

Chapter 5

Open Environment

5.1 Introduction

Overview

- 5.1.1 The policies in this chapter are principally aimed at protecting open land of strategic, borough-wide and local importance from inappropriate development, improving access to the countryside and conserving the natural environment, including wildlife. There continues to be considerable pressure for development in Barnet. These policies will help safeguard open land in the borough from harmful development and allow people to enjoy its pleasant surroundings. They will promote the quality of life and health of Barnet's residents, and preserve the borough's natural resources, particularly in urban areas. Maintaining and improving Barnet's environment will promote economic health by making the borough attractive, and support the principles of sustainable development.
- 5.1.2 This chapter includes a number of policies that are inter-connected in their aims. However, each policy deals with distinct issues, which are important in their own right. Policies on the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land seek to protect open space from inappropriate development. Heritage Land has a combined landscape, historic and nature conservation interest. Countryside Conservation Areas have historical value in terms of their traditional, open landscapes. The policies on green corridors, nature conservation and protection of species are specifically aimed at preserving and enhancing plant life and animal life, particularly in urban areas. A policy on the Watling Chase Community Forest supports the objectives of this area. Lastly, a policy on management is included to ensure that the potential of the countryside is realised in the interests of people and the natural environment.

National Planning Policy Context

- 5.1.3 The main documents which set out government policy on these topics are PPG2 – *Green Belts* (1995) and PPG9 – *Nature Conservation* (1994),¹ and Planning Policy Statement 7 – *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (2004). PPG2 sets out the purposes and objectives for the Green Belt. In terms of development proposals, it states that there should be a presumption against inappropriate development (which it defines). PPG9 emphasises the importance of local authorities as custodians of the natural environment and sets out how development plans can be used to achieve this. PPS7 promotes more sustainable patterns of development and encourages accessibility in all development decisions. The policies in PPS7 apply to rural areas (including country towns and villages) and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.
- 5.1.4 The national framework is also set out in legislation, the most relevant being the Countryside Act 1968 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Local authorities are required by section 11 of the Countryside Act 1968 “to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside”. Subsequent guidance has extended this to cover urban areas. Certain plant and animal species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996. Other animals are specifically protected under separate statutes, for example the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 afford additional legal protection to certain species. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 gives greater freedom for people to explore the open countryside, and contains provisions that introduced a new statutory right of access for open air recreation to registered common land.
- 5.1.5 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, lays down the requirements regarding the content of development plans, and Section 36 requires that all development plans include policies in respect of the conservation of the natural environment (more precisely, the conservation of natural beauty and amenity of land).

¹Although PPS9 – *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* (2005) supersedes PPG9, reference is made to the latter because of its significance in the preparation of the UDP.

- 5.1.6 Following the United Kingdom adding its signature to the Biodiversity Convention at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the government published *Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan* in 1994 to take stock of the UK's biodiversity and suggest ways of enhancing this resource. Subsequently, *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report* recommended the production of local biodiversity plans.

Regional Planning Policy Context

- 5.1.7 One of the objectives set out in the *London Plan* is to “make London a more attractive, well-designed and green city” including the promotion of biodiversity, and enhancement of world class heritage assets. The *London Plan* restates in essence the four purposes of the Green Belt listed in PPG2: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Its role in providing access to open countryside for Londoners is also recognised. The Mayor published a London-wide biodiversity strategy in July 2002, *Connecting with London's Nature*, which provides a basis from which boroughs can produce their own local biodiversity action plans.

Borough Context

- 5.1.8 Barnet includes within its boundaries land designated as Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. These are important designations, which protect mainly open areas from inappropriate development and contribute to the borough's open character. In 2004, Barnet had 2,466 hectares of Green Belt and another 690 hectares of Metropolitan Open Land. The council recognises the importance of protecting and enhancing the open spaces in the borough. The Green Belt in Barnet is under increasing pressure from development proposals such as cemeteries, golf courses, riding stables and other institutions. Development proposals will be considered in accordance with government advice and planning policy.
- 5.1.9 One of the aims stated in the council's Corporate Plan is to create a sustainable, healthy environment and improve the quality of life of everyone who lives, works or visits Barnet. Protecting and enhancing the landscape, open land and nature makes a significant contribution to these aims, and forms one strand of the council's 'Three Strand Approach'. *The Three Strands Approach* (2004) aims to provide the strongest protection for the preservation of Barnet's green and natural open spaces. 'Strand One' makes a commitment to “absolute protection for Green Belt and protected open spaces”. *The Three Strands Approach* also enhances protection of Barnet's suburbs, especially in relation to preserving the character and openness of lower-density suburbs and Conservation Areas.
- 5.1.10 Barnet has produced a number of non-statutory documents which will be taken into account when considering planning applications, in so far as they are material to planning. The most important of these is the *Premier Parks Strategy*. Barnet's Local Agenda 21 strategy sets out actions towards sustainable development in the borough.

Strategy

- 5.1.11 With regard to the open environment the council has the following objectives:
- To safeguard the integrity of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land from inappropriate development;
 - To protect and enhance important landscapes and features;
 - To increase access to the countryside and reconcile any conflict that may arise with nature conservation;
 - To maintain the biodiversity of wildlife and its habitats;
 - To minimise the adverse effects on wildlife where conflict of interest is unavoidable;
 - To meet the government's requirements for nature conservation;
 - To introduce environmental improvement proposals, management plans and briefs, in the pursuance of the above aims.

Management

- 5.1.12 The management of open spaces and rights of way is important in order to gain the maximum benefit for leisure, agriculture, nature conservation and other uses, and to prevent the neglect and dereliction of land. The council can influence the land management of its own land and holdings, but many important areas of land, including wildlife sites, are owned by private individuals. Where necessary, Section 106 agreements will be used to secure management plans and/or funds for such management plans, either with the owner or operator of the land and/or an appropriate voluntary body.

5.2 Strategic Policies

- 5.2.1 The key strategic policies to protect and enhance the quality of the open environment are as follows.

~~Policy GGreenBelt – Green Belt~~

~~The council will safeguard the permanence and integrity of the borough's Green Belt.~~

~~Policy GMOL – Metropolitan Open Land~~

~~The council will safeguard the permanence and integrity of the borough's Metropolitan Open Land.~~

- 5.2.2 The following two strategic policies deal with the open environment and also address the built environment. Details on those aspects of these policies that deal with the built environment are included in that chapter.

~~Policy GBEEnv1 – Character~~

~~The council will protect and enhance the quality and character of the borough's built and natural environment.~~

~~Policy GBEEnv4 – Special Area~~

~~The council will seek to protect, by preserving or enhancing, buildings, areas, open spaces or features that are of special value in architectural, townscape or landscape, historic, agricultural or nature conservation terms.~~

