

## Blaby District Council

# Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report Blaby District

### Final report

Prepared by LUC  
March 2026



*Bouskell Park, (Source: Blaby District Council)*

# Blaby District Council

## Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report Blaby District

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## Executive Summary

The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (EBD) was introduced under the Environment Act (2021). It requires all public authorities in England to consider how they can actively conserve and enhance biodiversity. Defra requires all Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and Local Authorities to report and publish what actions they have taken during the reporting period, and plan to take over the next five years, to meet the EBD. The first EBD report is due within 12 weeks from the 1st January 2026 and will continue in five-year cycles.

Blaby district includes habitats of national importance for biodiversity including ancient woodlands, wetlands, acid grasslands and meadows. 3% of the district (382 ha) is under a national or local designation, this increases to 8% (1,039 ha) when including potential sites for designation. Blaby has six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) accounting for 0.6% of the district (84 ha). 44.3% of land within SSSIs is in favourable condition, above the national average of 35%. Four Local Nature Reserves (LNR), cover 0.3% of the district (39 ha). Blaby has 80 notified Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS), covering 1% of the district (141 ha). Together, LNR and LoWS cover locally important ecological habitats and provide habitat connectivity across the district. Tree canopy cover, a key asset for biodiversity, air quality and climate resilience is 9.5%, below the national target of 16.5% by 2050.

Blaby has a strategic theme in the Blaby District Plan (2024 – 2028) to ‘*enhance and maintain our natural and built environments*’. This plan is supported by the Parks and Open Spaces and Climate Change Strategies which both include commitments and actions to deliver benefits for biodiversity. Strategic objectives and policies in Blaby’s Local Plan provide requirements on conserving and enhancing biodiversity within development.

Blaby has taken steps to enhance biodiversity across the district. This has included developing management plans for ten strategic sites which include provisions for biodiversity, adapting management techniques in parks and open spaces to create ‘nature zones’ and starting to explore nature restoration opportunities at Huncote (a former landfill site). The Council has provided £10,550 of funding for biodiversity enhancements through the Capital Green Grant Schemes. Initiatives under the scheme have included the creation and/or development of a pond, community and wildflower gardens, the installation of bird and bat boxes and hedge laying.

The Council works with several partners to deliver biodiversity enhancements across the district. Most significant is the signing of a 20-year lease with Green Circle Nature Regeneration CIC for the management and nature restoration of Fosse Meadows Country Park.

Three Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) plans have been approved by the LPA, providing 5.5 BNG units. As of February 2026, there is one registered BNG habitat banking site in Blaby district and a second approved site is in the pipeline.

Over the next five years, Blaby District Council will work with partners and colleagues to embed the priorities of the forthcoming Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), ensure delivery biodiversity enhancements as part of new developments and continue to balance managing parks and open spaces for the benefit of biodiversity and people.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Purpose of Report

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to enable Blaby District Council to meet the requirements of their Enhanced Biodiversity Duty, as per the reporting requirements for publication by 1st January 2026 (with a 12-week grace period).

**1.2** The report brings together existing work including policies, strategies and action plans that Blaby District Council have completed or have in progress. It sets out what actions Blaby District Council have taken for biodiversity since 2020 and takes a forward look at future actions to 2030. It provides a framework to assess current progress and sets a baseline for future reporting periods.

**1.3** Beyond Defra guidance, this report also presents a 'state of nature' section providing a baseline of the quantity, quality, and accessibility of nature-rich green space across the district. It provides an overview of key national and regional biodiversity targets and the progress the Council is making toward helping to achieve them. Beyond biodiversity, the inclusion of elements focussing on climate resilience seek to emphasise the importance of joined up thinking and the reality of climate risks for now and the future, and how best to ameliorate them and work with nature-based solutions for the benefit of people, nature and the climate.

**1.4** The EBD reporting process brings together different teams within the Council whose work delivers, or can support the delivery, for biodiversity. It helps to compile achievements, prompt and promote cross-team communications and streamline resourcing in achieving tangible gains for biodiversity.

