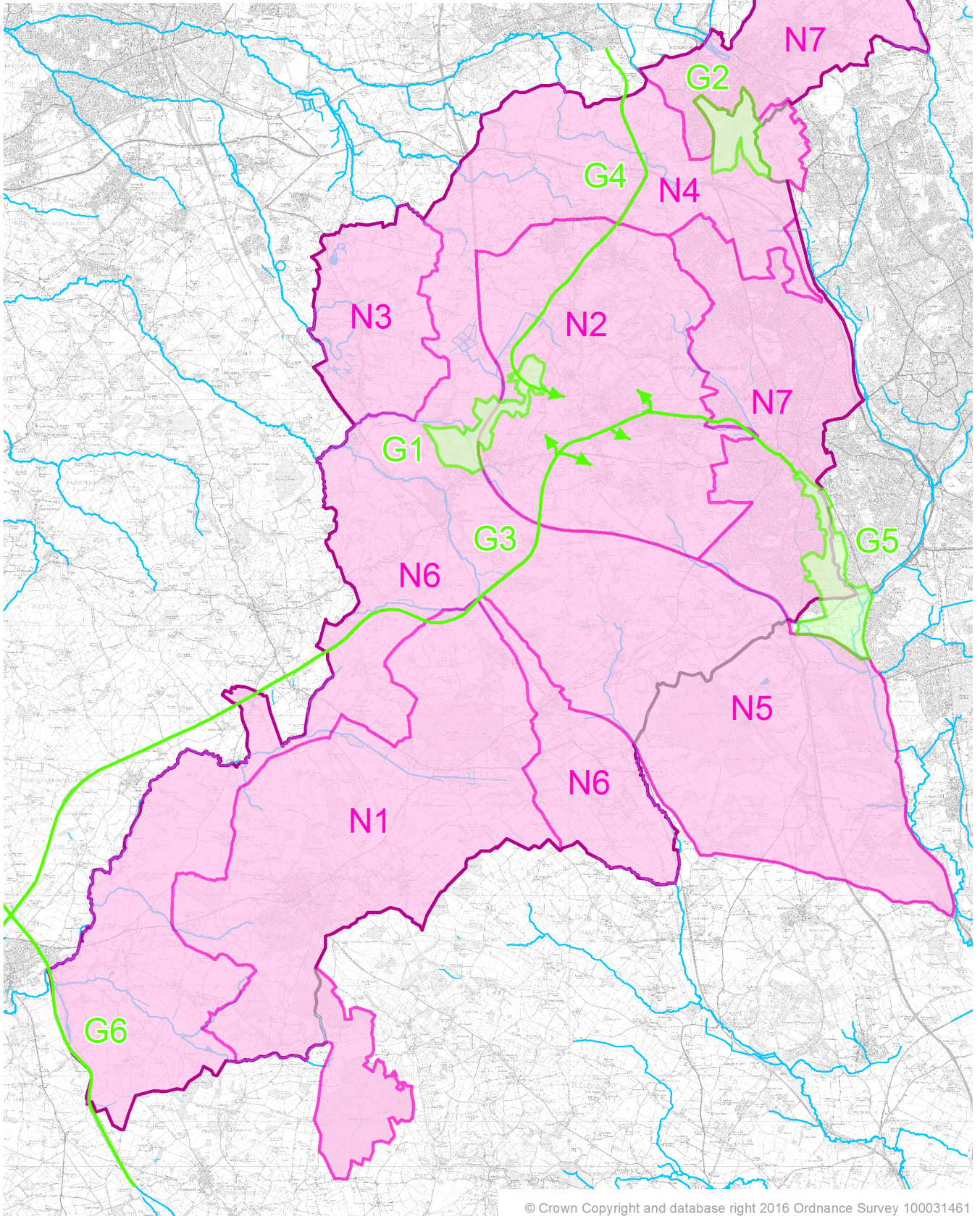## Green Infrastructure Strategy Executive Summary

Our vision is that by working in partnership, we can manage and enhance the quality, connectivity and multifunctionality of the Borough's Green Infrastructure. This will enable our Green Infrastructure to support the needs of both people and wildlife. We wish to contribute to halting the long-term decline in the natural environment nationally and internationally, not only in recognition of our collective responsibility, but also in recognition of the value of the natural environment on maintaining and improving quality of life.

1. Green Infrastructure is the network of multifunctional green space, in both urban and rural areas, that delivers a wide range of 'environmental' and 'quality of life' benefits to the community of Newcastle under Lyme.   Green Infrastructure is not an alternative description for conventional 'green' or 'open' space in the Borough but it does include it. It describes the Borough's entire network of 'green' spaces. This includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. It also includes the Borough's 'blue features' such as streams, canals and other water bodies, as well as any 'green' architectural features such as green roofs and green walls. It includes land in public, private and other ownerships. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is the guide to planning and implementation of Green Infrastructure across the Borough.

2. Research has shown that in Newcastle under Lyme, the services provided by the environment such as the provision of clean air and water are vulnerable to external factors such as climate change; that the opportunities to use natural solutions to environmental problems over civil 'built' infrastructure is currently low; that nature habitats are fragmented and this makes the Boroughs' wildlife vulnerable and that public access is limited in some areas. This means that the potential of the natural environment to contribute to the health and wellbeing of people is also limited.

