

Statement on the consistency of the Green Wedge designation in Leicester and Leicestershire with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

May 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Officers within Leicester and Leicestershire have worked jointly to prepare a statement on the consistency of the green wedge designation with the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published in December 2023. This statement replaces the Joint Statement which was prepared previously by Officers when the NPPF was first introduced in March 2012. The purpose of this Statement is to set out the continued support for the green wedge designation within Leicester and Leicestershire and that the designation is consistent with national policy, specifically the NPPF and other statements of national planning policy¹.

Background

- 1.2 Green Wedge policies were introduced in the Leicestershire Structure Plan in 1987 and continued to be identified in subsequent Structure Plans in 1994 and 2005. The East Midlands Regional Plan (2009) (now revoked) did not contain a policy on green wedges; however, it identified four functions of a green wedge which included preventing the merging of settlements, guiding development form, providing a green lung into urban areas and acting as a recreational resource. The Regional Plan emphasised that green wedges were a local planning designation and stipulated that a review of existing green wedges or the creation of new ones in association with development should be carried out through the Local Development Framework process which was in place at the time of the Regional Plan's adoption.
- 1.3 Since the removal of the regional tier of planning policy, Leicester and Leicestershire Local Authorities have continued to work together on strategic matters. The Green Wedge is a strategic designation which crosses administrative boundaries and so a Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology was prepared in 2011 so that a consistent approach could be taken and is still used. The Methodology was agreed by the following six local authorities Charnwood (CBC), Harborough (HDC), Hinckley and Bosworth (HBBC), Leicester City (LCC), North West Leicestershire (NWLDC) and Oadby and Wigston (OWBC). Blaby District Council (BDC) and Melton Borough Council (MBC) are part of the Leicestershire Housing Market Area but were not part of the joint methodology. Melton Borough Council do not have any green wedges within their administrative boundaries. The Joint Methodology is a Background Paper to this Statement and should be considered alongside it.
- 1.4 Each of the local planning authorities undertook a Green Wedge Review using the Methodology either in its entirety or using it as a basis to produce the necessary Green

¹ Paragraph 35 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ([National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115172/nppf-2023.pdf))

Wedge Evidence Base to allocate green wedges in their Local Plans. As such the green wedge designation has been examined by different Planning Inspectors through the examination in public process and allocated through this process. Appendix A of this Statement includes a map of the green wedges across Leicester and Leicestershire. The Green Wedge designation is contained within the following Adopted Development Plan documents:

Table 1: Table setting out the current 'adopted' planning policies relating to green wedges within Leicester and Leicestershire

Local Authority	Development Plan Document (s)
Blaby	Core Strategy (2013) Policy CS16 Green Wedges Delivery DPD (2019) Policies Map (2019)
Charnwood	Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 – 2028 (adopted 2015). Policy CS12 Green Infrastructure. Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037 Pre-Submission Draft & Policies Map 1 (currently at Examination). Policy EV2 Green Wedges.
Harborough	Harborough Local Plan (2019) Policy GD7 Green Wedges Adopted Policies Map (2019)
Hinckley and Bosworth	Core Strategy (2009) Policy 6 Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge, Policy 9 Rothley Brook Meadow Green Wedge Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD Policies Map (2016)
Leicester	Leicester City Core Strategy 2010-2026 (adopted 2014). Policy CS13. Green Network City of Leicester Local Plan 1996-2016 – saved policies version (adopted 2006). Policy GE06. Protection of Green Wedges Local Plan Proposals Map 2006
Oadby and Wigston	Local Plan (2019) Policy 42 Green Wedges Adopted Policies Map (2019)

- 1.5 In November 2008 NWLDC published an initial review of the Green Wedge in the district. The review concluded that the Green Wedge designation could no longer be justified as it did not meet all of the assessment criteria. Further reviews of the Green Wedge were undertaken in 2009 and 2011 based on the Joint Methodologies. These reviews also concluded that the Green Wedge did not meet all of the criteria to justify its continued designation. A range of options were considered for the future of the Green Wedge as part preparing the Council's Local Plan. This resulted in the adopted Local Plan (2017) that part of the Green Wedge is now countryside, and two other parcels of Green Wedge are designated as Areas of Separation.
- 1.6 The NPPF was first introduced in 2012 and a green wedge consistency statement was prepared to demonstrate that green wedges are a useful local planning tool used within Leicestershire and that the designation was consistent with the NPPF (2012). Since then, there have been a number of revisions made to the NPPF, the latest of which was published in December 2023. It is therefore necessary to update the original Consistency Statement prepared by Leicestershire Authorities so that it reflects the latest NPPF 2023.