5.3 Detailed Policies

Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land

- 5.3.1 As one of London's outer ring boroughs, Barnet has an important strategic role in helping to maintain the Metropolitan Green Belt around London. Barnet contains a large tract of Green Belt which comprises predominantly open land, including woodland. However, the main importance of the area of Green Belt is not in the quality of its landscape. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The council has consistently safeguarded the Green Belt by resisting inappropriate development and will continue to do so, in accordance with government guidance.
- 5.3.2 There are five reasons for including land in the Green Belt, as identified in government guidance contained in PPG2. These are:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, in this case London;
 - To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - To preserve the special character of historic towns; and
 - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 5.3.3 The Green Belt also has the following objectives:
- To provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
 - To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation near urban areas;
 - To retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
 - To improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
 - To secure nature conservation interests; and
 - To retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.
- 5.3.4 However, the purpose of including land in the Green Belt to prevent urban sprawl, as described above, is of paramount importance and will take precedence over these objectives.
- 5.3.5 Barnet's Green Belt boundary is generally drawn tightly around the edge of the built-up area of London, clearly defining the limits of urban development. However, there are some locations where open land adjoining the boundary is not included in the Green Belt, such as Sunny Hill Park, the Tudor Sports Ground and the playing field at Queen Elizabeth's Boys School. The boundary also encloses some areas of open land which are located within the fabric of the urban area, such as Copthall Playing Fields. Barnet's Green Belt is characterised by land in agricultural use, public and private open space, and includes golf courses, woodland and semi-natural habitat. Many parts are of high visual quality. The boundaries of Green Belt are shown on the Proposals Map.
- 5.3.6 Government guidance on the Green Belt states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development within it because, by definition, such development is harmful. Planning proposals for inappropriate development will be resisted. Applicants for planning permission will have to demonstrate very special circumstances before this presumption is overridden. Where such a special circumstance is proven, it will be treated as a departure from the development plan and referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under the Town and Country Planning (Green Belt) Direction 2005.

Metropolitan Open Land

- 5.3.7 Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is a designation which covers areas of major open spaces in Barnet which, in terms of their contribution to recreation, leisure and visual amenity, have more than a borough-wide significance. It is appropriate to apply the principles of control over development in the Green Belt to MOL as well. Hence, there is a presumption against inappropriate development in MOL, including development which would be harmful to its open character, and such development will only be allowed in very special circumstances.
- 5.3.8 The main difference between Green Belt and MOL is in the criteria used for their designation and the purpose of each. The main criteria used for identifying MOL in Barnet, including its purpose, are:
- Land which contributes to the physical structure of London by being clearly distinguishable from the built-up area;
 - Land which includes open air facilities, especially for leisure, recreation, sport, arts and cultural activities and tourism and which serves the whole or significant parts of London; and
 - Land which contains important features of historic, recreational or nature conservation interest.
- 5.3.9 MOL also forms a London-wide 'Green Chain' of related open space and linking footpaths, bridle ways and riverside walks. The boundaries of MOL in Barnet are shown on the Proposals Map.

Policy O1 – Green Belt/Metropolitan Open Land

Except in very special circumstances, the council will refuse any development in the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land which is not compatible with their purposes and objectives, does not maintain their openness and would harm their visual amenity.

New Buildings and Changes of Use

- 5.3.10 Some types of development, under certain circumstances, may be appropriate in the Green Belt or MOL. For example, limited ancillary buildings to serve the needs of open space (such as changing room facilities), unobtrusive spectator accommodation for outdoor sport or stables for outdoor sport and recreation. Cemeteries may also be acceptable – however, it is important to ensure that

any associated buildings or memorial stones are not detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt or MOL. In all these cases, any development must be of small scale, essential and genuinely required for their use and not be detrimental to visual amenity by reason of siting, materials and design. Any development should preserve the open character of the Green Belt or MOL, and not conflict with the reasons for including land in them.

Policy O2 – Green Belt/Metropolitan Open Land – New Buildings and Uses

The construction of new buildings, and changes of use of existing land and buildings, within the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, unless there are very special circumstances, will be inappropriate, except for the following purposes:

- i. Agriculture, horticulture and woodland;
- ii. Nature conservation and wildlife use; or
- iii. Essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and for other uses which complement and improve access to, and which preserve the openness and do not conflict with, the purposes and objectives of the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.

Extensions of Buildings

- 5.3.11 Extensions to some buildings may be required to retain the viability of existing uses and hence help preserve the character of the Green Belt or MOL. The extension of buildings within the Green Belt or MOL, if they are of limited size, may be acceptable. However, this should not lead to pressure for the sub-division of a site, and sufficient space around the building within the site should be retained. Extensions which would lead to over-development, or over-intensification of the use of the site, will be refused.

Policy O3 – Green Belt/Metropolitan Open Land – Extensions of Buildings

The council will only permit the limited extension of buildings within the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land where this would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building, an over-intensification of use, or harm the open character of the land and its purposes or objectives.

Redevelopment of Major Developed Sites

- 5.3.12 Barnet's Green Belt contains a number of significant sites such as religious, educational and research establishments, where exceptional, limited infilling may take place, or which may be suitable for redevelopment. These have been identified as Major Development Sites (MDSs) in order to support the provision of research, educational and religious facilities and to protect employment. The following criteria were used to select MDSs in the Green Belt:
- The sites include former institutional uses in extensive grounds such as educational, religious and research establishments.
 - The owners have expressed a specific interest to develop the site within the life of the UDP.
- 5.3.13 Any infilling or redevelopment which meets the criteria set out respectively in paragraphs C3 and C4 of PPG2 is not inappropriate development. Planning applications will be considered in relation to the advice set out in Annex C of PPG2 and in light of all material considerations.
- 5.3.14 The following Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt have been identified and are shown on the Proposals Map:
- Mill Hill School, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill;
 - National Institute For Medical Research, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill and MRC Technology, Burtonhole Lane, Mill Hill;
 - Watch Tower House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill.

Policy O4 – Green Belt – Major Developed Sites

The Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt are identified on the Proposals Map, and development proposals will be assessed in relation to the advice contained in Annex C of PPG2. Limited infilling within these defined areas should:

- Have no greater impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt than the existing development;

- Not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
- Not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site.

Complete or partial redevelopment on these sites should:

- Have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and where possible have less;
- Contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts;
- Not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
- Not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings.

Replacement of Dwellings

- 5.3.15 Replacement dwellings need not be inappropriate provided the replacement dwelling is not materially larger than the dwelling it replaces, and the open character of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land is at least maintained.

Policy O5 – Green Belt/Metropolitan Open Land – Replacement of Existing Dwellings

The replacement of existing dwellings in the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land will not be permitted where they would have a greater adverse impact on the openness of the area or the purposes of including land in it, compared with the dwellings they replace.

Re-use of Buildings

- 5.3.16 The re-use of existing buildings, including part re-use, alternative use or additional use, may be permitted on Green Belt and MOL in Barnet. The council would prefer that the building be occupied rather than left empty or grossly under-occupied. The preferred uses are those that are unlikely to be detrimental to the open character of the Green Belt and MOL, as identified in Policy O2. However, if there is little or no prospect of viable re-use within those categories, then other uses may be considered acceptable. Any proposals for the change of use of buildings, or the creation of new curtilage, will be assessed against the openness of the Green Belt and MOL, and the characteristic form of the existing or previous buildings. Where necessary, planning permission will be subject to conditions, legal agreements or the removal of development rights to ensure appropriate safeguards are met.

Policy O6 – Green Belt/Metropolitan Open Land – Re-use of Buildings

The council will permit the re-use of buildings within the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land provided that the following criteria are met:

- The proposed use does not have a materially greater impact than the existing use on the openness of the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in it;
- The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and
- The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with the locality. Where necessary the council will exercise strict controls over development for re-use.

Land Adjacent

- 5.3.17 Development adjoining the Green Belt or MOL can also adversely affect their open character. The siting, materials, scale and design of development adjacent to the Green Belt or MOL will therefore be carefully considered and controlled.

Policy O7 – Green Belt/Metropolitan Open Land – Adjacent Land

Proposals for new development adjacent to the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land should seek to secure a significant enhancement in the visual amenity of these areas through a combination of good design, appropriate siting and perimeter landscaping which respects the character of its surroundings. The council will resist proposals which would have a detrimental effect on visual amenity, or the openness, purposes and objectives of these designated areas.

