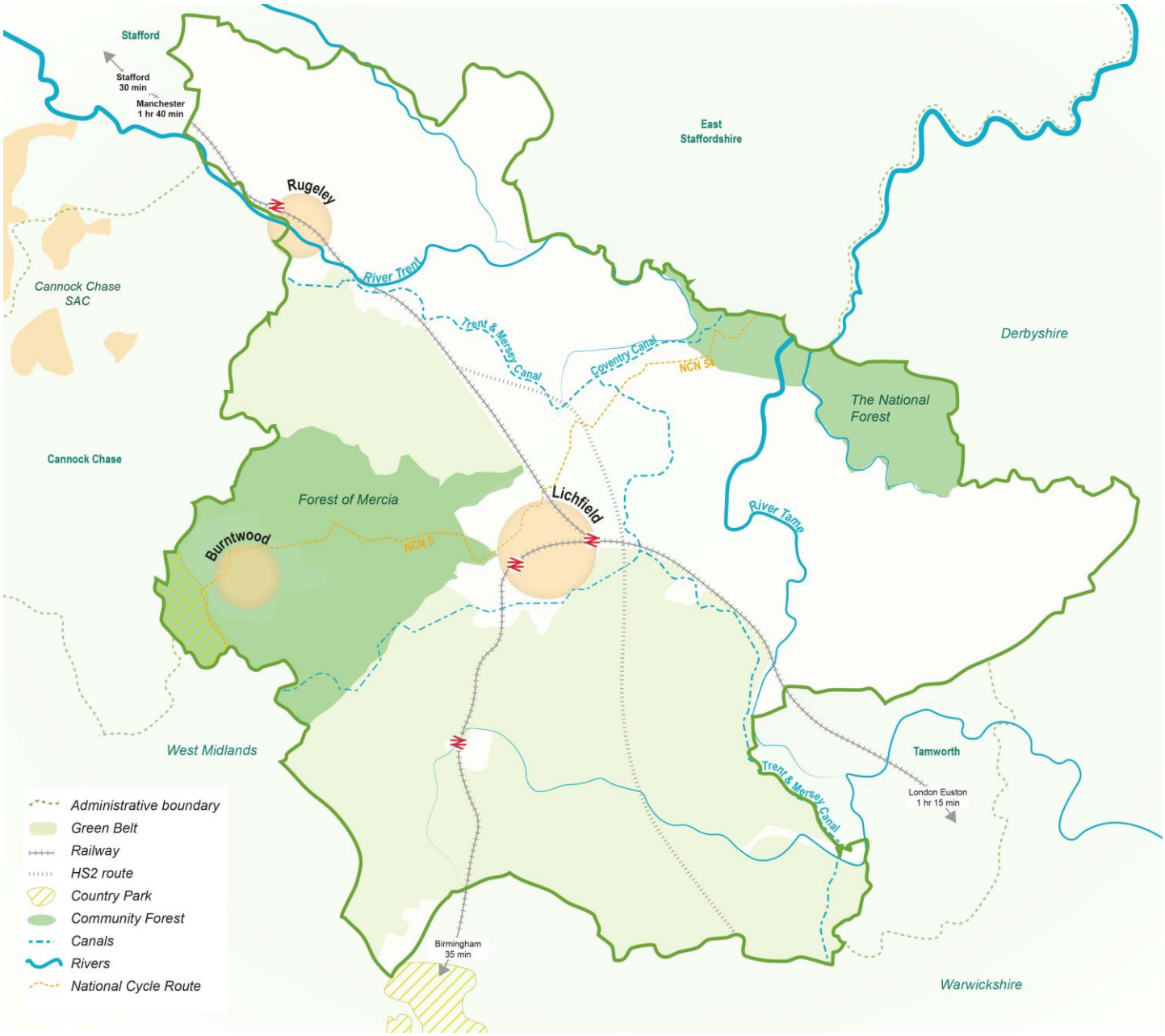
Green Infrastructure Study

Lichfield District Council

Draft report
Prepared by LUC
October 2025



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Executive Summary

Lichfield District Council has committed to becoming the greenest district in the country by 2050. Delivering on this ambition requires more than protecting existing parks and landscapes: it means actively designing and investing in a strategic, connected network of green and blue infrastructure (GI) that underpins healthy communities, thriving places, nature recovery and climate resilience.

This GI Study for Lichfield District provides the evidence and framework to achieve that ambition through the planning process and beyond it. It maps the District's existing GI assets, identifies areas of greatest need and sets out where investment will bring the biggest returns for people, nature and place. It also proposes new ways of working and partnerships to ensure delivery is coordinated and sustained.

What is Green & Blue Infrastructure?

Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI) is the network of natural and semi-natural spaces - from parks, woodlands, meadows and street trees to rivers, canals, wetlands and sustainable drainage features - that connect landscapes, people and places. Planned as a network, these elements deliver multiple benefits at once: they support wildlife, make walking and cycling easier and more pleasant, help manage water and urban heat and enhance the distinctiveness and vitality of towns and villages.

This study sets out the importance of viewing GI as essential infrastructure – just as essential as other types. By investing in it strategically, Lichfield can recover nature, strengthen communities, grow its visitor economy and achieve climate resilience - turning the ambition of being the greenest district in the country into reality

Why does Lichfield District need a GI study?

This GI Study will help to shape and support the delivery of Lichfield District Council (LDC)'s emerging Local Plan, which will guide development up until 2043. With significant population growth and need for new homes to be built, the district's existing green and blue spaces face increasing pressure. This study offers a vital opportunity to plan proactively – not just to protect what already exists, but to create a stronger, more connected GI network that delivers for people, place and nature.

This will help to ensure that Lichfield District's Local Plan lives up to the ambitions of the Council's Corporate Strategy (Lichfield 2050), which includes an aim for Lichfield District to become the "greenest district in the country".

A GI Vision for Lichfield District in 2050

"By 2050, Lichfield District will be home to a connected, nature-rich green and blue infrastructure network that forms a central plank in ambitions to be the 'greenest District in the country'. It will support the recovery of key habitats like heathlands, woodlands, wetlands and river corridors, improve access to green space in underserved communities and help manage water, carbon and climate risks across the district. This network will shape healthier, more distinctive and better-connected places – from Lichfield city centre to outlying villages – while underpinning sustainable growth and a fair transition to net zero."

This vision is supported by a number of strategic objectives, which you can find in **Chapter 3** of the study.

How is the District's GBI network performing today?

The GI "themes" used for this study draw on the Benefit Principles set out in the Natural England GI Framework - which outlines best practice for GI planning across England. They help to draw out the multiple 'functions' which GI assets play in the District:

- **Nature-rich Lichfield:** GI restores and connects habitats – including ancient woodlands, lowland heaths, river meadows - forming a resilient nature recovery network across the District. With woodland cover currently below national averages, there is significant opportunity for expansion, especially via the existing National Forest and Forest of Mercia.
- **Active and Healthy Lichfield:** Accessible, nature-rich spaces support active lifestyles and mental wellbeing. GI plays a vital role in creating safe, inclusive places for exercise, play, rest and social interaction and in making walking and cycling the natural choice.
- **Thriving and Prosperous Lichfield:** GI strengthens placemaking by enhancing town centres, improving the setting of heritage assets and anchoring the visitor economy - linking attractions such as Beacon Park, Chasewater Park, the Arboretum and Fradley Junction.
- **Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment**: GI is a natural tool for flood management and water quality along blue corridors like the Tame, Trent and the Lichfield's canal network. Wetlands, swales and restored river corridors slow the flow, improve ecological status and make space for water in both rural catchments and urban areas.

- **A Resilient and Climate-Positive Lichfield**: Expanding tree cover, greening streets and promoting low-carbon travel will help Lichfield meet its net zero goal, reduce heat stress in Burntwood and Lichfield in particular and build resilience to climate risks.

See **Chapter 2** of this report for a full SWOT-style analysis of Lichfield's current GI network across these themes.

GIS data layers used for this study were collated to produce two combined data sets:

- **Valued GI assets:** Existing green and blue infrastructure that provides important ecosystem services, biodiversity, recreation or placemaking value. These areas are priorities for protection and enhancement (see Figure 4.2).
- **GI needs:** Locations where GI is lacking or underperforming, highlighting priorities for investment, restoration or new interventions to improve connectivity, climate resilience and community wellbeing (see Figure 4.3).

These data sets then helped to identify the key priorities set out in the study. You can find these maps and a full explanation of how there were made in **Chapter 4** of this study, and in greater detail in **Appendix C.**

Priority Areas for strategic GI in the District

To focus action where it will have the greatest impact, this study identifies ten Green Infrastructure Priority Areas (GIPAs). These are places where investment in GI can deliver multiple benefits at once - for nature, climate resilience, health, access and placemaking. While every new development across the district should contribute to GI, these areas are where coordinated effort and funding can really transform outcomes.

The 10 GI Priority Areas (GIPAs) identified and mapped in this study are:

1. River Mease Nature Recovery Corridor
2. Trent Valley Wetlands
3. Mercian Greenways: A district-wide blue-green grid
4. Burntwood ‘Forest Town’ & Chasewater Fringe
5. Lichfield City Green Loops – Waters, Parks and Stations

6. Resilient Communities Programme – Surface water and heat (Lichfield & Burntwood)

7. 'Sponge' Employment Parks – Fradley and Burntwood retrofit

8. East-west woodland belt – the 'Two Forests' link

9. Tame Valley blue-green corridor

10. Tame Valley Southern Gateways – Tamworth fringe access and nature corridor

How were the Priority Areas identified?

GIPAs bring together three things:

- **Evidence of need and opportunity** – where mapping shows overlapping pressures (e.g. flood risk, poor access, low canopy cover) alongside valuable GI assets.
- **Partnerships and initiatives** – where local groups, landowners and organisations are already active, giving delivery a much greater chance of success.
- **Planned growth** – where new development offers immediate opportunities to embed GI from the outset.

Each Priority Area profile in the full report sets out its unique context, a map of assets and needs, and the most promising opportunities. Together, the ten areas provide a clear framework for targeting investment and shaping Lichfield's future as a greener, healthier and more resilient district.

Catalysts for delivery

To complement physical interventions, two delivery catalysts are proposed:

- **A Natural Health Service** – connecting communities to GI through green prescribing, guided walks, volunteering and inclusive programmes.
- **A GI Stewardship Network** – a steering group and Council-based coordinator to bring together the many active groups, share lessons and unlock funding for coordinated delivery.

See **Chapter 4** for the full GI Priority Area profiles and further information on the "catalysts for delivery"

A GI-led approach to new settlements in Lichfield District

New settlements offer a rare opportunity to plan sustainable places from the outset. Their scale allows GI to be embedded as a defining feature - linking new communities to the wider landscape, strengthening ecological corridors, supporting climate resilience, and creating a distinctive sense of place through high-quality parks, greenways and natural assets. For a semi-rural district like Lichfield, these sites are crucial opportunities to plan at a landscape scale and apply Garden City principles, ensuring that growth enhances the district's green character and delivers lasting benefits for people and nature

Three large sites have been put forward as options to consider for standalone 'new settlements' in the new Lichfield Local Plan (see **Figure 5.1** in the full report). This GI study provides an analysis of the GI constraints and opportunities within each one.

Best practice for GI-led new settlements

The following two case studies (one UK-based, one international) illustrate how a more GI-led approach to planning new settlements can deliver lasting benefits. A similar level of ambition will be essential to realise Lichfield's 2050 vision of becoming 'the greenest district in the country'

- **Houten (Netherlands):** Developed from the 1970s, Houten (20,000 homes) is structured around a continuous green-blue and cycle network, with neighbourhoods built around linear parks and waterways. A ring road channels cars to the perimeter, maximising green corridors inside. Historic landscape features were retained, and long-term stewardship is led by the municipality and residents.
- **Waterbeach (Greater Cambridge):** Planned for 8,000–10,000 homes, Waterbeach is structured around a green-blue spine of lakes, wetlands, woodlands and greenways, linking neighbourhoods and the wider landscape. By limiting road dominance, land is freed for continuous ecological corridors and parks. Existing assets are central, with long-term stewardship through a dedicated trust.

See **Chapter 5** of this report for full analysis of the GI opportunities and constraints posed by each of these new settlement options.

Next steps

This study will provide the evidence base for the District's new Local Plan to 2043 and as such will help to guide the infrastructure planning and investment which must come alongside new development. Successful delivery of its ambitions will require:

- Securing high quality on-site GI, by embedding the GI vision and objectives firmly in Local Plan policies and design codes.
- Securing investment in strategic off-site GI, through developer contributions (via Lichfield's Infrastructure Delivery Plan), biodiversity net gain, agri-environment schemes and grants.
- Building strong partnerships with landowners, community groups and strategic bodies.

Chapter 1
Introduction to the study

What is Green Infrastructure?

1.1 Green infrastructure (GI) refers to the network of natural and semi-natural spaces that connect landscapes, people and places. It includes parks, woodlands, rivers, wetlands, street trees, green roofs and even smaller features like ponds, hedgerows and sustainable drainage systems. These elements are planned, designed and managed in a way that delivers a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.

1.2 Blue infrastructure (those water-based elements of the network) are vitally important – for the purposes of this report we will be using 'GI' to refer to both green and blue elements.

1.3 Launched in 2024, Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework sets out a clear national vision for GI as a critical part of the built and natural environment. **[See reference 1]** It encourages a shift from thinking of green and blue spaces as single-purpose features - such as just a park, or just a drainage ditch - to recognising their ability to deliver multiple functions. For example, a high quality river corridor not only helps to manage flood risk but also supports biodiversity, provides walking and cycling routes and improves mental wellbeing for local residents.

1.4 By taking a multifunctional approach to planning and design of GI, it can contribute to climate resilience, support healthy lifestyles, enhance nature recovery and underpin sustainable development. There is increasingly a drive to consider GI as essential infrastructure – on an equal footing with transport, energy and digital networks – rather than as an optional or secondary consideration in planning and design.

Why does Lichfield District need a GI study?

1.5 This GI Study will help to shape and support the delivery of Lichfield District Council (LDC)'s emerging Local Plan which will guide development up until 2043. With significant population growth and need for new homes to be built, the district's existing green and blue spaces face increasing pressure. This study offers a vital opportunity to plan proactively – not just to protect what already exists, but to create a stronger, more connected GI network that delivers for people, place and nature.

1.6 Following the process journey set out in Natural England's GI Framework, the study will help LDC identify strategic priorities, map existing assets and understand where the greatest opportunities lie to enhance, restore, or expand GI. It will generate robust evidence and clear recommendations to inform policy, investment and delivery. Crucially, the study will ensure that new development contributes meaningfully to a multifunctional GI network – supporting climate resilience, nature recovery, health and wellbeing and placemaking across the district.

1.7 This will help to ensure that Lichfield District's Local Plan lives up to the ambitions of the Council's Corporate Strategy (Lichfield 2050), which includes an aim for Lichfield District to become the "greenest district in the country". **[See reference 2]**

How was the Study developed?

1.8 The method for developing this study was split into the following key tasks:

- A desktop baseline review and mapping of key data sets, considering existing policy and emerging information on potential growth locations.
- The identification of relevant GI 'themes', based on Lichfield District's characteristics and the Natural England GI Framework.
- Mapping and analysis of GIS data to understand how different GI assets interact with a range of factors and needs across the district, to identify gaps in current provision.
- Establishing a Vision and set of Strategic Objectives to guide the remainder of the study.
- Engaging with key stakeholders to 'sense check' the baseline and co-create GI opportunities.
- Identifying strategic-scale priorities for GI investment across the District, backed up by 'ground truthing' site visits.
- Considering the 'broad spatial options' for potential new settlements in Lichfield District and setting out the GI challenges and opportunities for each.
- Reviewing existing GI policy and recommending a new policy approach.
- Drafting the final report.

1.9 Because GI does not respect administrative boundaries, it was important that this study takes account of GI corridors which extend beyond the local authority boundaries of Lichfield District itself to take a wider, more strategic view.

What happens next?

Supporting the Local Plan

1.10 This GI Study will form an important part of the evidence base for Lichfield District's emerging Local Plan 2043. It will support both policy development and day-to-day planning decisions by identifying the strategic GI needs of the district. The findings will help shape a robust and forward-looking GI policy framework, ensuring that GI considerations are embedded not just in the Local Plan itself, but also in the assessment of each proposed scheme - working alongside Lichfield District's existing Design Code and other policy documents.

Strong Partnership Working

1.11 Beyond the Local Plan, the study will also provide valuable direction for Lichfield District's wider infrastructure planning - informing updates to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and helping to prioritise investment in nature-based solutions. However, delivering a high-quality, well-connected GI network will require more than just policy - it will need strong collaboration across council departments and with a wide range of external partners, including third sector organisations, landowners, developers and local communities.

From Study to Delivery

1.12 While this study sets out a strategic overview of the district's GI needs and opportunities, it does not provide detailed designs or delivery plans for individual projects. Further work - such as feasibility assessments, costings and community engagement - will be essential to bring identified opportunities to life and ensure that the benefits of GI are delivered on the ground.

Chapter 2
Lichfield District's current GI Network

A summary portrait of Lichfield District and its GI network

2.1 Lichfield District, located in southern Staffordshire is characterised by its historic market towns, rural villages and the rich natural environment which surrounds them. Its main settlements include the cathedral city of Lichfield, Burntwood to the west and the growing communities of Fradley and Fazeley.

2.2 While the city of Lichfield is known for its heritage charm and cultural offer, Burntwood retains a more industrial legacy and the rural areas remain shaped by farming and village life. The district is less densely populated than the English average and the denser urban fringe of Birmingham, with roughly two people per football-pitched size land parcel. The local economy is diverse-agriculture and tourism (particularly the heritage sector) play a steady role. Future plans seek to build on its strategic location near Birmingham, the M6 toll and the West Coast Mainline, including expanding employment sites near key transport nodes.

2.3 The GI network is an integral part of the district's character and quality of life. The landscape is gently undulating, with open arable fields, hedgerows, woodlands and scattered settlements - reflecting the Trent Valley's broad floodplain and the ancient farmlands around it. Key natural assets include the Cannock Chase National Landscape just over the district boundary, which exerts a strong recreational and ecological influence across the western edge of the District. Locally designated sites such as the River Mease SAC further highlight the district's biodiversity value.

2.4 The HS2 rail corridor, currently under construction, also passes through the district to the east of Lichfield City. While it poses some risks of habitat fragmentation and landscape disruption, it is accompanied by a programme of mitigation and biodiversity enhancement measures, which if well delivered could contribute positively to the GI network over the long term.

2.5 River corridors are a defining part of the GI network. The Rivers Tame, Trent and Mease all run through the district, serving as important components of the Nature Recovery Network (being mapped by the Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy) as well as floodplain landscapes that offer opportunities for nature-based recreation and climate resilience. The Coventry Canal and Trent & Mersey Canal

also criss-cross the district, contributing to the leisure economy and providing linear green spaces.

2.6 GI is a central part of the Council's vision for the future of the Lichfield District. The Lichfield 2050 Strategy sets out a bold ambition to "create the greenest district in the country" - recognising the role that accessible, well-connected natural spaces play in supporting health, biodiversity, resilience and place-based prosperity.

Analysing the network by GI theme

2.7 The following sections of Chapter 2 provide a summary of how the District's GI network is currently performing. To do that, five 'themes' have been used to structure the analysis, drawing on the five GI Benefit Principles set out in the Natural England GI Framework. **[See reference** 3**]** The five 'Benefit Principles' summarise the role GI can play in the creation of high quality, attractive, nature rich and climate resilient places, providing a setting for healthy, active day-to-day living, as listed below:

- Nature-rich Lichfield
- Active and healthy Lichfield
- Thriving and prosperous Lichfield
- Understanding and managing Lichfield's water environment
- Resilient and climate positive Lichfield

2.8 Each section begins with a brief overview of national and local policy, before summarising existing performance within the district in each case - driven by a combination of policy review, mapped data analysis and input from key stakeholders. Note that there are some overlaps between the themes, for example between the nature-rich theme and water environment and therefore where relevant, cross-references are made between the themes in the sections below.

2.9 *Please note that where policy documents or legislation are referred, a reference is only added the first time they are referred to.*

Theme 1: Nature-rich Lichfield

2.10 Biodiversity lies at the heart of the benefits that GI can provide. In a rural district like Lichfield, GI helps connect, buffer and extend the reach of existing nature-rich and designated sites - supporting species movement and creating a more resilient, joined-up landscape. This reduces pressure on sites designated for their biodiversity value and allows wildlife to thrive across both the countryside and through Lichfield District's towns and urban centres.

2.11 Carefully planned GI can also restore soils and geodiversity, reversing damage caused by intensive land use and development. With Biodiversity Net Gain now a requirement for most new developments, there is a clear opportunity to secure measurable improvements for nature through both new and enhanced green spaces.

2.12 Crucially, nature recovery is not limited to protected sites. By strengthening everyday connections between people and the natural environment, whether through familiar species, valued local landscapes, or green spaces on the school run, GI plays a vital role in inspiring stewardship and delivering wider environmental benefits across the District.

How does international legislation affect biodiversity in the District?

2.13 The EU Habitats Directive established the Natura 2000 network, a system of protected sites across Europe aimed at conserving Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The Directive forms the cornerstone of nature conservation policy in the EU, was transposed into UK law and continues to apply through domestic legislation.

What does national legislation and policy say?

2.14 The UK's **Environment Act 2021** sets out the government's environmental agenda for the next 25 years, putting key elements of its 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) into law. **[See reference 4] [See reference 5]** It requires the creation of LNRS to build a national nature recovery network and supports the delivery of a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through new development.

2.15 The **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023** places a duty on all local planning authorities to "take account of" their relevant LNRS. **[See reference 6]** While the Staffordshire LNRS has not yet been published at the time of writing, it will inform policy makers and other stakeholders – who will need to take account of the

Areas of Particular Importance (APIBs) and Areas that Could Become of particular importance (ACBs).

2.16 England's **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** requires planning decisions to protect and enhance the natural environment, including boosting biodiversity, improving air and water quality and addressing climate change - all while delivering housing and growth. Crucially, plans should also explicitly secure net gains for biodiversity.

2.17 The **EU Habitats Directive** established the Natura 2000 network, a system of protected sites across Europe aimed at conserving Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The Directive forms the cornerstone of nature conservation policy in the EU, was transposed into UK law and continues to apply through domestic legislation.

2.18 At the time of drafting this study, the **Planning and Infrastructure Bill** is currently under committee review by the House of Lords. Although it is still subject to amendment and assent in parliament, the Bill aims to introduce a more strategic approach to nature recovery, through:

- Introducing a new Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) that will unlock and accelerate development; and
- Allowing Natural England (or other designated delivery body) to bring forward Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) to address the impact that development has on a protected site or species. These can be utilised by a developer who would then no longer be required to undertake their own assessments or project-specific interventions for issues addressed by the EDP.

What does Local Policy say?

2.19 At a high level, the **Lichfield District 2050 Strategy** explicitly commits to protecting and enhancing the natural environment as a key priority. It commits to working collaboratively with partners to deliver nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement across the district, supporting policies like BNG and the implementation of the forthcoming LNRS. Specifically, the Strategy outlines a commitment to enhancing biodiversity through the establishment of two new local nature reserves by 2038 – at Beacon Park (Lichfield) and Redwood Park (Burntwood), with funding sourced from developer contribution, including off-site biodiversity net gain.

2.20 LDC's existing **Local Plan Strategy** (adopted in 2015) includes a number of policies which relate to biodiversity and nature recovery:

- **Policy NR3 (Biodiversity, Protected Species & Their Habitats)** only permits development if it actively protects and achieves a net gain for biodiversity/geodiversity and minimises habitat fragmentation.
- **Policy NR4 (Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows)** mandates the protection of trees, woodlands and hedgerows due in part to their habitat value.
- **Policy NR6 (Linked Habitat Corridors & Multi-functional Greenspaces)** requires the creation and linking of new habitats.
- **Policy NR7 (Cannock Chase SAC) and Policy NR8 (River Mease SAC)** ensure that development does not adversely affect the integrity of the sites. **[See reference 7]**

2.21 A requirement under the Environment Act 2021, the forthcoming **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LNRS** will guide planning, development and land management decisions to enhance ecological connectivity and support nature recovery across Lichfield District. At the time of drafting this study, this is still in development and due to be published by 2026.

2.22 In June 2022, LDC declared a **Nature Recovery Declaration**, developed in partnership with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. The declaration outlines strategic actions to integrate nature recovery into all planning, development and land management decisions, including the forthcoming LNRS. Key targets include managing at least 30% of council-owned land for wildlife by 2030 and ensuring all new developments achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

2.23 The **Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 [See reference 8]** was approved by what is now known as the Cannock Chase 'National Landscape' Joint Committee in March 2025. It defines the qualities that makes Cannock Chase special, identifies the key issues facing the landscape and sets out the Committee's vision and priorities for conserving and enhancing its natural beauty for the next 5 years. The Plan is a key material consideration when developing policies and plans.

2.24 In 2016, LDC was one of the first local authorities to require 20% BNG for major developments through a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Biodiversity and Development SPD **[See reference 9]** was supported by their own locally developed metric, the 'Lichfield Model'. This proactive approach to BNG predates the national mandate for 10% BNG introduced by the Environment Act 2021. The District also has a Trees, Landscaping and Development SPD **[See reference 10]**.

2.25 LDC adopted its **Design Code SPD** in 2024, which sets out measures for biodiversity enhancement and the maintenance, restoration and enhancement of ecological corridors as part of new development. It also sets out measures for

incorporating biodiversity into GI assets including provision of street trees, swales and SuDS. **[See reference** 11**]**

What are the assets, challenges and pressures in the District?

Nature conservation sites in Lichfield District

2.26 Lichfield District hosts a diverse range of sites designated for their biodiversity value. These are shown on **Figure 2.1** and will form the basis for the emerging Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent LNRS.

Nationally designated sites

2.27 At the national level, the district is home to the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated for its valuable aquatic habitats and species. The River Mease Partnership coordinates collaborative efforts to protect, restore and sustainably manage the SAC to improve water quality and biodiversity.

2.28 The River Mease catchment (see **Figure 2.4**) is sensitive to the impacts of agricultural practices, high levels of water discharge and the presence of invasive non-native species (INNS).

2.29 The District also lies within the 'zone of influence' for recreational impacts upon the Cannock Chase SAC, which supports the most extensive area of lowland heathland in the Midlands.

2.30 As shown on **Figure 2.1**, Lichfield District contains four SSSIs. The Chasewater and Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI is a notable example of one of Lichfield's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The site forms part of the Purple Horizons heathland restoration and reconnection project. The Sutton Park SSSI and NNR, while outside the District's boundaries, is a key site supporting significant ecological value and plays a key role in the GI network in the south of Lichfield District.

2.31 Data from Natural England shows that the majority of the SSSIs in the district are currently in "unfavourable condition". **[See reference** 12**]**

Locally designated sites

2.32 The locally designated sites shown on Figure 2.1 include Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). The District also contains a network of non-statutory Sites of Biological

Importance (SBIs) and Biodiversity Alert Sites (BAS) – these sites do not have legal protection as LNRs do, but they provide key stepping stones between protected sites, are a material consideration in planning terms and are likely to form part of the nature recovery network mapped by the LNRS.

2.33 The Staffordshire Wildlife Trust plays an important role in managing nature reserves, including Gentleshaw Common and George's Hayes.

Irreplaceable Habitats

2.34 Irreplaceable habitats, are those habitats which take a significant time to restore, recreate or replace once they are destroyed, often as a result of their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity **[See reference** 13**]**. Lichfield District's irreplaceable habitats include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees and lowland fens.

