

Advice on implementing policies in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan, enhancing biodiversity and allocating section 106 funding.



**For the Standish Neighbourhood Forum
By the Lancashire Wildlife Trust**



Final Report, 19th December 2019

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Photo above: Ron Wade looking for water in Beeches pond, 31st October 2019 by John Lamb.

Photo on cover: Pond off Brookfield Road, 31st October 2019 by John Lamb.

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introduction to the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside

The Wildlife Trust is a charity and non-profit making organisation dedicated to protecting wildlife and natural habitats throughout Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside (north of the Mersey). It is one of 47 independent charities that together form a national partnership, The Wildlife Trusts - the largest voluntary body in the UK concerned with all aspects of wildlife. Established by volunteers in 1962, the Wildlife Trust is governed by a voluntary council elected by its membership of nearly 30,000. On a day to day basis work is undertaken by a team of around 180 staff, headed by a Chief Executive, who work closely with volunteers in every area of activity. The Trust's headquarters is based at The Barn in Cuerden Valley Park, a 243 hectare (600 acre) country park south of Preston. Other staff are based at the Trust's centres in Bolton, Burnley, Heysham, Mere Sands Wood (West Lancashire), Brockholes (Preston), Seaforth (Liverpool) and Wigan.

The Trust's vision is ...

"to create a region richer in wildlife for all to enjoy. Keeping nature at the heart of everything we do."

Mr. John Lamb is one of five regional conservation officers employed by the Trust with Mr. Lamb being the Senior Conservation Officer (Lancashire). Mr. Lamb has a B.Sc. (Hons.) in Environmental Biology and a M.Sc. in Landscape Ecology, Design and Maintenance. He is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

The duties of Conservation Officer include the following areas of work:

- Providing information and advice to land managers, Trust members and members of the public including leading walks, training courses and educational materials and literature;
- Commenting on strategic documentation, planning applications, reviews of local plans and other documents in Lancashire;
- Undertaking ecological survey and advisory work, normally on a consultancy basis, throughout the Trust's area;
- Representing the Trust at meetings of initiatives and partnerships including greenspace management, the Lancashire botany group, local nature partnerships, local wildlife site initiatives, river catchment partnerships, wildlife fora etc; and
- Auditing the management systems and their implementation for companies that apply for The Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark, see www.biodiversitybenchmark.org



View over Robin Hill Field Local Green Space – a potential tree planting site for air quality amelioration, 31st October by John Lamb.

Introduction to this report

In July 2019, the final version of the Standish Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030 was published. Standish is the most northerly area in Wigan, bordering Haigh to the southeast, Wigan to the south, Shevington to the southwest, West Lancashire Borough to the northwest and Chorley Borough to the north and northeast.

Objective 3 of the 6 Objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan is “To enhance open and recreational space and access to it to improve biodiversity and residents’ health and wellbeing”.

In September 2019, Lancashire Wildlife Trust Ltd., was contacted by Standish Neighbourhood Forum for advice on the following: -

1. How we can implement the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan?
2. How we can best enhance and protect the green corridors from further development and how we can link these to other areas?
3. Suggestions as to where any s106 money would be best spent.
4. Suggestions for enhancement of three open spaces and the A5209 central reservation.

1. How we can implement the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan?

Taking these requests in turn, in respect of improving biodiversity, for implementing the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, Objective 3 Open Space And Recreational Open Space (OS) in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030 has 5 Policies, as follows. Advice on the three questions above and the policies and sub-policies is written in **green text** below, with recommendations highlighted in **bold text**. A list of all the recommendations made in this report is presented in section 4.

- POLICY OS1: Creation of Green Corridors for Access and Enhanced Biodiversity
- POLICY OS2: Local Green Spaces
- POLICY OS3: Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
- POLICY OS4: Amenity Green Spaces
- POLICY OS5: Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment

1.1 Implementation of Policy OS1: Creation of Green Corridors for Access and Enhanced Biodiversity (3 sub-policies).

OS1.1: The creation of new green/wildlife corridors will be supported where they:

- i) Create a buffer between existing housing and proposed development.
- ii) Create access to more green space and woodland.
- iii) Mitigate the loss of green infrastructure by new housing development.
- iv) Protect and enhance the existing green infrastructure and biodiversity in the following areas:

A. The area of the ponds at Almond Brook Road, the ponds to the south of Pepper Lane and the land in between as shown on the Policies Map and Map 6.

B. The Victoria Pit reclamation area north and eastwards towards Rectory Lane and Chorley Road as shown on the Policies Map and Map 7.