Agricultural Land

- 5.3.18 There is currently a surplus of certain agricultural commodities throughout the European Union. The extent to which agricultural land in Barnet remains in use is largely dependent on the future demand for agricultural products. It is likely that there will be increasing pressure for development on farmland and some land may cease to be used for agricultural production. Government guidance contained in PPS7 states that the best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected. This type of land is defined by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Agricultural Land Classification as grades 1, 2 and 3a land. Land of lesser agricultural importance is classified as being grades 3b, 4 or 5. Barnet's agricultural land lies in Green Belt and is of grade 3. However, more detailed investigation may reveal that it should be protected. Where land is to be lost, a 'worst first' principle will be applied – for example, sub-grade 3a land should be taken before grade 2.
- 5.3.19 The best and most versatile agricultural land may be allowed for development if there is an overriding need for the development, there is a lack of development opportunity in previously developed sites or there is little land in grades below 3a, or there is little lower-grade land which does not have an environmental value recognised by statutory designation. When the loss of agricultural land is acceptable, any development proposed will be assessed on the basis of Green Belt and MOL policy.
- 5.3.20 The attractive landscape character of the Totteridge Valley is partly due to the fact that parts of it are well farmed. It is important that this land continues to be actively farmed. Changes of use from agricultural land to other uses considered appropriate in the Green Belt may be acceptable in principle, but could still have an adverse impact because of the intensity of development that they may involve.

Policy O8 – Green Belt – Agricultural Land

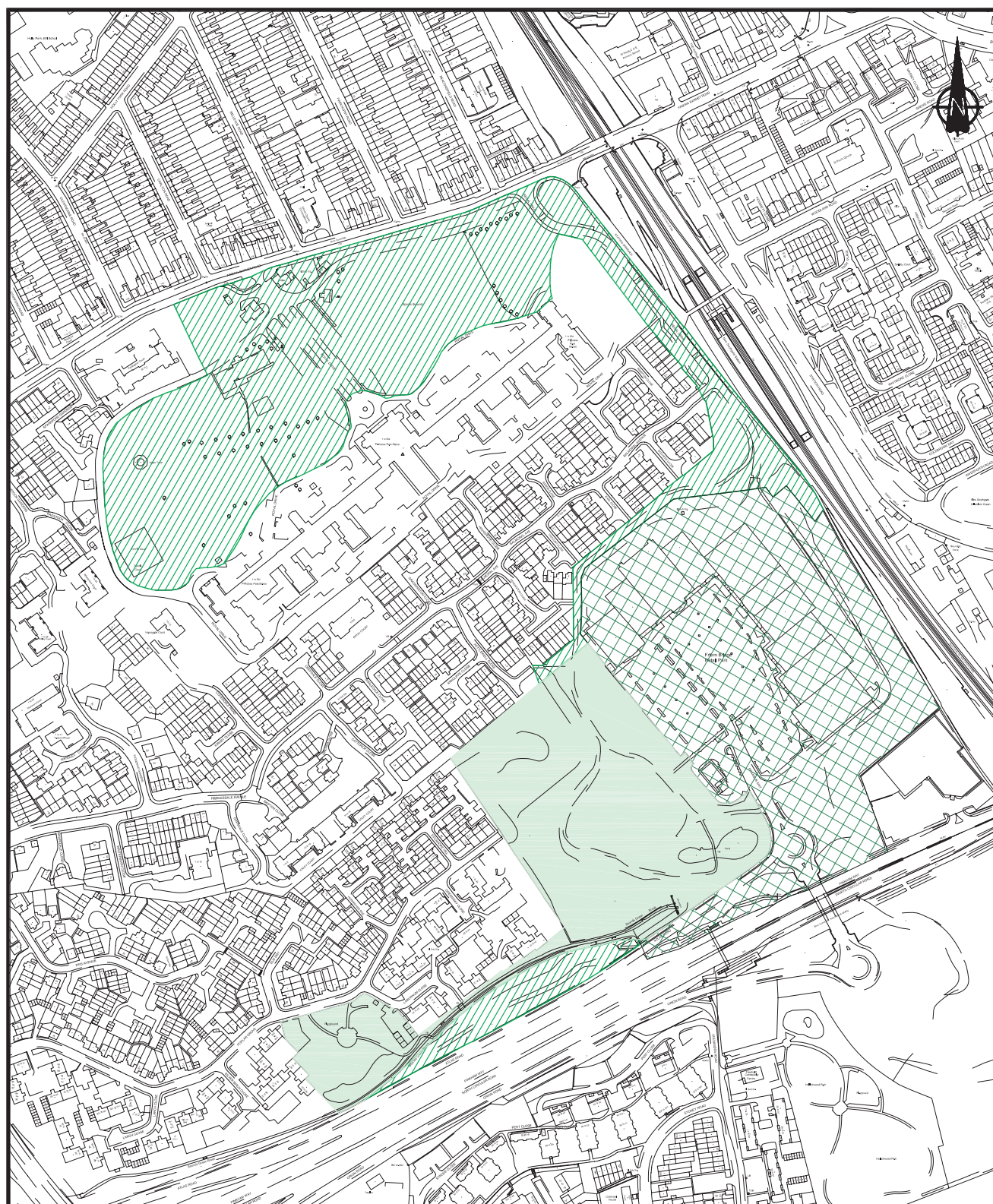
The council will support the use of Green Belt land for agriculture at an intensity which is compatible with its openness.

- 5.3.21 The predominant use of agricultural land in Barnet is for the grazing of horses. The use of such land for the purposes of feeding horses and for horticultural-type uses, is accepted as being an agricultural use. However, permission may be required if horses are kept on land for some other purpose, such as for sport or recreation. In some areas the condition of the land has noticeably deteriorated through over-grazing and lack of proper management. Where planning permission is required for the grazing of horses, Policy O2 will apply and the following considerations should be met:
- Acceptable arrangements for feeding must be included;
 - The potential productive capacity of the agricultural land must be maintained through good grassland management;
 - Landscape quality must not be affected adversely;
 - The economic viability of any land holding must not be affected by fragmentation;
 - Adequate access should be provided to suitable riding and exercise areas;
 - The area under consideration should be accessible to the source of demand, i.e. the urban area.
- 5.3.22 Some modern agricultural buildings can be unsightly and inappropriate where located in particularly attractive and sensitive areas of the countryside. Below a certain size, agricultural buildings do not normally require planning permission. However, a direction under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 means that planning permission will continue to be necessary for all new agricultural buildings in the Dollis and Totteridge Valleys (this Article 4 Direction is identified on the Proposals Map). The council will consider making use of Article 4 Directions to control agricultural buildings in other areas where appropriate.