- 1.7 Although Melton Borough Council and North West Leicestershire District Council do not have green wedges within their administrative boundaries, the authorities have worked collaboratively on the preparation of this Statement due to the strategic nature of this designation for Leicestershire as a whole. This statement has been prepared in partnership with Officers from the following local authorities: Charnwood Borough Council; Harborough District Council; Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council; Leicester City Council; Leicestershire County Council; Melton Borough Council; North West Leicestershire District Council; and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council.
- 1.8 The Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire² has been prepared by the ten partner organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire to provide a long-term vision to address challenges and provide opportunities. It is a non-statutory plan, but it sets out an agreed strategy for the period to 2050 which will be delivered through local plans. The Growth Plan includes a number of principal building blocks, one of these blocks is entitled 'protecting our environmental, historic and other assets'. This recognises the assets which are most important within the Growth Plan area identifying key features and designations to aid decisions about areas that need to be protected. This includes key features such as areas separating urban areas, i.e., green wedges, valuable landscapes and townscapes, local nature conservation designations, civic heritage to name a few.

2. National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- 2.1 The UK Government released a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2023, first published in 2012 and last updated in September 2023. A previous update to the NPPF in July 2021 included the introduction of design codes, tree protection and tree lined streets, and the emphasis on tackling climate change. These amendments reflected the 'Living with Beauty' Report³ recommendations, and there are more references to protection and enhancement of the environment and tackling climate change.
- 2.2 The NPPF does not contain a specific reference to green wedges, although paragraph 1 does make it clear that the Framework '*sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans can provide for sufficient housing and other development in a sustainable manner. Preparing and maintaining up-to-date plans should be seen as a priority in meeting this objective*'. The green wedge designation is consistent with the NPPF for the reasons set out below.

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 2.3 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF outlines three dimensions of sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. There is a strong relationship between green wedges and the environmental objective of sustainable development as green wedges help '*to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including*

² [Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan \(2018\)](#)

³ MHCLG (2020) Living with beauty: report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission ([Living with beauty: report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))

making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy' (NPPF 2023; Paragraph 8 c)). Within the Leicestershire green wedges there are a number of protected and designated sites, habitats and species including: Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, and Priority habitats and species. The green wedges also provide a multi-functional green and blue infrastructure network and provide a green lung within urban environments, aiding air quality and minimising pollution.

- 2.4 In addition to this, green wedges also support the social strand of sustainable development through supporting *'strong, vibrant and healthy communities'* as they provide urban communities with the opportunity to access open spaces and countryside which supports *'communities health, social and cultural well-being'* (NPPF 2023; Paragraph 8 b)). For instance, providing access to Leicestershire's Public Right of Way Network and open spaces such as Burbage Common and Woodland (HBBC), Aylestone Meadows (LCC), Brocks Hill Country Park (OWBC), and Watermead Country Park in Charnwood (CBC).
- 2.5 Green wedges have a more limited role regarding the economic strand of sustainable development although they do aid the direction of growth of development helping to shape communities. For example, as part of the Local Plan preparation process, the green wedge review process allows for development needs to be weighed against the functions of the green wedge. This can result in a change to existing green wedge boundaries to accommodate development as well as the identification of new areas of green wedge. The process is therefore responsive to economic needs. Green Wedges also provide a multi-functional green infrastructure network which *'can drive economic growth and regeneration, helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors'*⁴. In Charnwood the green wedge connects to the Grand Union Canal and River Soar corridors which attracts 250,000 visitors annually looking to use the network of footpaths, cycle routes and boating facilities⁵.
- 2.6 Green wedges have a role to play in achieving sustainable development by making environments which are vibrant and healthy whilst enhancing the natural and built environment through the efficient use of land and supporting improvements to biodiversity and green infrastructure. Green wedges have helped to guide development form and protect settlement identities of communities within and around urban areas by preventing the merging of settlements.

Plan making and Duty to Cooperate

- 2.7 Paragraph 15 of the NPPF sets out that *'the planning system should be genuinely planned. Succinct and up to date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for meeting housing needs and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings'*. In 2011 Leicestershire County Council undertook a public consultation exercise to understand the value of local green spaces in Leicestershire. The green

⁴ [NPPG Natural Environment Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 8-006-20190721](#)

⁵ [Charnwood Borough Council Green Wedges, Urban Fringe Green Infrastructure Enhancement Zones and Areas of Local Separation Methodology and Assessment Findings Report, March 2016, page 81.](#)

wedge areas were shown to be of high value and as such important to the local community. Green wedges are therefore important to local people, and they help shape the communities' surroundings.

