

Report of the Director for Place Management

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Draft for Public Consultation

**1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) were introduced by the Environment Act 2021 to halt biodiversity decline; 48 LNRSs will be prepared to cover the whole of England.
- 1.2. A draft LNRS for Greater Manchester has been prepared by GMCA and is ready for public consultation; it includes a vision, aims, priorities and actions that will help make Greater Manchester a place where people and nature thrive. It features maps of ‘core nature sites’ and ‘opportunity areas’ for habitat enhancement, and together these comprise our ‘Nature Network’. Areas mapped within our Nature Network are particularly suitable for the delivery of offsite biodiversity net gain and are classed as strategically significant in terms of the Defra Biodiversity Metric. The proposed strategy can be found in the Appendix.
- 1.3. The LNRS does not override existing plans, policies, processes, best practice or protections that are already in place for nature, nationally or locally, nor is it binding for landowners. Stockport Council must consider the LNRS in biodiversity conservation and planning decisions. It is not a delivery plan – this will be produced to sit alongside the strategy in 2025.

**2. WHAT ARE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGIES**

- 2.1. At a national level, there has been a recognition that the current overall approach to halting this decline in nature is not working. This report sets out the work that has been done to bring forward a Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy and seeks confirmation that Stockport Council provides its approval for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (on behalf of the Mayor of Greater Manchester) to publicly consult on the Draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 2.2. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a range of measures to seek to halt decline in nature. This included the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to cover the whole of England, to set out where and how efforts should be focussed locally to contribute to halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity. There are 48 strategy areas across England, including one for Greater Manchester.
- 2.3. The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy is aimed at encouraging all organisations, communities and residents to take action to support nature’s recovery. It will be of particular importance for landowners and, once adopted, will incentivise investment through Biodiversity Net Gain and environmental land management schemes.

2.4. In preparing the strategy, to meet the requirements of the Environment Act 2021, underpinning regulations and statutory guidance, and to adapt this to what's needed locally, the GMCA has produced a draft for public consultation. This will build on previous engagement in the preparation of the strategy – GMCA ran a public survey in early 2024 which received over 800 responses and has a wide range of workshops, events and other engagement sessions with a range of public, private and VCSFE organisations over the past year.

### 3. WHAT THE GM LNRS CONTAINS

3.1. The strategy covers the following, as required by requirements under the Environment Act 2021, regulations thereunder and statutory guidance issued to responsible authorities:

- A **shared vision** for nature recovery in Greater Manchester
- **Shared priorities and targets** for nature recovery
- **Actions** we can all work towards to help deliver them
- Maps of a Nature Network:
  - **Core local nature sites** - existing valuable areas for nature
  - **Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas** - opportunity areas where action should be focused across the city-region

#### **Maps within the strategy**

3.2. To drive nature recovery, the strategy sets out a Nature Network for Greater Manchester, following the principles of “more, bigger, better and joined up” spaces for nature. An extract of the map showing the ‘core’ and ‘opportunity’ areas is included at the end of this report.

#### Map of core local nature sites

3.3. This sets out Greater Manchester’s existing wildlife sites, including those designated and protected at an international, national and local level, as well as irreplaceable habitats<sup>1</sup>. What to include in this map is prescribed by Defra through statutory guidance and termed “areas of particular importance for biodiversity.”

#### Map of nature recovery opportunity areas

3.4. This sets out how our core local nature sites can be joined up to create a Nature Network. These are areas where action to enhance, restore or create different types of habitats (i.e. woodlands, grasslands, moorlands, waterbodies and wetlands) would expand and better connect our core local nature sites (our “areas which could become of particular importance for biodiversity”).

3.5. The mapping work has been comprised of three stages:

- Ecological mapping – used connectivity modelling to map a nature network of how best to join up core local nature sites.
- Refinement with local views and knowledge – local authorities and other stakeholders inputted to refine the map based on local knowledge.
- Mapping measures on the nature network map – based on suitable land cover type and any constraints on the site.