For OS1.1i), it would be useful to know where the boundaries of developments that are either underway or have detailed planning consent in relation to SBIs, Wildlife Corridors in Wigan’s Local

Plan, Green Corridors in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan so that potential buffers between existing housing and proposed development can be identified and created. **It is recommended that the Standish Neighbourhood Forum requests Wigan Council to carry out a buffer mapping exercise for the Neighbourhood Area and updates the map(s) periodically to reflect the completion of new housing development and/or the approval of detailed planning applications. The map(s) can then be used to identify buffers between existing housing and proposed development, which can be proposed as a new green/wildlife corridor.**

OS1.1ii) is outside the scope of the request from Standish Neighbourhood Forum, although the Wildlife Trust could make suggestions for circular walks or nature trails that pass through or adjacent to SBIs, corridors, priority habitats and sites supporting priority species, which could include recommendations for the creation of new access to green space and woodland.

For OS1.1iii), Green infrastructure is defined in paragraph 9.57 of the Wigan Local Plan as *“our natural outdoor environment and includes our countryside, parks, woodlands, wetlands, canals and rivers, allotments and community gardens, privately owned gardens and trees. Most of these are covered by other core policies but the purpose of identifying them collectively as green infrastructure is to capture the multiple benefits that can be achieved”*. Paragraph 9.62 of the Wigan Local Plan states that the Council will publish a local green infrastructure plan to identify the need for and function of green infrastructure throughout the borough and determine opportunities for enhancement and creation in accordance with this core policy. Note: definitions of green infrastructure by other organisations differ from that used by Wigan Council.

In order to mitigate the loss of green infrastructure by new housing development, it would be useful to know if green infrastructure is mapped accurately in the Neighbourhood Area. **If not, it is recommended that the Standish Neighbourhood Forum requests Wigan Council to map green infrastructure at an appropriate scale for the Neighbourhood Area and updates the map(s) periodically to reflect the completion of new housing development and/or the approval of detailed planning applications. The map(s) can then be used to identify what green infrastructure and biodiversity will be protected and what can be enhanced through the creation of new green/wildlife corridors in Areas A and B.**

OS1.1iii) requires the loss of green infrastructure by new housing development to be mitigated. Mitigation is defined in paragraph 6.21 of the Wigan Local Development Framework Development and Protected Species Supplementary Planning Document as *“the reduction of the impacts of the development upon biodiversity”*. Paragraph 6.22 of the document above defines Compensation as *“the provision of an alternative to compensate for any loss that is unavoidable”*. Hence if the loss of green infrastructure by new housing development cannot be mitigated, then an alternative must be provided. What and where this alternative is will depend on what is being lost. However, the National Planning Policy Framework requires there to be a net gain in biodiversity, hence the compensation should be better, greater or larger than the loss or losses, see 1.2 and 1.3 below.

For OS1.1iv), the recommendation in OS1.1iii) applies to green infrastructure, as defined by Wigan Council, but biological diversity, or biodiversity for short, is defined in article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity as

*“the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”*.

Information on the presence and distribution of species is held nationally by the National Biodiversity Network and locally by the Local Biological Records Centre, in this case being the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), which is also responsible for the identification of Local Wildlife Sites, called Sites of Biological Importance in Greater Manchester, which includes Wigan. In order to protect and enhance the existing biodiversity in the areas, we need to know which species of fauna, flora and fungi and what ecosystems, or habitat types, occur or have been recorded in the areas. The GMEU will hold data of the fauna, flora and fungi recorded in Areas A and B, but details of the habitat types may be limited. Some information on habitat types is available online, e.g. www.MAGiC.defra.gov.uk . **It is recommended that Standish Neighbourhood Forum requests a copy of the data that the GMEU holds for the Neighbourhood Area, including Areas A and B, for which there may be a charge. The data can then be assessed in order to identify which species need to be protected and which populations can be enhanced in the Neighbourhood Area.**

It is also recommended that the data are reviewed to confirm the presence and status of noteworthy species, highlight data that are out of date and identify gaps in our knowledge of species groups. Attempts can then be made to update records that are out of date and/or to fill the gaps in our knowledge of species groups.

According to paragraph 9.74 of the Wigan Local Plan, important wildlife sites cover over 1,500 hectares or around 7.5% of the borough. However, only one-third of the Borough's 1,100 ponds are within designated sites.

There is one SBI in Area A (Map 6) and two SBIs in Area B (Map 7), which can be summarised as follows:

A28-1. Ponds at Primrose Lane, the site having two SBI qualifying features: Fw2 – Ponds & Small Lodges and Am1 – Amphibians. The site supports five amphibians, together with associated terrestrial habitat. Such ponds are a Priority Habitat. As part of a compensation scheme for the loss of a part of the SBI to housing, three new ponds were created on the retained part of the site in 2006 and management works undertaken on the existing pond. Monitoring works as a part of this scheme indicates that the site supports a medium population of Great Crested Newt, a large population of Smooth Newt and small populations of Palmate Newt and Common Toad. Common Frog also breeds at the site. Water Voles were recorded in the past, but have not been seen in recent years. Priority Species recorded from the site are Common Toad, Dunnock, Great Crested Newt, Song Thrush, Starling and Yellowhammer.