Balancing public access and recreation with wildlife protection

2.35 High levels of recreation can harm sensitive habitats and species, as seen at Cannock Chase SAC and National Landscape where historic recreational pressure has caused habitat loss and deterioration, despite the SAC lying outside Lichfield District.**[See reference** 14**]** Growth in Lichfield District may continue to impact neighbouring sites, requiring cross-boundary mitigation through Habitats Regulations Assessments and public access strategies.

2.36 Zones of influence (8km and 15km) have been developed based on visitor surveys inform the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership's 'Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Measures' strategy, which aims to manage recreational impacts on heathland habitats.**[See reference** 15**]** Similarly, at sites like Chasewater Country Park SSSI, measures such as boardwalks have been installed to protect sensitive areas from trampling. As development progresses in the District, further mitigation will be needed to address rising recreational pressures.

Nutrient pollution within blue corridors

2.37 The River Mease SAC is currently in an "unfavourable" condition due to harmful agricultural practices and poor wastewater treatment and discharge practices. Nature-based solutions provide opportunities to address this issue through measures such as integrated wetlands.

2.38 This issue is discussed in more detail as part of Theme 5 (Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment).

Air pollution impacts on sensitive habitats

2.39 Poor air quality and high levels of ammonia from agriculture are leading to increased levels of atmospheric nitrogen. This has been found to have a significant impact on sensitive habitats such as heathland, woodland and wetlands.

2.40 The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan **[See reference** 16**]** highlights that sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and ammonia are having an impact on the lowland heathlands of the SAC. The critical levels for species assemblages on the heathland have already been exceeded, with a risk of future exceedance of others if measures are not taken to reduce air pollution.

Key habitats and species

2.41 Figure 2.1 shows the distribution of Priority Habitats across the District. These are habitats identified by the UK government as being of principal importance for biodiversity conservation under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Woodlands

2.42 The District's woodlands and wood pasture provide important habitats supporting ancient and veteran trees, rare insects, mosses, lichens and fungi associated with deadwood. Species-rich hedgerows, treelines and shelter belts contribute to ecological connectivity, allowing bats, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates to move between woodlands. These habitats are key features of the agricultural landscape and often correlate with historic landscapes and heritage features.

Grasslands

2.43 The district's priority grassland habitats (including semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows) support high plant and invertebrate diversity, provide nesting and shelter for small mammals and birds and offer key foraging areas for birds of prey. Wet grasslands along river corridors serve as important winter foraging grounds for wading birds and waterfowl. Species-rich road verges form many Biological Alert Sites (BAS) and changes to open space management (such as relaxed mowing) are enhancing species diversity in amenity grasslands through designated 'habitat havens'. **[See reference** 17**]**

Heathlands

2.44 Lowland heathland in the district is a distinctive and regionally important habitat. It supports rare plants, birds, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians. Many areas are in unfavourable condition, with scrub and bracken encroachment a key issue at Chasewater SSSI. Some habitats within these sites, including lowland fen, marsh, swamp and open water at the Chasewater SSSI, are in favourable condition. The Cannock Chase SAC and SSSI are especially significant, as Staffordshire is a stronghold for European dry heath in the Midlands.

Wetlands and open water habitats

2.45 Lowland fens in the district occur in small areas, often alongside reedbeds and grazing marsh. Open water habitats, including lakes, reservoirs, ponds, rivers and streams, support great crested newt, other amphibians and important bird populations. Rivers and streams also provide habitat for rare riparian species such as otter and native white-clawed crayfish.

Farmland

2.46 The majority of the district is arable and pasture land. These areas support many farmland birds, now in serious decline. Pesticides, herbicides and intensive farming have reduced invertebrates. Pasture, hedgerows and woodlands are also vital for species like brown hare, barn owl and harvest mouse.

Habitat fragmentation, loss and impact of development

2.47 If not carefully managed, habitat loss and the associated impacts of habitat fragmentation and degradation are a major threat from development, intensive agriculture and recreational pressure. These impacts on wildlife are compounded by climate change (see Theme 5).

2.48 Lichfield District's habitat network has been significantly fragmented by both development and agricultural intensification. According to Natural England's National Habitat Network and the Priority Habitat Inventory **(see Figure 2.1)**, much of the district's remaining semi-natural habitat (such as heathlands, lowland meadows and wetlands) now exists in isolated patches, limiting ecological connectivity and species movement.

2.49 Agricultural practices such as monoculture cropping, drainage of wetland margins and removal of boundary features (like hedgerows) continue to degrade and

fragment habitat, creating barriers to species dispersal and reducing ecological resilience.

2.50 In addition, the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) route, as shown on **Figure 2.1,** is set to cut through rural parts of Lichfield District. This has the potential to result in loss and fragmentation of habitats and green corridors. However, the project has a legal duty to deliver 'no net loss of biodiversity' for Phase 1. This will include the creation of new habitats, wildlife crossings, habitat compensation sites and funding for community projects.

INNS outcompeting native flora and fauna

2.51 Invasive non-native species (INNS) are a key ecological pressure in Lichfield District, threatening native biodiversity by outcompeting local flora and fauna.

2.52 A high proportion of Staffordshire's riparian statutory and non-statutory sites are adversely affected by non-native species. Notably, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and American signal crayfish have caused widespread loss of important habitats and species, with detrimental impact on the condition of the River Mease SAC **[See reference** 18**].**

2.53 According to the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat, INNS are among the top drivers of biodiversity loss in freshwater and terrestrial systems nationally **[See reference** 19**]**. Their control is particularly challenging in fragmented or linear habitats - such as river corridors - where coordination across multiple landowners is needed to prevent further spread and ecosystem degradation.

Existing projects and biodiversity initiatives

2.54 LDC has a committee to assist with delivery of the Council's climate change and biodiversity goals. Within the council's landownership of approximately 65 acres of open space, they have delivered enhancement projects including wildflower planting, 'no mow' areas and spring bulb planting. In particular:

- **'Habitat havens'** have been identified by the Council as areas which are not used for games or play and where tall grasses and wildflowers will not negatively impact the surrounding area.
- **The 'Purple Horizons' nature recovery project [See reference** 20**]**, aims to restore and connect fragmented habitats, including heathland, wetland, grassland and woodland between Cannock Chase SAC and Sutton Park NNR. This is mostly on land under local authority or charity ownership, but also

includes the development of BNG habitat bank projects on private land. Working with the Environment Agency, the project is also co-funding hydrological research on the Crane Brook to inform wetland restoration in the River Tame catchment.

2.55 The **Cannock Chase SAC Partnership** aims to mitigate the effect of rising population numbers in the 15km “Zone of Influence” by delivering a programme of capital works and public awareness, engagement and education projects.

2.56 The River Mease Improvement Project is enhancing water quality and habitat condition through a Partnership approach.

Figure 2.1: Protected habitats in Lichfield

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Figure 2.1: Protected habitats in Lichfield

Lichfield boundary

Context

HS2 route

Natural features

Special Area of Conservation
Site of Special Scientific Interest
Local Nature Reserve
Ancient woodland
River
Key designations

Priority habitats

Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - single or mosaic habitat
Deciduous woodland - single or mosaic habitat
Good quality semi improved grassland
Lowland calcareous/lowland dry acid grassland
Lowland fens - single or mosaic habitat
Lowland heathland
Lowland meadows
Ponds
Purple moor grass and rush pastures
Traditional orchard
No main habitat but additional habitats present

River Mease SAC

N 0 2.5 5 km

Map scale 1:95,000 @ A3

Summary of key challenges

- **Recreational pressure:** on designated sites and sensitive habitats as population expands.
- **Habitat fragmentation**: from development and intensive farming limits species movement and reduces ecological resilience. Coordination challenges make it difficult to manage cross-boundary issues like this. The emerging HS2 route will contribute to this fragmentation.
- **Nutrient pollution**: of rivers including the River Mease SAC with harm to sensitive species and degradation of important riverine habitat.
- **Air pollution**: with associated impact upon heathland of Cannock Chase SAC and National Landscape.
- **Invasive non-native species**: (e.g. Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, signal crayfish) are degrading habitats and outcompeting native wildlife.
- **Soil degradation**: compaction, erosion and nutrient loss, reducing land capacity to support biodiversity and harming aquatic life.
- **Development pressure**: continues to threaten remaining semi-natural habitats.
- **Climate change**: will increase pressures on habitat networks.

Summary of emerging opportunities

- **Strong network of designated sites**: if well managed and protected from growth pressures, provides a base for nature recovery. This can be best supported by buffering the network through appropriate GI.
- **Active land management**: by partners like Staffordshire Wildlife Trust supports the ecological functions of key habitats and should be supported.
- **Policy tools**: like nutrient neutrality, BNG and the LNRS can help secure long-term ecological gains.
- **Enhance existing and create new green spaces:** Seek opportunities to deliver greenspace enhancements and create new greenspaces within new settlements as well as off-site to avoid and reduce recreational pressures upon sensitive sites. This would contribute to the aims of the SAMM for Cannock Chase SAC.

- **Purple Horizon Partnership Project**: ensure that GI links into and expands this work, which is linking Cannock Chase SAC and Sutton Park National Nature Reserve.
- **Further ecological enhancements to open spaces**: The District has delivered enhancements to various open spaces over the past few years and there is opportunity to do more for nature through additional wildflower and 'no mow' areas.
- **Regional partnerships**: offer scope for coordinated action against the district's largest challenges.
- **Nature-based solutions:** (e.g. integrated wetlands, SuDS, soil restoration) deliver multiple benefits.
- **Community input**: can offer important local insight into the growth and management of GI in the correct places across the district.

Theme 2: Active and Healthy Lichfield

Why is GI important for active and healthy places in the District?

2.57 Health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of physical, mental and social well-being. GI plays a vital role in supporting this by creating safe, nature-rich spaces for exercise, social interaction, play and rest - while also helping to mitigate environmental health risks such as flooding, air pollution and extreme heat. **[See reference** 21**]**

2.58 Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework identifies "active and healthy places" as a core benefit of GI. Well-designed GI encourages physical activity, fosters connections with nature and supports stronger, more cohesive communities - all of which contribute to improved physical and mental health, reduced health inequalities and better quality of life.

2.59 Public Health England categorises the health benefits of green space into four key areas:

- promoting healthy behaviours;
- strengthening social ties and belonging;
- supporting learning and skills - particularly for young people; and
- reducing exposure to environmental harms such as poor air quality and flooding. **[See reference** 22**]**

2.60 There is extensive evidence that regular activity in natural spaces helps prevent long-term health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers. Increasing access to GI is recognised across the health sector as a way to support long-term independence and wellbeing, with outdoor activity increasingly used as a positive complement or alternative to medical interventions.

2.61 According to Natural England's People and Nature Survey (2024), 92% of adults agree that being outdoors is good for physical health and 89% for mental health. However, nearly one in three adults do not live within a 15-minute walk of a green space. **[See reference** 23**]** These findings highlight the urgent need for equitable access to high-quality GI across all communities.

2.62 What does National Policy say?

2.63 In recent years, the value of GI for people (as well as biodiversity) has risen to the forefront of the UK's political agenda. The government's **25-year Environment Plan** looks to connect people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing. This includes opportunities to improve health and wellbeing by using green spaces, encouraging children to be close to nature and greening towns and cities.

2.64 England's **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve "healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles", especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs.

2.65 Natural England's **Green Infrastructure Framework** (launched in early 2023) further highlights the importance of GI and natural spaces for health and wellbeing, local communities and inclusive spaces. The Framework provides guidance to help local planning authorities and developers to meet GI requirements through the planning system and outside it - including on setting 'Headline GI standards'. The Accessible Greenspace Standard includes a recommendation for "everyone to have access to and benefit from good quality green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home".

What does Local Policy say?

2.66 The District's existing **Local Plan Strategy** (adopted in 2015) includes a number of policies which relate to healthy and active places:

- **Policy HSC1 (Open Space Standards**) requires improvements to quantity, quality and accessibility of green spaces.
- **Core Policy 10 (Healthy and Safe Lifestyles)** states that the Council will "create an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice."

2.67 The **Lichfield District 2050 Strategy** outlines LDC's key priorities for development under four themes, one of which is 'Active Communities'. By 2050, the Council aspires to "make Lichfield District the most active in the UK". Objectives relating to GI include:

- Ensuring that "the full potential of parks and green spaces are activated for health and wellbeing" and
- Providing "a network of high-quality leisure and recreational facilities and community groups exists to provide equitable, affordable access for all".

2.68 The Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board oversee the county-wide **Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2022 – 2027**. The strategy aims to reduce inequality

and increase healthy life expectancy though focusing on four priority areas: health in early life, good mental health, healthy weight and healthy ageing. **[See reference** 24**]**

2.69 The **Lichfield District Open Space Assessment (2024)** provides an audit of existing open space within the district to inform and support policies on open spaces, leisure, health and wellbeing in the Lichfield District Local Plan. It also helps to guide developer contributions through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and support planning decisions. **[See reference** 25**]**

2.70 As part of the 2011 Local Transport Plan, Staffordshire County Council published a **Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP),** which sets priorities for managing and improving the rights of way network across the county. A key recommendation for Lichfield District was to increase connections between canal towpaths and the PRoW network. The ROWIP also noted that funding is a major obstacle and that councils should extend partnership working and community involvement to ensure local needs are met. **[See reference** 26**]**

2.71 The Staffordshire **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2021 – 2031** also assessed the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public. This included an assessment of accessibility standards and provision of opportunities for outdoor exercise and recreation across Staffordshire. **[See reference** 27**]** The **Lichfield District Integrated Transport Strategy 2015 – 2029** also places emphasis on the need to promote active travel routes, some of which play an important part in the wider GI network.

What are the assets, challenges and pressures in the District?

Physical and mental health

2.72 The district's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) **[See reference** 28**]** sets out that health outcomes are generally better than the national average. Life expectancy is slightly higher than England overall for both men and women. In most wards, residents live longer than average, however there are two wards where women's life expectancy is below the national figure.

2.73 Childhood obesity is broadly in line with national trends. Around 1 in 10 children aged 4–5 and 1 in 5 children aged 10–11 in the District is classified as obese. While five wards have lower obesity rates than the national average, Fazeley stands out with significantly higher levels among Year 6 children. Adult excess weight (including obesity) affects around two-thirds of the population - similar to the national picture.

2.74 According to Sport England's Active Lives survey, physical activity among children is mixed. Around 4 in 10 are active for at least an hour a day, but 1 in 3 are active for less than 30 minutes daily, mirroring trends seen across Staffordshire and England. **[See reference** 29**]**

2.75 Most adults in the District are physically active, with activity rates slightly above the national average. However, active travel is less common: fewer people walk or cycle to work compared to national levels and just 16% of adults walk for travel three or more days a week. **[See reference** 30**]**

Ageing population

2.76 The District has an older population than both the regional and national averages, with nearly a quarter of residents aged 65 or over. The 2021 Census also showed a sharp rise in people aged 75–84, alongside a decline in the number of residents aged 35–49, highlighting a significant shift in the district's age profile.

2.77 This ageing trend is set to continue. By 2043, over a quarter of the District's population is expected to be aged 65 or above, well above the national forecast. **[See reference** 31**]**

Access to Green Space

2.78 Lichfield District is served by a diverse range of green spaces. In particular, the district has access to a number of large recreational, green spaces:

- Part of Cannock Chase National Landscape falls within the north-west of the district and incorporates Gentleshaw Common SSSI, a large area of open access heathland which is crossed by a number of public rights of way (PRoW).
- The Forest of Mercia is a large, multi-purpose Community Forest **[See reference** 32**]** surrounding Burntwood that provides valuable recreational opportunities such as walking, cycling and nature watching. It plays an important role in promoting physical and mental health for local communities.
- Part of the National Forest (another flagship Community Forest) lies on the District's eastern boundary. It is a large-scale environmental regeneration project in the Midlands, aiming to create a new, mixed woodland landscape across parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire.
- Chasewater Country Park offers a range of recreational activities based around Chasewater Reservoir in the west of the district.

- The National Memorial Arboretum near Alrewas provides landscaped green space offering a peaceful space for reflection and quiet recreation.

2.79 Located just outside of Lichfield District (within Sutton Coldfield), the Sutton Park National Nature Reserve (NNR) is one of the largest urban parks in Europe and is also an important regional GI asset and exerts an influence on communities in the south of the district.

2.80 Figure 2.2 shows the 'Access to Green space Standards (AGSt) profile' for Lichfield District, helping to highlight which areas have least access to certain types of open space at different scales. **[See reference** 33**]** The access standards are based on walkable distances to certain sizes of open space, with the assumption that people will walk further to a larger open space that offers more opportunities for different types of recreation and experiences, than to a smaller park. The AGSt buffers on the map show the walkable access distances, but these do not include the Forest of Mercia or the National Forest. The mapping clearly shows poor access to green space of all scales (apart from the national forests) in the more rural east of the district.

2.81 Large areas of the District are rural in nature. However, it is important to acknowledge that access to green space in rural areas is often poor despite being surrounded by countryside because much of the land is privately owned and used for farming or other purposes and only accessible by fragmented public rights of way. Public parks, managed green spaces and safe walking routes can be less common in villages and infrastructure like pavements, signage and entrances can be limited or poorly maintained. As a result, rural residents may have countryside around them but few usable, inclusive and nearby spaces for everyday recreation or wellbeing.

2.82 The Lichfield District Open Space Assessment (2024) further examines the provision of open space locally and identifies several notable deficiencies across the district. **[See reference** 34**]** While overall levels of natural and amenity green space are above national standards, access is uneven - particularly in rural areas such as Hamstall Ridware, Shenstone and parts of Burntwood, which lack walkable access to green spaces.

2.83 High quality natural play provision should form part of a healthy GI network. There are district-wide shortfalls in equipped play provision, both in quantity and quality, with rural settlements and parts of Lichfield City and Burntwood especially under-served. There is also a specific need identified to provide open space designed for teenagers. Waiting lists for allotments are long and unmet demand is concentrated in Lichfield City and several larger villages. Quality also varies significantly across typologies, with poorer performing spaces in both urban and rural areas.

2.84 The open space assessment also highlighted a number of barriers when accessing green space in the district, including:

- Physical barriers: such as busy roads, railway lines and canals (even when distances are short). For example, the A38 preventing National Cycle Network NCN 54 from accessing the National Memorial Arboretum.
- A lack of safe pedestrian routes and crossing points: preventing access, particularly to play areas.
- Recreational pressure: The need to carefully manage and monitor potential conflicts between access and conservation, in the case of biodiversity assets like Cannock Chase SAC (see also Theme 1).
- Maintenance and design quality: affecting the potential for enjoyment of open spaces (litter, dog fouling, graffiti).
- Meeting varied local needs: needs vary between local communities, which calls for flexible standards and local community involvement in provision.

Inequalities in access to Green Space

2.85 Across the country as a whole, research has shown that people living in the most deprived areas are ten times less likely to live near high-quality green space. **[See reference** 35**]**

2.86 England's 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that, although Lichfield is a relatively prosperous district, this masks concentrated areas of deprivation. These, include Chadsmead ward in the north of Lichfield City. The Lichfield Social Progress Index, **[See reference** 36**]** identifies Fazeley (a boundary area on the outskirts of Tamworth) and Chasetown (Burntwood) wards as having the lowest score for overall health and wellbeing.

2.87 Mapping by Natural England which overlays socio-economic deprivation with access to green space highlights these same locations as area of particular challenge. **[See reference** 37**]** This mapping can help to prioritise GI interventions and investment into areas where these deficiencies overlap.

Linear routes and assets

2.88 Enabling green corridors across the district for commuting and travel is a key aim of the Lichfield District 2050 Strategy, beginning with one linking Burntwood and Lichfield City by 2028.

2.89 Lichfield District is intersected by two National Cycle Network (NCN) routes, as illustrated in **Figure 2.3**. In addition, the former South Staffordshire Railway Line (closed since the 1980s) is currently being redeveloped by a partnership including Sustrans, LDC and a community group into a multi-user greenway, which will provide a valuable active travel link connecting Brownhills and Chasewater with Lichfield City and NCN route 5.

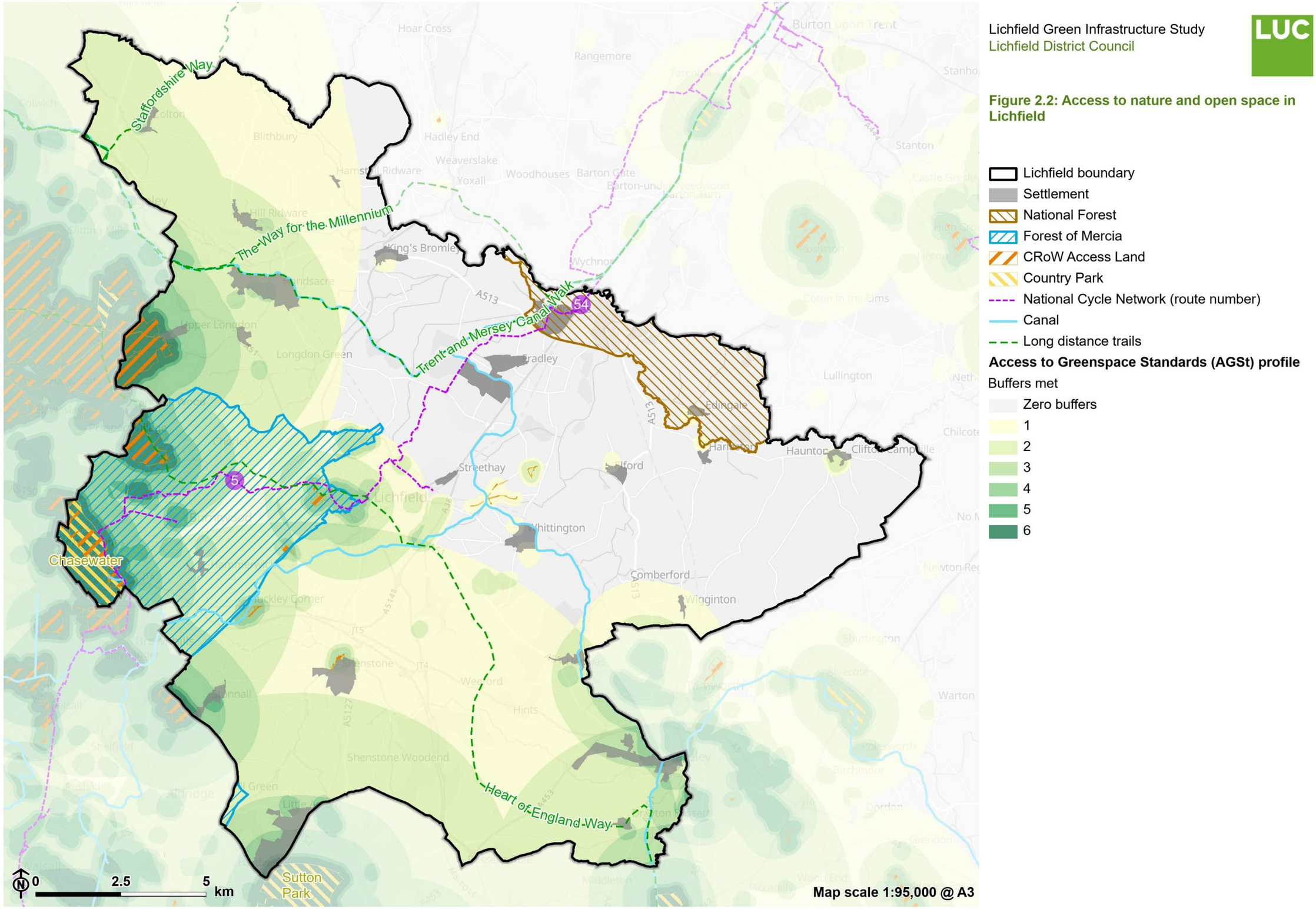
2.90 Despite these assets, the Staffordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan identified that overall, the District has the shortest total length of cycle paths in the county, with just 11km recorded. The LCWIP also noted that "improvements to the walking and cycling network including NCN 54 between Burntwood, Lichfield City and Fradley, have been limited in recent years," with investment having been focused instead on enhancing the public transport network.

2.91 Rivers and canals also make a significant contribution to the district's GI. The Trent, Tame and Mease rivers, alongside the district's canal network and restored towpaths, form important green corridors that support both recreation and active travel - walking, cycling and horse riding in particular (see **Figure 2.4** in Theme 4). These blue corridors are increasingly recognised as a core component of the district's wider approach to promoting sustainable transport and improving health outcomes. The Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust is actively working to restore sections of the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal and its towpaths, with the aim of improving recreational access and biodiversity value along the route. The wider public rights of way network also plays a key role in supporting access to nature and active travel, with numerous routes available for walking, cycling and horse riding. At the strategic scale, the district is crossed by four long-distance footpaths as shown on **Figure 2.2**: the Way for the Millennium, Staffordshire Way, the Heart of England Way and the Trent Valley Way.

Air Quality

2.92 The main source of air pollution within the District is from transport sources. **[See reference** 38**]** There are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) designated in the District, both centred on major transport infrastructure. However, there have been recent proposals to withdraw both due to progress on emissions. GI can play a role in reducing air pollution, largely by capturing air pollutants or buffering sensitive locations (such as green barriers along busy roads near schools). However, the scope for GI to play a significant role in combatting air quality is limited and the major focus must be on strategies to improve air quality by influencing how people move around the District. The GI network can play a complementary role alongside transport policies in helping to encourage active travel for daily journeys.

Figure 2.2: Access to nature and open space in Lichfield



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Summary of key challenges

- **Uneven access to green space**: including in rural areas where private landownership and fragmented rights of way limit everyday use.
- **Deficiencies in play and recreation spaces**: notably for teenagers, with shortages in both quantity and quality across urban and rural areas.
- **Barriers to green space access**: such as busy roads, railways, lack of safe pedestrian routes and poor signage or maintenance.
- **Connectivity gaps between green spaces:** fragmented networks limit the ability for people and wildlife to move easily between sites, reducing the multifunctional benefits of GI.
- **Health and wellbeing disparities**: with obesity levels and physical inactivity particularly high in some wards (e.g., Fazeley).
- **Inequalities in green space access:** linked to deprivation, concentrated in areas like Chadsmead, Fazeley and Chasetown.
- **Ageing population**: leading to changing demands for accessible, inclusive green spaces suited to older residents.
- **Limited walking and cycling infrastructure:** with Lichfield District having the shortest cycle path network in Staffordshire and slow progress on walking and cycling improvements.
- **Transport-related air pollution**: remains a concern, noting the limited scope for GI alone to mitigate it effectively.

Summary of emerging opportunities

- **GI as part of a 'natural health service':** Making the GI network as attractive and accessible as possible to make active and healthy lives the easy choice for all residents. Including exploring opportunities for green prescribing.
- **Plugging new development into the wider GI network:** Ensure new residential developments include well-connected active travel links.
- **HS2:** Capitalise on the infrastructural corridor to explore the potential for greenways or strategic walking/cycling routes between poorly connected villages in the east.