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<sup>1</sup> **Irreplaceable habitats for the LNRS** are those set out in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024. Available on the [Legislation.gov website \(external link\)](#).

- 3.6. This results in a final map, setting out the priority areas within which to focus action to create a joined-up Nature Network across Greater Manchester. They are spaces that are often used and managed in a range of different ways and for different purposes (e.g. for food production or recreation). These areas are not designated or protected, nor are they barriers to development. Development within these opportunity areas (or where it could have an impact on these areas) should seek to support and deliver on the priorities set out for these areas and help to work towards the wider ambitions of the Nature Network alongside other ambitions.
- 3.7. Officers from Stockport have worked with GMCA to identify the opportunity areas that are of most importance to nature recovery for our borough and have input into workshops to shape the shared priorities and targets. The Nature Network covering Stockport proposed by GMCA is a subset of our own Ecological Network which was updated in 2020. The strategy is therefore aligned with Stockport's ecological network and reflected within the emerging draft Local Plan.

#### **4. STATUS OF THE GM LNRS (INCLUDING THE MAPS)**

- 4.1. As a local authority, Stockport Council will have to have regard to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy when performing its duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2016 when considering what action they can take to “further the general biodiversity objective” of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when delivering their functions.
- 4.2. The Environment Act 2021 sets out that local authorities will need to “have regard” to the LNRSs in local planning policy and decisions.
- 4.3. The Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 included a clause which creates a new requirement on all relevant plan-makers and requires all tiers of planning to take account of the relevant LNRS. The Act also requires the Secretary of State to set out further guidance on how to do this in practice, but this is yet to be published.
- 4.4. Taken together, these legislative provisions are designed to support development plans and provide closer alignment with the planning system and environmental outcomes.
- 4.5. However, it is important to note that the LNRS (which includes the mapping of opportunity areas) does not introduce any new protections of sites or designations – for example, the opportunity areas do not have any status in planning – nor introduce any new barriers to development. However, the GMCA and local authorities will continue to work together as to how the LNRS can be reflected in the planning process.

##### **Legal/procedural aspects**

- 4.6. The Environment Act 2021 set out that the Secretary of State would determine the geographical areas for each LNRS and the “responsible authority” for developing it (for Stockport), the area for the strategy is Greater Manchester and the responsible authority is the Mayor of Greater Manchester. Each local authority in Greater Manchester is a “supporting authority” under Article 3 of The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023. Natural England and the Peak District National Park are also designated supporting authorities.

- 4.7. Under Article 7 of those regulations, the responsible authority must provide all supporting authorities with the consultation draft of its Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This is what the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has provided us with. Each supporting authority is asked to confirm it is content for the Mayor of Greater Manchester for the consultation to proceed. If each supporting authority either confirms or does not object to this, the consultation will be launched subject to final approval at a meeting of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority on 25th October 2024.
- 4.8. If Stockport Council wishes to raise an objection with the draft for consultation (or how it has been prepared by GMCA) it must do so in writing to GMCA, provide reasons for the objection and do so within 28 days of the draft for consultation being provided. GMCA would then consider this objection(s) and whether it (or they) can be accommodated within the draft for consultation. There are then two possible outcomes:
- A resolution to the objection is agreed between GMCA and Stockport Council (i.e. the draft for consultation is changed to meet the objection).
  - As a last resort, if a resolution cannot be agreed, the responsible authority can seek the Secretary of State's approval to consult without the objection being accommodated.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