In Area A, the Safeguarded Land known as Pepper Lane (TEP Site Ref 013) is described as "Safeguarded land, partially within Council ownership. The site is surrounded by low density residential housing, with Shevington Moor to the west and Standish to the southeast. The site largely consists of agricultural land with several farms. There are some small areas of woodland, consisting of coniferous plantation to the west of the site and mixed plantation to the centre of the site. There are also several ponds and managed greenspace linked to Standish High School which lies to the east of the site".

Wigan Council's Proposals Plan shows that there are two SBIs adjacent to the Safeguarded Land, with the Ponds at Primrose Lane being situated within a Green Corridor in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Ponds at Primrose Lane - A28 is 1.3 hectares of vegetation mosaic also supporting amphibians and invertebrates. Priority habitats in the SBIs include managed greenspace and standing water.

In Area B, the Safeguarded Land known as Rectory Lane (TEP Site Ref 017) is described as “Safeguarded land, partially within Council ownership. The residential area of Standish surrounds much of the site, with the Bradley Hall Trading Estate to the north. The site contains agricultural land, Standish Court Golf Club, woodland belts, a number of ponds, drains, a stream and areas of managed greenspace with public footpaths. A railway line runs north-south through the site”.

Wigan Council’s Proposals Plan shows that there are four SBIs adjacent to the Safeguarded Land, two of which (Fairhurst Lane - A32 and Barrowcroft Wood – A33) are situated within a Green Corridor in the Neighbourhood Plan and both also lie within a Wildlife Corridor in the Wigan Local Plan.

Fairhurst Lane - A32 is 2.2 hectares of woodland and wetland habitats and Barrowcroft Wood – A33 is 8.2 hectares of vegetation mosaic also supporting amphibians, bryophytes and invertebrates. Priority habitats in the SBIs include ancient woodland, hedgerow, managed greenspace and standing water.

Fairhurst Lane - A32 is an area of mixed habitat including broadleaved woodland and scrub, wet woodland and wetland, including watercourses and waterbodies. The SBI is part of a matrix of woodlands in Standish and one of the waterbodies is one of the larger naturalistic waterbodies in the area. Wet woodland and ponds are Priority Habitats in England and lowland broadleaved woodland and ponds are Greater Manchester Biodiversity Priority Habitats.

Two small ponds to the east of the site are included within the SBI and support five amphibian species. A large population of Smooth Newt is present together with a medium population of Palmate Newt and Great Crested Newt. Small populations of Common Frog and Common Toad are also present.

Barrowcroft Wood – A33 supports a wide variety of habitats including woodland, scrub, acid grassland, neutral grassland, marshy grassland and open water. Some of the woodland is classified as ancient. A small pond on the northern edge of the woodland supports *Riccia fluitans*, an uncommon liverwort. The pond was surveyed by the Pondlife project in 1995, which recorded 39 invertebrate species, including 17 beetles, together with Common Frog, Great Crested Newt, Palmate and Smooth Newts. Overall the bryophyte population is recorded as substantial with 36 species recorded.

Priority species in the SBIs described above include bats, Common Toad and Great Crested Newt, although other species are listed as probable and may also occur.

In line with TEP’s general appraisal for Strategic Sites, **the following recommendations are made:**

- **That SBIs adjacent to Safeguarded Land should be protected and buffered through open space provision and/or landscaping.**
- **Gardens of new houses should not back directly onto the SBI boundaries. If, however, this is unavoidable, then appropriate conditions should be secured through planning consent to ensure that suitable fencing is provided to prevent encroachment into the SBI, minimise dumping of garden and household waste, and discourage cats and dogs from entering the SBI.**
- **SBIs adjacent, and in close proximity (<1km) to, Safeguarded Land should be provided with linkages to other SBIs and/or corridors using appropriate green infrastructure, the linkages being dominated by habitats present within the SBIs.** At both Pepper Lane and Rectory Lane the habitats within linkages should comprise grassland, marsh, scrub and open water, with particular attention on enhancing the populations of Great Crested Newts.

OS1.2: Improvements to public accessibility of these green corridors through the extension and/or the creation of new public rights of way will be supported.

OS1.2 is outside the scope of the request from Standish Neighbourhood Forum, although the Wildlife Trust could make suggestions for circular walks or nature trails that pass through or adjacent to SBIs, corridors, priority habitats and sites supporting priority species, which could include access to green corridors.

OS1.3: Any proposed development within and adjacent to these areas must be able to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity on the green infrastructure and biodiversity of that area.