Proposed MOL Boundary Changes

5.3.23 Permanence is an important feature of Green Belt and MOL. PPG2 and the *London Plan* state that its boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. The main instances in this UDP include:

- The boundaries of MOL at the former Friern Barnet Hospital, Compton School and at the Temple Fortune Sports Club have been revised to take into account recent development at the site.
- Barnet Football Club at South Underhill, which lies in the Green Belt. There may be very special circumstances for allowing redevelopment of the stadium due to the need for the club to provide better facilities. Any redevelopment proposal should not harm the Green Belt over and above that caused by the existing stadium.
- The area situated to the south of the former Friern Barnet Hospital in Friern Barnet Road was defined as Metropolitan Open Land. Part of this area has been developed as a retail park and its designation as MOL is no longer relevant. Therefore it has been omitted from MOL. The remaining area of existing MOL (together with the public open space) situated at the north of the former hospital building (at the Friern Barnet Road frontage) has been introduced as new MOL. However, it is important that these areas of MOL are linked via a public access. Currently, there is a footpath/cycle way linking these two areas, which runs from north to south (adjacent to the railway) and this strip of land has also been designated as MOL. Map 5.1 provides detailed boundaries.
- The Compton School in Summers Lane, and adjoining land at a former council nursery and waste transfer station, have recently been redeveloped. Essentially, this involved demolishing the nursery and waste transfer station and erecting housing and a sports hall, and alterations to the sports field and extensions to the school. The nursery was classified as MOL in the previous UDP, but was redeveloped for housing. Part of the justification for allowing housing development was that it would be compensated for by designating new MOL. This accorded with a development brief for the site, which stated that the loss of MOL occupied by the nursery was to be replaced elsewhere within the site. The southern part of the nursery is undeveloped and does not meet any of the criteria for MOL designation. Thus, the classification of the former nursery and current housing site as MOL has been omitted. New MOL has been introduced at the southern end of the school site, which is currently occupied by the sports hall and playing field. This area of land adjoins existing MOL, and its addition will help contribute to the physical structure of London and provide for a larger, open air recreational facility. This is shown on Map 5.2.
- Temple Fortune Sports Club in Bridge Lane previously fell within the MOL designation. The southern part of the site comprises a sporting pavilion, tennis courts, a bowling green, a car park and an area of woodland on the northern boundary. The site, except for the area covered by the woodland, has been omitted from a designation as MOL, on the basis that its previous designation did not meet the criteria for designating MOL (as set out in RPG3). The southern part of the site is situated in between residential properties and does not contribute to the physical structure of the city. The sports club, given its small size, does not provide leisure facilities which serve significant parts of London. Also, the site does not contain features or landscape of value at a metropolitan level. However, the wooded area situated at the northern part of the site contributes to the open character of the larger area of MOL and has not been omitted. The revised area of MOL is shown on Map 5.3.



PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO MOL



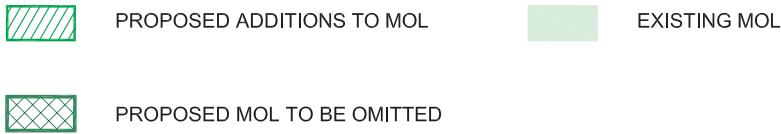
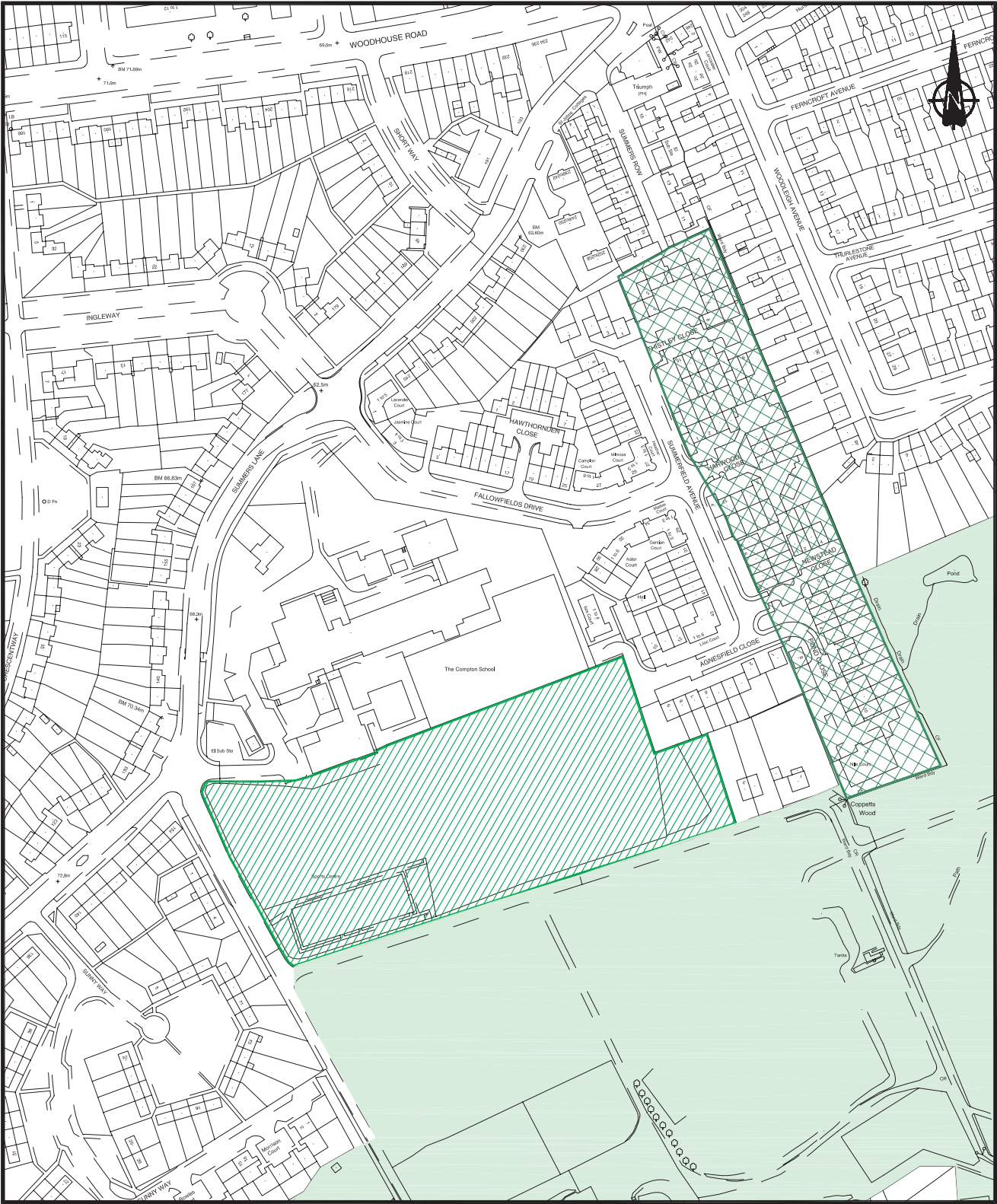
EXISTING MOL



PROPOSED MOL TO BE OMITTED

Map 5.1 Changes to Metropolitan Open Land Boundary – Friern Barnet Hospital

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Map 5.2 Changes to Metropolitan Open Land – Compton School



PROPOSED MOL TO BE OMITTED

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Map 5.3 Changes to Metropolitan Open Land – Temple Fortune Sports Club

Heritage Land

- 5.3.24 Heritage Land can be defined as extensive areas of open land which, because of their intrinsic value for landscape, historic and nature conservation interest, are of strategic importance. The concept was originally proposed jointly by the Countryside Commission and English Nature. It overlaps designations such as Green Belt, MOL, Countryside Conservation Areas and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, but is not intended to duplicate the roles of these other designations. The council aims to ensure that Heritage Land is protected from development and remains as attractive countryside or urban open space, with any historically important landscape, wildlife habitats and archaeological features respected.
- 5.3.25 The boundaries of Heritage Land in Barnet are shown on Map 5.4. It comprises:
- Arkley/Totteridge;
 - Hampstead Heath Extension;
 - Golders Hill Park;
 - Monken Hadley; and
 - Scratchwood.