- **Redevelopment of the South Staffordshire Railway Line** into a multi-user greenway offers a new active travel corridor linking key communities**.**
- **Blue corridors (rivers, canals, towpaths)** can be better leveraged for recreation, active travel and biodiversity enhancement.
- **Growing older population** presents opportunities to design inclusive, accessible GI promoting health and social wellbeing.
- **Nature-based play**: Pursue opportunities to ensure that all play facilities delivered in the District (including those providing for the teenage age range) are nature-based and well-integrated into the wider GI network and natural landscape.
- **Targeted GI investment** in deprived wards (e.g., Fazeley, Chasetown) can reduce inequalities in green space access and health outcomes.
- **Integration of GI with transport policies** to encourage active travel and complement emissions reduction strategies.
- **Community Forests:** Further developing the strengths of the district's two community forests (the Forest of Mercia and the National Forest) and creating stronger green links between them and communities (existing and new).
- **Community input**: can offer important local insight into the growth and management of GI in the correct places across the district.

Theme 3: Thriving and Prosperous Lichfield

Why is GI important for a thriving and prosperous District?

2.93 GI is key to building thriving, prosperous communities in the District. It acts as a vital 'placemaking' tool by creating attractive, high-quality places that draw businesses, investors and visitors, while also enhancing the setting and character of historic sites. By supporting vibrant retail areas and regeneration efforts, GI helps encourage people to spend more time and money in local centres.

2.94 GI also drives green job opportunities - from ecology experts and green roof installers to those working in food production and forestry. These roles are essential for maintaining and managing the green spaces that enrich everyday life, from local parks to river corridors.

2.95 As competition for skilled workers grows, access to well-connected, nature-rich environments becomes a powerful asset. A strong GI network boosts quality of life, making the District a place where people want to live, work and invest, supporting long-term economic success.

2.96 Research carried out by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and Bournemouth University sets out the clear benefits of nature restoration for economic growth and job creation. **[See reference** 39**]** It highlights how many local businesses rely on having a healthy and attractive local environment. This includes not only tourism, recreation and agriculture, but other businesses such as manufacturing and construction, which require clean water, natural materials and a hazard-free environment.

What does National Policy say?

2.97 The national policy agenda is increasingly recognising the role of GI and the natural environment in high quality design and as part of wider economic regeneration agendas. This is led by the UK's **Environment Act 2021**, which highlights how environmental sustainability is inherently tied to economic prosperity.

2.98 England's **National Planning Policy Framework** sets out that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt (paragraph 85). In rural areas in particular, decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside (paragraph 88). The NPPF also sets out the important

role of trees for the quality of urban environments (paragraph 136) and supports measures to ensure the vitality of town centres (Chapter 7).

2.99 Finally, England's **National Design Guide** **[See reference** 40**]** outlines ten characteristics that create a well-designed place. One of these emphasises the importance of the provision of a network of high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play.

What does Local Policy say?

2.100 At a high level, the **Lichfield District 2050** Strategy recognises that "restoring nature is vital to our future and economy". It includes two key priorities with particular relevance for this theme:

- Confident communities – to be the place where people across the UK aspire to live and where they feel a strong sense of belonging.
- Prosperous communities – to enable Lichfield City, Burntwood and our villages to flourish, by creating the conditions for business success and innovation, investing in town and rural centres and creating vibrant places to live, work and visit.

2.101 Lichfield's existing **Local Plan Strategy** (adopted in 2015) includes a number of policies which relate to creating thriving and prospering places:

- **Core Policy 8**, identifies the vital role of a vibrant network of city, district and local centres to the overall spatial strategy, which should both stimulate economic activity and enhance the public realm.
- **Policy CP14 (Our Built & Historic Environment)** sets out how natural landscapes form the setting to the built and historic environment and should be conserved and enhanced.
- **Policy PL1 (Lichfield Environment)** focuses on maintaining and enhancing Lichfield City's high-quality environment by protecting and expanding its significant GI links, such as the linear park and safeguarding the route for a restored Lichfield Canal, while promoting walking and cycling.

2.102 In addition to the Local Plan, LDC has adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Documents that provide applicants with additional guidance relating to the Council's design aspirations for new developments. Those of relevance to this theme include:

- **Sustainable Design SPD [See reference 41]**: Considers the role and importance of GI, utilising sustainable drainage systems and creating walkable communities.
- **Historic Environment SPD [See reference 42]**: Places GI at the heart of preserving, enhancing and enriching Lichfield District's heritage and historic places, which makes important contributions to creating distinctive and desirable places.

2.103 The **Tamworth and Lichfield Economic Strategy [See reference 43]** aims to foster a stronger and more resilient local economy through sustainable business development and growth. The overarching objective of the Strategy is to support sustainable business growth and development as through increasing wealth creation and job opportunities, this will naturally yield other social and community benefits and contribute to the quality of life of the area, its image and perception in the wider world.

2.104 The 2020 masterplan for Lichfield City emphasises the importance of public spaces and green assets as integral to the city's identity and visitor appeal. **[See reference 44]** The plan recognises that GI can support regeneration by improving the setting of heritage assets, reinforcing local distinctiveness and creating vibrant environments appealing to businesses, investors and visitors.

2.105 In terms of the visitor economy in particular, in November 2023 Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent were accredited as a **Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).** The LVEP brings together local authorities, tourism organisations, businesses and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies for growing the visitor economy.

2.106 The **Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 [See reference 45]** recognises the strong cultural heritage of the National Landscape including its medieval hunting landscape, historic estates and parklands, canals, industrial heritage, wartime sites and areas of ancient common land.

What are the assets, challenges and pressures in the District?

GI within town, city and local centres

2.107 Some parts of the District's urban centres suffer from poor-quality public realm and fragmented GI. The 2020 Lichfield City Centre Masterplan **[See reference 46]** highlights the importance of spaces like Minster Pool, Stowe Pool and Beacon Park

in shaping the city's identity and attracting visitors, while also calling for improvements to the quality of public spaces to help the city reach its full potential.

2.108 The District's 2024 Open Space Assessment **[See reference** 47**]** identifies a clear imbalance in the quality of open space provision across the district. Green space is often not fulfilling its placemaking potential. While amenity green space is generally well distributed, its quality is inconsistent, with clusters of low-scoring sites in Lichfield City, Burntwood, Fazeley, Alrewas and Armitage with Handsacre. These disparities underline the need for investment in underprovided areas as part of wider placemaking efforts, focusing on improving the quality and connectivity of existing spaces, particularly in more built-up parts of the district.

2.109 Retail trends also pose challenges for town and city centres. The shift toward online shopping has increased pressure on high streets to diversify. As of May 2024, vacancy rates were 7% in Lichfield City and 8% in Burntwood. **[See reference** 48**]** While broadly in line with regional averages, persistent vacancies highlight the need for public realm improvements and GI interventions that enhance footfall, encourage dwell time and improve the townscape experience.

GI, the visitor economy and the historic environment

2.110 GI plays a vital role in the District's visitor economy but could do more to connect key destinations and enhance their settings.

2.111 The 2016 Lichfield City Centre Development Strategy set out a goal to increase visitor spending by £46 million, recognising the value of the city's GI assets. Popular destinations across the District include Beacon Park (which hosts regular festivals), Chasewater Country Park, Cannock Chase AONB (now National Landscape), the National Memorial Arboretum, the National Forest and the Forest of Mercia. These are complemented by the National Cycle Network, National Trails and the canal network, including Fradley Junction and its adjacent nature reserve.

2.112 The District's historic environment also contributes significantly to its distinctiveness and visitor appeal. As shown in **Figure 2.3**, the district contains 22 Conservation Areas, 15 Scheduled Monuments and one Registered Park (Lichfield Cathedral Close). Lichfield Cathedral alone attracts around 200,000 visitors annually **[See reference** 49**]** and relies on high-quality urban greening to create an appropriate setting for its cultural and heritage value.

Figure 2.3: Placemaking, heritage and GI in Lichfield

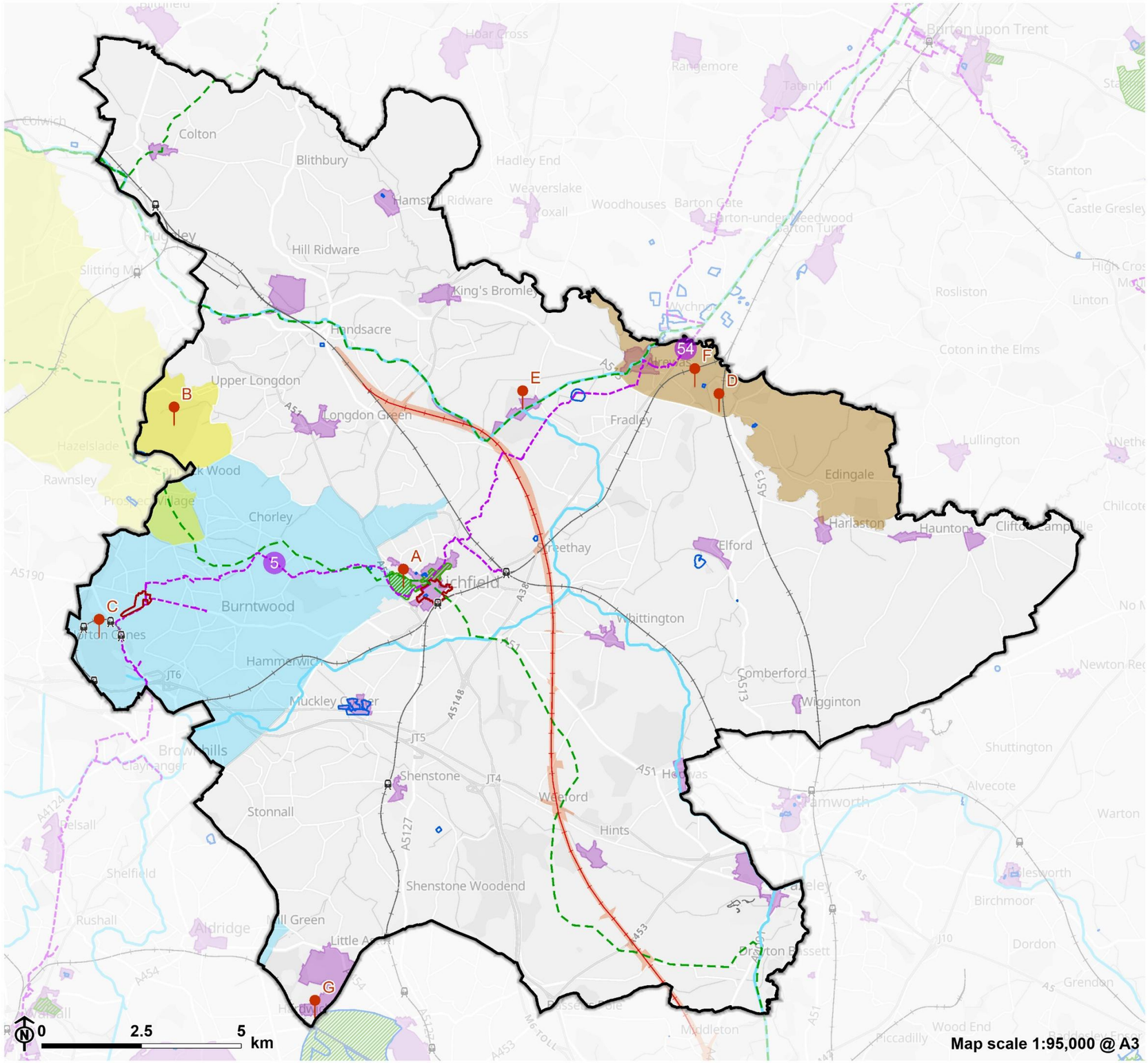

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Figure 2.3: Placemaking, heritage and green infrastructure in Lichfield

- Lichfield boundary

Context
- Town centre
- HS2 route
- HS2 safeguarded land
- Railway track
- Railway station

Landscape-scale initiatives
- National Forest
- Forest of Mercia
- Cannock Chase National Landscape

Heritage assets
- Conservation area
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument

Visitor economy routes and attractions
- National Cycle Network
- Long distance trails
- Canal
- Key nature-based visitor destination

A: Beacon Park
B: Cannock Chase National Landscape
C: Chasewater Country Park
D: Croxall Lakes Nature Reserve
E: Fradley Junction
F: National Memorial Arboretum
G: Sutton Park

Summary of key challenges

- **Uneven GI provision and quality**, especially in urban areas like Burntwood, Fazeley and parts of Lichfield City, with some rural settlements lacking any accessible green space.
- **Fragmented GI networks and poor connectivity:** in town and city centres, weakening connectivity between key assets and limiting their placemaking potential.
- **Room to improve quality of public realm** in parts of the District's urban centres, to enhance attractiveness, usability and visitor experience.
- **Commercial vacancy pressures**, particularly in Burntwood and Lichfield City, reflecting wider retail decline and the need to explore a more GI-led approach.
- **Underutilised visitor economy potential**, with key GI assets not fully integrated or promoted as part of a coherent destination offer.

Summary of emerging opportunities

- **Public realm and greening improvements** in Lichfield city centre, as identified in the 2020 Masterplan, to support vibrancy and identity.
- **Strategic investment in underprovided areas**, targeting quality upgrades and better connectivity in existing green spaces.
- **Leveraging high-profile visitor destinations** - such as Beacon Park, Chasewater, the Arboretum and Fradley Junction - to anchor a wider GI-led tourism offer.
- **Capitalising on heritage assets**, such as Lichfield Cathedral and the city's Conservation Areas, through high-quality green settings that enhance experience and dwell time.
- **Expanding active travel routes** via the National Cycle Network, canal paths and trails to link GI assets and support low-carbon leisure.
- **Community input**: can offer important local insight into the growth and management of GI in the correct places across the district.

Theme 4: Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment

Why is GI important for Improved Water Management in the District?

2.113 GI has a vital role to play in how the District manages water, both in everyday conditions and during extreme weather. Thoughtfully planned GI can support a more natural, sustainable water cycle while delivering multiple other benefits for people and nature.

2.114 At both local and catchment scales, GI can act as a nature-based solution to flood risk. Features like swales, wetlands and rain gardens slow the flow of water, reducing pressure on drains, sewers and watercourses. This not only helps prevent surface water flooding and storm overflow incidents, but also allows more water to be stored, absorbed and put to positive use - such as supporting green space and biodiversity.

2.115 GI can also help improve water quality. Natural planting and permeable surfaces encourage filtration, reducing pollutants before they reach rivers and streams. This supports healthier ecosystems and can even recharge groundwater, helping to build long-term resilience into the local water cycle.

2.116 The District's rivers such as the Tame, Trent and their tributaries, not only play an essential role in flood management, but also form part of the district's ecological networks and are valuable assets for recreation and wellbeing. Enhancing the water environment through GI can therefore deliver a powerful combination of environmental, social and economic benefits.

What does National Policy say?

2.117 Water management is closely integrated into the planning policy landscape. Concerns over future climate resilience and the deteriorating quality of the UK's rivers are leading to an increasingly prominent policy position.

2.118 The core aim of the EU's **Water Framework Directive (WFD),** which was retained in UK law post-Brexit, is to protect the country's water environments by preventing their deterioration and improving their quality. The planning system is required to consider this, guided by a series of River Basin Management Plans (RBMP). The relevant plan for Lichfield District is the **Humber River Basin district**

RBMP - it describes the current condition and challenges for water resources in the catchment area and sets out objectives and actions to management and improve water resources. **[See reference** 50**]**

2.119 The UK's **Environment Act 2021** also sets out ambitious targets for improving water quality in England's watercourses, including reducing pollutants like phosphorus, nitrates and microplastics.

2.120 In general, national policy adheres to a **Catchment-based approach (CaBA),** led by the Environment Agency, which aims to improve water quality and watercourse health by considering the whole area that feeds into the river, not just the river itself.

2.121 In this light, the **NPPF** requires that new developments should manage surface water effectively on site and protect watercourses from contamination. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features should be multifunctional wherever possible, in part to improve water quality. Additionally, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) **[See reference** 51**]** states that GI can contribute to the protection of water quality and other natural resources.

2.122 National policy in England is evolving to promote the wider adoption of SuDS. The establishment of a SuDS Approval Body (SAB) was planned through **Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act** in 2024. However, at the time of writing, the policy has not yet been fully implemented.

2.123 The UK's **National Design Guide [See reference** 52**]** includes a policy to improve and enhance water management, noting the importance of effective SuDS. In well-designed places, it notes, water features form part of an integrated system of landscape, biodiversity and drainage.

2.124 Finally, Defra has also recently published national standards for SuDS to guide design of surface water drainage systems for new developments. It promotes a 'natural' approach to water management, which promotes water quality, biodiversity and amenity benefits as well as water management. **[See reference** 53**]**

What does Local Policy say?

2.125 The District's existing **Local Plan Strategy** (adopted in 2015) includes a number of policies which relate to water management:

- **Policy NR9 (Water Quality)** aims to prevent negative impacts on water quality from development and encourages the improvement of ecological and chemical water quality.

2.126 The 'Green Communities' theme of the **Lichfield District 2050 Strategy** sets out at a high level the Council's ambitions for managing the District's water environment:

- By 2038, it aims to have supported the reintroduction of the Lichfield Canal.
- By 2050, the goal is that "river restoration will have been explored and implemented, reconnecting rivers and waterbodies to their natural floodplains" and to have reintroduced native aquatic species, such as white-clawed crayfish and water voles.

2.127 The Staffordshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2024) sets out five main strategy objectives. **[See reference** 54**]** Those most relevant to the GI network are as follows:

- Manage flood risk and new development in a sustainable manner including "*ensuring guidance on SuDS is up-to date and is complied with by developers and their agents*."
- Seek and secure funding for flood alleviation schemes with an aim to *"prioritise nature-based solutions and ensure environmental mitigation & enhancement".*

2.128 Staffordshire County Council have published a Sustainable Drainage Systems Handbook (2017) to guide and support design and delivery of SuDS across the County. **[See reference** 55**]**

What are the assets, challenges and pressures in the District?

Key blue corridors and their future

2.129 As shown on **Figure 2.4,** the River Trent is the main river within Lichfield District. It flows through the eastern part of the district and has two major tributaries, fed by a network of several smaller tributaries:

- The River Tame, which crosses the southern part of the district, converging with the Trent to the east of Alrewas.
- The River Mease, a lowland clay river, designated as a SSSI and SAC for the internationally important species of native freshwater fish it supports.

2.130 The District is also served by a number of canals which form part of a wider regional network. These canals are valuable water assets and important local heritage features which contribute to the landscape character, distinctiveness and

identity of the district. Within the District they comprise the Trent and Mersey, Coventry and Birmingham and Fazeley Canals.

2.131 The Lichfield Canal restoration project, led by the volunteer-run Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust (LHCRT), aims to reinstate the historic Ogley Locks section of the Wyrley and Essington Canal to reconnect the District with the national canal network. The project is in progress at the time of drafting this strategy, with a recently completed 120-metre stretch at Darnford Moors featuring ecological enhancements and a new nature trail, funded in part by HS2's Community & Environment Fund. The Trust is working to secure further funding to extend the canal towards Huddlesford Junction, relying on community support and volunteers to achieve these goals.

2.132 Strategic partnerships play an important role in management and improvement of the District's waterways:

- The **Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership** (formerly the Central Rivers Initiative) is a landscape partnership led by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, which manages the River Trent and River Tame between Tamworth and Burton upon Trent to "restore and enhance the natural, cultural and historic features of the Trent Valley landscape".
- The **River Mease Partnership** comprises a group of local authorities, agencies, farmers and individuals working to protect and improve the water quality of the River Mease, primarily by reducing phosphate levels of the river.

Water Quality

2.133 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, data from the Humber Catchment River Basin Management Plan indicates that most of the rivers within the catchment are in 'poor' or 'moderate' ecological condition, with two in a 'bad' condition. This is primarily due to "diffuse pollution" (meaning pollution from a variety of sources over a large area, such as agricultural runoff), urban runoff and physical modifications to watercourses. Under the Water Framework Directive, all water bodies should aim to achieve 'good' ecological condition status.

2.134 As is the case with all rivers across the UK since 2019, all rivers within the District are failing their chemical classification since the monitoring of Ubiquitous Persistent, Bio-accumulative and Toxic substances (uPBTs) was introduced.

2.135 The River Mease SAC is one of the few remaining unspoilt meandering lowland rivers in central England, providing critical habitats. However, it is currently in an unfavourable condition due to nutrient pollution, primarily due to elevated

phosphate levels resulting from sewage discharges and diffuse pollution. The extra nutrients cause too much algae to grow in the water - when the algae die and break down, they use up oxygen, making it harder for sensitive animals like white-clawed crayfish, spined loach and bullhead to survive.

2.136 To address these challenges, a comprehensive River Improvement Project is underway, led by the River Mease Partnership. This initiative includes habitat restoration and the creation of wetland areas. **[See reference** 56**]**

2.137 Despite these efforts and attempted improvements in wastewater treatment works, development within the River Mease catchment is currently restricted unless it can be demonstrated that it will not increase nutrient levels, as per Natural England's 'nutrient neutrality' guidance. **[See reference** 57**]** The Environment Agency's Diffuse Water Pollution Plan **[See reference** 58**]** highlights that diffuse water pollution arises from multiple land-use activities, which individually may be relatively minor but cumulatively have a significant impact on water quality. The plan also sets out a targeted programme of measures for the River Mease to address nutrient inputs from both point and diffuse sources. This precautionary approach underscores the ongoing challenges and the need for continued collaborative efforts to restore the river to a favourable condition.

2.138 In addition to nutrient management pressures, water resource availability within the River Mease catchment is an increasing concern. Abstraction licences have recently been amended to include tighter seasonal restrictions and time limited permissions to protect low flows. Stakeholders engaged during the development of this study also highlighted wider water environment risks, including the increasing threat of drought and the need to enhance water resilience across a number of the District's blue assets.

Flood Risk

2.139 Flood risk in the District is a significant concern, primarily due to surface water and highway drainage issues, with some areas also at risk of river flooding.

2.140 As shown on **Figure 2.5** in Theme 5, fluvial (river) flood risk is concentrated along the major river corridors of the River Trent and River Tame. Significant areas of fluvial flood risk are also associated with tributaries including Black Brook, Bourne Brook and Gallows Brook. While not as prevalent as surface water flooding, river flooding can still cause significant disruption and damage.

2.141 According to the Southern Staffordshire Surface Water Management Plan (SSSWMP) Phase 1 Report (2010), historic flooding incidences across the district

primarily relate to surface water flooding (including highways), with flood events concentrated in and around Lichfield City and Burntwood. Although uncommon, a flood event resulting from canal overtopping was recorded on the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal in 2007. **[See reference** 59**]**

2.142 Urban areas like Lichfield City and Burntwood are particularly vulnerable to surface water flooding, especially during heavy rainfall, due to the extent of impermeable surfaces. Natural England's "Greenness Grid" assesses the extent of man-made surfaces - while it does not directly indicate flood risk, areas with lower greenness may correspond to areas where risk of surface water flooding is higher, highlighting the need for enhanced GI to mitigate. Within the District, key "gaps" in the greenness grid are generally found within Lichfield city centre and within industrial parks such as Fradley Park and the Burntwood Industrial Estate area. **[See reference** 60**]**

Figure 2.4: Lichfield's blue corridors

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Figure 2.4: Lichfield's blue corridors

- Lichfield boundary
- River Mease SAC
- River
- Canal

Management catchment

- Tame Anker and Mease
- Trent Valley Staffordshire

Water quality ecology status (cycle 3 2023)

- Good
- Moderate
- Poor
- Bad

0 2.5 5 km

Map scale 1:95,000 @ A3

Summary of key challenges

- **River ecological condition**: is mostly poor or moderate due to diffuse pollution, urban runoff and physical changes to watercourses.
- **Development restrictions in the River Mease catchment**: due to nutrient pollution in the River Mease SAC threatening sensitive species. The need to meet nutrient neutrality requirements highlights ongoing environmental pressures.
- **Surface water flooding**: especially in urban and industrial areas with "greenness gaps" like Lichfield City and Burntwood, is a major risk driven by impermeable surfaces and inadequate drainage.
- **Fluvial flood risk** is concentrated along the River Trent, River Tame and their tributaries.
- **Water environment resilience:** increasing threat of drought alongside the need for improved water storage, sustainable drainage and water re-use measures.

Summary of emerging opportunities

- **Multifunctional restoration projects along blue corridors**: such as the Lichfield Canal restoration and River Mease Partnership initiatives, offer habitat improvements and community engagement.
- **Strategic partnerships**: such as the Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership, which support coordinated landscape-scale GI enhancement and water quality improvements.
- **Enhancing access to blue corridors**: The extensive network of rivers, canals and tributaries provide valuable corridors for recreation, biodiversity and sustainable transport.
- **Greening business parks**: Investigate potential for nature-based flood mitigation and GI to manage surface water within business parks and industrial estates – including features like green/brown roofs and linear SuDS.
- **Community-led projects and volunteer groups**: play a critical role in advancing restoration and green space access.
- **Promote catchment-scale management**: to improve water quality across the district.

- **De-paving:** Given that surface water flooding is the main source of flood risk within the District, ‘de-paving’ and reducing the extent of impermeable surfaces through urban greening efforts should be a key function of the GI network, focused on gaps in Natural England’s “greenness grid”.
- **Community input**: can offer important local insight into the growth and management of GI in the correct places across the district.
- **Nutrient Neutrality Mitigation:** The River Mease partnership has developed a mitigation strategy for nutrient neutrality, opening up upstream opportunities for improvement.
- **EA Diffuse Water Pollution Plan:** The Environment Agency’s plan for the Mease is critical in informing partnership projects. It should be considered when identifying projects with multiple environmental benefits.

Theme 5: Resilient and Climate-positive Lichfield

Why is GI important for Resilient and Climate-positive Places in the District?

2.143 In the face of intensifying environmental pressures, resilient landscapes are those that can absorb and recover from change while continuing to provide essential functions. GI plays a vital dual role in responding to climate change - both by *mitigating* its causes and by helping us *adapt* to its unavoidable impacts**.**

2.144 To support climate mitigation**,** a well-designed GI network can reduce emissions through carbon sequestration in habitats such as woodlands, wetlands and grasslands, while also supporting low-carbon travel via active travel routes and green corridors (alongside strong sustainable transport policies).

2.145 At the same time, GI is key to climate adaptation – enhancing flood resilience and water retention, providing cooling and shading in urban areas and improving habitat connectivity to allow wildlife to move and adapt as conditions change. **Theme 4** goes into further detail about the District's water environment and the role of GI in flood mitigation.

What does National Policy say?

2.146 The **UK's Climate Change Act 2008** (as amended in 2019) sets a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. **[See reference** 61**]** England's 25 Year Environment Plan also includes a strong focus on protecting and improving the environment to tackle climate change.

2.147 The UK's independent Climate Change Committee recommends increasing woodland cover in the UK from 13% to a minimum of 17% by 2050 (and ideally to 19%) to help the country achieve net zero carbon emissions as a support to full decarbonisation efforts. **[See reference** 62**]** The Government launched a Tree Planting Task Force in November 2024, to strengthen collaborative working and oversee the planting of millions of trees, noting that the UK has less tree cover than almost anywhere in Europe and recognising the need to close the gap. **[See reference** 63**]**

2.148 Similarly, the government's **Nature Positive 2030 report [See reference** 64**]** aims to combat climate change and biodiversity loss through the deployment of nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation - notably by restoring peatlands and planting native trees.

2.149 England's **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** includes a requirement to mitigate and adapt to climate change (as a key environmental objective under paragraph 8). The planning system is explicitly required to support the transition to net zero by 2050.

2.150 Finally, the UK's **10-year Infrastructure Strategy** released in June 2025 **[See reference** 65**]** highlights a significant role for nature-based solutions and GI in climate mitigation and adaptation. The strategy posits a hierarchy for infrastructure design, which instructs that "first, maintain and optimise existing assets. Then, consider green and nature-based solutions where they are effective. New 'grey' solutions should only be deployed if other solutions are not viable."