3. The Borough's Green Infrastructure objectives are to:

    - **Increase the robustness of ecosystems** through long-term management planning, starting with those areas most at risk of further decline.
    - **Address spatial deficiencies in Green Infrastructure**.
    - **Build the 'capacity', which can support Green Infrastructure** notably by partnership building, increasing the input of volunteers and reducing the reliance on the local authority. However, as a democratic organisation it remains necessary for the local authority to continue to be the competent body for Green Infrastructure and offer leadership.
    - **Ensure a suitably worded policy/policies on Green Infrastructure is/are included in the Local Plan** and that clear guidance is available to those in development management on how to maximise Green Infrastructure benefits through the development process.
    - **Seek nature-based solutions on all major developments and infrastructure projects** such as H2S, road improvements, housing and commercial development sites.
    - **Plan Green Infrastructure at all scales, from the neighbourhood to the landscape scale**.
    - **Place Green Infrastructure to be central to resilience planning** (notably about climate change) and health and wellbeing planning (notably about the cardio-vascular, obesity, mental health and children's development agendas).
    - **Focus on the basics first** by focusing on Green Infrastructure nodes, improving connectivity & designing in multifunctionality.

4. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is in two part. The first is the 'spatial strategy' and the second the 'thematic strategy'. The spatial strategy is based on identified localities within the Borough. The thematic strategy covers the whole Borough. The core elements of the Spatial Strategy are: **Nodal areas** – these are existing areas where Green Infrastructure is concentrated and/of notable value. These areas function at the 'landscape scale' rather than at the 'local scale', hence isolated Green Infrastructure assets are not included. Nodal areas may be likened to 'jigsaw pieces' of green spaces being joined together to enhance functionality. **Green corridors** – these may be corridors that provide various forms of connectivity, the most notable being (i) ecological connectivity (ii) recreational or access connectivity or (iii) landscape connectivity. The interventions are areas requiring **conservation or preservation** and areas requiring **new Green Infrastructure.** The spatial strategy is mapped and described in detail in the full strategy report.

Newcastle under Lyme Green Infrastructure Spatial Strategy

Legend:
- Nodes
- Green Corridors
- Water Courses

5. Thematic Strategy

Quality vs. quantity	Where a decision needs to be taken between 'quality' and 'quantity', for instance in respect of public open space management, then quality will be preferred.
Urban design	Development planning should require that developers include green design to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, in line with Council guidance.
Green corridors and Rights of Way	Recognition is given that connectivity is an essential part of the Borough's Green Infrastructure approach. Hence wherever possible green spaces will be linked together, although this can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. Cross reference should be made with spatial strategy and synergies looked for.
Off-setting	Losses in Green Infrastructure should normally be offset by commensurate increases in provision elsewhere in terms of overall environmental performance. Where financial contributions are involved these can be pooled to maximise the benefits.
Transportation and movement	Civil engineering operations commissioned by the Borough Council and other public agencies working in the Borough; should normally utilise the regulatory services provided by Green Infrastructure to offset their environmental impact in preference over grey infrastructure solutions.
Food security	Encouragement should be given to local food production, local food marketing, foraging, composting and waste recycling.
Economy and jobs	Public Policy should encourage employment and training in land based industries and facilitate volunteer involvement in Green Infrastructure project delivery.
Health and wellbeing, education & social cohesion	Encouragement and when possible funding should be deployed to facilitate green exercise and other activities that strengthen well-being and social cohesion in open spaces; for example, through activity and event programmes that target those who currently do not use open space or are socially excluded from it.
Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Areas of high ecological value including designated sites should be protected from development and enhanced wherever possible. Advice should be sought from competent authorities where there is a question of potential development impacts. There is a need maintain the quality of sites to prevent or reduce the risk of habitat losses across all key sites.
Trees	Trees should normally be protected from the adverse impacts of development and veteran trees should only be removed in extremis (for example when they are a risk to human well-being). Whenever possible existing trees should be incorporated into new developments and protected during the building phase. Tree planting should normally be required on all development sites to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, in line with Council guidance. The Borough Council should seek to manage trees using the principles of urban forestry. In Newcastle under Lyme, Kidsgrove and urbanised villages the Borough Council should seek opportunities to plant trees within the street scene to encourage ecosystem connectivity.
National and regional infrastructure	National and regional infrastructure in the Borough should be audited with a view to agreeing with operator's/agencies long term objectives for enhanced Green Infrastructure performance and improved connectivity.
Landscape	The landscape of the Borough should be protected from degradation and enhanced whenever possible.
Neigbourhoods Development Plans (NDPs)	Designated bodies should be invited to include Green Infrastructure in their NDPs and cross reference to this Strategy.

The role of the Borough Council in delivery is:

• Coordinate Green Infrastructure activities across the Borough in cooperation with Staffordshire County Council and as needed other adjacent local authorities. The relationship with the City of Stoke is notable as the new Joint Local Plan is being produced with the city. There is also a notable overlap with the City of Stoke in respect of Node N5.

• Nominate a local authority officer as principle 'Green Infrastructure' advocate with the option to mirror this role at member level. Their role(s) is within the Council as well as externally.

• Ensure that there are suitably worded planning policies that recognise the role of Green Infrastructure in the new joint Local Plan.

• Manage the Council's land assets in a way that supports the Green Infrastructure Strategy, notably by using the Open Space standards to guide decision making and through the deployment of existing budgets.

• Consider the Green Infrastructure Strategy as a consideration when determining planning applications

• Review the Green Infrastructure Strategy from time-to-time to take account of changes.

• Ensure that there is awareness of Green Infrastructure and of the existence of the Green Infrastructure Strategy across all service areas.

• That the Council's Senior Management and Members are upskilled and knowledgeable about Green Infrastructure.

• Raise awareness and interest in Green Infrastructure across the community through media activity such as the Council's website and twitter feed.

• Encourage and developed the role of Green Infrastructure in delivering ecosystem services and health benefits.

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