Policy O10 — Heritage Land

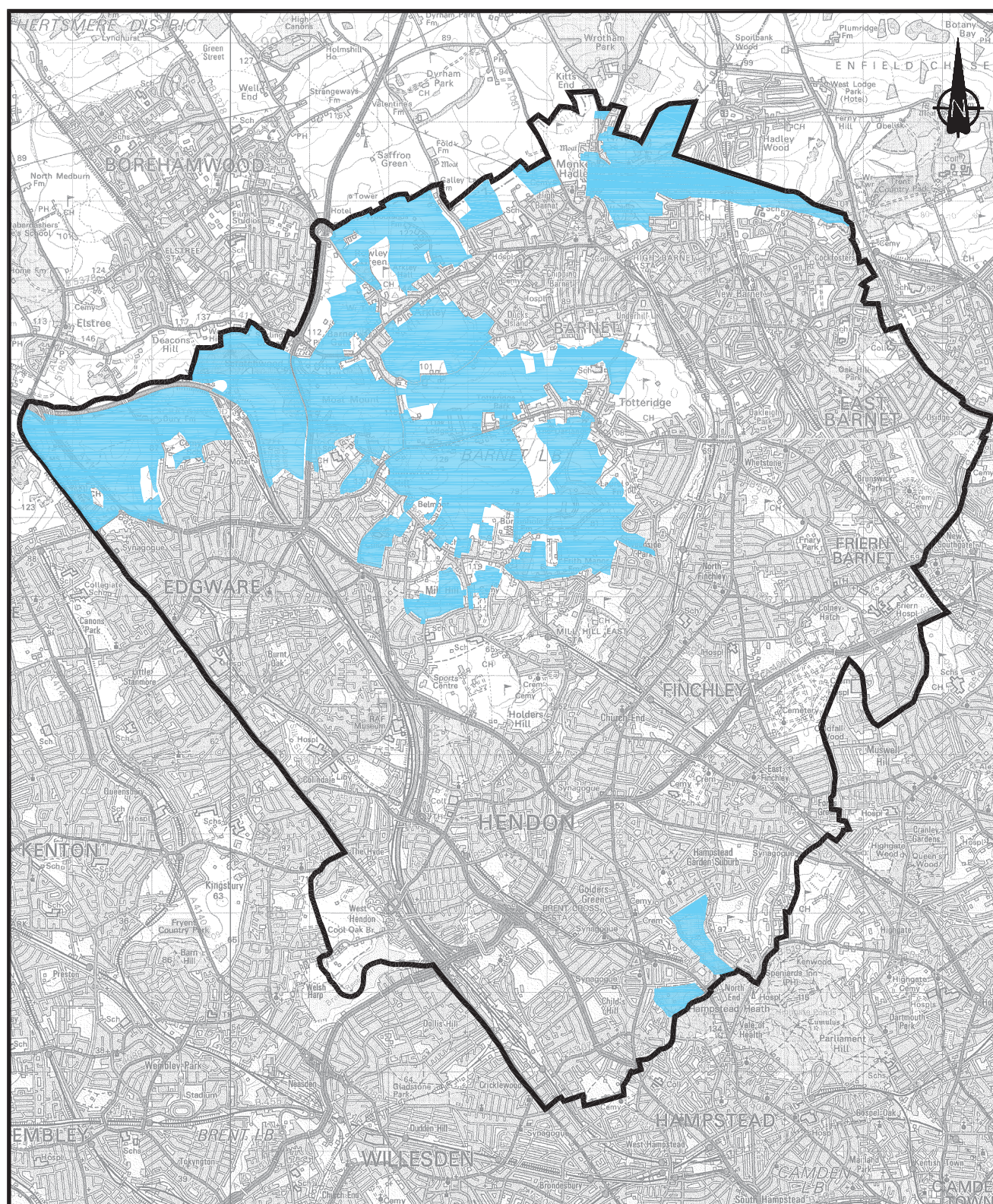
~~The council will maintain and enhance the individual quality and character of Heritage Land in Barnet.~~


Countryside Conservation Areas

- 5.3.26 Countryside Conservation Areas are characterised by their open landscapes, where traditional forms of land use have continued to the present day. Such areas have considerable visual and aesthetic value, usually with a combination of small fields, hedges, copses, woods and ponds. The ecological value of such areas is not necessarily high throughout, as some fields may have been improved or partially improved for agriculture, with the ecological interest remaining concentrated in ancient hedgerows, woodlands, meadows or farm ponds. Where appropriate, sites which are of particular ecological importance are protected under the nature conservation policies in this Plan.
- 5.3.27 Barnet's Countryside Conservation Areas are shown on Map 5.5. They lie in three main areas: around Arkley north of Barnet Road; in Moat Mount, Totteridge Fields and the upper Dollis Valley; and in Mill Hill, Totteridge Common and parts of the Folly Brook Valley.

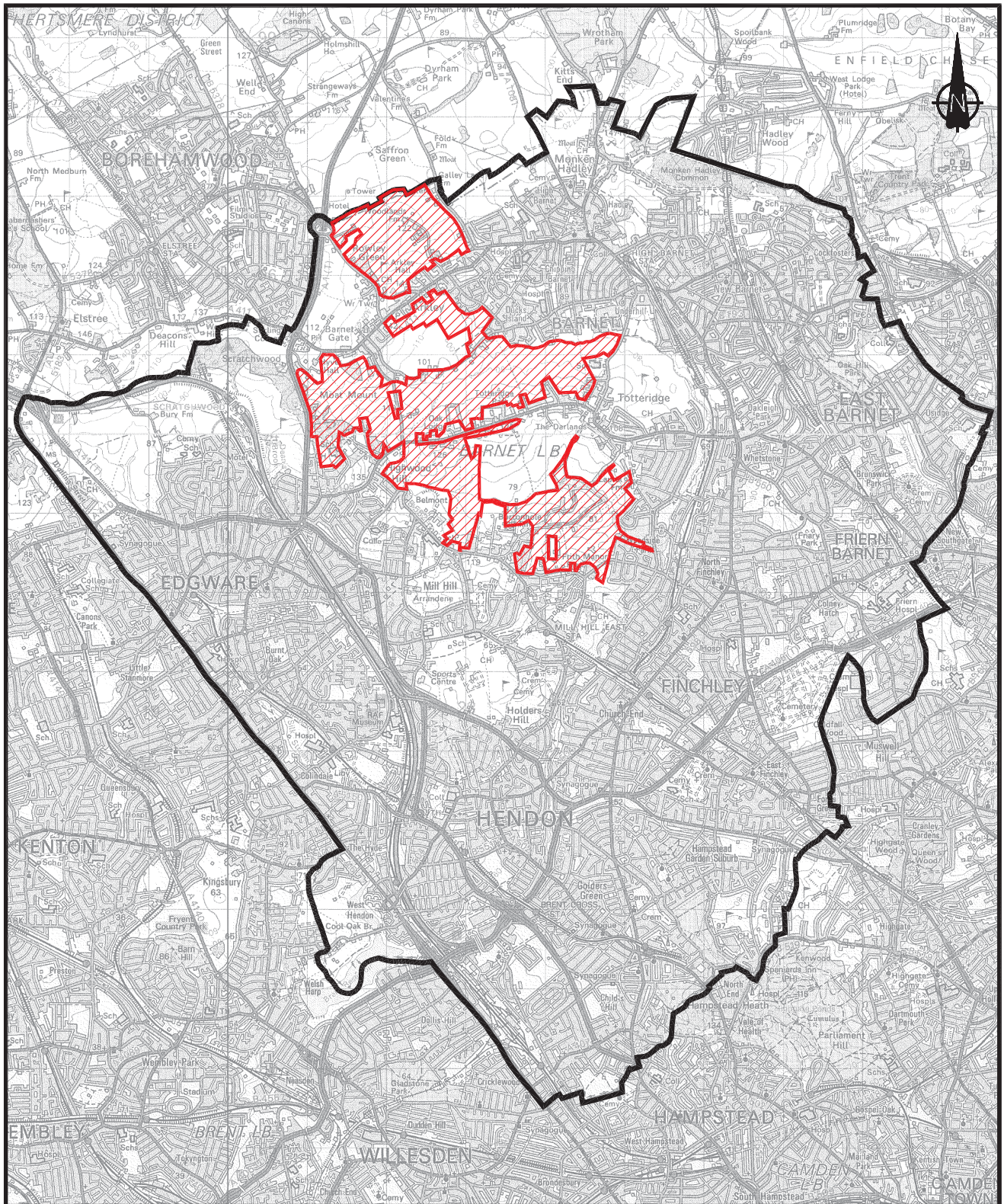
Policy O11 — Countryside Conservation Areas