What does Local Policy say?

2.151 LDC declared a climate emergency in December 2019, which committed the Council to consider climate impacts in all future Council policies and spending decisions. **[See reference** 66**]**

2.152 The District's existing **Local Plan Strategy** (adopted in 2015) includes a number of policies which relate to creating resilient and climate-positive places through the GI network. These include:

- **Policy NR4 (Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows)** aims to protect and enhance Lichfield District District's trees, woodland and hedgerows.
- **Policy CP5 (Sustainable Transport):** aims to improve accessibility to footpaths and cycle routes, thereby reducing car dependency and promoting healthier lifestyles. These policies are supplemented by a number of SPDs with additional guidance for applicants. Of relevance to this theme is the:

2.153 The **Sustainable Design SPD** **[See reference** 67**]** recognises the value of GI in tackling the effects of climate change, including water management and flood reduction, cooling of built-up areas and reducing air pollution.

2.154 The Lichfield District 2050 Strategy commits to becoming the greenest district in England, recognising that climate change is the most critical challenge the District faces. It pledges to reach district-wide carbon neutrality by 2050. This will include enabling greener homes and sustainable development. **[See reference** 68**]**

2.155 LDC collaborates with partners through the **Staffordshire Adaptation Strategy**, which sets out a county wide response to the risks and opportunities posed by climate change. **[See reference** 69**]** The Strategy outlines a number of

opportunities, including integrating GI into new developments, delivering biodiversity net gain and improving flood risk awareness and resilience.

What are the assets, challenges and pressures in the District?

Supporting low-carbon travel

2.156 As of 2019, carbon emissions per sq km in the District were 2.1kt, beneath the West Midlands average of 3.2. **[See reference** 70**]** Across the wider Staffordshire County area, transport accounts for 40% of total emissions in the district. **[See reference** 71**]**

2.157 As set out under **Theme 2**, levels of walking and cycling today in the District are low given poor provision of options for these modes of transport. A well planned GI network can work alongside sustainable transport policies to provide high quality options that reduce car dependency and as a result carbon emissions.

"Carbon sink" assets

2.158 Carbon sinks are natural habitats that absorb more carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the atmosphere than they release. They help reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which can play a supporting role to full decarbonisation programmes in climate mitigation efforts. While peatlands and marine environments play a role, the relevant habitats for the District include woodlands and forests, wetlands and healthy well-managed grasslands.

2.159 According to ONS data sets, as of 2019 woodland cover in the District stood at only 6.2% - well below the English average of 10% and the national 2050 target of 17%. **[See reference** 72**]** **Figure 2.5** show that the woodland cover is scattered across the district and fragmented, with slightly larger blocks in the south around Hopwas Hays Wood and along the M6/A38 corridor.

2.160 As a district, Lichfield benefits from two landscape-scale reforestation initiatives – the Forest of Mercia in the west (a designated Community Forest) and the National Forest in the east near the Mease Valley. While distinct in geography and governance, they share similar goals - using woodland creation and landscape-scale GI to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits on both public and private land. While the National Forest only lies partly within Lichfield District, as a whole it has increased woodland cover within its own boundaries from approximately 6% in the early 1990s to 25%. **[See reference** 73**]**

2.161 As climate pressures grow, the role of these Community Forests in delivering natural climate solutions will be increasingly important to Lichfield District's long-term environmental resilience.

2.162 In response to the climate emergency, LDC has taken local action to enhance carbon offsetting and local greening efforts, notably through the Tiny Forest Programme, collaborating with Severn Trent and Earthwatch. This saw the planting of six miniature woodlands in January 2022 across sites in Lichfield City and Burntwood, **[See reference** 74**]** however ongoing maintenance of these sites has proved challenging

Urban heat impact

2.163 Figure 2.5 highlights those areas of the District where communities are most vulnerable to urban heating, with key areas of vulnerability within built-up areas of the District in particular.

2.164 Expanding canopy cover is an effective way to manage urban heat. The Tree Equity Score Map (developed by American Forests) is a tool that identifies where tree cover is needed most by combining data on canopy cover with social and environmental factors - helping target urban tree planting to improve health, climate resilience and equity in underserved communities. The tool highlights a number of gaps where urban tree planting should be prioritised in the north of Lichfield City and in central, northern and western Burntwood. **[See reference** 75**]**

Flood risk

2.165 Nature-based solutions to flood risk are a central plank of how GI can contribute to greater climate resilience across the District. As noted at the start of this chapter there are some overlaps between the themes, therefore for the purposes of this report, the use of nature-based GI solutions to address flood risk is dealt with under **Theme 4** (Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment). However, **Figure 2.5** also highlights key areas of fluvial flood risk in the District.

Figure 2.5: Climate vulnerability in Lichfield

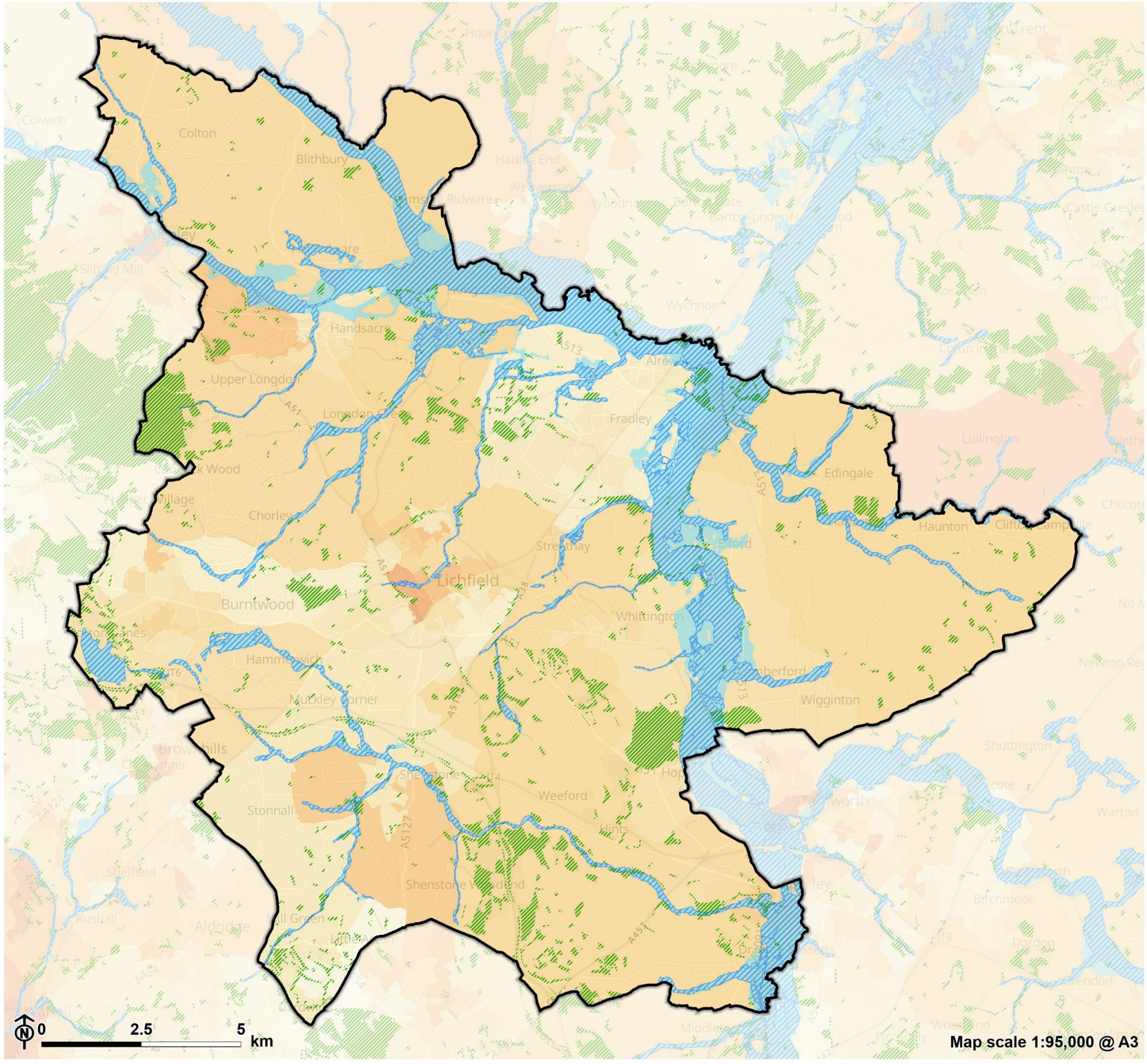

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Figure 2.5: Climate vulnerability in Lichfield

- Lichfield boundary
- National Forest Inventory
- Flood zone 2
- Flood zone 3

Socio-Spatial Heat Vulnerability Index*

- Lower vulnerability
- Higher vulnerability

*Socio-spatial heat vulnerablity refers to mapped social vulnerablity with respect to heat-related hazard. Source: L.S.J et al (2011) "Climate change, justice and vulnerability",Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report, York. Derived from UKCP18 Crown Copyright 2018, Met Office.

Summary of key challenges

- **Carbon emissions**: are dominated by transport (40%), requiring better GI integration with sustainable transport to support low-carbon options.
- **Woodland cover**: is low and fragmented at 6.2%, below the English average (10%) and far from the 2050 target (17%).
- **Impermeable surfaces:** Urban areas and industrial zones have large expanses of hard surfaces, contributing to heat vulnerability and flood risk.
- **Tree planting and urban greening**: need better targeting in vulnerable urban communities where heat and social inequity has been identified.

Summary of emerging opportunities

- **LDC commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050**: aligned with national targets, provides strategic support for GI investment.
- **Expand woodland cover:** strategically, to connect existing blocks, making use of grant funding opportunities and through new development sites. Could consider canopy cover standard as part of Local Plan policies.
- **Two Community Forests (National Forest and Forest of Mercia):** offer a landscape-scale opportunity for woodland expansion, connecting areas of woodland and climate resilience.
- **Tiny Forest Programme**: Local initiatives like this demonstrate effective community-led woodland creation (although challenges remain related to long term maintenance responsibilities).
- **Improved walking and cycling routes:** GI can encourage low-carbon travel.
- **Use of data to prioritise:** Tools like the Tree Equity Score Map enable targeted urban tree planting in heat-vulnerable and underserved communities.
- **Community input**: can offer important local insight into the growth and management of GI in the correct places across the district.
- **National Forest Recognition:** The National Forest is included in the Local Plan. However, there is an opportunity to enhance its visibility and promote stronger policy support for GI within developments, particularly tree planting.

Chapter 3
Vision and strategic objectives for GI in the District

3.1 This chapter sets out the proposed Vision and strategic objectives for GI in Lichfield District, arising from the review of existing GI assets, challenges and opportunities in **Chapter 2**.

Vision

By 2050, Lichfield District will be home to a connected, nature-rich green and blue infrastructure network that forms a central plank in ambitions to be the 'greenest District in the country'. It will support the recovery of key habitats like heathlands, woodlands, wetlands and river corridors, improve access to green space in underserved communities and help manage water, carbon and climate risks across the district. This network will shape healthier, more distinctive and better-connected places – from Lichfield city centre to outlying villages – while underpinning sustainable growth and a fair transition to net zero.

Strategic Objectives

3.2 The following five strategic objectives will help to deliver on this vision. Together with the Vision, they should act like a 'golden thread' for decision making on GI and guide the opportunities identified later in this report:

1. Nature-rich Lichfield

Create a resilient nature recovery network across the district by expanding, restoring and reconnecting priority habitats such as ancient woodland, lowland heath and river meadows – supporting species movement across landscapes

like the National Forest and Forest of Mercia and securing long-term gains for biodiversity through development, land management and partnership delivery

2. Active and Healthy Lichfield

To make healthy lifestyles the easy choice, by reduce inequalities in access to high quality, multifunctional green spaces - using data tools to target investment where it's needed most. Support transport policy in delivering safe, inclusive routes for walking and cycling and design green spaces that respond to the needs of all generations.

3. Thriving and Prosperous Lichfield

Strengthen the role of GI in placemaking and economic resilience by greening Lichfield city's historic core, enhancing underused spaces in all settlements and developing a more joined-up visitor economy linking flagship assets like Beacon Park, Chasewater, the Arboretum and Fradley Junction.

4. Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment

Improve the ecological status of the District's rivers and catchments – by integrating Water Framework Directive objectives into Local Plan policy and decision-making. Promote catchment-scale management and support multifunctional blue corridors that reduce flooding, enhance water quality and restore natural river functions.

5. A Resilient and Climate-positive Lichfield

Support the District's 2050 net zero goal by expanding woodland and urban tree canopy cover – especially in fragmented landscapes and heat-vulnerable communities – promoting low-carbon travel and embedding nature-based solutions into all new development and regeneration projects.

Chapter 4
Investment priorities for GI in Lichfield

What are the GI Priority Areas?

4.1 It is vital that all new development across Lichfield District makes a meaningful contribution to the GI network. However, this part of the study identifies a number of strategic areas where investment in the GI network should be prioritised. It is important that these GIPAs are reflected in Local Plan policy and that schemes coming forward within each of these areas reflect the challenges and opportunities highlighted by this study.

4.2 A map of the GIPAs can be seen on **Figure 4.1**.

Figure 4.1: GI Priority Areas (GIPAs) in Lichfield

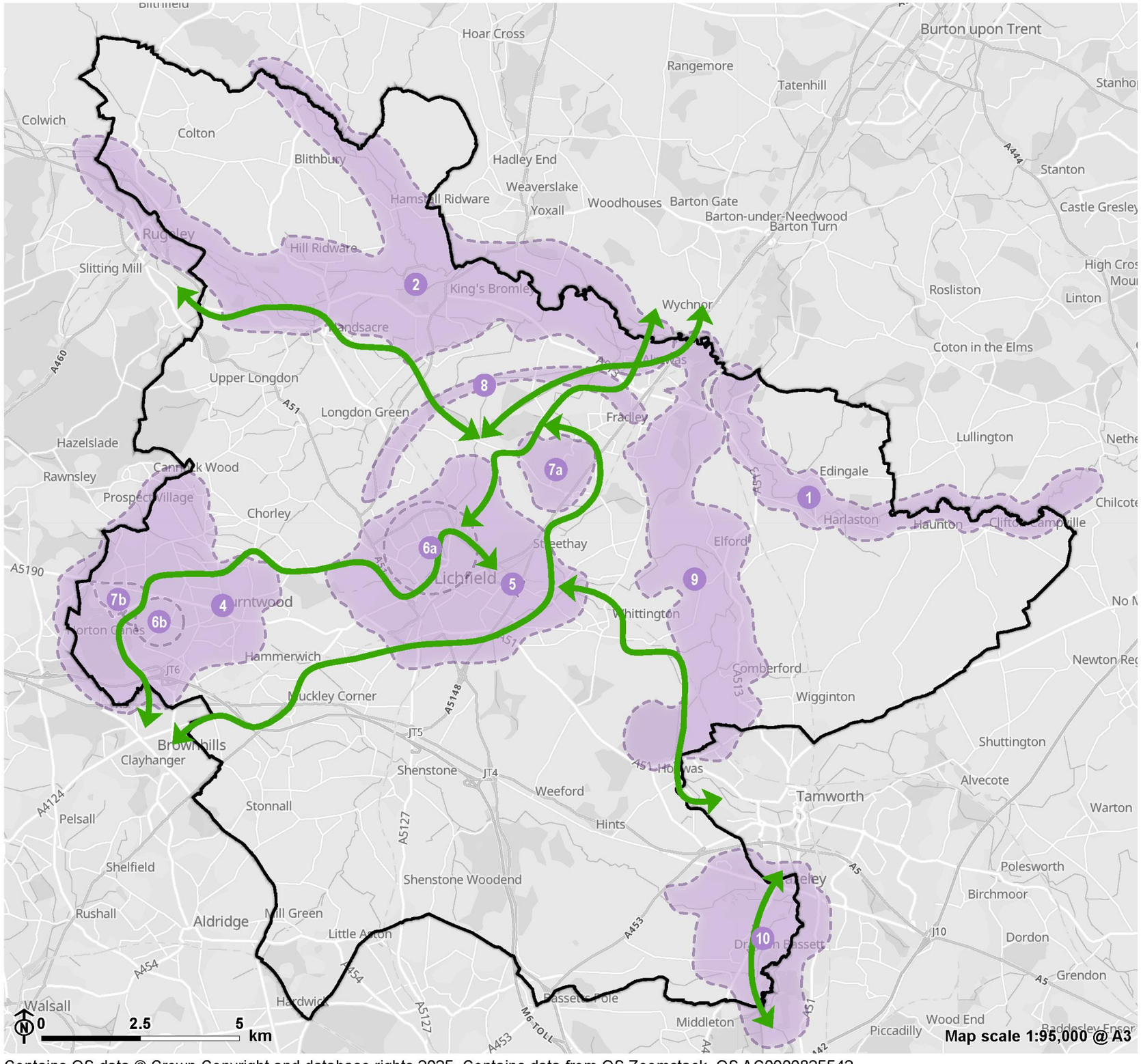

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Figure 4.1: GI priority areas in Lichfield

Lichfield boundary

Priority area

1. River Mease nature recovery corridor
2. Trent Valley living rivers corridor
3. Mercian Greenways: district-wide blue-green grid (priority area 3)
4. Burntwood Forest town
5. Lichfield City green loops
6a. Resilient communities (Lichfield)
6b. Resilient communities (Burntwood)
7a. Sponge employment parks (Fradley)
7b. Sponge business parks (Burntwood)
8. East-west woodland belt
9. Tame Valley blue-green corridor
10. Tame Valley southern gateways

How were the GIPAs identified?

4.3 The process for identifying these priorities was through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The following three considerations informed the identification of the GIPAs

1. GIS mapping of assets and needs

4.4 GIS data layers used for this study were combined to produce two combined data sets:

Valued GI assets

Features and areas of green and blue infrastructure currently present within Lichfield District that provide key ecosystem services, biodiversity value, recreational opportunities or placemaking/economic value and as such are prioritised for conservation and enhancement (shown on **Figure 4.2**).

GI needs

Identified areas within Lichfield District showing deficits in green infrastructure provision or function, representing priority locations for investment, restoration, or new GI interventions to improve ecological connectivity, climate resilience and community wellbeing, in line with this study's five GI themes (shown on **Figure 4.3**).

4.5 By using these mapping layers together, we can identify areas where there is an opportunity to deliver multifunctional GI enhancements in one place i.e. locations where there are overlapping needs for GI functions. As an example, this might help to identify an area of river corridor where there is evident flood risk, high socio-economic deprivation, regeneration needs, low canopy cover and the identified need for habitat expansion or biodiversity.

4.6 Appendix C provides a full method for how the mapping of Valued GI Assets and GI Needs was carried out.

Figure 4.2: Mapping of Valued GI assets in Lichfield

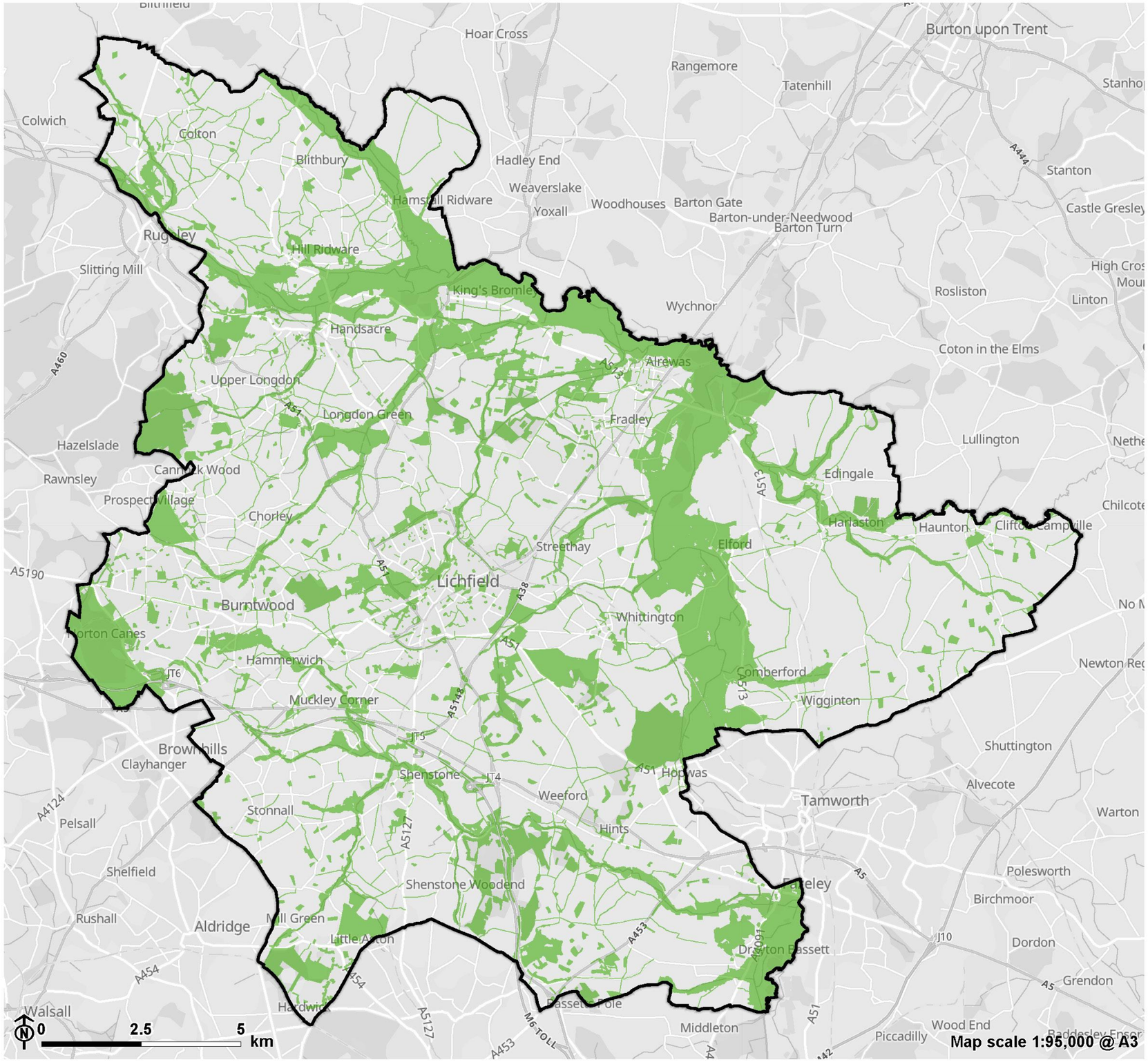

Figure 4.3: Mapping of GI need in Lichfield

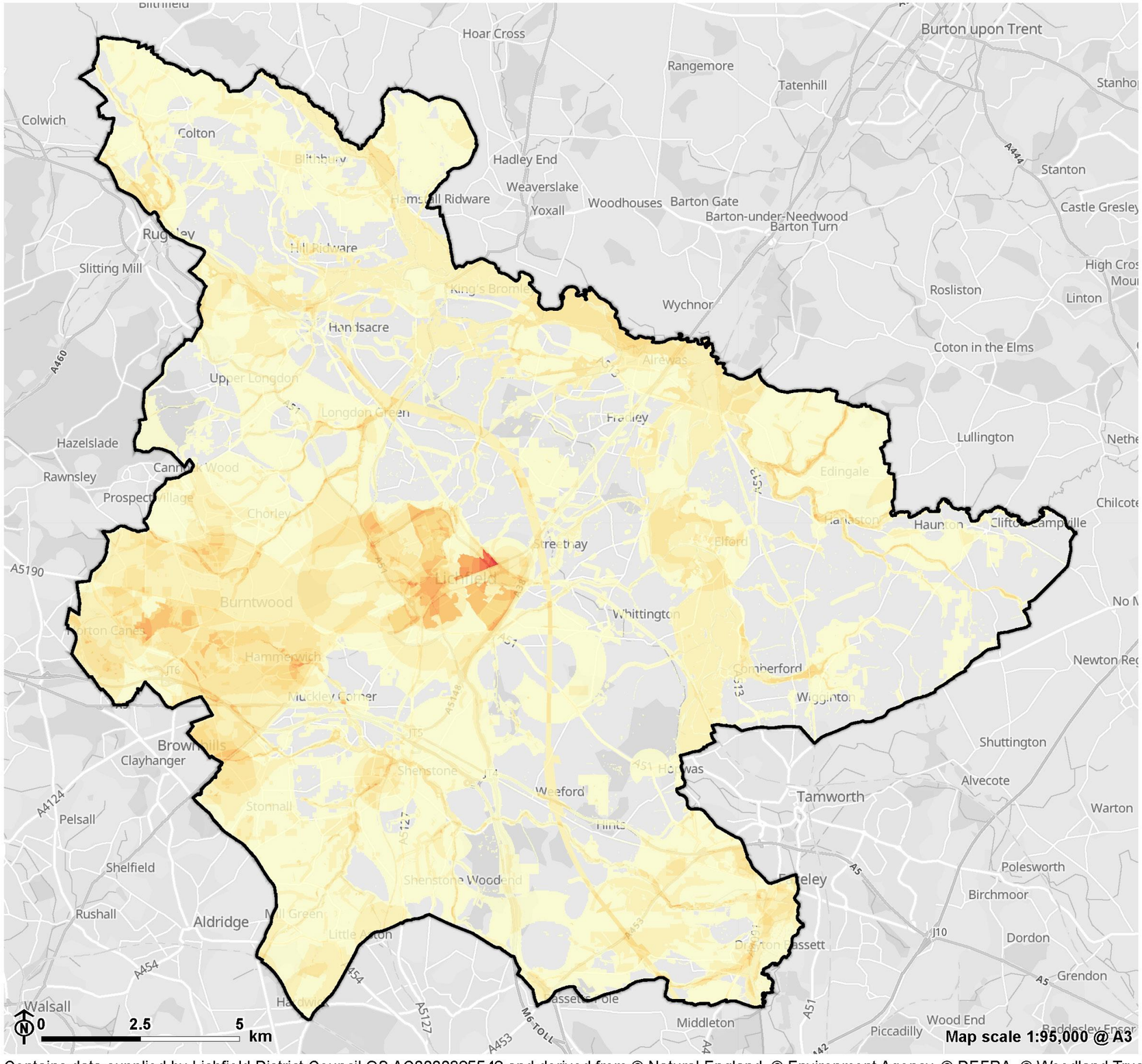

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Figure 4.3: GI needs in Lichfield

Lichfield boundary

Areas of Lichfield in need of GI

Some need

Significant need

2. Existing initiatives and partnerships

4.7 We also considered where in the District there is the presence of existing initiatives and/or proactive stakeholders and landowners at all scales, from large organisations to small-scale community actors. The inputs from the stakeholder workshop (see **Appendix A** for which organisations were involved) was important in identifying these.

4.8 When identifying priority areas for investment, is vital not only to reflect the evidence base - such as mapped need, opportunity and ecological value - but also to align with places where existing initiatives, partnerships and proactive stakeholders are already active. Targeting areas where there is both strategic focus and local momentum significantly increases the likelihood of successful delivery, as these locations benefit from local knowledge, capacity and buy-in. Such alignment helps to embed GI projects within wider place-based agendas (such as health, climate resilience or active travel) and enables more effective use of funding and resources by building on what is already in motion. It also fosters long term stewardship by involving those with a real stake in the GI network, boosting the impact of GI interventions beyond the planning stage.