For OS1.3, clarification is required as to whether the net gain in biodiversity on the green infrastructure and biodiversity the area is to be delivered within the development site or in Area A or B as relevant. It is up to the developer and/or their consultant(s) to demonstrate to the Council that there will be a net gain in biodiversity. The GMEU and/or the Wildlife Trust may be able to scrutinise applications and confirm whether or not there will be a net gain in biodiversity. The Wildlife Trust will expect applications to use the Biodiversity Offsetting metric, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-offsetting>

1.2 Implementation of Policy OS2: Local Green Spaces (1 policy applying to 4 areas).

OS2: The following sites, as shown on the Policies Map (Map 8), are designated as Local Green Spaces:

1. Almond Brook Ponds
2. Victoria Pit
3. Robin Hill Field
4. Southlands Rec

Development within these areas will not be permitted unless:

- a) It is considered appropriate to its function as a Local Green Space; or
- b) There are very special circumstances which demonstrate that development on Local Green Space clearly outweighs other considerations.

Development considered appropriate on a Local Green Space would be:

- i) Provision of appropriate facilities, including new buildings, associated with outdoor sport or outdoor recreation providing it preserves and improves the function and value of the Local Green Space.
- ii) The extension or alteration of an existing building providing it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the function and value of the Local Green Space.
- iii) The replacement of a building provided the new building is in the same use, not materially larger than the one it replaces and does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the function and value of the Local Green Space.

For OS2, one of the reasons that sites can be designated as Local Green Spaces is because of its wildlife value. Sites 1, 2 and 3, Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field, have demonstrable wildlife value, which is one of the reasons their designation as Local Green Spaces was acceptable. Site 4, Southlands Rec, was designated as a Local Green Space for its historic

significance, recreational value and tranquillity. **For a) above, any development on Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field Local Green Spaces must be considered appropriate to its function for wildlife in order to be permitted. Any development(s) proposed for Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field Local Green Spaces that are not considered appropriate to its function for wildlife should be refused.**

For b) above, in the very special circumstances that can demonstrate that development on Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field Local Green Space clearly outweighs wildlife considerations, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012, as amended) still requires there to be a net gain in biodiversity/nature/wildlife. The GMEU and/or the Wildlife Trust may be able to scrutinise applications and confirm whether or not there will be a net gain in biodiversity. The Wildlife Trust will expect applications to use the Biodiversity Offsetting metric, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-offsetting>

It is recommended that every development considered appropriate on a Local Green Space, as outlined in i) to iii) above, incorporates biodiversity features into and/or onto new facilities, including buildings, extensions or alterations to existing buildings and replacing buildings. Biodiversity features include green roofs, green walls, bird nesting boxes (e.g. Swift and House Sparrow), bird feeding and/or watering stations, amphibians or reptile refugia and hibernacula, bat boxes and/or suitable cladding that may support roosting bats, Hedgehog boxes, bee and bug hotels etc.

1.3 Implementation of Policy OS3: Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland (4 sub-policies – no 3.3 or 3.4).

OS3.1: Where any future major development proposals will result in the loss of woodland, individual trees not protected by a Tree Protection Order or significant lengths of boundary hedges, adequate compensatory measures are to be put in place which result in a net gain to the overall quality of the environment, including structural landscaping and the creation of new green infrastructure.

For OS3.1, where major development would result in the loss of woodland, individual trees not protected by a TPO or significant lengths of boundary hedges, in order to achieve a net gain there needs to be more than a 1: 1 replacement in the area of woodland, number of individual trees and/or length of hedgerow. **It is recommended that the ratio of loss: replacement of woodland, individual trees not protected by a TPO or significant lengths of boundary hedges is at least 1: 1.5 and ideally 1: 2 or more. Furthermore, it is also recommended that the species of trees and shrubs to be planted should be selected from a list tailored to the Neighbourhood Area that includes species appropriate to the local environment (including soil type, hydrology and chemical/nutrient status) and beneficial to target species of fauna, including birds, invertebrates and/or mammals^{3.1}. The list and target species should be approved by partners including the GMEU, Wigan Council and the Wildlife Trust.**

^{3.1} To be confirmed once the data requested in OS1.1iv) have been received and assessed, but should include Priority Species listed in the SBI citations, i.e. Common Toad, Dunnock, Great Crested Newt, Song Thrush, Starling and Yellowhammer etc.

OS3.2: In addition, new trees should be planted at a minimum of:

- i) One tree for each dwelling for residential development.
- ii) One tree per 100 square metres of floor space for non-residential development.

For OS3.2, it is recommended that the trees planted should be on the list produced in response to OS3.1 above. However, it may be considered appropriate to limit this restriction to Wildlife Corridors in the Wigan Local Plan and Green Corridors in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

OS3.5: Where it is not possible to secure this new or replacement tree planting on site, trees should be planted at a suitable location outside the site but within the Standish Neighbourhood Area in consultation with Standish Voice, or a qualifying successor organisation, and Wigan Council's arboriculture officer.