~~The council will maintain and enhance the quality and character of Countryside Conservation Areas in Barnet.~~



 AREAS OF HERITAGE LAND

Map 5.4 Heritage Land



COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION AREAS

Map 5.5 Countryside Conservation Areas

Green Chains

- 5.3.28 'Green Chains' are an important element of strategic planning policy. They consist of public and private open space within urban areas, such as parks, playing fields, rivers, corridors and golf courses which are, or can potentially be, interlinked. The value of these open spaces to local communities, and London as a whole, can be enhanced by linking them together by publicly accessible routes such as footpaths, cycle routes and bridle paths. A key aim of Green Chains is to make them, as far as possible, publicly accessible. Green Chains can play a variety of important roles, including increased opportunities for appropriate, sensitive land and water-based recreation, aiding nature conservation, helping to define and provide balance to the urban structure and contributing to visual and other amenity.
- 5.3.29 The council has identified existing Green Chains and a potential new chain. It will promote the provision of missing links in such chains, for example by the creation of new open space and improving existing public access through Section 106 agreements. Where sections of a designated chain lack public access, the council will seek, where appropriate, to negotiate the provision of a right of way across the land which may include bridle paths. Barnet's Green Chains are shown on the Proposals Map. There are four designated Green Chains, the first three of which accord with the designated Metropolitan Walks, as specified in the chapter on "Leisure, Recreation and Tourism":
- Pymmes Brook Green Chain runs from East Barnet to New Southgate and links with a designated chain in Enfield borough.
 - Dollis Valley Green Chain runs from Hampstead Heath to Whetstone, and continues to Moat Mount.
 - Monken Hadley Green Chain runs from Cockfosters to Barnet Playing Fields.
 - Silk Stream Green Chain runs from Mill Hill to Brent Reservoir, linking with Brent Borough.

Policy O12 – Green Chains

The council will resist any development proposals which would adversely affect the character, function or nature conservation value of any open space constituting part of a designated Green Chain. It will promote the provision of missing links in such chains.

Green Corridors

- 5.3.30 Green Corridors can be defined as relatively continuous stretches of open space, leading from the open countryside around Greater London through the built-up area towards Inner London. Within the borough, shorter stretches serve to link sites to one another. Green Corridors often follow railway embankments and cuttings, river valleys, roadside verges, paths and tracks and private gardens. They may also link non-linear features such as parks and other open land. Green Corridors are similar in concept to Green Chains. However, while Green Chains have as a key objective the establishment of extended, publicly accessible routes, the key importance of Green Corridors is in their nature conservation value, providing wildlife habitats and facilitating the movement of plants and animals. Also, unlike Green Chains, Green Corridors are not always publicly accessible. The borough's Green Corridors are identified on Map 5.6.
- 5.3.31 The council's primary aim is to protect the designated corridors from development which will harm their function. However, in some cases development may outweigh the value of the Green Corridor. In other cases, where the ecological infrastructure is deficient, there may be justification for seeking the addition of land to existing corridors, or the setting aside of land for ecological purposes, by way of Section 106 agreements negotiated on new development proposals. Planning conditions will be used in the interest of nature conservation.

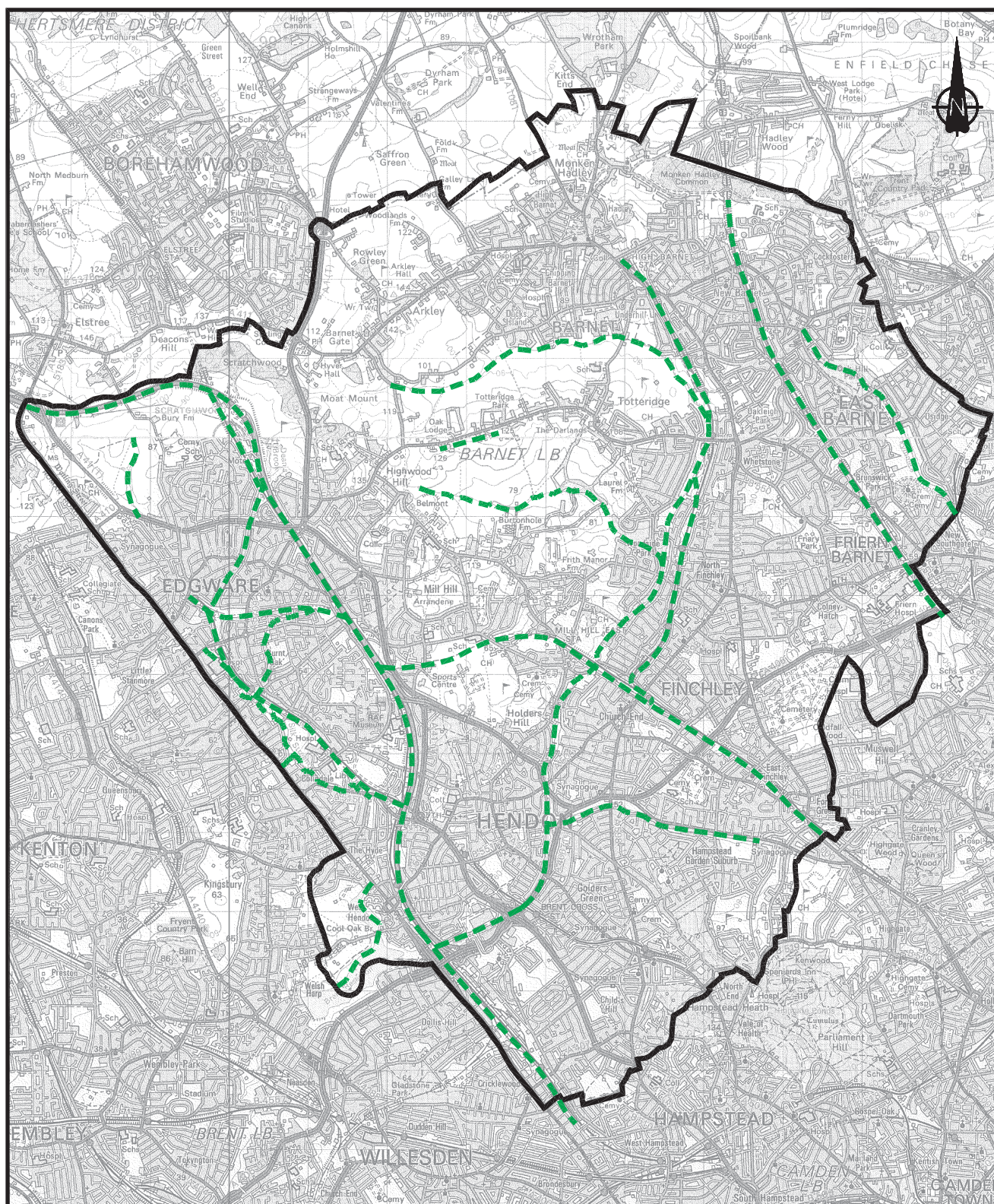
Policy O13 – Green Corridors

The council will oppose development proposals which would cause demonstrable harm to the character or nature conservation value of a Green Corridor. The council may also seek enhancements of the nature conservation value of a corridor through planning obligations attached to relevant planning permissions.