3. Key areas of growth

4.9 The process also focused on areas of planned growth within Lichfield District's emerging Local Plan – such as key housing and employment allocations. This is because these locations offer the most immediate and tangible opportunities to deliver new GI on the ground. Integrating GI into areas of development ensures that new communities benefit from access to nature, climate resilience and healthy environments from the outset, rather than retrofitting these assets later at greater cost.

Future considerations

4.10 These GIPAs were identified prior to the publication of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent LNRS. Once the LNRS has been fully adopted, it will be important that this is taken into account when considering priorities for GI investment – particularly in relation to biodiversity. This can be achieved through considering habitat and species measures set out within the LNRS Habitat Map within areas such as these GIPAs defined for GI. This will contribute to the Council's statutory duty to take account of the LNRS in their planning.

What are the GI catalysts?

4.11 Alongside the 10 GI Priority Areas, this study also identifies two 'GI catalysts'. These act as the 'software' that accompanies and boosts the impact of the physical interventions proposed in the Priority Areas. However, they are equally crucial in enabling a resilient, sustainable and well-maintained GI network in the District that meaningfully helps to deliver on the wider aims of the Lichfield District 2050 Strategy.

Priority Area 1: River Mease Nature Recovery Corridor

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A protected, recovering river system where nutrient loads are reduced and connected wetlands and meadows support SAC species. Low-impact access is carefully zoned, with nearby settlements offering alternative nature spaces so wildlife is allowed to thrive without disturbance.

Figure 4.4: The River Mease at Harlaston

Figure 4.5: Recent floodplain restoration between Edingale and Croxall [See reference **76**]

Why enhance here?

4.12 A lowland clay river of international importance, the River Mease (SAC/SSSI) threads through a mosaic of riparian wetlands, wet grasslands and meadows, passing rural settlements such as Harlaston and Edingale. This is the district's most sensitive water environment and a critical biodiversity spine.

4.13 The following challenges need to be addressed here:

- The SAC/SSSI in unfavourable condition.
- The Water Framework Directive (WFD) status for this waterway is largely poor/moderate.
- Nutrient loading from wastewater and agricultural pollution.
- Risk of disturbance to sensitive habitats.
- Risk of drought / low water flows.
- Increasing flood and heat stress on aquatic habitats.
- Need for carbon-sequestering habitats.

Priorities for improvement

4.14 Any actions within this area should integrate and build upon the restoration activities which have already been undertaken by the River Mease Partnership (through Environment Agency and DCS funding). Key priorities should include:

- **Floodplain habitat restoration:** Reconnect floodplain incorporating natural flood management principles and restoring lowland meadows/fens and wet grasslands - a key feature of the riverscape in the District.
- **Catchment-led nutrient reduction:** Agricultural reversion (i.e. taking land out of intensive agricultural use and allowing it to return to a more natural state) within the floodplains of the Mease catchment. Improvements may include riparian “buffers”, livestock exclusion and soil/water stewardship in collaboration with farmers.
- **Riparian planting:** Expanding woodland belts along the Mease to increase ecological connectivity and provide shading of the watercourse, with benefits for fish and other wildlife.
- **Habitat recovery**: Floodplain and river restoration including backwater creation (i.e. creating small, still or slow-flowing water areas), removal of fish barriers and control of INNS. Suitable habitats, locations and measures should be informed by the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent LNRS.
- **Access management:** Public access in this particular river corridor should be limited to existing PROWs and should avoid the riverbanks, be clearly zoned (in line with the ‘access hierarchy’ and carefully managed to protect habitats and species while allowing low-key connection with nature within the wider landscape.
- **Expand access to nature within nearby communities:** In order to protect an undisturbed Mease, alternative GI should be provided in nearby settlements in order to deflect pressure on sensitive habitats. This could include community gardens and orchards. Opportunities for green prescribing activities should be sought across new greenspaces within nearby settlements.
- **Monitoring:** Tracking of phosphate loads and explore the use of citizen science (to support actions of and lead by River Mease Partnership). Draw on monitoring data from the Mease Partnerships projects, such as between Edingale and Croxall to inform future work in the catchment. **[See reference** 77**]**

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

River Mease Partnership; Environment Agency; Natural England; Severn Trent Water; Trent Rivers Trust; landowners/farm clusters; Parish Councils; LDC/SCC; National Forest Company (eastern fringe); Staffordshire Wildlife Trust; Support Staffordshire.

Delivery mechanisms

- River Mease nutrient mitigation scheme (Developer Contribution Scheme (DCS) / Nutrient Neutrality)
- Section 106 agreements
- Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes
- BNG off-site units and conservation covenants.
- National Forest/woodland expansion grants.
- Green finance

Next steps

- Agree a local nutrient mitigation roadmap (aligned to the Partnership's post-DCS approach) and map priority sub catchments.
- Co-design farmer packages (buffer widths, wetland siting, soil plans).
- Define wayfinding (in line with access hierarchy) + "alternative natural spaces" around settlements.

Case study: Enfield Chase River Restoration (Greater London)

4.15 At Enfield Chase, the Council and landowners partnered to create a chain of catchment wetlands and riparian buffer strips that strip out nutrients before they reach the river. The model was secured through simple landowner agreements and is readily transferable to farmer-led "wetland chains" elsewhere. Alongside the water-quality gains, around 1,000 ha of former farmland has been converted into accessible natural greenspace - opening up new paths, habitats and flood storage while reconnecting local communities with the river. Local volunteers play an important role in managing habitats. **[See reference** 78**]**

Priority Area 2: Trent Valley Living Rivers Corridor

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A living floodplain parkland that stores water, cleans the river and knits villages, the Arboretum and Fradley Junction with accessible greenways. New riparian woodland and wet grasslands make the valley a flagship for nature recovery and nature focussed leisure activities.

Figure 4.6: The Trent Valley Way [See reference **79**]

Why enhance here?

4.16 The Trent Valley Living Rivers Corridor forms a broad floodplain landscape connecting settlements in the District including Rugeley (cross-boundary), Armitage/Handsacre and Kings Bromley. The Trent & Mersey Canal is another blue corridor which runs through this area. The Valley represents a flagship opportunity to restore a healthy, nature-rich blue-green corridor which integrates riparian woodland, wet grasslands and lowland fen with accessible blue and greenways. The corridor is

highlighted in this study's Valued GI Assets mapping as a major priority for flood resilience and ecological connectivity. Key areas of need include:

- WFD data records the River Trent in this section as having 'poor' ecological status.
- Potential irreplaceable and restorable lowland fen, wet grassland and meadows along the floodplain require targeted restoration and protection.
- A significant network of PRoW provides links through the corridor. However, there are fewer accessible spaces between Armitage, Kings Bromley and further to the east.
- The impacts of climate change represent an increased risk and severity of flooding, calling for nature-based solutions to flooding and water management along key blue corridors.

Priorities for improvement

- **Floodplain reconnection:** Re-establish natural hydrological processes by re-linking rivers with their floodplains.
- **Accessible greenways:** Strengthen and extend PRoW and cycle routes, improving east to west connectivity across the corridor while protecting sensitive habitats. Improve wayfinding and PRoW network connectivity between the River Trent and Trent and Mersey Canal – in line with the priorities in Priority Area 3 (Mercian Greenways).
- **Contribute to building and connecting to the Trent Valley Way:** The Trent Rivers Trust is in the process of creating a fully signposted path along the Trent Valley, with a section already signposted going north from Rugeley. **[See reference** 80**]**
- **Habitat mosaics:** Differentiate where riparian woodland expansion is most appropriate versus new wet grasslands, lowland meadows and fen habitats, guided by the LNRS and WWNP mapping (see data list in Appendix B).
- **Water quality improvements:** Implement natural solutions to reduce diffuse pollution, such as buffer strips and reedbeds.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

- Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership; Environment Agency; Trent Rivers Trust; Natural England; Forestry Commission; Canals and Rivers Trust.

Delivery mechanisms

- CIL / S106 contributions.
- Cannock Chase SAC Zone of Influence (via CIL / S106 contributions).
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) off-site units.
- Beneficial use of Green Belt.
- Partnership & External Funding Blends.

Next steps

- Work with partners to prepare an integrated corridor framework for this stretch of the Trent (nature + flood + access).
- Identify priority land parcels for voluntary flood storage/ELM + costed project pipeline.

Case study: The Burton Washlands (Burton upon Trent)

4.17 The vision for this scheme is a landscape-led project that enhances flood resilience, biodiversity and public access across 630 hectares of floodplain in Burton upon Trent. Developed through partnership, it delivers new wetlands, restored river channels, wildflower meadows and improved public spaces, creating a multifunctional landscape that supports wildlife, reduces flood risk and provides recreation for the community. It won the 2018 Landscape Institute Award for Local Landscape Planning. **[See reference** 81**]**

Figure 4.7: Burton Washlands [See reference **82**]

Priority Area 3: Mercian Greenways – District wide blue-green grid

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A well signed, seamless grid of canals, greenways, PRoW and former railway lines that links every settlement in the District to stations and destinations. Intersections become welcoming hubs with shade, seating and wayfinding and the corridors themselves deliver net gains for nature.

Figure 4.8: Restored section of the Lichfield Canal at Fosseway Heath, now forms part of the Heritage Towpath Trail

Why enhance here?

4.18 The “Mercian Greenways” concept seeks to create a seamless, district-wide blue-green grid that provides easy access to blue corridors for residents of and visitors to the District while creating robust linear habitats. It does this by “knitting

together" existing corridors including canals and their adjacent habitats, PRoW, National Cycle Network routes, former railway lines and the HS2 corridors. This network would connect every settlement with high quality walking, cycling and wheeling routes to key destinations, stations and visitor attractions such as Cannock Chase, Chasewater Country Park and the National Memorial Arboretum. It represents a transformative opportunity for sustainable transport, inclusive access and ecological connectivity. Key areas of need include:

- The district records low rates of walking and cycling, highlighting the need for safe, attractive routes.
- Existing greenways, PROW and canals are disjointed and lack consistent wayfinding, seating and shade at key gateways.
- Canals, hedgerow corridors and woodlands provide valuable linear habitats (including for bats and badgers).
- Improved connectivity to heritage and natural attractions could diversify and expand sustainable tourism in the District, putting Lichfield 'on the map' as a destination.

Priorities for improvement

- **South Staffordshire Railway:** support the Council's ambition to invest in the former South Staffordshire Railway as a strategic walking and cycling network.
- **Network integration**: use mapped analysis to create a continuous grid of off-road walking and cycling routes linking all settlements to key destinations and rail stations – including key heritage features such as scheduled monuments, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG).
- **Branding and wayfinding**: establish a coherent identity for the network, with consistent signage and digital mapping. A junction-based network using numbered points for easy navigation would be a strong asset (see case studies below). Easy-to-access bike and e-bike hire points should also be provided along the way.
- **Wildlife corridors**: enhance existing and create new habitats along greenways to improve ecological connectivity and increase the value of these corridors to wildlife. Provide nectar-rich, berry bearing plants, shrubs and wildflowers within hedges, treelines and grass verges. Note that all routes will require careful management of lighting and public access to prevent disturbance to vulnerable habitats.

- **Stepping stone habitats**: identify opportunities for improving stepping stone habitat as part of maintenance and planned improvement work to infrastructure, especially at key nodes such as at settlements. Suitable habitats, locations and measures should be informed by the LNRS.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

- Sustrans / National Cycle Network; HS2 Ltd; Environment Agency; Canals and Rivers Trust; Natural England; Trent Rivers Trust (for links to the Trent Valley Way); Visit Staffordshire; Historic England; Council departments managing the transport network and visitor economy initiatives.

Delivery mechanisms

- LCWIP or active travel-aligned funding.
- Section 106/CIL
- BNG (combining on-site delivery within settlements with off-site units)
- H2S community fund
- Heritage Lottery (e.g. for interpretation resources)
- sponsorship/adoption.

Next steps

- Produce the Mercian Greenways Map & Design Guide (surfacing, widths, lighting/biodiversity, signage).
- Phase 1 delivery: South Staffs Rail Greenway + canal “missing links”.

Case study 1: The Flemish Node Network

4.19 The Flemish Node Network (or “junction node” system) is a tourist infrastructure system in Flanders (Belgium) that uses numbered, interconnected junction points ("nodes") to create cycling and hiking routes. Users plan their path by stringing together consecutive node numbers, then follow the physical signs on the ground to navigate scenic routes independently. The concept originated in Limburg and is now a popular, free system for exploring Flanders' diverse landscapes.

Case study 2: The Bristol and Bath Railway Path

4.20 The Bristol-Bath path is a flat, traffic free route spanning approximately 23 kilometres that connects Bristol and Bath along a disused railway line, forming part of National Cycle Network Route 4. The route is a versatile corridor for walking and cycling while also acting as an important wildlife link. Along the route, users can access heritage spots like Mangotsfield, Warmley and Bitton stations (some featuring cafes, sculptures and steam engines) as well as stopping points at Saltford and scenic vistas.

Figure 4.9: Bristol and Bath Railway Path [See reference **83**]

Priority Area 4: Burntwood 'forest town' & Chasewater Fringe

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A cooler, greener Burntwood that feels like a "gateway" to the Forest of Mercia and Chasewater. Targeted street trees and small-scale woodlands, a wooded greenway to the lake and community orchards boost health and wellbeing while respecting nearby heathland habitat.

Figure 4.10: Larks Rise Woodland - a green corridor within a residential area of Burntwood

Figure 4.11: Existing GI assets in and around Burntwood

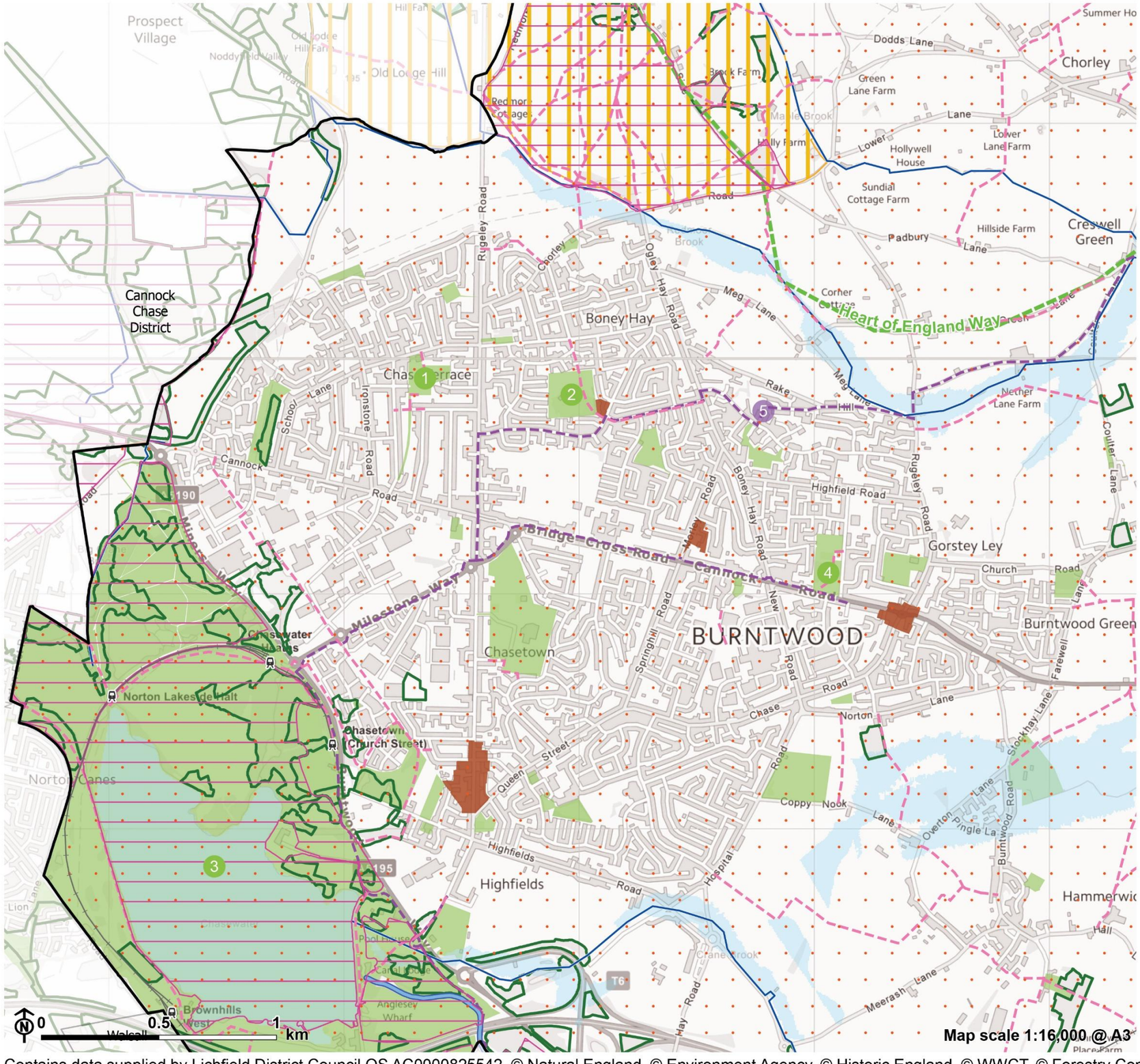

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Figure 4.11: Existing GI assets in and around Burntwood

- Lichfield boundary
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ancient woodland
- National Forest Inventory
- Cannock Chase National Landscape
- Forest of Mercia
- Flood zones 2 and 3
- Existing blue-green space
  - 1 – Chase Terrace Park
  - 2 – Redwood Park
  - 3 – Chasewater
  - 4 – Burntwood Park
- Local centre
- Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Restoration
- Railway station
- Railway track
- River
- Public Right of Way
- National Cycle Network (route number)
- Long distance trails

Why enhance here?

4.21 The town of Burntwood sits within the Forest of Mercia boundaries but does not currently give the impression (in terms of its GI network) of a 'gateway to the forest'. Actions here would also support the objective in the Lichfield 2050 Strategy that *"the tree canopy across the district has been extended and more street trees are introduced to our urban areas"* and will contribute towards the national target of increasing tree canopy cover in England to 16.5% by 2050.

4.22 Expanding tree cover in priority areas of Burntwood would deliver a wide range of ecosystem service benefits and help to address the following challenges:

- In Chasetown and central/north west Burntwood, GIS mapping shows that there is a combination of low canopy cover and high heat vulnerability. The 'Tree Equity Score' mapping (see data list in Appendix B) identifies areas of 'high need' for urban tree planting in north and west Burntwood.
- Flood risk within the town from both surface water and river corridors will be exacerbated by climate change. Natural flood management (NFM) measures including woodland and other GI features would be an effective nature-based solution to climate adaptation.
- The public realm in Burntwood town centre does not currently deliver a high-quality visitor experience, and woodland features and urban greening would help to 'soften' the townscape, enhance 'walkability' and support town centre health.
- Chasewater Country Park is a valuable GI asset sitting on the edge of the Burntwood, however the town currently 'turns its back on' the park, with poor access links between the two (unsafe crossing points across Miner's Road and an unattractive "arrival" experience in general).

Priorities for improvement

- **Targeted street and neighbourhood tree planting** for urban greening and shade provision, informed by Tree Equity priority area mapping. New woodland planting should include a mix of native mixed species of tree, as well as hedgerow corridors, orchards and individual trees to support pollinators and enhance habitat networks to support biodiversity.
- **Green links outwards to key GI assets:** connect neighbourhoods (Chasetown, Chase Terrace, Boney Hay) to Chasewater and Cannock Chase through a network of tree-lined streets and green, leafy corridors.

- **Greening Burntwood's schools and health estate** through new small-scale tree and woodland planting, including orchards, tree belts and tiny forests.
- **Burntwood-Chasewater Greenway:** Creation of a continuous wooded traffic-free, multi-user greenway from Burntwood town centre to Chasewater Country Park.
- **Link up existing green spaces within town using green corridors**: including Burntwood Park, Redwood Park and Larks Rise Woodland. This would support wider transport-led measures to reduce reliance on the private car, in line with local policy.
- **Encourage community ownership:** by involving the community in new planting initiatives from start to finish including tree planting, aftercare and maintenance. Involve schools and community groups.
- **The right habitats in the right place:** Ensure tree/woodland planting is not at the expense of open habitats, including species-rich grassland and heathland. Incorporate other habitat priorities where relevant such as wood pasture and parkland, scrub, species-rich grasslands, lowland fens, ponds, lowland heathland (where relevant to local landscape and soils and informed by LNRS).

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

- Forest of Mercia Community Forest CIC; Cannock Chase National Landscape; LDC/SCC; Parish Councils; schools/health partners; Friends groups/community groups; Staffordshire Wildlife Trust; landowners (including Severn Trent Water); developers.

Delivery mechanisms

- Forest of Mercia/Forestry Commission woodland expansion grants.
- GI delivered as part of new site design at development sites
- Section 106/ CIL.
- Cannock Chase SAC Zone of Influence (CIL / S106 contributions).
- LCWIP or active travel-aligned funding.
- Section 278 Agreements.
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) off-site units and conservation covenants.
- Partnership and external funding blends.

Next steps

- Develop a Burntwood Canopy Plan (priority streets, species palettes, maintenance) as part of town masterplan.
- Commission a feasibility study for a new Chasewater Greenway (including route options).
- Explore links to Cannock Chase National Landscape and Forest of Mercia programmes, including co-branded community planting with the Forest of Mercia.

Case study 1: The Mersey Forest, URBAN GreenUP project (Liverpool)

4.23 Through the EU-funded URBAN GreenUP programme, Liverpool - supported by The Mersey Forest and the University of Liverpool - retrofitted over 40 nature-based solutions across the city, creating green corridors with living walls, rain gardens, street trees and floating habitat islands. The project targeted hotspots for heat, air quality and surface-water flooding and coupled delivery with monitoring so the model can be replicated elsewhere. Reported outcomes include diverting 5.2 million litres of stormwater, sequestering around 155,000 kg CO_2 and summer temperature reductions of up to 7.5°C. **[See reference** 84**]**

Case study 2: Telford Forest City (Shropshire)

4.24 Telford was originally planned as a 'Forest City' based on a framework of trees, woodlands and open spaces, which remain a defining characteristic of the town. Similar to Burntwood, Telford had an industrial heritage and has been awarded 'Tree Cities of the World' status three years running in recognition of the commitment to urban forestry creation, management and maintenance. **[See reference** 85**]**

Priority Area 5: Lichfield City Green Loops – Waters, Parks and Stations

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A network of shady, legible loops connecting neighbourhoods to Beacon Park, Stowe & Minster Pools and the stations. SuDS-first streets and playful spaces enhance the Cathedral city's character while making everyday active travel the natural choice.

Figure 4.12: NCN Route 54 through Beacon Park, Lichfield

Figure 4.13: GI network in and around Lichfield City

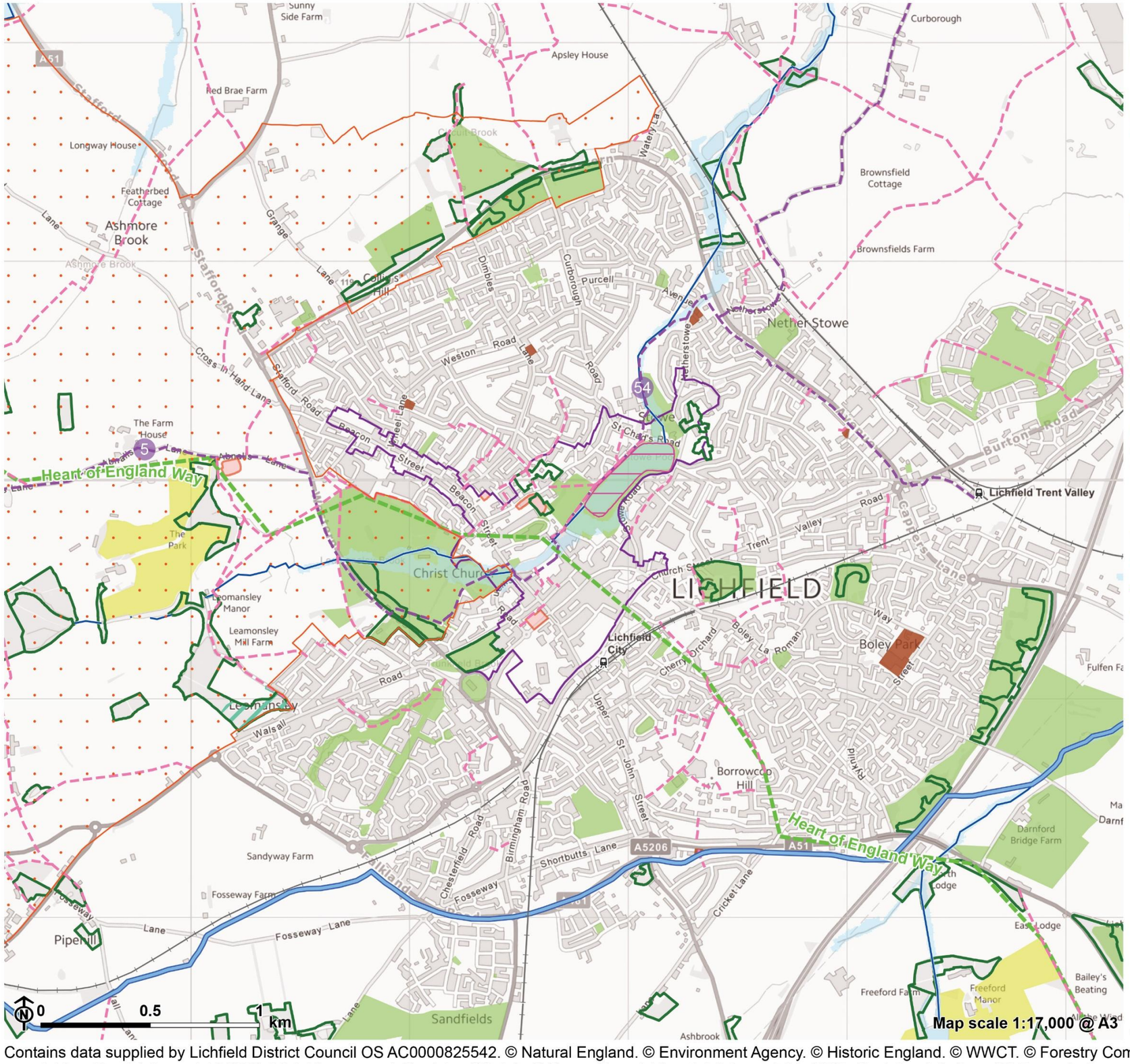

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Figure 4.13: GI network in and around Lichfield City

- Lichfield boundary
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ancient woodland
- National Forest Inventory
- Wood pasture and parkland
- Forest of Mercia
- Scheduled monument
- Conservation area
- Flood zones 2 and 3
- Existing blue-green space
- Local centre
- Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Restoration
- Railway station
- Railway track
- River
- Public Right of Way
- National Cycle Network (route number)
- Long distance trails

Why enhance here?

4.25 Lichfield city has a wealth of GI assets and cultural assets as a historic cathedral city (see **Figure 4.13**). However, rates of walking and cycling (especially for commuting) are below the national average. Footpaths and cycle routes through the city are fragmented in places and road corridors present barriers to connectivity. Creating navigable green loops linking cultural assets, economic hubs and key visitor destinations and green spaces will contribute to enhancing Lichfield's public realm, in line with aims of the Lichfield District 2050 strategy.