2.8 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that *'the development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area'*. Paragraph 20 continues to highlight that *'strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places (to ensure outcomes support beauty and placemaking), and make sufficient provision for:*

- a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*
- b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);*
- c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and*
- d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation'.*

2.9 Green wedges help to guide the form of new developments as urban areas grow as well as safeguarding the identities of communities within and around urban areas that face growth pressures and providing a recreational resource. Alongside this, green wedges help to conserve and enhance the natural environment providing green infrastructure, aiding climate change resilience and providing flood alleviation measures. Therefore, green wedges help to inform the *'overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality'* as urban areas grow. As set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Joint Methodology not all parts of the green wedge need to fulfil all four functions, however in its entirety the green wedge is expected to contribute to all the functions. Green wedges therefore are multi-functional and deliver a wide range of benefits to the local and wider communities they serve.

2.10 Paragraphs 24-27 of the Framework sets out how local planning authorities and County Councils should maintain effective cooperation on strategic matters, including the duty to cooperate. As set out above, this Statement has been prepared jointly including all local planning authorities within the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area as the green wedge designation is seen as an important Leicestershire-wide designation.

2.11 Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities have an on-going working relationship regarding green wedges (as well as other topic areas) which commenced after the removal of the overarching Structure Plan policies and continued after the revocation of the Regional Plan with the aim of ensuring that the green wedge designation retained its strategic cross-border function through the review of its boundaries. This has included working together to produce the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology and NPPF Consistency Statements. This joint working demonstrates that Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities are committed to the continuation of green wedges subject to their review through the preparation of

individual Local Plans and illustrates an effective and on-going joint working relationship across Leicestershire in relation to green wedges.

- 2.12 Paragraph 35 of the NPPF details what makes a Local Plan 'sound', one of the tests of soundness is to be '*consistent with national policy*'. Criteria d) of paragraph 35 expands on this and states that to be consistent with national policy a Plan should enable '*the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant*'. This statement sets out how the green wedge designation meets this test.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

- 2.13 Paragraph 96 outlines that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy and inclusive places that promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles. Green wedges support this paragraph of the Framework at a local level by providing safe and accessible green infrastructure networks, as well as including uses such as allotments and sports facilities. In addition, the green wedges provide many walking and cycling routes which encourages exercise and active travel through the green wedge areas which provide connectivity between urban areas.
- 2.14 Paragraph 102 of the Framework highlights the importance of having '*access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity*' in relation to achieving '*health and wellbeing of communities and*' the delivery of '*wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change*'. One of the agreed functions of the green wedge is to provide a recreational resource and green wedges contain uses such as public open spaces, country parks, allotments, fishing lakes, golf courses, football and rugby fields, as well as a network of formal and informal footpaths which provide opportunities for the local communities to achieve healthy lifestyles. Green wedges are important as they provide access to open space from urban areas. For instance, the green wedges in Leicestershire include facilities such as the Leicester Road Stadium (HBBC), the Great Central Way (LCC), and an outdoor pursuits centre (LCC).

Making effective use of land

- 2.15 Paragraph 123 of the Framework states that planning policies '*should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions*'. Green wedges enable this within Leicestershire by providing strategic gaps which protect the setting and identity of settlements, prevent the merging of settlements, retain and shape new settlement patterns by maintaining the openness of land whilst supporting social interactions and healthy lifestyles (supporting both physical and mental wellbeing). The green wedge designation enables the protection of strategic open land which helps to shape urban growth as it progresses by ensuring new developments are sensitive to the green wedge functions; preserve and enhance links between urban areas and the open countryside; and facilitate sustainable management of land.
- 2.16 Paragraph 124 b) of the NPPF states that planning policies should '*recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation,*

flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production’. The green wedges within Leicestershire provide all these functions providing open space and recreational facilities within easy reach of urban residents; through the penetration of urban areas, they preserve and promote green and blue networks and landscape and wildlife corridors between the countryside and urban areas. They also provide flood risk management measures, such as the Knighton Park flood storage area (LCC) as well as build in climate resilience by supporting ecological networks and sites of great ecological importance, such as Groby Pool and Wood SSSI (HBBC).