Nature Conservation

- 5.3.32 As an Outer London borough containing large areas of countryside, woodland and parks, Barnet has a rich wildlife resource which plays an important role in the daily lives of people who live and work in, or visit, the borough. Government advice places a duty on the council to protect and enhance the natural environment and to conserve wildlife. The council's nature conservation policies are based on survey results and information contained in Ecology Handbook 28, *Nature Conservation in Barnet*, produced in 1997 by the London Ecology Unit (LEU). This document is a material planning consideration and will be used as non-statutory guidance. The LEU's habitat surveys of Barnet, in 1992 and 1996, revealed a rich and varied array of plants and animals.²
- 5.3.33 Nature conservation sites are in a hierarchy of importance:
1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are of national importance;
 2. Sites of Metropolitan Importance are of London-wide significance;
 3. Sites of Borough Importance are significant in a Barnet-wide context (albeit that they are sub-divided, on the basis of their quality, into two grades);
 4. Sites of Local Importance are of particular value to nearby local residents and schools because they are designated in areas deficient in wildlife sites;
 5. Areas of deficiency are those areas which are situated more than 1 kilometre from accessible Metropolitan or Borough sites, or sites of equivalent quality in neighbouring boroughs.
- 5.3.34 There is currently one SSSI partly in the borough – the Brent Reservoir or Welsh Harp – of which the remaining part falls within Brent. There are five Local Nature Reserves – Rowley Green, Oak Hill Woods, Scratchwood and Moat Mount, Coppetts Wood and Glebelands, and Big Wood and Little Wood. Local Nature Reserves may fall anywhere within the hierarchy of nature conservation sites given in the previous paragraph. A Local Nature Reserve is also proposed at the Welsh Harp.
- 5.3.35 The LEU identified sites of nature conservation importance in Barnet, which are listed in Table 5.1. These include nine Sites of Metropolitan Importance (two shared with adjacent boroughs), 35 Sites of Borough importance (10 at Grade I and 25 at Grade II) and 23 Sites of Local Importance. The Proposals Map identifies the boundaries of these sites, which can be cross-referenced with *Nature Conservation in Barnet*.

²The LEU was absorbed into the GLA in 2000.



GREEN CORRIDORS

Map 5.6 Green Corridors

Table 5.1: Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

Sites of Metropolitan Importance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brent Reservoir (or the Welsh Harp) (SSSI) • Hadley Green • Rowley Green Common (<i>Local Nature Reserve</i>) • Totteridge Fields and Highwood Hill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrandene Open Space & Featherstone Hill • Hampstead Heath • Edgware Way Rough • Mill Hill Substation Pastures • Scratchwood (<i>Local Nature Reserve</i>)
Sites of Borough Importance – Grade I	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glebe Land Pastures • Glebelands (<i>Local Nature Reserve</i>) • Monken Hadley Common • Oak Hill Woods (<i>Local Nature Reserve</i>) • Mill Hill Golf Course • Coppett's Wood & Scrubland (<i>Local Nature Reserve</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folly Brook and Darlands Lake (<i>Nature Reserve</i>) • The Upper Dollis Brook • Totteridge Croft Field (or Dell's Down Acre) • Big Wood and Little Wood (<i>Local Nature Reserve</i>)
Sites of Borough Importance – Grade II	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sulloniacs Pastures • Deans Brook • The Silk Stream and Burnt Oak Brook Farm • Bruno's Field • Totteridge Common • Drivers Hill • Burtonhole Lane and Pasture • King George's Field • Turners Wood • St Pancras and Islington Cemetery • New Southgate Cemetery • Rowley Lodge Field • Arkley South Fields • Edgwarebury Brook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mill Hill Old Railway (Nature Reserve) • Moat Mount (Local Nature Reserve) and Mote End Farm • The Mill Field • Copthall Railway Walk and Copthall Old Common • Ashley Lane • Totteridge Green • Lower Dollis Brook • North Middlesex Golf Course Ponds • Pymme's Brook • Arkley Lane and Pastures • Northern Line Railway Embankment, High Barnet
Sites of Local Importance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clay Lane • Bell's Hill Burial Ground • The Mutton Brook • Cherry Tree Wood • Lakeside Nature Reserve • Barfields Allotments Nature Park • Barfields Allotments Nature Park • Grahame Park • Barnet Countryside Centre • Clitterhouse Recreation Ground • Hendon Park & Northern Line Rail Cutting • Woodridge School Nature Reserve • Belmont Open Space, Cockfosters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunny Hill Park • Avenue House Grounds • Friary Park • Prince's Park • Edgwarebury Park • Copthall South Fields • Copthall South Fields • East Finchley Cemetery • Greenhill Gardens • Oakleigh Park Rail Cutting • College Farm • Clarefield Park • Belmont Open Space, Cockfosters

- 5.3.36 When considering development proposals which may affect a site of importance for nature conservation, an applicant's approach should be to avoid adverse impact on the nature conservation value of the site and, if that cannot be achieved, the proposals should seek to minimise such impact and seek mitigation of any residual impacts. In exceptional circumstances, where development is to be permitted because of reasons which are judged to outweigh significant harm to nature conservation, appropriate compensation should be made. The Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and other sites of nature conservation importance will be accorded a level of protection commensurate with their borough or local significance.

Policy O14 – Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

~~Where development is proposed which would affect a site of importance for nature conservation, the council will, in the first instance, expect the proposals to avoid adverse impact or, where that is not possible, to minimise such impact while incorporating mitigation of any residual impacts. Where, exceptionally, a development is to be permitted because the reasons for it are judged to outweigh significant harm to nature conservation, the council will expect appropriate compensation measures.~~

Policy O15 – Nature Conservation

~~When considering development proposals the council will, where appropriate, seek the retention and enhancement, or the creation, of habitats and facilities for nature conservation, particularly in areas lacking ecological interest.~~

