

Castle Point Plan Board (CPPB) Workshop
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Urban Greening Factor (UGF)

18 January 2024

PSC Recommendation 1: The Environment PSC support a higher minimum threshold above the mandatory 10% for BNG. This should be investigated through the work on the Castle Point Plan and whether this could be obtained and included in policies. This could include an adjusted level for urban sites.

- The CPPB agreed to assess the minimum requirement of BNG at 10% as well as higher thresholds through viability evidence. This should be assessed against other policy requirements.
- It was agreed that a higher level of BNG should not be to the detriment to other requirements such as affordable housing and transport infrastructure and this will be looked into further once this evidence has been completed.

PSC Recommendation 2: For note, the Environment PSC want to maximise BNG in urban areas.

- The CPPB want to maximise BNG in urban areas, however this needs to be looked into the context of specific sites and should not be a detriment to utilising urban sites development potential.
- Other methods to increase BNG such as urban greening factor should be explored for sites that are exempt from BNG requirements.
- BNG offsetting sites in the urban area should be explored, e.g. parks in the urban areas.

PSC Recommendation 3: Investigate whether the Council can require BNG sites to be secured for an additional 30 years for enjoyment after they have been fully developed, as defined in their management plan in the legal agreement.

- Any requirements beyond 30 years are likely to impact viability. The board agreed to stick to the 30 year period, but further work should be undertaken in specifying the maturation of trees

PSC Recommendation 4: Investigate how to include wildlife corridors into policies that can be delivered in a meaningful way.

- The board agreed to include wildlife corridors into policies, this could be through site specific policies, specific policies, targeting off-site BNG into known wildlife corridors and integration of additional wildlife provisions e.g. bug hotels, bat boxes and hedgehog highways.
- The board would like wildlife corridors to be integrated into existing and future walkways.

PSC Recommendation 5: Look at ways to maximise planning gain through the use of a dynamic assessment tool which adjusts the different policy levers for infrastructure, passive house, BNG and affordable housing based on viability.

- The board agreed that this tool would make the planning process too complicated and time consuming for the council and applicants. It would also make it unclear what the council require from applicants. The board agreed against looking into this further.

Further recommendations

- The board agreed to look into UGF using the Natural England standards, especially for sites that are exempt from BNG requirements. This will need to be assessed for viability in a wider context with other policy requirements.
- It was agreed that stewardship of UGF and other policy requirements should be looked into further.
- The board would like to see a local register of BNG offsetting sites to make it easier for developers to use local sites close to development for BNG when required.