Priorities for improvement

- **Link cycleways and footpaths:** Create a linked-up network of accessible, waymarked routes linking neighbourhoods to parks, green spaces and railway stations. Signage and branding should be consistent across the town/district and linear SuDS and street trees integrated along key routes in areas of need.
- **Connecting beyond the city:** Bolster walking and cycling links beyond the city to link up with key green and blueways connecting to other parts of the District and key landscape features (see Priority Area 3: Mercian Greenways).
- **Joining up gaps** between high quality sections of NCN route 54 and other areas of the city that are less well-served – aiming for a consistent, joined up network across the whole city.
- **Canal connections:** Support the ongoing work by Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust to enhance recreational connectivity across the district via the network of restored canal paths and deliver high quality 'gateways' to each one within the city, with seating, interpretation and natural play features.
- **Reconnected railway path:** Link the Lichfield section of the 'Back the Track' railway path restoration project into the network of green spaces to bring the greenway seamlessly into the town centre.
- **Linear habitats:** Ensure that linear linkages also provide important habitat connections, in line with the priorities set out in the LNRS.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

LDC/SCC (particularly green spaces and transport planning); schools/businesses; developers; Back the Track; Sustrans; Hatherton and Lichfield Canal Restoration Trust; Canals and River Trust; Sport England; Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Delivery mechanisms

- GI delivered as part of new site design at development sites.
- Section 106/CIL.
- LCWIP or active travel-aligned funding.
- Section 278 Agreements.
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- Severn Trent partnerships.
- Partnership and external funding blends, including heritage/public realm funds.

Next steps

- Commission a feasibility study and consult with local communities to gain understanding of where improved connections should be prioritised.
- Identify and engage with key landowners, local organisations, community groups and commercial partners to seek potential partner organisations.
- Develop a wayfinding/signage strategy+ shade/seating audits.
- Deliver ‘quick win’ SuDS streets to pilot the approach, in collaboration with water companies.
- Ensure city centre GI projects are aligned to Lichfield City Masterplan and linked to the LCWIP.

Case study: Grey to Green (Sheffield)

4.26 Sheffield City Council has converted surplus road space on the edge of the city centre into a linear corridor of rain gardens, swales, street trees and meadows. These manage surface water while creating high-quality walking and cycling routes. Crucially, it links existing GI assets - the River Don, city centre spaces and nearby neighbourhood parks – and so stitches fragmented habitats and public realm into a connected green network.

Figure 4.14: ‘Grey to Green’ Planting in Sheffield

Priority Area 6: Resilient Communities Programme – surface water and heat (Lichfield and Burntwood)

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

Streets, schools and small parks in priority neighbourhoods retrofitted with shade, SuDS and pocket nature so daily life is cooler, safer and greener. Projects are both community - led and data - led, focused where heat, flood risk and access gaps overlap.

Figure 4.15: Green Acres Estate, Alrewas

Why enhance here?

4.27 Data sets used for this study highlight particular residential locations within Lichfield and Burntwood where surface water flood risk, areas of relative socio-

economic deprivation and access to open space overlap. These areas of acute need should be identified and used as the target for pilot projects which 'retrofit' streetscapes with nature-rich linear SuDS features – on the model of the Greener Grangetown project in Cardiff (see case study).

Priorities for improvement

- **Nature-rich SuDS and 'de-paving':** Deliver linear SuDS features in high surface water flood risk areas, alongside natural planting and seating areas.
- **Urban canopy cover:** Street scale trees where appropriate to provide shade at priority locations within the wider project scheme such as bus stops or routes to school.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

LDC/SCC (Highways/PRoW/Public Health); Severn Trent; schools; housing associations; community groups.

Delivery mechanisms

- Severn Trent funding programmes
- Corporate adopters
- CIL/Section 106

Next steps

- Publish a Priority Streets & Spaces list, drawing on the following data sets (see data list in Appendix B):
  - Climate Just heat vulnerability mapping.
  - Climate Just mapping of Communities at Risk of Flooding.
  - Local surface water flooding data.
  - Natural England Agst 'access to green space' mapping.
  - Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
  - Tree Equity mapping (areas of high priority for street tree planting).
- Pilot 2–3 "cool streets" in priority areas and a pocket park designed for multiple generations. Monitor outcomes from the pilot project.

Case study: Greener Grangetown (Cardiff)

4.28 In Cardiff, the Greener Grangetown project redesigned residential streets with rain gardens, permeable paving and street trees to capture and clean rainwater before it enters the River Taff. The scheme removed delivered 127 new trees and removed 4.4 hectares of surface water from a combined sewer, alongside providing safer junctions and improved public realm with street furniture. **[See reference** 86**]**.

Priority Area 7: 'Sponge' employment parks - Fradley and Burntwood retrofit.

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

Business parks that soak up rain, cool the air and provide welcoming green places for workers and visitors. Retrofit SuDS, tree-lined streets and green roofs cut flood risk and pollution while enhancing the image of Fradley and Burntwood.

Figure 4.16: Attenuation pond on the edge of Burntwood Business Park

Why enhance here?

4.29 Surface water flooding presents a significant risk in Lichfield District, particularly in built-up areas where impermeable surfaces are most extensive. Natural England's Greenness Grid (see data list in **Appendix B**) highlights significant "greenness gaps" which correspond with Lichfield District's industrial estates, reflecting a higher concentration of impermeable land cover and an increased risk of surface water

runoff. This reinforces the need for GI interventions to act as nature-based solutions for reducing flood risk.

4.30 Retrofitted sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) can help to minimise surface run-off and reduce surface water flooding, whilst also enhancing the aesthetic and amenity value of business parks in Lichfield District.

4.31 GI interventions in these locations can also help meet Water Framework Directive requirements by addressing urban runoff pressures and supporting improvements to water quality and the ecological status of rivers and waterbodies in the catchment.

Priorities for improvement

- **Retrofit SuDS:** to existing buildings and business parks. This could include bioretention streets (where verges help to capture and filter runoff), swales, detention basins, rain gardens; green/brown roofs; tree pits and daylighted ditches.
- **Habitat creation:** Identify opportunities to create “pocket habitats” such as woodlands, orchards, grassland meadows, wetlands and ponds, to enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity.
- **Permeable surfaces:** Explore the potential for retrofitting logistics yards with permeable zones such as permeable paving where appropriate.

4.32 The same principles should be applied to the GI requirements set out for new commercial development or business park expansions in the District.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

Site owners/occupiers; LDC; SCC Lead Local Flood Authority; Severn Trent; Environment Agency; developers; landscape/maintenance providers.

Delivery mechanisms

- Water company partnership funding.
- Section 106 for future business park expansions.
- BNG.
- Environment Agency grants.

- Corporate ESG budgets.

Next steps

- Engage with landowners/occupiers to carry out an estate-wide flood risk audit and concept plan. Identify opportunities for feasible ‘quick win’ retrofit actions.
- Explore options for ‘business improvement district’-style stewardship for long term management.

Case study: Bristol Business Park SuDS (UK):

4.33 Developed over several phases in north Bristol, the park used a SuDS “train” to manage runoff on clay soils. Permeable parking courts drain to vegetated swales, which convey flows to a wet detention pond with flow control before discharge. Later phases retrofitted SuDS into existing plots, linking new permeable paving and rainwater connections into the estate network. The result is reliable flood attenuation, greener streetscapes and biodiversity gains. **[See reference** 87**]**

Figure 4.17: Bristol Business Park SuDS [See reference **88**]

Priority Area 8: East-west woodland belt - the "Two Forests Link"

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

An east–west woodland and hedgerow belt that connects the National Forest to the Forest of Mercia without compromising heathlands. New community woodlands, orchards and riparian tree lines expand canopy cover and climate resilience across both farmland and villages. A 'Two Forests' route would link with the wider greenway network to connect Alrewas in the east with Chasewater Park in the west.

Figure 4.18: The National Forest [See reference **89**]

Why enhance here?

4.34 The "Two Forests Link" proposes an east–west woodland and hedgerow belt that connects the National Forest in the east with the Forest of Mercia in the west, while safeguarding heathland habitats. This strategic corridor would significantly

expand canopy cover across farmland, villages and riparian landscapes, contributing to national woodland targets and climate resilience. It provides an opportunity to combine woodland creation with wider mosaic habitat restoration, including traditional orchards, species-rich grasslands, ponds, fens and wood pasture. The corridor also ties into greenway networks and existing settlements, offering a multifunctional approach to GI delivery. Key areas of need include:

- As set out in Chapter 2, woodland cover is around 6% across the district, well below the national target of 17%.
- Scattered woodland assets are present, particularly along the Trent & Mersey Canal, but wider ecological connectivity is lacking.
- Potential growth at Whitemoor/Brookhay and Fradley, plus urban extensions north of Lichfield, require integration with woodland and habitat expansion.
- New community woodlands and orchards could provide accessible green space and improve health outcomes.

Priorities for improvement

- **Strategic woodland expansion:** deliver new community woodlands, riparian tree lines and hedgerow planting along this strategic east–west corridor.
- **Habitat diversity**: incorporate orchards, wood pasture, ponds, lowland fens, species-rich grasslands and meadows alongside woodland to deliver biodiversity net gains.
- **‘Two Forests’ Way:** As part of the Mercian Greenways network of routes (se Priority Area 3), enhance planting and habitat the linear features of the Trent and Mersey canal and National Cycle Network route to strengthen connectivity. This would result in a dedicated walking and cycle way with extensive woodland cover, linking all the way from Alrewas in the east via Lichfield and Burntwood to Chasewater in the west.
- **Settlement integration**: embed woodland and habitat creation into new settlements and extensions, particularly any new settlement at Whitemoor/Brookhay, in Fradley, in northern Lichfield and in Burntwood (see also Priority Areas 4, 5 and 7).
- **Linkage to river corridors**: strengthen ecological connectivity through woodland expansion along the tributaries of the River Trent which run through this corridor.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

- LDC/SCC; Forest of Mercia Community Partnership; National Forest Company; HS2 Ltd; Environment Agency; Canals and Rivers Trust; Natural England; landowners and estates; local farming community.

Delivery mechanisms

- Community Forest and woodland expansion grants.
- BNG off-site woodland units / LNRS targeting.
- Corporate woodland sponsorship.
- Environmental Land Management (ELM).
- Section 106/CIL.

Next steps

- Publish “Two Forests” priority belt map (constraints/opportunities) with reference to LNRS actions along the corridor.
- Considering launching a “Two Forests” community orchard grant project within settlements along the corridor.

Spotlight on the National Forest and the Forest of Mercia

4.35 Woodland delivery across the region is supported by a range of organisations that provide practical action. Two of note are the Forest of Mercia and the National Forest. Both deliver tree planting and woodland creation but differ in their structure and scale.

4.36 The **Forest of Mercia** is a Community Interest Company (CIC) focused on local delivery in Staffordshire and the West Midlands. It directly manages planting schemes and environmental education programmes, supported by grants such as Trees for Climate and works closely with landowners, schools, volunteers and communities, providing practical support and training.

4.37 Meanwhile, the **National Forest** is a nationally significant initiative led by the National Forest Company, working across a 200-square mile area of the Midlands to create a new forested landscape, linking the ancient remnant forests of Charnwood and Needwood. It is delivered through government support, charity and partnerships with local authorities.

Priority Area 9: Tame Valley blue-green corridor

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A continuous blue-green corridor along the Tame river and its floodplain – from Whitemoor Lakes to the edges of Tamworth - that aims for multiple GI functions. Riverside paths allow for everyday walking and cycling, while river-edge habitats are expanded. Sensitive design protects riparian wildlife and a blue-green spine is strengthened.

Figure 4.19: River Tame [See reference **90**]

Why enhance here?

4.38 Given the pressures of climate change and the need to build a nature recovery network, blue corridors such as the Tame will play a vital role and require investment and stewardship in order to fully fulfil that role. Reflecting this, the 'Valued GI asset' mapping carried out for this study highlights a significant corridor along the Tame and its floodplain. Along this stretch of the Tame in particular:

- WFD data highlights ‘poor’ water quality along the Tame here (see Chapter 2: Theme 4).
- The EA’s WWNP data (see Appendix B for data list) highlights significant potential for floodplain and riparian woodland along this corridor.
- PROW networks along this corridor are sparse and fragmented.

Priorities for improvement

- **Riverside path upgrades with nature-positive edges:** Target upgrades to existing paths, using permeable surfacing and soft vegetated margins. Prefer short links to open banks/PRoW over continuous riverbank routes in order to protect wildlife. Most significant public access is likely to be concentrated around areas of development coming through the Local Plan, while other more remote areas can be reserved for undisturbed wildlife.
- **Wet woodland areas:** Create/enhance riparian wet woodland in suitable floodplain pockets to slow flows, trap sediment and buffer sensitive riverbank habitats.
- **Interpretation of heritage/landscape:** Add wayfinding and interpretation that draws visitors to wider landscape features, dispersing pressure from the river edge.
- **INNS management:** Coordinate control of balsam/knotweed etc., linking works to community action and routine maintenance.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

- LDC/SCC; Transforming the Trent Valley partnership/Tame Valley Wetlands; EA; Natural England; Parish Councils; landowners; developers.

Delivery mechanisms

- Off-site BNG.
- Environmental Land Management (ELM).
- Section 106/design codes for any new development within the wider corridor.
- Public Health funding for activity/health routes.

Next steps

- Further studies such as detailed towpath/PRoW audit; bat corridor mapping.
- Quick win surface/wayfinding works at “gap sites”.

Case study: Clyst Valley Regional Park (Devon)

4.39 A partnership-led project (East Devon DC, National Trust, EA, landowners) that is restoring the River Clyst corridor through wetland and floodplain woodland creation, while routing circular access loops away from sensitive riverbanks. It blends heritage interpretation with nature recovery and flood mitigation, funded via development contributions, agri-environment schemes and community grants. This is aa scalable model for framing a river as a regional asset - balancing growth, biodiversity and carefully managed public access. **[See reference** 91**]**

Priority Area 10: Tame Valley Southern Gateways - Tamworth Fringe Access & Nature Corridor

Vision for the future of the Priority Area

A cross-boundary gateway where communities on the Tamworth fringe gain safe, attractive access to the River Tame, Middleton Lakes and Dosthill Park. Floodplain restoration, riparian planting and a new Tame Gateway Greenway rebuild habitats while opening doors to nature on the doorstep.

Why enhance here?

- **Needs of local communities:** Data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (see data list in **Appendix B)** shows that on the edges of Tamworth (within the neighbouring authority) experience relatively more socio-economic deprivation than the majority of communities in Lichfield. There are also significant barriers to access the nearby GI assets for those communities – including roads, rail infrastructure and watercourses.
- **Ecology assets**: There are important habitat networks in this area of the Tame corridor, including Priority Habitat floodplain grazing marsh. The WWNP data (see data list in **Appendix B**) highlights significant opportunities for floodplain reconnection and riparian planting opportunities.
- **Policy drivers**: there is a need for cross-boundary recreational pressure management in this area.

Priorities for improvement

- **Access & inclusion:** Create a continuous Tame Gateway Greenway (Fazeley–Dosthill–Middleton Lakes), with inclusive surfacing, accessible gateways, safe crossings and wayfinding from neighbourhood centres, bus stops and stations. Enabling access to RSPB site on edge of settlement without the need for a private car.
- **Habitat & water:** Reconnect river to floodplain, create wet meadows, scrapes and backwaters. Consider riparian woodland belts and hedgerow restoration linking woodlands (including Canwell estate margins). Incorporate control of INNS.

- **Heritage & destinations:** Interpretation features to tell the story of quarrying and the river landscape history, as well as the local wildlife and species supported.
- **Protecting wildlife:** Buffers to be incorporated around designated SBIs and LNRs.

Key stakeholders/delivery partners

- LDC; Tamworth Borough Council; North Warwickshire Borough Council; RSPB (Middleton Lakes); Warwickshire Wildlife Trust / Tame Valley Wetlands; Staffordshire Wildlife Trust; Canals & Rivers Trust; Environment Agency; Natural England; Severn Trent Water; HS2 Ltd; Sustrans; Drayton Park Golf Club; Canwell Hall estate/landowners; community groups.

Delivery mechanisms

- Cross-boundary Section 106/CIL.
- BNG off-site units and conservation covenants.
- Environmental Land Management (ELM).
- Active travel and LCWIP-aligned funding.
- Public health funding for green prescribing.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund for access/interpretation.

Next steps

- Convene a Tame South Gateway Working Group (three councils + RSPB/Wildlife Trusts/EA/CRT).
- Prepare a concept Corridor Framework: access plan, habitat opportunity map (WWNP/LNRS), flood storage zones, gateway locations etc. Outline project pipeline including ‘quick wins’ (such as wayfinding/access repairs) and more strategic initiatives (including the greenway and floodplain reconnection packages).

GI 'catalyst' 1: Lichfield Natural Health Service

How the catalyst works

This catalyst connects health partners (GPs, social prescribers), community groups and site managers to activate everyday parks, woodlands and riverside routes through green prescribing, guided walks, outdoor classes and nature-volunteering. Clear referral pathways, simple signposting (maps/QR trails/GP leaflets) and light-touch coordination ensure people can find, join and stick with activities close to home.

Why is this needed?

4.40 As set out in Chapter 2 (Theme 2), "GI plays a vital role in supporting this by creating safe, nature-rich spaces for exercise, social interaction, play and rest." In particular in Lichfield:

- Health inequalities and inactivity in parts of the district.
- High quality GI assets exist in the District and wider areas of landscape available beyond the settlements, but the benefits are under-realised without structured programmes and referrals.
- Green prescribing can improve mental wellbeing, increase activity, reduce isolation and ease demand on primary care.

Priorities for action

- Scale green social prescribing via Primary Care Networks and community hubs.
- Use the GI assets and destinations set out in this study to programme inclusive, year-round activities (all ages/abilities).
- Build a delivery partnership (NHS, LDC and others) for training and data sharing.
- Provide wayfinding and promotion (on-site maps, QR codes, GP packs, local media).
- Monitor outcomes (participation, wellbeing, reduced appointments) to guide funding.

Next steps

- Convene a steering group and select 2–3 pilot sites (e.g. accessible parks/riverside loops).
- Agree referral pathways and a 12-month activity calendar with delivery leads.
- Secure blended funding (including health budgets and grants).
- Launch pilots, review quarterly and scale to additional sites.

Case studies

4.41 Staffordshire Green Prescribing (2022–24) linked GP referrals to walking and nature-volunteering (incl. Cannock Chase), reporting improved mental wellbeing and reduced isolation.

4.42 Sheffield's "Move More" programme shows how coordinated activity programming across parks can mainstream referral routes and sustain participation - an approach Lichfield could adopt across its GI network.

GI 'catalyst' 2: Lichfield GI stewardship network

How the catalyst works

This catalyst would create a joined-up stewardship network for Lichfield's GI, linking the many groups already active across the district - from national NGOs to parish-level 'Friends of' groups. A Council-based GI coordinator or officer would act as the hub, convening a GI steering group, mapping actors, aligning local projects with strategic priorities and helping partners share learning and secure funding. In this way, community enthusiasm and expertise are translated into a coherent, district-wide programme that strengthens the GI network as a whole.

Why is this needed?

4.43 Stakeholder workshops highlighted a real strength in Lichfield District - lots of good groups doing valuable work at every scale. However, their efforts are often fragmented. Without a mechanism for coordination, opportunities to link projects, share resources and deliver bigger landscape-scale outcomes are lost.

4.44 Smaller volunteer groups can also struggle to access grant funding or technical support, while larger organisations may not always connect to grassroots priorities. A coordinated network would help avoid duplication, ensure that local projects add up to more than the sum of their parts and position Lichfield District to compete for larger-scale investment.

Priorities for action

- Build on existing work as part of the LNRS to map GI actors and roles across the District.
- Establish a GI steering group with clear terms of reference and regular meetings.
- Provide support and training for smaller groups (funding applications, habitat management, volunteer coordination).
- Develop a communications hub (newsletter, online portal, or annual forum) to raise visibility and connect initiatives.

Next steps

- Secure officer support and resources for a dedicated GI coordinator post within LDC.
- Pilot the steering group and identify 1–2 joint projects (e.g. INNS control, access improvements).
- Explore blended funding streams (e.g. National Lottery, Woodland Trust, Natural England, developer contributions) to sustain the network long-term.

Chapter 5
GI Profiles for New Settlement Options

5.1 Three large sites have been put forward as options to consider for 'new settlements' in the new Lichfield District Local Plan, as shown on the overview map **Figure 5.1**:

- Option 1: Brookhay/Whitemoor Garden (approximately 350 hectares)
- Option 2: Land at Thorpe Estate (approximately 544 hectares)
- Option 3: Land at Packington Hall Farm (approximately 166 hectares).

5.2 As shown on Figure 5.1, the land at Packington Hall Farm lies within the Greater Birmingham Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out in paragraphs 153-160 how planning authorities should address development proposals on land that would be released from the Green Belt. Paragraph 156 states that:

> *"Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the following contributions ('Golden Rules') should be made:*
>
> *a. affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157;*
>
> *b. necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
>
> ***c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces."*** **[See reference** 92**]**

5.3 Given the likely scale of these new settlements (between 2,500 and 7,000 homes) these options in a semi-rural authority like Lichfield would usually be seen as a strategic site or new settlement. While they may not qualify for formal "New Town" status under the New Towns Act 1981, they can be planned as freestanding garden communities, urban extensions, or self-contained mixed-use developments.

5.4 This scale is still large enough to justify integrated and high-quality GI networks alongside other infrastructure such as a new local/town centre, schools, employment

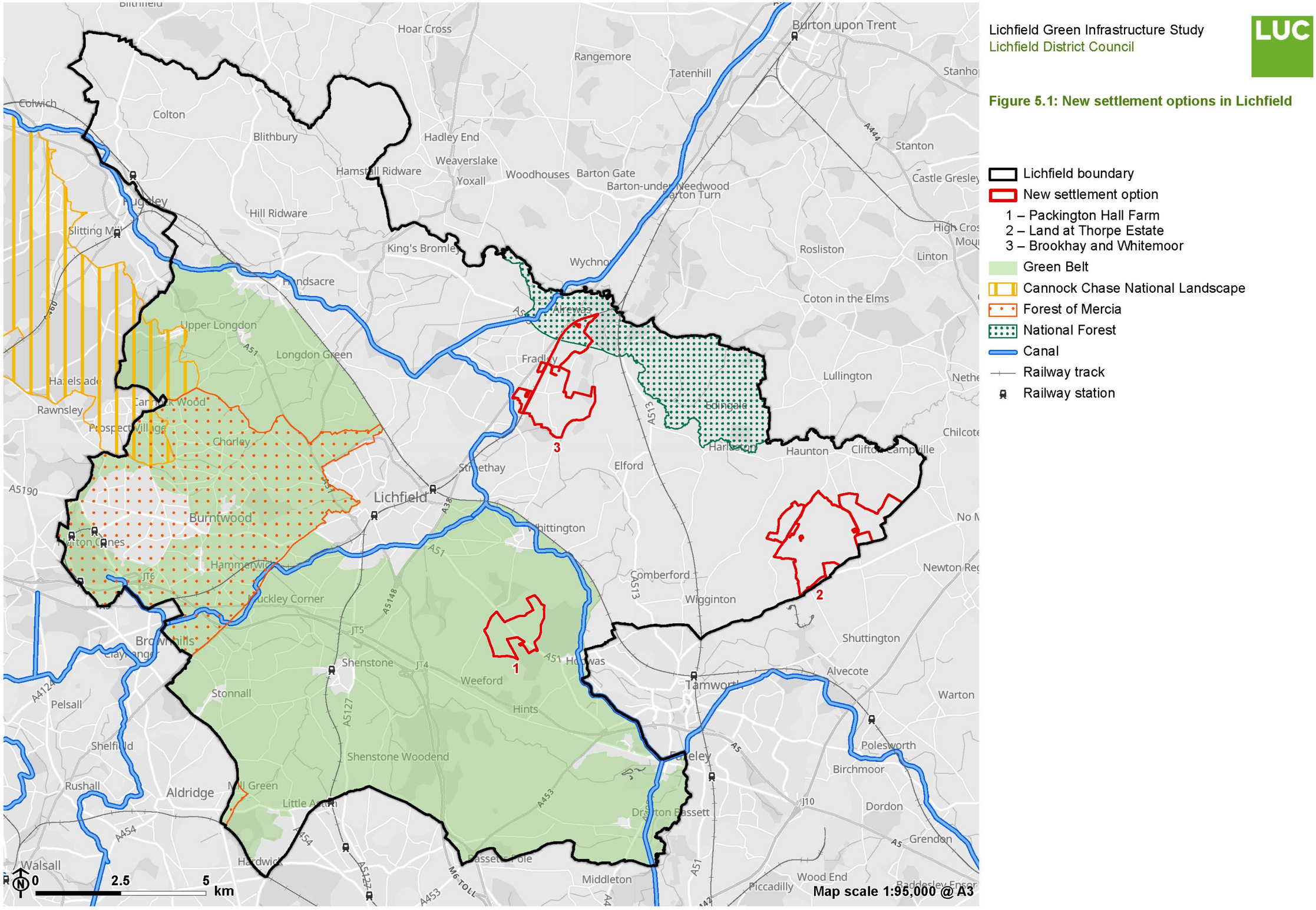
space and public transport infrastructure. At this scale, it is expected that the settlement would deliver a detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which should include a schedule of GI projects required to support placemaking.

5.5 We recommend that any new settlement in Lichfield District should be designed following Garden City principles, which promote:

- The creation of sustainable, inclusive and well-planned communities.
- A focus on capturing land value for community benefit.
- Ensuring long-term stewardship through community ownership and involving residents in the planning process.

5.6 This chapter sets out a proposed GI Profile for each of the new settlement options. If any of them are taken forward as strategic allocations in the new Local Plan, then these GI Profiles should be used to help when drafting the allocation policies in the plan and guide the requirements for GI to be integrated into the design of the new settlement(s).

Figure 5.1: New settlement options in Lichfield



GI Profile: Brookhay/Whitemoor

Overview of GI setting of Brookhay/Whitemoor

5.7 This site is located between Lichfield and Burton upon Trent and straddles the A513. The A38 forms a physical barrier between the site and nearby settlements of Alrewas and Fradley. A railway line follows the western site boundary along much of its length – as such, there is the potential for a new station along this line to serve a future settlement in this location. Approximately 6,500 homes are proposed at this site in total if allocated.

5.8 This site is located at a strategically important location within Lichfield District's wider GI network – meaning there are multiple sensitivities to navigate but also significant opportunities. Blue corridors form an important part of the setting for the site, notably the River Tame blue-green corridor (see GI Priority Area 9) and the Coventry Canal (see GI Priority Area 3). Finally, part of the site lies within the National Forest.

5.9 Immediately to the north of the site is the 150-acre National Memorial Arboretum – part of the Royal British Legion with 400 memorials and 25,000 trees that welcomes over 300,000 visitors each year. The wider site encompasses the Whitemoor Lakes Watersports Centre, which uses previously quarried land.