Protection of Species

- 5.3.37 Some plant and animal species are afforded varying degrees of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended in 1985 and by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). Other animals such as badgers, wild mammals and bats are specially protected under their own legislation. In Barnet, the main specially-protected species that are likely to be encountered are bats, great crested newts, grass snakes, the common lizard and slow worms. The Mayor's *Biodiversity Strategy – Connecting with London's Nature* (2002) encourages the protection of habitats/species that are of nature conservation importance via planning controls. The strategy also states that where damage is unavoidable, new places for wildlife should be provided as compensation and new development should take opportunities to create, manage and enhance wildlife habitat. There are other species of high conservation-concern which are identified as priority species in the *Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan* (1994) and in the *London Biodiversity Action Plan* (BAP).
- 5.3.38 PPG9 – *Nature Conservation* states that "The presence of a protected species is a material planning consideration when a Local Planning Authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat". PPG9 also states that:
- The government's objectives for nature conservation are to ensure that its policies contribute to the conservation of the abundance and diversity of British wildlife and its habitats, or minimise the adverse effects on wildlife where conflict of interest is unavoidable, and to meet its international responsibilities. English Nature will be consulted about planning applications which may affect protected species.
- 5.3.39 When considering development proposals, changes in land use or management of open spaces, the council will evaluate the impact on protected species, priority species identified in *Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan*, the Mayor's *Biodiversity Strategy* and local priority species for biodiversity in Barnet. Where development is permitted that may affect these species, the council will impose conditions. Also, where appropriate the council will seek planning obligations attached to relevant planning permissions to facilitate the survival of particular species, reduce disturbance to a minimum and/or provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of the population. The relocation of species will be considered only as a last resort and where appropriate, management can be applied to ensure continuing survival. The Mayor's *Biodiversity Strategy* advises that planning permission is refused if a proposed development would have a

significant adverse effect on sites identified as being important for nature conservation, or on the population or conservation status of a protected or priority species, unless the social or economic benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the importance of the site or species.

Policy O16 – Protected or Priority Species

~~The council will resist development that would have a significant adverse impact on the population or conservation status of protected or priority species identified in the London Biodiversity Action Plan.~~

Ecological Impact Statements

- 5.3.40 Some developments can have a significant adverse impact on nature conservation. Where conflict is unavoidable this impact needs to be minimised. The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessments) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, require that Environmental Impact Assessments be carried out for certain types of development before planning permission can be granted. However, some kinds of development will not fall within the remit of these Regulations, but could nevertheless have an adverse impact on nature conservation. In these cases the council may require additional information to be submitted with planning applications, to enable a reasonable and proper judgement to be made about the proposed development.

Policy O17 – Ecological Impact Statement

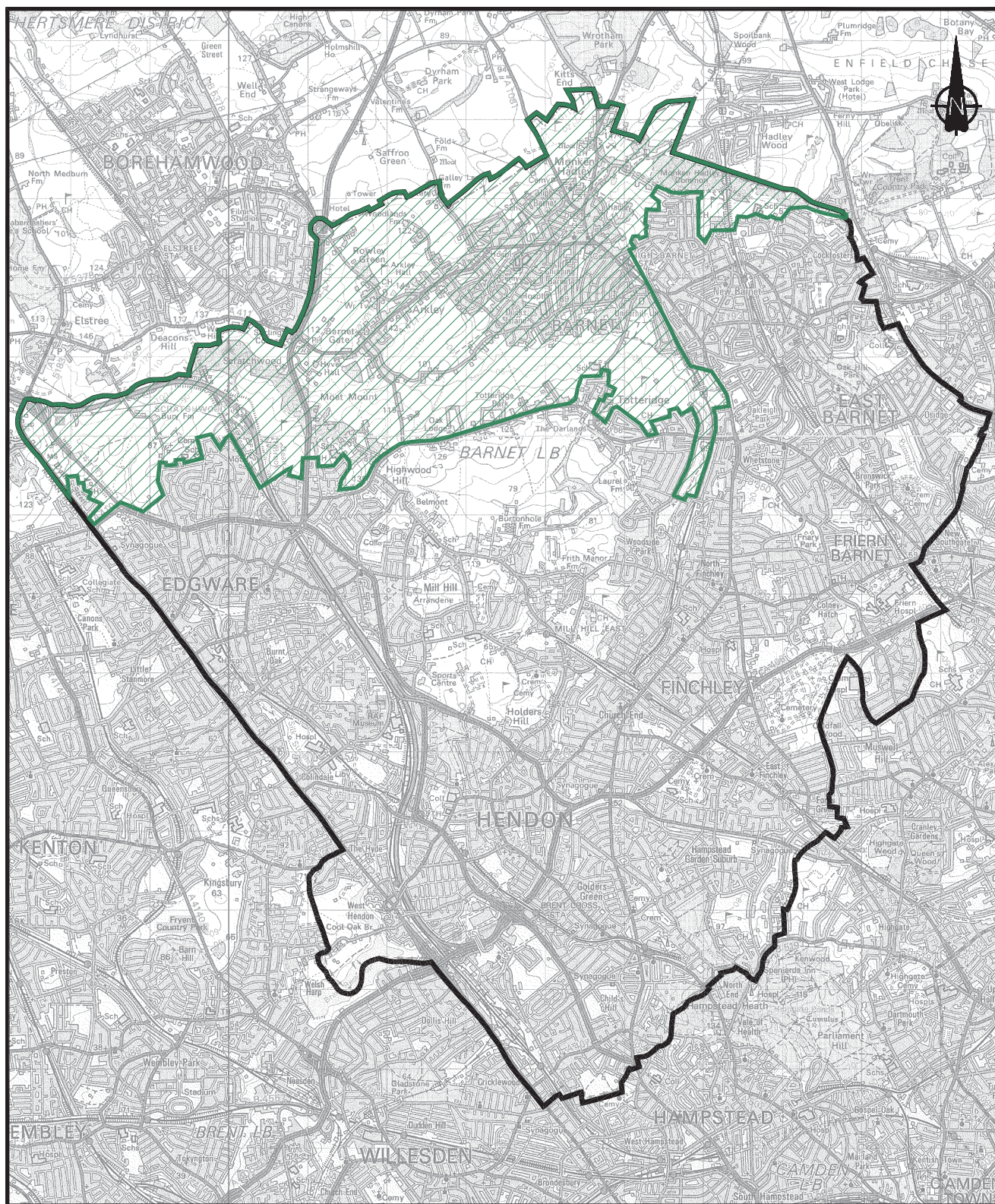
Where proposed development could have an adverse impact on areas of nature conservation value, including habitats, statutory protected species of wildlife and *Biodiversity Action Plan* species, an Ecological Impact Statement will be required to be submitted with planning applications.

Watling Chase Community Forest

- 5.3.41 The Watling Chase Community Forest is one of twelve Community Forests designated in England, as part of a joint initiative run by the Countryside Agency, the Forestry Commission and local authorities. The Watling Chase Community Forest area covers 72 square miles and is situated in the northern part of the borough, extending into South Hertfordshire. The forest area situated within the borough is shown in Map 5.7. The initiative proposes to increase woodland coverage in the designated area by approximately 30% by the year 2020, interspersed with farmland, grassland and lakes. The initiative is not just concerned with tree planting, but also woodland management. The main objectives set out in the *Watling Chase Forest Plan* (1995) are as follows:
- To produce a timber supply;
 - To offer an alternative to agricultural use of land;
 - To contribute to rural employment;
 - To create attractive sites for public enjoyment;
 - To enhance the beauty of the countryside; and
 - To create wildlife habitats.
- 5.3.42 PPG2 states that a forest plan may be a material consideration in deciding planning applications. Therefore, when assessing development proposals in the area the council will have regard to the policies and objectives set out in the *Watling Chase Forest Plan*. The Local Planning Authority can assist in promoting the objectives of the Community Forest by approving proposals that allow improvement to rights of way and open spaces, provide environmental education facilities, picnic sites and small car parks, and provide forest-related enterprises ancillary to the forest use.

Policy O18 – Watling Chase Community Forest

The council will require that development proposals in the Watling Chase Community Forest area have regard to the objectives of the *Watling Chase Forest Plan*.



 WATLING CHASE
COMMUNITY FOREST

Map 5.7 Watling Chase Community Forest

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