Achieving well-designed places

- 2.17 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF highlights that *'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve*’. Green wedges enable green space to integrate into the urban fabric providing a design feature which is fundamental to the urban areas it penetrates as it helps to define neighbourhoods from each other, brings the countryside into the urban area and provides movement corridors for the community and wildlife. These interactions mean that the green wedge ensures better quality development for people to live and work and can help guide master planning work.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

- 2.18 Paragraph 157 of the Framework notes that *'The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure*’.
- 2.19 Paragraph 158 continues that *'Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure*’.
- 2.20 Green wedges provide a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change by providing opportunities for:

Mitigating Climate Change

- Enabling active travel through cycling and walking
- Providing the opportunity for renewable energy installations
- Conserve and restore woodlands (carbon storage)
- Locally produced food through agriculture and community orchards

Adapting to Climate Change

- Managing and conserving water resources

- Flood alleviation
- Provide shade and green infrastructure to reduce overheating in the urban areas during warmer summer months
- Provides multi-functional green and blue infrastructure networks
- Trees and woodland planting
- Promoting social interaction and equality to help build resilient communities
- Providing opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and the protection of water quality and other natural resources

2.21 Green wedges also provide a role in relation to integrated water management in relation to flood risk. A number of water courses flow through the Leicestershire green wedges within an urban catchment; for example, the Wash Brook, Rothley Brook and Saffron Brook where they receive urban run-off. The Environment Agency flooding maps also indicate that flood zones fall within the Leicestershire Green Wedges and flood prevention measures are in place within the Green Wedge. For instance, a section of green wedge located in Knighton Park within the Leicester City administrative area forms part of a flood storage area. This area of land becomes flooded during heavy periods of rainfall and rather than flooding occurring downstream which would affect residential properties this area of parkland acts as a basin for flood water storage.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

2.22 Paragraph 181 of the NPPF states '*Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries*'. Green wedges are locally designated areas which help guide development, provide a green lung and act as a recreational resource which directly relates to this paragraph.

2.23 The NPPF defines green infrastructure as '*A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity*'. (NPPF; page 70). The green wedge designations reflect this as they are a multifunctional designation recognising the importance these areas have in providing a green lung into urban areas and creating access to green infrastructure.

2.24 Paragraph 191 of the NPPF sets out that '*Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development*'. One of the functions of the green wedge is to provide a green lung into urban areas; this relates to environmental value such as green infrastructure, wildlife sites, air quality and flood alleviation measures.

- 2.25 The green wedge designation is important locally with green wedges providing multifunctional green spaces which help to maintain settlement identity, provide a green lung into urban areas and provide a recreational resource. The multi-functional role of green wedges and the benefits they deliver for local communities and the natural environment in and around the urban area sets them apart from the wider countryside.

3. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Climate Change

- 3.1 NPPG states that *'When preparing Local Plans and taking planning decisions local planning authorities should pay particular attention to integrating adaptation and mitigation approaches and looking for 'win-win' solutions that will support sustainable development'*. This includes *'through the provision of multi-functional green infrastructure, which can reduce urban heat islands, manage flooding and help species adapt to climate change – as well as contributing to a pleasant environment which encourages people to walk and cycle'*⁶. The green wedge achieves this by providing a multifunctional green and blue infrastructure network close to urban environments.

Healthy and safe communities

- 3.2 NPPG notes how positive planning can contribute to healthier communities through the *'design and use of the built and natural environments, including green infrastructure are major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system'*⁷. The green wedge helps to promote healthy lifestyles through the provision of open space and recreational facilities, as well as green routeways for walking and cycling.

Natural environment

- 3.3 NPPG provides further detail on what green infrastructure can include and why it is important. It highlights that green infrastructure can *'include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space, woodland, allotments, private gardens, sustainable drainage features, green roofs and walls, street trees and 'blue infrastructure' such as streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies'*⁸. The majority of these are green infrastructure assets that can be found within the Leicestershire Green Wedges.
- 3.4 NPPG also highlights that *'Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood*

⁶ [NPPG Climate Change Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 6-004-20140612 \(gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [NPPG Healthy and Safe Communities Paragraph: 001 Reference ID:53-001-20190722 \(gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ [NPPG Natural Environment Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20190721 \(gov.uk\)](#)

risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services⁹. The green wedge designation provides the multiple benefits listed above.