5.10 Figure 5.2 provides an overview of key GI assets within and around this settlement option.

Figure 5.2: New settlement option - Brookhay and Whitemoor

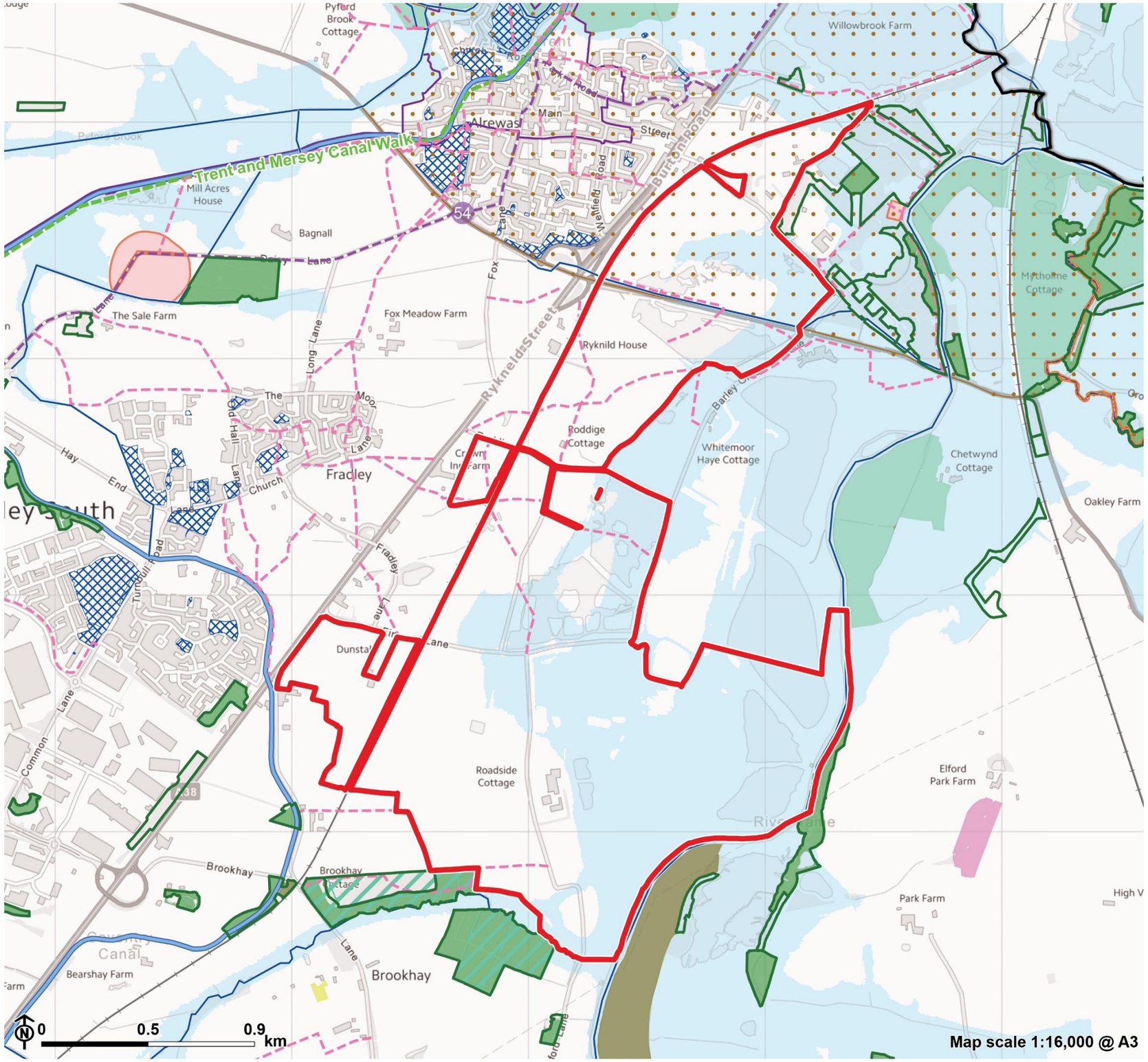


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Figure 5.2: New settlement option - Brookhay and Whitemoor

- Brookhay and Whitemoor
- Lichfield boundary
- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ancient woodland
- National Forest Inventory
- National Forest
- Scheduled monument
- Conservation area
- Flood zones 2 and 3
- Existing blue-green space
- Canal
- Railway track
- River
- Public Right of Way
- National Cycle Network (route number)
- Long distance trails

Priority habitats

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh - single or mosaic habitat
- Deciduous woodland - single or mosaic habitat
- Lowland meadows
- Traditional orchard
- No main habitat but additional habitats present

Significant GBI assets in and around the site

Water and Blue Corridors

- The River Tame runs along the eastern edge of the site, partly within the boundary.
- The Coventry Canal borders the site, providing links north toward Armitage/Handsacre and south toward Lichfield, with some PROWs connecting into the canal network.
- Croxall Lakes Nature Reserve (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust) lies beyond the Arboretum, with Priority Habitats including freshwater and floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland. It forms an ecological connection to Catton Park in the neighbouring authority.
- The River Mease SAC/SSSI (See GI Priority Area 1) is located around 1 km from the site.
- Whitemoor Lakes outdoor activity centre to the east provides blue/green space but is largely private, except for one PROW.

Woodlands and Habitats

- Part of the site falls within the National Forest.
- Brookhay Wood and Wetleyhay Wood (immediately south) are ancient woodlands designated as SBIs, with Brookhay Wood linked to the site by a PROW.
- Within the site, hawthorn hedgerows along the A513 are designated as an SBI.
- The wider site includes improved grassland, arable land and a small area of broadleaved woodland in the north.

Cultural and Landscape Assets

- The National Memorial Arboretum lies on the edge of the site, combining landscaped parkland, woodland and a major cultural/heritage role.
- A number of scheduled monuments surround the site, including a deserted medieval village and a cluster of neolithic-bronze age sites around Wychnor (East Staffordshire). However public access is limited.

Access and Connectivity

- A network of PROWs crosses the site, with variable levels of connectivity to Fradley and Alrewas.
- Long-distance footpaths nearby include the Coventry Canal Walk, Trent & Mersey Canal Walk and the Way for the Millennium. The National Forest Way starts at the Arboretum and crosses the north of the site.
- NCN Route 54 runs close to the site boundary, though the A38 and railway currently limit access between the town and site.

Summary of key challenges

Theme	Challenge
Theme 1: Nature-rich Lichfield	■ Nutrient pressures: Elevated loads in the River Mease catchment risk impacts on the River Mease SAC/SSSI and River Tame. ■ Recreational pressure: Within the ZOI for Cannock Chase SAC, so visitor impacts may require mitigation. ■ Habitat loss/fragmentation: Risk to on-site habitats (including SBI-quality hedgerows) and nearby designated habitats such as ancient woodland/SBIs. ■ Connectivity: Development on greenfield land may reduce ecological connectivity and create barrier effects across the local GBI network. ■ Disturbance of sensitive receptors: Increased use of Croxall Lakes Nature Reserve and nearby wetlands (floodplain grazing marsh) could disturb breeding waders, wintering birds and otter.
Theme 2: Active and Healthy Lichfield	■ Existing location is currently isolated with very limited existing green space / recreational assets. Nearest publicly accessible green spaces are amenity spaces in Alrewas/Fradley. The site lies outside the AGst standards mapped by Natural England at all scales. As a result, new development in this area would need to deliver significant strategic green space provision. **[See reference** 93**]**

Theme	Challenge
	■ Severance: The A38 and railway line form a physical barrier between the site and Alrewas. This limits accessibility of active travel routes (cycle routes and PRoW).
Theme 3: Thriving and Prosperous Lichfield	■ Limited connectivity along blue-green routes compromises the ability of assets within this area to contribute to a nature-based visitor economy. ■ Cluster of scheduled monuments nearby (around Wychnor) are currently 'buried' in farmland and do not have public access for visitors to explore as part of the GI network. ■ There is an existing employment area at Fradley, however, suitable access would have to be provided for residents across the A38 and the railway line to be able to access jobs at this location via green travel routes.
Theme 4: Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment	■ The site includes areas of medium-high flood risk associated with the River Tame. If development of greenfield land introduces large expanses of impermeable surfaces, this will lead to increased runoff and flood risk. ■ The River Mease SAC is currently in 'unfavourable' condition due to factors including excessive phosphate levels from agricultural activity and sewage treatment discharges.
Theme 5: Resilient and Climate-positive Lichfield	■ The A38 is currently a major barrier to connectivity of active travel links, risking reliance on cars for commuting and leisure travel. ■ Despite the overlap with the National Forest, canopy cover in the area is relatively low, limiting carbon storage potential.

Summary of key opportunities

Transform and connect the landscape

- Transform former quarry land into a flagship Country Park/nature reserve, with green corridors as the starting point for a landscape-led masterplan.
- Provide a high quality, nature-rich link to the National Forest Way, National Memorial Arboretum, canals and river corridors. Include wayfinding/interpretation to the Wychnor scheduled monuments, encouraging access to these surrounding sites without the need for a private car.
- If a new station comes forward to serve the site, make nature the arrival – placing multifunctional GI, walking and cycling ahead of roads/parking.
- Create a flagship nature-based play destination connected by greenways and "play streets."

Restore the Tame & stitch together habitats

- Deliver river corridor restoration along the Tame using natural flood management and riparian planting to boost biodiversity and carbon storage.
- Expand and connect habitats: enhance SBI hedgerows with locally characteristic species; extend wetland, wet woodland and grassland linking toward Croxall Lakes.
- Buffer ancient woodland with a 50–100 m woodland strip and provide alternative routes to relieve recreational pressure.**[See reference** 94**]**
- Embed multifunctional SuDS (swales, rain gardens, ponds) to manage runoff and create stepping-stone habitats.

People, paths and quiet places

- Create a clear access hierarchy in open spaces across the site:
  - Active access (e.g. cycling, walking, play)
  - Exploring nature (low-key routes with natural feel)
  - Undisturbed areas (protected core habitats)
- Provide new PROWs linking into existing networks and long-distance routes. Include nature-based 'play on the way' to ensure routes are family-friendly.

- Develop safe, nature-rich cycle routes connecting to NCN 54, including hedgerow, wildflower planting and berry-bearing trees along corridors.
- Use sensitive design measures (e.g. carefully designed lighting, screened boardwalks, bird hides) along the Tame river corridor and other sensitive areas to balance public access with habitat protection.
- Deliver high quality doorstep green spaces such as pocket parks and community orchards, offering stepping-stone habitats while easing pressure on sensitive areas such as ancient woodland.

Links to Lichfield's GI Priority Areas

GI Priority Area	Relevance to settlement option
"Mercian Greenways" district-wide blue-green grid	Important strategic linkages to be made from the site to the local NCN route and Coventry Canal, as well as filling gaps within existing PROW.
Tame Valley Blue-Green Corridor	Any new settlement here should be well connected to Tame Valley river corridor and contribute to investment in multifunctional river restoration.
The "Two Forests Link" east-west woodland belt	New tree planting within the site, including creation of community orchards, hedgerow trees and small woodlands can contribute to National Forest targets and to the wider strategic woodland belt.

GI Profile: Land at Thorpe Estate

Overview of GI setting of land at Thorpe Estate

5.11 This site is surrounded by gently rolling (Grade 2 and Grade 3) agricultural land within the Thorpe Estate landholding. It is under mixed arable and pastoral use. Two Grade II listed buildings associated with the estate (Thorpe Hall and Church of St Constantine) lie within the site boundary. The site does not lie directly along any key 'valued GI corridors' (as mapped in Chapter 4), other than the tributary of the River Mease which lies along its eastern boundary.

5.12 Around 4,000 - 6,000 homes are proposed at this site - with additional developments proposed within the neighbouring authority of North Warwickshire.

Significant GBI assets in and around the site

Water and blue corridors

- The site lies partly within the River Mease nutrient-neutrality catchment and the River Mease SAC/SSSI lies approximately 1.3 km to the north.
- Tributaries of the Mease run through the site's northern area.

Woodland and habitats

- A mosaic of arable and pasture fields with small woodland blocks, hedgerows, treelines and TPO-protected trees.
- Priority habitats include traditional orchards and deciduous woodland copses. Three spring-fed lakes currently operate as commercial fisheries.
- Leys Field Wood (ancient woodland) adjoins the eastern boundary near Spencer's Spinney Wood.

Access and connectivity

- A network of rural PRoWs crosses the site, linking to Clifton Campville and Haunton.

Figure 5.3: New settlement option - Land at Thorpe Estate

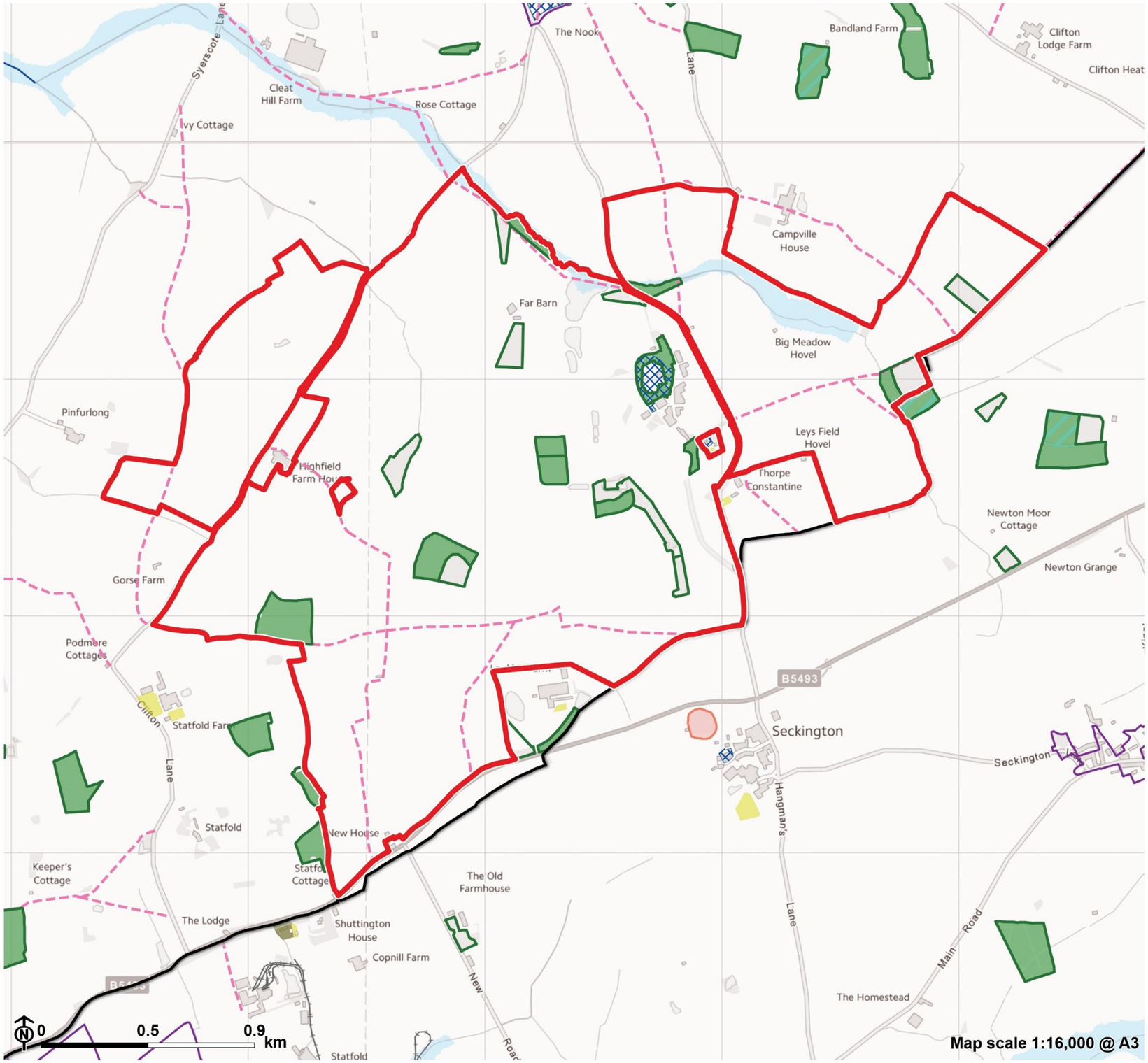

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Figure 5.3: New settlement option - Land at Thorpe Estate

- Land at Thorpe Estate
- Lichfield boundary
- Ancient woodland
- National Forest Inventory
- Scheduled monument
- Conservation area
- Flood zones 2 and 3
- Existing blue-green space
- Railway track
- River
- Public Right of Way

Priority habitats

- Deciduous woodland - single or mosaic habitat
- Traditional orchard
- No main habitat but additional habitats present

Summary of key challenges

Theme	Challenges
Theme 1: Nature-rich Lichfield	■ Impacts relating to degradation/ fragmentation/ loss of habitats (e.g. deciduous woodland copses, hedgerows and trees including those protected by TPOs) and resulting impact on ecological connectivity. ■ The River Mease catchment (which this settlement lies partially within) is subject to high levels of nutrient pollution. Impacts on River Mease SAC/ SSSI water quality and biodiversity due to change/ increase in recreational activity.
Theme 2: Active and Healthy Lichfield	■ Existing location is currently isolated with very limited existing green space / recreational assets, given that surroundings are largely agricultural surroundings. Nearest green space sites are amenity spaces in Clifton Campville. Site lies outside the AGst standards mapped by Natural England at all scales, so new development in this area would need to deliver significant strategic green space provision. **[See reference** 95**]** ■ Active travel routes (including PROW) within and around the site are currently limited and those that exist are fragmented. ■ Absence of existing walking/cycling links to services in nearby Tamworth. No nearby National Cycle Network routes.
Theme 3: Thriving and Prosperous Lichfield	■ The site is not well connected to local centres – the nearest railway station is around 6 miles away with no active travel routes from the site. It is currently served by one B-road (B4593) and one local bus service. ■ There are no notable nearby assets which form part of the nature-based visitor economy.

Theme	Challenges
Theme 4: Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment	■ The unnamed Mease tributary within the site is identified to be at medium-high risk of flooding (within flood zones 2 and 3). If development of greenfield land introduces more impermeable surfaces, this would lead to increased runoff and flood risk.
Theme 5: Resilient and Climate-positive Lichfield	■ Only limited presence of woodland cover and other carbon-storing habitats. ■ The absence of existing walking and cycling routes nearby would mean that a strong network of blue-green routes as part of the GI would be required to mitigate against car dependence at this location.

Summary of key opportunities

Make the Mease a Model Catchment

- Deliver a wetland corridor along the Mease tributaries (reedbeds, silt traps, offline ponds) to cut phosphorus, slow flows and boost habitat - aligned with the River Mease DCS.
- SuDS first: swales, rain gardens and attenuation basins embedded in streets and parks to create stepping-stone habitats and improve water quality.

Car-free movement to 'free up space' for GI and boost health

- Plan a cycle-first, filtered-permeability layout, incorporating blue-green nature-rich corridors. Car access on perimeter loops and low-speed home zones.
- Integrate linear SuDS features into all green links in order to deal with increased run-off from development.
- Upgrade existing PROW with high quality wayfinding and 'access for all' principles, to enable exploration of the open countryside surrounding the site.

Statfold Greenway

- Create a strategic green link – a walking and cycling corridor designed for all ages - from the new settlement to Statfold Country Park and onwards toward

Tamworth (for town centre and rail access), using quiet lanes, new hedgerow-lined tracks, barrier-free crossings and nature-based ‘play on the way’ features.

- Landscape the route as a biodiversity corridor with native planting, shade trees and rest points approximately every 500 m.

Orchards, Copses and Hedgerows

- Expand traditional orchards, broadleaved woodland and deciduous copses. Connect Leys Field Wood and other woodlands via strengthened hedgerow/treeline corridors.
- Introduce wildlife-friendly field margins and meadow parcels to enhance ecological connectivity across arable and pasture blocks.

Everyday Nature on the Doorstep

- Deliver a “5-minute” network of pocket parks, community orchards and nature-based play opportunities across the settlement area.
- Apply a clear access hierarchy led by ecological sensitivities: lively activity spaces, low-key “explore nature” routes and quiet refuges for more sensitive habitats.

Heritage as a Place-Maker

5.13 Frame Thorpe Hall and the Church of St Constantine with parkland restoration, orchard belts and walking loops. Incorporate interpretation to celebrate estate heritage within the GI network.

Long term GI stewardship

- Establish a GI stewardship partnership (involving partners including the estate, parish, Wildlife Trust/partners) with funded maintenance, volunteering and citizen science.
- Use GI-led design coding as a tool to ‘lock in’ quality, with targets for BNG, canopy cover, SuDS quality and walking/cycling.

Links to Lichfield GI Priority Areas

GI Priority Area	Relevance to settlement option
River Mease Nature Recovery Corridor	A new settlement here could contribute to providing improved habitats along the Mease and its tributaries as part of sensitive access to nature spaces.
“Mercian Greenways” district-wide blue-green grid	A new settlement here should be fully integrated into the blue-green corridor network – with a focus on better connecting the surrounding network of PROW and on a strategic cross-boundary walking/cycling link to Statfold Country Park.

GI Profile: Land at Packington Hall Farm

Overview of settlement option

5.14 The proposed Packington Hall Farm site straddles the A51 on the route between Lichfield and Tamworth, within the Greater Birmingham Green Belt. It sits in an area of relatively flat agricultural land currently used for pig farming.

5.15 The site sits on the edge of the Tame Valley Blue-Green Corridor GI Priority Area and is connected to the canal route running to the south by the Local Wildlife Site at Hopwas Wood.

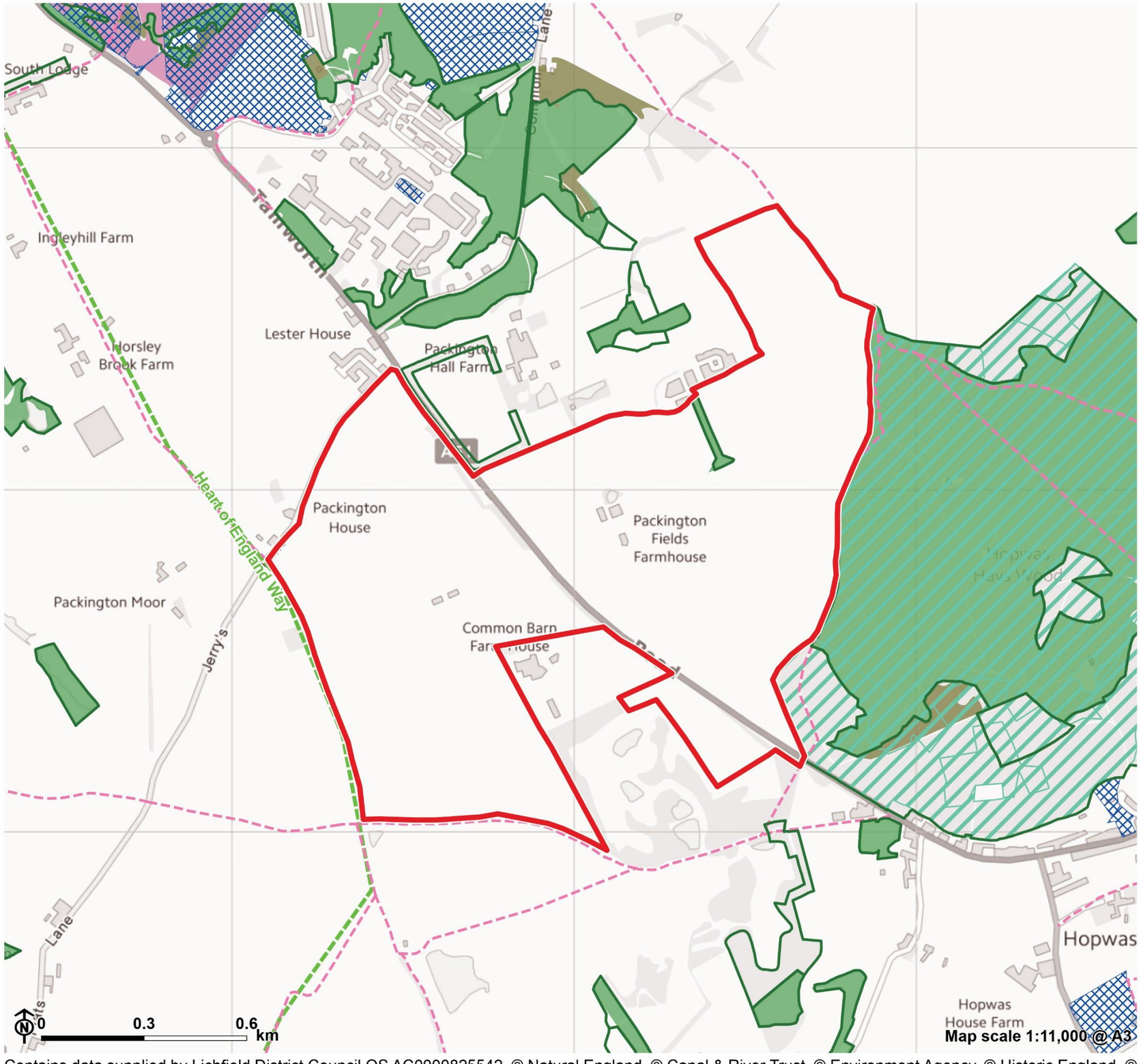
5.16 Packington Hall (Grade II listed building) lies immediately to the north of the site. The HS2 route skirts the north and west of the site, lying around 350 metres from its boundaries.

5.17 Between 2,500 - 3000 homes are proposed for this site if allocated.

Significant GBI assets in and around the site

- Hopwas Hays Ancient Woodland (SBI) borders the eastern edge - a large ancient woodland (part ancient semi-natural, part ancient replanted) with heather/acid-grassland glades and areas of heathland.
- Within the site, a narrow strip of deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) runs south from Packington Hall. Most other land is intensively farmed, with treelines, hedgerows and shelterbelts. There are also young tree belts along the A51.
- The River Tame and Birmingham & Fazeley Canal run approximately 1.2 km to the south east. PROW along the site boundaries and through Hopwas Wood connect towards these blue corridors.
- To the south lies restored heathland mosaic on the former Hopwas Quarry site – restored by Cemex in partnership with the RSPB. **[See reference** 96**]**.
- There is no public access within the site, but bridleways and footpaths run around the perimeter, including Jerry's Lane (north-west) and Knox Grave Lane (south). The Heart of England Way follows the western edge.

Figure 5.4: New settlement option - Packington Hall Farm



Lichfield Green Infrastructure Study
Lichfield District Council

LUC

Figure 5.4: New settlement option - Packington Hall Farm

- Packington Hall Farm
- Lichfield boundary
- Ancient woodland
- National Forest Inventory
- Existing blue-green space
- Public Right of Way
- Long distance trails

Priority habitats

- Deciduous woodland - single or mosaic habitat
- Lowland heathland
- No main habitat but additional habitats present

Summary of key challenges

Theme	Challenge
Theme 1: Nature-rich Lichfield	■ Sensitive habitats at Hopwas Wood ancient woodland and SBI immediately adjacent to the site. ■ Risks relating to degradation, fragmentation and potential loss of on-site habitats (including trees and hedgerows) and resulting impacts on ecological connectivity. ■ The existing habitat network within the site is limited with poor ecological connectivity. With this in mind, existing hedgerows, treelines and woodland shelterbelts should be maintained and strengthened whilst creating a diverse range of new terrestrial and freshwater habitats.
Theme 2: Active and Healthy Lichfield	■ Existing location is currently isolated with very limited existing green space / recreational assets, given that surroundings are largely agricultural surroundings. Nearest publicly accessible green spaces are amenity spaces and sport facilities in Whittington. Site lies outside the AGst standards mapped by Natural England at all scales other than the sub-regional scale (related to the Sutton Park National Nature Reserve). As a result, new development in this area would need to deliver significant strategic green space provision. **[See reference** 97**]** ■ Active travel routes within and around the site are currently limited and fragmented. There are PROW linkages to the canal network but no nearby National Cycle Network.
Theme 3: Thriving and Prosperous Lichfield	■ The site is not located close to located close to existing employment areas.
Theme 4: Understanding and Managing Lichfield's Water Environment	■ The site falls within a groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ).