For OS3.5, it is recommended that the trees planted should be on the list produced in response to OS3.1 above. However, it may be considered appropriate to limit this restriction to Wildlife Corridors in the Wigan Local Plan and Green Corridors in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

OS3.6: Landscaping proposals should include native species and habitats that respect the distinctive local landscape character and should seek to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with DEFRA's Biodiversity Impact Calculator.

For OS3.6, it is recommended that the trees planted should be on the list produced in response to OS3.1 above and using the Biodiversity Offsetting metric, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-offsetting>. However, it may be considered appropriate to limit this restriction to Wildlife Corridors in the Wigan Local Plan and Green Corridors in the Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 Implementation of Policy OS4: Amenity Green Spaces (1 policy applying to 27 areas).

The following areas as shown on the Policies Map are designated as Amenity Green Space:

1. Langtree Lane
2. Quakers Burial Ground
3. Almond Green Avenue
4. Primrose Lane
5. Cranborne Close
6. Woodhurst Drive / Almond Brook Road
7. Corner of Almond Brook Road / School Lane
8. Woodhurst Drive / Hampstead Road
9. Land adjacent to 71 Woodhurst Drive
10. Bradshaw Close
11. Land adjacent to Beech Walk
12. Calveley Walk / Aldford Way
13. Byley Rise
14. Walkway between Wigan Road and Green Lane
15. Hartington Drive
16. Ashfield Park
17. Land off Lordy Close
18. Land off Cranleigh
19. Ashfield Park Drive / rear of Birch Avenue
20. War memorial, High Street / Church Street
21. Standish Library, Cross Street
22. Cross Street / Market Place
23. Broomfield Place
24. Bradley Lane / Sheldon Avenue

- 25. Templegate Close / Copeland Drive
- 26. Otter Close Wood
- 27. Whelley Loop Line Linear Walkway

The Amenity Green Space shall be retained and enhanced, including where appropriate, improvements to the visual, landscape and nature conservation value of the site.

Development that would result in the loss of all or part of an area of Amenity Green Space will only be supported where the remaining area of Amenity Green Space or a nearby Amenity Green Space is enhanced. The development should not have an adverse impact on footpath or cycleway links to areas of open space or the countryside.

For OS4, the nature conservation value of some or all of the 27 sites of Amenity Green Space is probably not known, although this can be confirmed once the data requested in OS1.1iv) have been received and assessed. It is recommended that, once data have been received and assessed, baseline wildlife surveys of some or all of the 27 sites of Amenity Green Space are commissioned*, involving members of local natural history groups and the local communities in both initial and future/ongoing surveys.

*** for which there may be a charge.**

1.5 Implementation of Policy OS5: Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment (3 sub-policies).

OS5.1: Development proposals should take account of the statutory requirements, policies in the development plan and the following principles:

- i) They protect and enhance wildlife areas, including Sites of Biological Importance and undisturbed ecological buffer zones adjacent to watercourses, and contain measures to sustain and improve biodiversity.
- ii) They do not adversely affect the distinctive local character of the open landscapes of the Standish Neighbourhood Area.
- iii) They protect and where possible enhance footpaths and public rights of way.
- iv) They contain measures that will help to mitigate the impacts of, and adapt to, climate change.
- v) Development affecting land alongside watercourses and ponds should ensure the following:
 - A. There must be no adverse effects from increased runoff or access causing bank erosion and increased sedimentation.
 - B. Nothing should be done to impact adversely on the quality of water.
 - C. Where discharge of surface water via a soakaway or other form of infiltration system is demonstrated not to be feasible, the watercourse should be utilised for the discharge of surface water, wherever possible, to adhere to the surface water drainage hierarchy set out in paragraph 12.30.
- vi) Development proposals should wherever possible provide habitat linkages and permeability for wildlife through effective incorporation of green spaces and wildlife corridors, use of native planting and habitat features such as ponds and areas of meadow.

For OS5.1, it is recommended that a checklist is prepared against which development proposals can be tested to ensure that they take account of statutory requirements, policies in the development plan and principles i) to vi) above.

OS5.2 Special arrangements are to be made to protect and enhance the habitats of priority species included in the England Biodiversity List under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Wigan's Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough (TEP 2010) identifies priority habitats in the borough as being woodland, wetland, mossland, grassland and urban greenspace, all of which are considered a priority at a local, regional and national level. The study considers areas where protected and/or priority species may be present, particularly amphibians, bats and birds, and also the presence of priority habitats and species on key development sites. It also identifies those areas that have the potential for enhancement as mitigation for other schemes.

According to paragraph 9.75 of the Wigan Local Plan, priority species recorded regularly across the borough include Great Crested Newt and Water Vole, and the borough also has a nationally significant population of Willow Tit.

For OS5.2, if priority species from S41 of the NERC Act 2006 are known to occur on any site(s) in the Neighbourhood Area that is proposed for development (see recommendation in OS1.1iv), then special arrangements to protect and enhance their habitat(s) need to be made. It is recommended that Wigan Council defines what is meant by 'special arrangements' to protect and enhance the habitats of priority species.