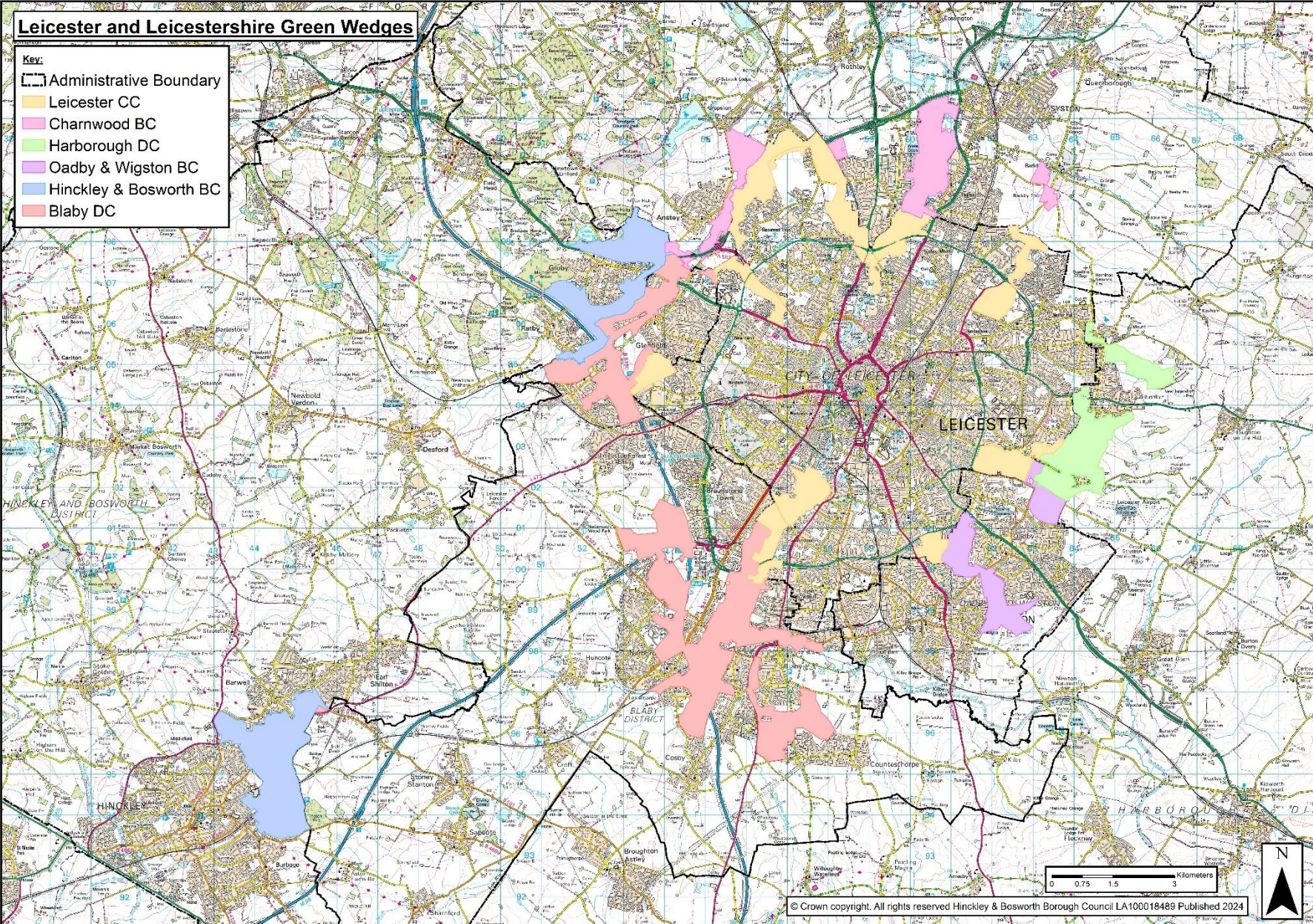
- 3.5 NPPG continues to set out how local planning authorities can help to support biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystems. The green wedges within Leicestershire contribute towards ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and supporting biodiversity and geodiversity within and outside of designated areas. There are a number of designated sites within the green wedges including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites as well as Protected Species and Priority Habitats and Species. The green wedges help to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity and contribute to habitat connectivity in the wider area.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Green Wedges have considerable local support across Leicester and Leicestershire which has been shown through the support for green wedge policies through the local plan process. For many years they have successfully guided development in Leicester and Leicestershire by helping to shape the urban area as it grows, ensuring green spaces penetrate into urban areas, providing a green lung, protecting environmental assets and providing a recreational resource. They represent a unique and bespoke local solution to managing growth, which could not be addressed by other national designations. For the reasons outlined in this statement, the green wedge designation is consistent with policies set out within the NPPF 2023. It is the intention of the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities to continue to utilise green wedges as a strategic planning tool and to review the scope of individual green wedges through the preparation of their local plans and seek their review and justification as part of Local Plan preparation.

⁹ [NPPG Natural Environment Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 8-005-20190721 \(gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix A: map illustrating the Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedges



Background Paper: The Leicester and Leicestershire Joint Green Wedge Methodology (2011)

The Leicester and Leicestershire Joint Green Wedge Methodology (2011) sits alongside this Statement of Consistency.