Theme	Challenge
	■ Development of greenfield land would introduce more impermeable surfaces leading to increased runoff and flood risk. ■ The site is located in Flood Zone 1, indicating low risk from fluvial flooding.
Theme 5: Resilient and Climate-positive Lichfield	■ The site is located a distance from local centres with facilities and has limited public transport connections. This will likely necessitate reliance on car travel for leisure and commuting.

Summary of key opportunities

HS2 Greenway Spine

- Create high quality links to any greenway delivered along the HS2 corridor and further along to integrate with Lichfield's LCWIP routes. This would help to form a key link in creating key links in the wider blue-green network of walking and cycling routes.

Respect and buffer Hopwas Hays

- Protect Hopwas Hays Ancient Woodland (SBI) with a 50–100 m planted buffer (scrub, understorey and new woodland) and no new direct access points.
- If needed, use wildlife-friendly fencing and prefer dense, thicket-type planting to discourage desire lines.

Blue-Green Streets & Ponds

- Embed SuDS (ponds, swales, rain gardens) as part of streets and parks to slow and clean runoff and link existing ponds from Packington Hall to areas near Knox's Grave Lane.
- Use water-sensitive design to protect local water resources while adding habitat and seasonal interest.

Hedgerow & tree connections

- Retain and strengthen trees, hedgerows, treelines and shelterbelts (including along the A51) to form wildlife corridors and windbreaks. Gap-up and plant species-rich, varied-height hedgerows.
- Add young woodland belts to increase canopy cover, support net-zero goals and soften views.

Heathland Stepping-Stones

- Expand or recreate heathland features (e.g., species-rich meadows, butterfly banks) as quiet wildlife areas, providing stepping-stones to the restored heathland at Hopwas Quarry.

Everyday Nature & Play

- Deliver a 5-minute network of pocket parks, small woods and nature-play spaces, linked by greenways for all ages with “play on the way”.

Paths People Want to Use

- Join up PROWs around the site with new, direct and attractive routes. Integrate the Heart of England Way – with high quality wayfinding and interpretation. Upgrade selected links through Hopwas Wood where appropriate, while protecting sensitive areas.
- Apply a simple access hierarchy: lively routes and spaces; low-key “explore nature” paths; and undisturbed refuges - with sensitive lighting kept away from hedgerows, treelines and woodland edges.

Heritage-Led Place-Making

5.18 Use the setting of Packington Hall (Grade II) to shape parkland walks, avenues and viewpoints. Reflect its landscape character in new greenspaces and street planting.

5.19 Incorporate a flagship nature-based play feature into the heritage setting, linked strongly into the wider landscape and network of green routes.

Links to Lichfield's GI Priority Areas

GI Priority Area	Relevance to settlement option
Tame Valley blue-green corridor	The new settlement should be fully integrated into the green corridor network – including nearby canals and any new links along the HS2 route, to contribute to connectivity across the district.
"Mercian Greenways" district-wide blue-green grid	Located just over 1km from the River Tame, the new settlement should be well-connected to the Tame Valley corridor via traffic-free routes and contribute to multifunctional river restoration where possible, including via any off-site BNG.

Case studies for GI-rich new settlement planning

5.20 Entirely new settlements offer a valuable opportunity to choose a different starting point for planning a new settlement compared to urban extensions or infill – allowing planning to “start with the landscape” in an ambitious way.

5.21 The following two case studies (one UK-based, one international) help to outline how a different, more GI-led approach to planning new settlements can reap benefits. This level of ambition will be required in the approach to new settlements in Lichfield District in order to achieve over the long term the Lichfield District 2050 Strategy ambition to be ‘the greenest district in the country’.

Case study 1: Houten (Netherlands)

Image: Park Schoneveld, Houten. Photo by Jan Dijkstra (2018), Park Schoneveld, Houten, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

5.22 Houten is a new town south-east of Utrecht, largely built from the 1970s onward and now comprising approximately 20,000 homes. It is internationally recognised for a cycle-first street network and a continuous green-blue structure.

5.23 GI as a framework: The plan for Houten established linear parks, water bodies and continuous cycleways as the primary framework, with neighbourhoods arranged around this network. GI therefore shapes settlement form, connects to surrounding farmland and woodlands and supports everyday access to nature.

5.24 Making space for GI: Car movement is channelled to a perimeter ring road, while internal links prioritise walking and cycling. By avoiding heavy internal highway geometry, the design maximises the use of land for uninterrupted green corridors, pocket parks and biodiversity areas.

5.25 Stewardship and existing assets: the municipality leads long-term management, complemented by active resident groups that assist in managing planting and small spaces. Historic tree lines, ditches and field boundaries were retained and woven into the network to strengthen ecological connectivity.

5.26 Challenges: The model depends on sustained maintenance funding but demonstrates how GI can effectively organise a settlement and guide daily movement patterns.

Case study 2: Waterbeach (Cambridgeshire)

Figure 5.5: The GI framework for the Waterbeach development [See reference 98]

5.27 Waterbeach is a large new settlement on former barracks/airfield land north of Cambridge, progressing in phases toward around 8,000–10,000 homes across the wider allocation. Its masterplan centres on lakes, wetlands and woodland belts.

5.28 GI as a framework: A broad green-blue spine (comprising the main lake, wetlands, woodlands and greenways) sets the development structure and defines character from the outset. This framework links neighbourhoods internally and ties the new town to the surrounding fen-edge landscape.

5.29 Making space for GI: Movement design deliberately limits road dominance by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport. Releasing land from extensive highway infrastructure allows connected parks, playable spaces and ecological corridors to be continuous and multifunctional.

5.30 Stewardship and existing assets: Existing GI assets, including the lake, mature tree belts and drainage ditches, are retained and enhanced as core features.

A dedicated stewardship trust or estate management model is planned to secure long-term funding and management beyond build-out.

5.31 Challenges: Delivery involves multiple landowners and complex phasing and the stewardship model must be adequately resourced over time. Even so, Waterbeach illustrates how a nature-rich GI framework can structure a major new community from day one.

Chapter 6
Delivering GI in Lichfield

Embedding GI in Local Plan Policy

6.1 The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework (NEGIF) provides a clear national steer on how local planning authorities should plan for and embed green and blue infrastructure (GI) in their Local Plans. It sets out a six-stage "Process Journey" to help councils move from strategic vision to delivery, with policy development as a central step. Through clear and measurable policies, Local Plans can set expectations for GI from the earliest stages of design, link new development to wider ecological networks, and secure long-term stewardship arrangements.

6.2 Strong Local Plan policy on GI is essential to:

- Provide clarity for applicants, decision-makers and communities.
- Embed GI objectives across multiple policy areas (e.g. water, biodiversity, design, health).
- Ensure consistent quality and multifunctionality across all new development.
- Unlock investment in the strategic GI networks identified in this study.

6.3 The evidence and spatial priorities set out in this GI Study provide a robust foundation for policy drafting and will help deliver Lichfield District's ambition to become the greenest in the country.

Key Challenges to Address

6.4 Discussions with Development Management officers and a review of recent housing schemes in the District highlighted several recurring issues that new policy and guidance will need to address:

- Clarity and consistency – Existing policies lack clear standards or thresholds, resulting in variable quality across sites.
- Early design integration – GI often emerges late in the planning process, limiting strategic and multifunctional outcomes.
- Strategic context – Applicants and case officers lack clear mapped guidance on how development should connect to the wider GI network.

- Delivery mechanisms – GI is not currently prioritised within Section 106 or CIL negotiations, meaning opportunities are sometimes missed.
- Stewardship – Long-term adoption and maintenance arrangements are inconsistent.
- Cross-sector working – Highways and drainage standards can be a barrier to tree-lined streets and SuDS integration.

6.5 Addressing these challenges through updated policy, guidance and supporting processes will be critical to raising the baseline for GI delivery across the District.

Key Considerations for Policy and Plan-Making

6.6 Drawing on national best practice and the findings of this study, the team producing this study provided to the Council a critical analysis of their existing strategic GI policies and recommended wording for a replacement policy. In general, it sets out that the following considerations should inform Lichfield District's emerging Local Plan:

- A single, integrated GI policy, supported by linked policies on biodiversity, open space, water and design, to provide a coherent strategic framework.
- Early integration of GI at concept and pre-application stages, supported by clear expectations and checklists.
- Strong and unambiguous wording, avoiding "should/where possible" in favour of "must/will", to provide clarity in decision-making.
- Embedding the strategic GI network and Priority Areas in policy and mapping, so that development is required to safeguard, connect to and complete missing links.
- Explicit linkages to BNG and the LNRS, ensuring development contributes to wider ecological networks and legal/statutory duties.
- Advice to explore the use of quantified standards, aligned with the NE GI Framework "headline GI standards", to support development management negotiations.
- Securing long-term stewardship through legal agreements or endowments, to ensure high-quality GI is maintained over time.
- Resolving adoption issues early with highways and drainage authorities to enable multifunctional streets and SuDS.

Key considerations for delivering off-site GI in Lichfield District

Overview of delivery drivers / mechanisms

6.7 Beyond securing high quality GI *within* new development sites through strong Local Plan policies, delivery of *off-site* GI will be essential in order to build a robust strategic GI network in Lichfield District that responds to all the challenges and opportunities set out in the GI study.

6.8 The sections below set out:

- Key *drivers* for delivery i.e. the legal duties and targets that require GI and shape what must be delivered.
- Key *mechanisms* for delivery i.e. the tools and processes for securing, funding, adopting and maintaining off-site GI.

Drivers for off-site GI delivery

6.9 Several overlapping legal, policy and environmental drivers require or encourage investment in GI beyond development boundaries:

- **GI Priority Areas:** Evidence-based spatial priorities identified in this study provide the clearest steer for where off-site investment should be focused. They help target multifunctional outcomes but need periodic updates and site-scale interpretation.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):** A statutory duty requiring measurable biodiversity improvements, which an be delivered through off-site habitat creation or enhancement. Provides a strong delivery route but in practice is generally ecology-focused rather than recreational.
- **Beneficial use of Green Belt:** National policy requires compensatory environmental and access improvements where Green Belt land is released for development. Offers a mechanism for large-scale GI enhancements if clearly tied to Local Plan evidence and projects.
- **Cannock Chase SAC Zone of Influence:** Developer contributions collected through CIL or S106 fund strategic access and recreation management measures, directly linking growth to GI-related mitigation.

- **Water Framework Directive / Humber River Basin Plan:** Drives river-catchment improvements such as riparian buffers, flood-plain reconnection and wetlands, often requiring multi-partner delivery.
- **Landscape programmes (National Forest / Forest of Mercia):** Provide area-based frameworks and external grant routes for woodland, access and habitat creation, supporting alignment of district priorities with wider landscape initiatives.

Mechanisms for securing, funding and maintaining off-site GI

6.10 A range of planning and partnership tools are available to turn these drivers into delivery:

- **Section 106 agreements**: Secure site-specific GI works or financial contributions through legal agreement. These are effective for targeted projects but less suited to pooling funds for large-scale schemes.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**: A pooled charge on development that can fund strategic GI and blue-green linkages, though GI must compete with other infrastructure priorities unless ring-fenced.
- **Planning conditions**: Useful for securing defined off-site works (e.g. habitat enhancement).
- **Conservation covenants:** New legal tools under the Environment Act 2021 enabling long-term conservation management by landowners and “responsible bodies”, though uptake currently remains limited.
- **River Mease Developer Contribution / Nutrient Neutrality schemes:** Fund targeted water-quality and habitat improvements, demonstrating how partnership delivery can achieve multifunctional GI benefits.
- **Section 278 highway agreements:** Allow street trees, swales or verge planting to be delivered as part of developer-funded highway works, linking GI through movement corridors.
- **Partnership and external funding blends:** Combine developer funds with grants and partner investment to deliver larger or more strategic GI projects, though coordination and timing are critical. Integrating GI into the Lichfield Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

Integrating GI priorities into local infrastructure delivery planning

6.11 The 2021 Lichfield Infrastructure Delivery Plan (LIDP) **[See reference 99]** is an important tool for setting out infrastructural priorities where developer contributions should be spent off-site (generally negotiated as part of Section 106 agreements or via a Community Infrastructure Levy). The IDP identifies the infrastructure necessary to drive and support growth throughout the District.

6.12 Lichfield's IDP identifies specific projects or enabling works required to facilitate long term growth and to capitalise on funding opportunities as they become available. As such, a future review of the IDP presents an opportunity to assist with the implementation of the priorities set out in the GI study. This is an important issue and often one where the role of an IDP is often overlooked.

6.13 Lichfield's IDP has the potential to be a key tool in translating GI priorities (as set out in the GI study) into deliverable projects/items in the IDP, by channelling funding to those GI priority projects from planning obligations and other funding streams.

6.14 To strengthen the delivery of GI in Lichfield District, the IDP must be revisited and amended to reflect the GI study and the key priorities set out in the GI Priority Areas. The schedule should reflect both the GI Priority Areas, and individual initiatives taken forward within them by key stakeholder/delivery partners. It should also make reference to the emerging LNRS. Each priority project should, where possible, be costed, linked to delivery partners, and aligned with potential funding sources. Explicitly mapping GI alongside "hard" infrastructure will help ensure that its delivery is planned, funded, and monitored on an equal footing.

6.15 To better integrate GI into the IDP, the Council should consider:

- **Creating a dedicated GI schedule** – a clear list of priority projects, based on the outputs of the GI study, with as much detail as is available on location, scale, indicative costs, delivery partners and funding sources.
- **Cross-reference with growth areas and** allocations – map GI priorities directly onto the Local Plan Proposals Map and site allocations so delivery can be secured through specific developments.
- **Adopt a collaborative delivery model** – work with internal teams (housing, leisure, public health) and external partners to co-produce the infrastructure plan and 'mainstream' GI by embedding it across other infrastructure typologies. For example – opportunities to deliver linear nature-based SuDS along active travel routes or highways, co-locate and co-deliver community gardens and

health centres, or allow for flood management within new or existing parks (i.e. as flood storage areas).

- **Include GI in monitoring and delivery governance** – add GI projects to the same monitoring framework as other infrastructure, ensuring progress is tracked annually and risks are escalated.

Appendix A
Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders engaged during this study

A.1 The following national organisations took part in the stakeholder engagement process:

- Forestry England
- National Farmers Union
- The Rivers Trust
- The Canal and River Trust

A.2 The following local community organisations took part:

- National Forest
- The National Memorial Arboretum
- Transition Lichfield
- Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust
- Trent Rivers Trust
- Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership
- Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council
- Whittington and Fishwick Environment Group
- Support Staffordshire
- Back the Track
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

A.3 The following Lichfield District Council officers took part:

- Environmental Policy and Strategy Team Lead
- Environmental Policy and Strategy Officer

- Development Management Manager
- Senior Policy and Strategy Officer
- Senior Development Management planner
- Parks Manager

A.4 The following County and neighbouring Councils took part:

- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Tamworth Borough Council
- East Staffordshire Borough Council
- South Staffordshire District Council
- Cannock Chase District Council

Format of key stakeholder 'virtual round table'

A.5 On Wednesday 6 August 2025, the team convened a 1.5 hour virtual 'round table', inviting key selected stakeholders (see list above for those who attended). Other than core project team, there were 36 participants on the day, representing a range of viewpoints.

A.6 The key purpose of the round table was to:

- Firstly, gather feedback on the desktop baseline study carried out to date, including identified key strengths and key challenges and the initial mapping of network assets.
- Secondly, explore ongoing GI initiatives and opportunities the study should explore further.

A.7 A MIRO 'virtual whiteboard' was used to capture conversation and results were shared with participants.

Summary of issues raised by stakeholders

Discussion 1: Sense check of findings from LUC desktop baseline analysis of the GI network

- Language – Ensure consistent reference to Lichfield District (not just the City).
- Community Involvement – Strong need for community input across all themes, with Parish Councils and local groups seen as key delivery partners.
- Policy and Legislation – Potential changes from the Planning and Infrastructure Bill viewed as both a challenge and an opportunity.
- Biodiversity and Nature Recovery – Importance of aligning with the emerging LNRS. AONB boundary and management plan should be incorporated and air quality (nitrogen) highlighted as a major threat.
- Access & Recreation – Visitor pressure can harm ecology. There is a need stronger emphasis on connectivity in the GI network.
- Heritage & Historic Environment – Scheduled monuments and heritage assets are under-represented and should be mapped.
- Water Environment – Drought, water storage and re-use identified as major risks that should be incorporated. The need for a cross-boundary catchment-based approach was emphasised. Communities should be shown.
- Climate & Resilience – More recognition needed of peat deposits and carbon storage role of woodlands and landscapes.
- Mapping & Evidence – Key gaps in current figures (heritage, water, peat, AONB/National Landscape). Ongoing work by LNRS to map community groups should be integrated.

Discussion 2: Ongoing GI Initiatives/Partnerships & Opportunities in Lichfield

- Partnerships & Ongoing Initiatives – Strong role of partnerships such as Transforming the Trent Valley, River Mease, Forest of Mercia/National Forest and Cannock Chase SAC in driving funding, policy alignment and delivery. Opportunities exist to strengthen collaboration, particularly with Canal & River Trust, Paddle UK and LNRS.
- Policy & Statutory Duties – The NPPF and the new statutory duty from the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act highlight the importance of the National Forest

and AONB Management Plans as material considerations, requiring integration into GI planning.

- Water Environment – Nutrient neutrality and diffuse pollution on the River Mease present both challenges and opportunities.
- HS2 Impacts – Significant local impacts (e.g. at Whittington) could be offset by engaging with community funds and GI initiatives.
- Health & Wellbeing – Opportunity to link GI more closely with health initiatives, social prescribing and tackling health inequalities.
- Connectivity & Transport – GI should align with sustainable transport plans (e.g. LCWIP), ensuring walking, cycling and greenways form a connected multifunctional network.
- New Development Principles – GI needs to be spatially defined in the Local Plan with policies to protect and reinforce it. New developments should prioritise emissions reduction, active travel and integration of LNRS priorities (e.g. species recovery, habitats, swift boxes).
- Greenways & Access – Better promotion, signposting and community communication needed; neighbourhood plans could help deliver local greenway networks. Stakeholders stressed the importance of access to larger parks and avoiding piecemeal GI on the edges of developments

Appendix B
List of data sets used

Figure 2.1 Protected habitats in Lichfield

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	© Natural England
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	© Natural England
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	© Natural England
Ancient Woodland	© Natural England
River	© Ordnance Survey
Key Designations	Digitised by LUC
Priority Habitat Inventory	© Natural England
HS2 route	Provided by Lichfield Council

Figure 2.2 Access to nature and open space in Lichfield

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Settlement	Provided by Lichfield Council
National Forest	Provided by Lichfield Council
Forest of Mercia	Provided by Lichfield Council
CRoW Access Land	© Natural England
Country Park	© Natural England
National Cycle Network	© Sustrans (now known as Walk Wheels Cycle Trust)
Canal	© Canal and Rivers Trust
Long distance trails	Digitised by LUC
Access to Greenspace Standards	© Natural England

Figure 2.3 Placemaking, heritage and green infrastructure in Lichfield

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Town Centre	Provided by Lichfield Council
HS2 route	Provided by Lichfield Council

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
HS2 safeguarded route	Provided by Lichfield Council
Railway track	© Ordnance Survey
Railway station	© Ordnance Survey
National Forest	Provided by Lichfield Council
Forest of Mercia	Provided by Lichfield Council
Cannock Chase National Landscape	© Natural England
Conservation area	© Historic England
Registered Parks and Gardens	© Historic England
Scheduled Monument	© Historic England
National Cycle Network	© Sustrans (now known as Walk Wheels Cycle Trust)
Canal	© Canal and Rivers Trust
Long distance trails	Digitised by LUC
Key nature-based visitor destination	Digitised by LUC

Figure 2.4 Lichfield's blue corridors

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	© Natural England
River	© Ordnance Survey
Canal	© Canal and Rivers Trust
Management catchment	© Environment Agency
Water quality ecology status (cycle 3 2023)	© Environment Agency

Figure 2.5 Climate vulnerability in Lichfield

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
National Forest Inventory	© Forestry Commission
Flood zone 2	© Environment Agency
Flood zone 3	© Environment Agency
Socio-Spatial Heat Vulnerability Index 3	ClimateJust: Lindley, S. J., O'Neill, J., Kandeh, J., Lawson, N., Christian, R. & O'Neill M. (2011) "Climate change,

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
	justice and vulnerability", Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report, York.

Figure 4.1 GI priority areas in Lichfield

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Priority areas	Digitised by LUC

Figure 4.11 Existing GI assets in and around Burntwood

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	© Natural England
Ancient woodland	© Natural England
National Forest Inventory	© Forestry Commission
Cannock Chase National Landscape	© Natural England
Forest of Mercia	Provided by Lichfield Council
Flood zone 2	© Environment Agency
Flood zone 3	© Environment Agency
Existing blue-green space	© Ordnance Survey
Local centre	Provided by Lichfield Council
Lichfield and Hatherton canal restoration	Provided by Lichfield Council
Railway track	© Ordnance Survey
Railway station	© Ordnance Survey
River	© Ordnance Survey
Public Right of Way	Provided by Lichfield Council
National Cycle Network	© Sustrans (now known as Walk Wheels Cycle Trust)
Long distance trails	Digitised by LUC

Figure 4.13 GI network in and around Lichfield City

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	© Natural England
Ancient woodland	© Natural England

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
National Forest Inventory	© Forestry Commission
Wood pasture and parkland	© Natural England
Forest of Mercia	Provided by Lichfield Council
Conservation area	© Historic England
Scheduled Monument	© Historic England
Flood zone 2	© Environment Agency
Flood zone 3	© Environment Agency
Existing blue-green space	© Ordnance Survey
Local centre	Provided by Lichfield Council
Lichfield and Hatherton canal restoration	Provided by Lichfield Council
Railway track	© Ordnance Survey
Railway station	© Ordnance Survey
River	© Ordnance Survey
Public Right of Way	Provided by Lichfield Council
National Cycle Network	© Sustrans (now known as Walk Wheels Cycle Trust)
Long distance trails	Digitised by LUC

Figure 5.1 New settlement options in Lichfield

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
New settlement option	Provided by Lichfield Council
Green Belt	Digitised by LUC
Cannock Chase National Landscape	© Natural England
National Forest	Provided by Lichfield Council
Forest of Mercia	Provided by Lichfield Council
Canal	© Canal and Rivers Trust
Railway track	© Ordnance Survey
Railway station	© Ordnance Survey

Figures 5.2-5.4 New settlement options

Datasets included	Conditions to data/copyrights
New settlement option	Provided by Lichfield Council
National Forest	Provided by Lichfield Council
Forest of Mercia	Provided by Lichfield Council
Canal	© Canal and Rivers Trust
Railway track	© Ordnance Survey
Conservation area	© Historic England
Scheduled Monument	© Historic England
Flood zone 2	© Environment Agency
Flood zone 3	© Environment Agency
Existing blue-green space	© Ordnance Survey
Priority Habitat Inventory	© Natural England
River	© Ordnance Survey
Public Right of Way	Provided by Lichfield Council
National Cycle Network	© Sustrans (now known as Walk Wheels Cycle Trust)
Long distance trails	Digitised by LUC
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	© Natural England
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	© Natural England
Ancient Woodland	© Natural England
National Forest Inventory	© Forestry Commission

Appendix C

Method and data sets used for mapping of Valued GI assets and GI needs

C.1 The approach to mapping "valued GI assets" and "GI needs" for Lichfield District is set out in Chapter 4 of this report. However, this Appendix sets out the various data sets that were used for the mapping in each case.

C.2 Both the assets and needs analysis was carried out using the GIS software ArcPro:

- For the assets analysis, all data representing GI assets were merged to create one layer which represented these areas as a single feature.
- To demonstrate the areas of GI need, the overlap of data sets representing areas of low GI were counted, with areas of more overlapping data representing a higher need and areas with fewer overlaps a lower need. Before counting these overlaps each dataset was dissolved into one feature, ensuring there were no overlaps within each dataset.

C.3 It should be noted that there is a 'grey area' between assets and needs where a judgement call was made, based on the wider objectives of the study. For example, a river floodplain can be conceived as both an 'asset' and an area of 'need'.

C.4 *NB for data source information, please refer to Appendix B (which includes a list of all data sets used in the study)*

Table C.1: Data sets used for mapping of valued GI assets

GI theme	Data sets used
Nature-rich Lichfield	■ Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) + Wood pasture and parkland (combined) ■ Ancient woodland ■ SACs ■ LNRSs ■ SSSIs ■ Nature Reserves

GI theme	Data sets used
Active and healthy Lichfield	■ Canals – line buffered to 5m ■ Lichfield canal restoration route – line buffered to 5m. ■ Local open space – polygons ■ OS green space sites ■ Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs) ■ Public Rights of Way (PROW) – lines buffered to 5m ■ National Cycle Network (NCN) – lines buffered to 5m ■ CROW open country
Thriving and prosperous Lichfield	■ Scheduled monuments
Understanding and Managing Lichfield's water environment	■ Flood zone 2 (to indicate river corridors/floodplains)
Resilient and climate positive Lichfield	■ National Forest Inventory (NFI) ■ Woodland Trust sites

Table C.2: Data sets used for mapping of GI needs

GI theme	Data set used
Nature-rich Lichfield	■ Natural England habitat network (combined habitats): Network expansion zone (*used as proxy because finalised LNRS mapped data not yet available*) ■ Rivers with poor/bad water quality as per WFD 2023 cycle, with 5 metre buffer applied. ■ HS2 route + safeguarded land
Active and healthy Lichfield	■ Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (deciles 1, 2 and 3) ■ Road/Rail Noise ■ Accessible green space inequalities (population density), L1, L2 and M1: sub-regional 10km, district 5km, neighbourhood 1km, local, doorstep (Natural England)

GI theme	Data set used
Thriving and prosperous Lichfield	■ Town centres ■ Local centres ■ Conservation Areas ■ Railway stations + 800m buffer ■ National Forest ■ Forest of Mercia

Understanding and Managing Lichfield's water environment	■ Combined as one single layer:
	  ■ WWNP Wider catchment woodland potential
	  ■ WWNP Floodplain reconnection potential
	  ■ WWNP Riparian woodland potential
	  ■ WWNP Floodplain woodland potential
	■ Source Protection Zone 2
	■ Natural England 'greenness grid' (all areas > 50% manmade)

Resilient and climate positive Lichfield	■ Flood Zone 2 ■ Areas of high + medium risk surface water flooding ■ Tree Equity Score (all LSOAs identified as HIGH or HIGHEST priority i.e. score of 70+ ■ Climate Just social heat vulnerability index (relatively high + extremely high + acute)

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Report produced by LUC

Bristol
12th Floor, Beacon Tower, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 4XE
0117 389 0700
bristol@landuse.co.uk

Cardiff
Room 1.12, 1st Floor, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 0EB
0292 254 0920
cardiff@landuse.co.uk

Edinburgh
Atholl Exchange, 6 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG
0131 326 0900
edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Glasgow
37 Otago Street, Glasgow G12 8JJ
0141 403 0900
glasgow@landuse.co.uk

London
250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD
020 7199 5801
london@landuse.co.uk

Manchester
4th Floor, 57 Hilton Street, Manchester M1 2EJ
0161 802 2800
manchester@landuse.co.uk

Sheffield
32 Eyre Street, Sheffield, S1 4QZ
0114 392 2366
sheffield@landuse.co.uk

landuse.co.uk

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