### Why Nature Matters

**1.5** Nature is essential for all life on earth. We depend on it for the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. It boosts health and wellbeing, captures and stores carbon and has a vital role to play in climate change adaptation. Nature underpins all economic activity, and the benefits received from nature is estimated to be valued at 95 trillion pounds.

**1.6** Nature also has intrinsic worth beyond the quantifiable value we attribute it via natural capital and ecosystem services thinking. It enriches us spiritually, brings us great joy and

warrants an ethical consideration beyond the framework we conventionally ascribe value; an intangible, but important, aspect of our humanity and our connection with nature.

**1.7** In Blaby, the conservation and enhancement of nature is key to achieving a strategic theme within Blaby's District Plan 2024 – 2028 of '*enhancing and maintain Blaby's natural environment*'. A strategic objective of the Parks and Open Spaces strategy 2024 – 2034 is '*to consider how parks and open spaces can be managed to enhance biodiversity and wildlife*'. A strategic objective in the local plan to '*protect the important areas of the district's natural environment (species and habitats), landscape and geology and to improve biodiversity, wildlife habitats and corridors*'. Enhancing biodiversity will also help meet the ambitions and targets of other related strategies and plans across the district (see **Chapter 3**).

**1.8** The Council's approach to climate change, including the Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030, is heavily integrated with its work with nature. '*Protecting the environment*' is an overarching theme in the Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030 (see **Chapter 3**). This reflects the interdependencies of the twin-crises and effort to mitigate and increase resilience. This report also includes emphasis on climate resilience to emphasise this interdependence and outline thinking on how to tackle the twin-crises of climate and nature in a joined-up way.

## The Blaby Area

**1.9** Blaby district is located in the East Midlands, southwest of the city of Leicester, in South Leicestershire, England. It covers an area of 50 square miles and shares district borders with the City of Leicester in the north, Oadby and Wigston in the northeast, Harborough in the east, Rugby in the southwest and Hinkley and Bosworth in the west (see **Figure 1** in **Appendix A**).

**1.10** The district has a population of 102,500 people (2021 estimate) which represents 14.51% of the total Leicestershire resident population of 745,573 people (excludes City of Leicester)<sup>1</sup>.

**1.11** The district is a mix of both urban and rural, often described as a suburban, semi-rural area. It features significant urban development, including parts of the Leicester Urban Area (like Glenfield and Braunstone), while also extending into a mostly rural, agricultural landscape to the southwest (see **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** in **Appendix A**).

## Blaby District Council

**1.12** Leicestershire currently operates under a two-tier structure of local government. Leicestershire County Council is the first-tier unitary authority with Blaby District Council making up one of the seven district and borough Councils in the second-tier.

**1.13** Under the Central Government's Local Government Reorganisation scheme, Blaby District Council will become part of a larger unitary Council, expected to be in place by 2028.

**1.14** Blaby District Council is currently represented by 36 councillors representing 17 wards within the district.

**1.15** Blaby District Council provides district level services including local planning and building control, Council housing, environmental health, markets and fairs, refuse collection and recycling, leisure services, parks and tourism.

## Legal and National Policy Context

**1.16** This section summarises the national background context for the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty, associated reporting and national conservation targets. Blaby District Council's progress in complying with the duty and contributing to national UK conservation targets for is summarised in **Chapter 3**.

### The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

**1.17** The NERC Act 2006 first introduced the Biodiversity Duty, requiring all public authorities in England to consider what action they can reasonably take for the conservation of biodiversity.