OS5.3 Provision should be made for long-term monitoring and management of new and retained green infrastructure. Adequate funding should be made available and include provision for contingencies where monitoring shows that remedial action is needed.

For OS5.3, once Wigan Council has mapped new and retained green infrastructure in Standish (see OS1.1iii), plans need to be made for habitat and infrastructure management and monitoring of progress towards targets. Both management and monitoring will need to be funded over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, i.e. to at least 2030. **Where monitoring shows that remedial action is needed, it is recommended that survey findings are analysed by a group or committee of suitably experienced and/or qualified people, appropriate action(s) are discussed, agreed and adequate funding identified and allocated towards implementation of the actions.**

2. How we can best enhance and protect the green corridors from further development and how we can link these to other areas?

Paragraph 9.77 of the Wigan Local Plan states that "Existing key wildlife corridors support functional networks for wildlife habitats and species. We will review the boundaries of our wildlife corridors in a subsequent plan".

For 2, it is recommended that any development proposal on any part of the green corridors should follow the mitigation hierarchy in British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity Code of practice for planning and development, which seeks to avoid impacts, mitigate unavoidable impacts, and, as a last resort, compensate for unavoidable residual impacts that remain after avoidance and mitigation measures.

Replacement with like for like does not meet the requirement for net gain, hence **if one unit of land is to be developed, it is recommended that the Council asks for at least 1.5, ideally 2 or more, units of land to be converted or restored to the habitat type(s) that would be lost*.**

Furthermore, the Council should require that the compensatory land be converted or restored to the habitat type(s) required and that it is in an acceptable condition, before development commences.**

* some habitats, such as ancient woodland and limestone pavement, are irreplaceable and, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, should not be lost to development.

** habitat condition assessments have been developed by the Wildlife Trust for non-statutory wildlife sites that can also be applied to habitats in the wider town and countryside. Targets for improvement in the condition of habitat(s) on specific sites can be agreed and achieved through appropriate management over time.

3. Suggestions as to where any s106 money would be best spent.

For 3, the Wildlife Trust is aware that some of the s106 money has to be spent on air quality amelioration, but that other s106 money can be spent on sites, habitats and/or species within the Neighbourhood Area.

For s106 money that has to be spent on air quality amelioration, trees can absorb particulate matter, including dust, and a variety of pollutants as well as reduce noise, screen buildings, provide shade and cooling effects. The Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Lancaster University have developed an Urban Tree Air Quality Score (UTAQS). The native species with the highest UTAQS are Alder, Field Maple, Hawthorn and Silver Birch. Native species with a medium UTAQS are apple, Ash, Elder, elm, Hazel, Holly, lime, Rowan and Wild Cherry. Native species with the lowest UTAQS are Aspen, oak and willow. **It is recommended that tree and shrub species with high and medium UTAQS are planted on available and suitable land* in accordance with the following hierarchy:**

- i). Connecting two or more woodland SBIs,
- ii). Connecting one or more woodland SBI with one or more SBI having non-woodland features,
- iii). Extending one or more woodland SBIs,
- iv). Connecting two or more green corridors and/or Local Green Spaces,
- v). Extending one or more green corridors and/or Local Green Spaces, and
- vi). Lying within a green corridor and/or Local Green Space.

Note: In addition to apples, other fruit trees may also be planted including as part of an orchard area(s).

*Suitable land includes that which could be damaged by tree planting such as non-woodland priority habitats, sites supporting non-woodland priority species, archaeological or cultural features and on or underneath wayleaves etc.

Local Green Space 3 on Policies Map Inset 3, located southwest of Standish Community High School has already been identified as a potential site for tree planting to ameliorate air quality following housing development(s) built nearby on Safeguarded Land, as shown in the Neighbourhood Plan. There isn't, however, a similar need to find a site for air quality amelioration in the Safeguarded Land off Rectory Lane.

The Wildlife Trust recommends that s106 money NOT required for air quality amelioration would be best spent creating and managing habitats on available and suitable land* in accordance with the following hierarchy:

- a). Connecting two or more SBIs supporting similar habitat types,
- b). Connecting two or more SBIs supporting differing habitat types,
- c). Extending one or more SBIs,
- d). Connecting two or more green corridors and/or Local Green Spaces,
- e). Creating new green corridors and/or Local Green Spaces, and
- f). Creating stepping stone sites in between a) to e) above, and
- g). Providing opportunities for protected, priority and/or other noteworthy species including pollinators.

At the habitat level this may involve creating new wetlands and wildflower meadows, planting new hedgerows, trees and woodland. At the species level this may involve providing bee and bug hotels; nest boxes for bats, birds and hedgehogs; feeding and watering stations for birds; providing logs for Willow Tit to nest in; and creating hibernacula for amphibians.