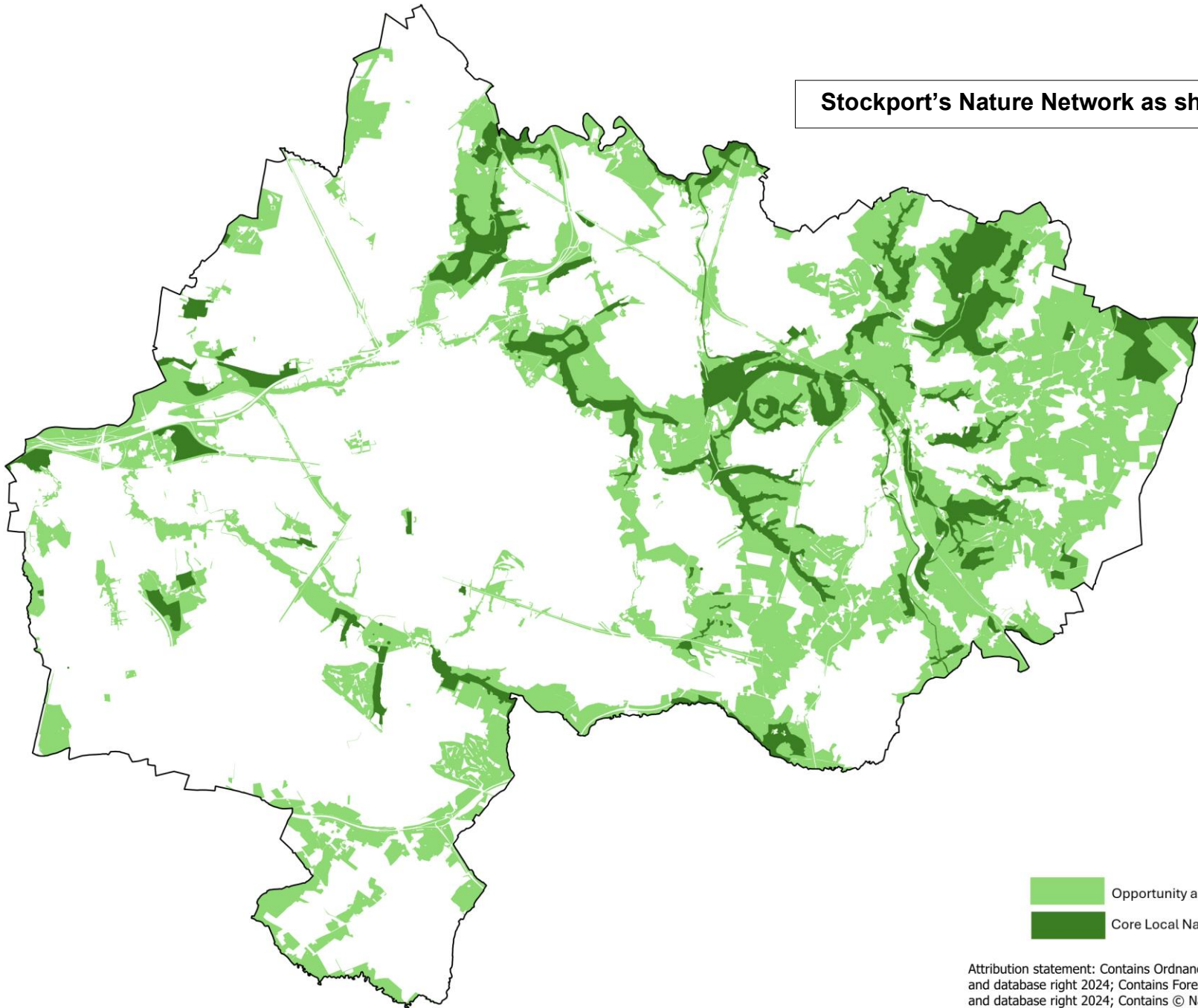
- 5.1. To note and comment on the report that details the draft LNRS for GM which has been prepared by GMCA and is ready for public consultation.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[GMCA Paper March 2022 – Biodiversity Emergency](#)

[GMCA Paper March 2023 – Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

**Stockport's Nature Network as shown in the GM LNRS**



- Opportunity areas for nature recovery
- Core Local Nature Recovery Sites

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