Specific sites for spending s106 money not required for air quality amelioration should be identified by applying hierarchy a) to g) to the maps of buffers and green infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Area, including Green/Wildlife Corridors, Local Green Space, SBIs, and the locations of protected and priority species, to be produced by Wigan Council, or another organisation (see recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7 below).

Standish includes Strategic Opportunity Areas for the proposed Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing scheme, the contract being awarded to the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. **It is recommended that some of the s106 money is spent on land adjacent to, or that connects two or more ponds, which are being managed through Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing.**

Further to ponds being created and/or restored through the Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing scheme, there will be additional opportunities for pond creation and restoration in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, such as restoring Beeches pond, see photograph on page 2. **It is recommended that ponds are created and/or restored on suitable sites that fall outside the Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing, where opportunities arise, e.g. Beeches pond off Rectory Lane (B5239).**

It is recommended that the timescale for ongoing maintenance should be the remaining lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, i.e. to at least 2030.

4. Suggestions for enhancement of three Local Green Spaces and the A5209 central reservation.

The Local Green Spaces at Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field, as shown on the Policies Map (Map 8), are areas that can be targeted for conserving and enhancing habitats and species of fauna, flora and fungi, using s106 money, where appropriate. Suggestions for enhancement of three Local Green Spaces and the A5209 central reservation, known locally as “The road to nowhere”, can be compared and contrasted in the following table:

Action	Almond Brook Ponds	Victoria Pit	Robin Hill Field	A5209 central reservation
Tree planting	Limited due to existing ponds & woodland	Limited	Significant opportunity	Limited due to visibility requirements
Woodland management	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Future requirement if trees planted	N/A due to absence of trees

Pond creation	Limited due to existing ponds & woodland	Limited due to past land use	Significant opportunity	Limited value due to isolation by roads
Pond management	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Future requirement if pond(s) created	N/A due to absence of pond
Wildflower meadow creation	Limited due to existing ponds & woodland	Limited due to existing habitat	Limited if planted with trees, otherwise a significant opportunity	Significant opportunity
Bird feeding station(s)	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Limited due to presence of roads
Bird watering station(s)	Water present already	Water present already	Significant opportunity	Limited due to presence of roads
Refugia for amphibian & reptiles	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Limited value due to isolation by roads
Bat boxes	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Limited to existing trees	N/A due to absence of trees
Hedgehog boxes	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Limited value due to isolation by roads
Bee/bug hotels	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity
Footpath creation	Limited due to existing network	Limited due to existing network	Significant opportunity	N/A due to presence of roads
Footpath improvement	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Future requirement if paths created	N/A due to presence of roads
Information board	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	N/A due to presence of roads
Nature trail	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	N/A due to presence of roads
Environmental artwork/sculpture(s)	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity	Significant opportunity

To summarise, it is recommended that Almond Brook Ponds can be enhanced by managing the woodland to replace the non-native poplar trees with locally native trees and shrubs (see recommendation 11), managing the ponds by controlling invasive species, providing bird feeding stations, constructing hibernacula/refugia, bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, bee/bug hotels, improving the surface of sections of footpath, providing an information board(s), developing a nature trail and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).

Victoria Pit can be enhanced by managing the woodland to diversify the composition and structure of the canopy and understorey, managing the pond by controlling invasive species, providing bird feeding stations, constructing hibernacula/refugia, bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, bee/bug hotels,

improving the surface of sections of footpath, providing an information board(s), developing a nature trail and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).

Robin Hill Field can be enhanced by planting locally native trees and shrubs (see recommendation 11), creating one or more ponds, creating wildflower meadow area(s)*, providing bird feeding and watering stations, constructing hibernacula/refugia, erecting bat boxes on existing trees, hedgehog boxes, bee/bug hotels, surfacing 'desire lines' to create footpaths, providing an information board(s), developing a nature trail and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).

The "road to nowhere" (A5209 central reservation) can be enhanced by creating wildflower meadow area(s)*, providing bee/bug hotels and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).

* Wildflower meadows can be created by reseeding, plug planting and/or scarification and slot seeding.

5. List of recommendations presented in this report

1. Standish Neighbourhood Forum requests Wigan Council to carry out a buffer mapping exercise for the Neighbourhood Area and updates the map(s) periodically to reflect the completion of new housing development and/or the approval of detailed planning applications. The map(s) can then be used to identify buffers between existing housing and proposed development, which can be proposed as a new green/wildlife corridor.
2. Standish Neighbourhood Forum requests Wigan Council to map green infrastructure at an appropriate scale for the Neighbourhood Area and updates the map(s) periodically to reflect the completion of new housing development and/or the approval of detailed planning applications. The map(s) can then be used to identify what green infrastructure and biodiversity will be protected and what can be enhanced through the creation of new green/wildlife corridors in Areas A and B.
3. Standish Neighbourhood Forum requests a copy of the data that the GMEU holds for the Neighbourhood Area, including Areas A and B. The data can then be assessed in order to identify which species need to be protected and which populations can be enhanced in the Neighbourhood Area.
4. Data are reviewed to confirm the presence and status of noteworthy species, highlight data that are out of date and identify gaps in our knowledge of species groups. Attempts can then be made to update records that are out of date and/or to fill the gaps in our knowledge of species groups.
5. That SBIs adjacent to Safeguarded Land should be protected and buffered through open space provision and/or landscaping.
6. Gardens of new houses should not back directly onto the SBI boundaries. If, however, this is unavoidable, then appropriate conditions should be secured through planning consent to ensure that suitable fencing is provided to prevent encroachment into the SBI, minimise dumping of garden and household waste, and discourage cats and dogs from entering the SBI.
7. SBIs adjacent, and in close proximity (<1km) to, Safeguarded Land should be provided with linkages to other SBIs and/or corridors using appropriate green infrastructure, the linkages being dominated by habitats present within the SBIs.

8. Any development on Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field Local Green Spaces must be considered appropriate to its function for wildlife in order to be permitted. Any development(s) proposed for Almond Brook Ponds, Victoria Pit and Robin Hill Field Local Green Spaces that are not considered appropriate to its function for wildlife should be refused.
9. Every development considered appropriate on a Local Green Space incorporates biodiversity features into and/or onto new facilities, including buildings, extensions or alterations to existing buildings and replacing buildings.
10. The ratio of loss: replacement of woodland, individual trees not protected by a TPO or significant lengths of boundary hedges is at least 1: 1.5 and ideally 1: 2 or more.
11. Species of trees and shrubs to be planted should be selected from a list tailored to the Neighbourhood Area that includes species appropriate to the local environment and beneficial to target species.
12. Trees planted should be on the list produced in response to OS3.1 and using the Biodiversity Offsetting metric.
13. Once data have been received and assessed, baseline wildlife surveys of some or all of the 27 sites of Amenity Green Space are commissioned, involving members of local natural history groups and the local communities in both initial and future/ongoing surveys.
14. A checklist is prepared against which development proposals can be tested to ensure that they take account of statutory requirements, policies in the development plan and principles i) to vi).
15. Wigan Council defines what is meant by 'special arrangements' to protect and enhance the habitats of priority species.
16. Where monitoring shows that remedial action is needed, survey findings are analysed by a group or committee of suitably experienced and/or qualified people, appropriate action(s) are discussed, agreed and adequate funding identified and allocated towards implementation of the actions.
17. Any development proposal on any part of the green corridors should follow the mitigation hierarchy in British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity Code of practice for planning and development.
18. If one unit of land is to be developed, the Council asks for at least 1.5, ideally 2 or more, units of land to be converted or restored to the habitat type(s) that would be lost.
19. The Council should require that the compensatory land be converted or restored to the habitat type(s) required and that it is in an acceptable condition, before development commences.
20. Tree and shrub species with high and medium Urban Tree Air Quality Score (UTAQS) are planted on available and suitable land in accordance with the hierarchy specified in i)-vi).
21. Section 106 money not required for air quality amelioration would be best spent on available and suitable land in accordance with the hierarchy specified in a)-g).

22. Some of the s106 money is spent on land adjacent to, or that connects two or more ponds, which are being managed through Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing.
23. Ponds are created and/or restored on suitable sites that fall outside the Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing, where opportunities arise, e.g. Beeches pond off Rectory Lane (B5239).
24. The timescale for ongoing maintenance should be the remaining lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, i.e. to at least 2030.
25. Almond Brook Ponds can be enhanced by managing the woodland to replace the non-native poplar trees with locally native trees and shrubs (see recommendation 11), managing the ponds by controlling invasive species, providing bird feeding stations, constructing hibernacula/refugia, bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, bee/bug hotels, improving the surface of sections of footpath, providing an information board(s), developing a nature trail and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).
26. Victoria Pit can be enhanced by managing the woodland to diversify the composition and structure of the canopy and understorey, managing the pond by controlling invasive species, providing bird feeding stations, constructing hibernacula/refugia, bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, bee/bug hotels, improving the surface of sections of footpath, providing an information board(s), developing a nature trail and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).
27. Robin Hill Field can be enhanced by planting locally native trees and shrubs (see recommendation 11), creating one or more ponds, creating wildflower meadow area(s), providing bird feeding and watering stations, constructing hibernacula/refugia, erecting bat boxes on existing trees, hedgehog boxes, bee/bug hotels, surfacing 'desire lines' to create footpaths, providing an information board(s), developing a nature trail and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).
28. The "road to nowhere" (A5209 central reservation) can be enhanced by creating wildflower meadow area(s), providing bee/bug hotels and commissioning environmental artwork/sculpture(s).