### The Environment Act 2021

**1.18** The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the Biodiversity Duty and amends the NERC Act. Under the strengthened duty, public authorities must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Act also introduced LNRS and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), amongst other key instruments for conserving and enhancing nature. LNRS, prepared by a Responsible Authority, identify priorities for nature recovery locally and propose measures in locations identified using local evidence and input from local stakeholders. BNG mandates that developers must deliver a biodiversity uplift of at least 10%, in some circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (2024). Local indicators for Blaby. Available online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E07000129-blaby>

### The Environment Improvement Plan

**1.19** The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, and revised Environmental Improvement Plan 2025, took forward the delivery of the Environment Act 2021. It sets out the legally binding targets and actions needed for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) will use EBD reporting to assist in their requirements to monitor the delivery of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

### Levelling Up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023

**1.20** The LUR Act 2023 instructs Public Authorities to “take account” of the LNRS; the Environment Act 2021 requiring public authorities to “have regard” for the LNRS. This strengthened duty places an onus on Local Authorities to consider how they can “take account” of the LNRS. The EBD providing clear opportunity for these bodies to articulate how they have or are planning to deliver this duty.

### Methodology

**1.21** This report has been prepared by LUC. The process has included:

- 1. An inception meeting** to discuss the scope, timeline and relevant data to support delivery of the report.
- 2. Targeted research** to identify key targets, metrics, actions and other relevant quantitative and qualitative data that could help capture the local, regional and national objectives and measures and the progress in achieving them.
- 3. A workshop** with officers from across the organisation to discuss and identify relevant strategic targets and actions undertaken to deliver for biodiversity and climate change resilience.
- 4. Data analysis** including spatial analysis through GIS. With support from the local environmental records centre: Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC) and analysis of other data collated to assess progress against targets.
- 5. The preparation of this report** efficiently and effectively capturing the research and analysis undertaken and delivering the requirements of the EBD reporting.

### Target Audience

**1.22** This report will provide key information to Defra to assist in the monitoring of Environmental Improvement Plan delivery and to enable them to evaluate whether public authorities are delivering their EBD.

**1.23** This report will be taken to Cabinet and provide a useful overview to Blaby councillors and officers of the contributions the Council has made to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the district to date, helping to bring cohesion and efficiency between the workstreams that the various teams deliver. Importantly, the EBD report sets the trajectory of actions for the next five years.

**1.24** This report will be published on the Blaby District Council’s website and provide information to residents to understand what action is being taken for nature in their district.

### Consultation

**1.25** This report has been prepared in consultation with Blaby District Council officers from a range of Council departments. Data has been collated and analysed through targeted consultation and workshops with officers representing Blaby District Council functions.

## Chapter 2

### State of Nature

This chapter describes the current biodiversity baseline across Blaby. Formed from a set of measurable criteria, it can be repeated in future iterations.

#### The State of Nature

##### Designated Sites

**2.1** Blaby's national and local designated site network is 382 ha covering ~3% of the district. When including potential and candidate LoWS, this increases to 1,039 ha (8% of the district). National and local wildlife site designations represent and protect the district's most important natural assets including mosaics of ancient and deciduous woodlands, grasslands, wetlands and meadows. The statutory and non-statutory components, their purpose and distribution are set out below and mapped in **Figure 2** in **Appendix A**.

**2.2** It should be noted that this reflects only the land under a form of statutory or non-statutory nature designation, not the proportion of land which is being effectively managed for nature in the district. National targets of 30% of land and water managed for nature should include both land under designation and land being managed for nature, the latter aspect not being included in this analysis due to data limitations.

##### International Statutory Designated Sites: SPAs/SACs/RAMSAR

**2.3** There are no statutory designated sites of European or international importance within Blaby district.

**2.4** There are no SPAs/SACs or RAMSAR sites immediately adjacent to Blaby District.

##### National Statutory Designated Sites: SSSIs

**2.5** Blaby district has six SSSIs, covering 84 ha (0.6% of the district). These SSSIs and the reasons for designation are presented below in order of extent:

1. Croft and Huncote Quarry (35 ha) – Geological site.

2. Burbage Wood and Aston Firs (31 ha) – The site comprises one of the best remaining examples of ash-oak-maple woodland in Leicestershire and is representative of semi-natural woodland developed on the clays of eastern England.
3. Narborough Bog (8.5 ha) - The site contains one of the largest natural reed-beds in Leicestershire together with areas of wet woodland and meadow.
4. Croft Pasture (6 ha) - The site includes unusual Leicestershire examples of acidic mixed grassland which shares characteristics with certain of the Breckland grasslands of eastern England.
5. Croft Hill (2 ha) - Croft Hill supports a nationally rare vegetation type of short, tussocky grasses in an open sward. The species composition closely reflects the description of this habitat classification within the National Vegetation Classification system. The site is the largest known area of this grassland type in Leicestershire.
6. Enderby Warren Quarry (1.7 ha) – Geological site

**2.6** The percentage of SSSIs in favourable condition within Blaby is 44.3%, well above the national average of 35%<sup>2</sup>. The percentage of SSSIs in other conditions is as follows:

- 43.6% in unfavourable, recovering.
- 9.7% in unfavourable, no change.
- 2.4% in unfavourable, declining.

**2.7** Croft Hill is the only ecological SSSI that has been assessed as favourable. The site is being maintained in favourable condition for the regionally scarce short-sward notified acid grassland community through the pressure from a combination of human footfall and rabbit grazing. Narborough Bog is the only SSSI which has been assessed as unfavourable no change and unfavourable declining. This SSSI is assessed as unfavourable no change due to the woodland and reedbed drying out over a number of years because of low river levels in the River Soar. Willow scrub encroachment is also a contributing factor to its unfavourable condition.

#### National Statutory Designated Sites: NNRs

**2.8** Blaby has no NNRs.

#### Local Statutory Designated Sites: LNRs

**2.9** Four LNRs are located within Blaby district, covering 39 ha (0.3 % of the total district). These are relatively evenly distributed across the district (see **Figure 2**). Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (NEGIF) includes a recommendation for 1 ha of LNR per 1,000 population. The England and Wales 2021 census recorded that the district's population was ~102,900. Using these figures, the district should have a minimum of 103 ha of LNR. The district falls short of this standard by 64 ha (62%).

#### Non-Statutory Designated Sites: LoWS

Complementing the statutory network are 80 notified LoWS (141 ha, 1% of the district), which provide critical stepping stones and buffers to the nationally statutory designated sites and support species of local importance. Blaby has 112 candidate LoWS (180 ha, 1% of the district). Within Leicestershire, for the purposes of planning and policy, notified and candidate LoWS have the same status. The difference between notified and candidate LoWS is that candidate LoWS have typically not been subject to landowner consultation, and the status has not been formally agreed with landowner. Blaby has 226 potential LoWS (477 ha, 4% of the district). Potential LoWS are sites where the LRERC has recent evidence that they are likely to meet the LWS criteria, but further survey is needed to confirm this.

#### Habitats and Species

**2.10** Irreplaceable habitats, are those habitats which take a significant time to restore, recreate or replace once they are destroyed, often because of their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. Blaby's irreplaceable habitats include 31 ha of ancient woodland (84% is located within a designation), ancient and veteran trees and 6.5 ha of lowland fen (71% is located within a designation).

**2.11** Blaby supports a diverse range of priority habitats covering 2.5% of the district (320 ha). 19% of all priority habitats are under a national or local designation. The extent and distribution of these are discussed below and mapped in **Figure 3** in **Appendix A**.

**2.12** Deciduous woodland constitutes the largest extent of priority habitat within Blaby district, covering 2% of the district (262 ha). Small parcels of this priority habitat are scattered relatively evenly across the district, with a larger expanse found in the southwest near Hinckley. 15% of the deciduous woodland is protected under a statutory designation.

<sup>2</sup> Natural England (2025). Extent and condition of protected areas. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/england-biodiversity-indicators/1-extent-and-condition-of-protected-areas--2>

**2.13** Floodplain grazing marsh covers 0.3% of the district (39 ha). It forms important wetlands providing a riparian buffer zone to the rivers across the district and supports a diverse range of species. 17% of floodplain grazing marsh is under a statutory designation.

**2.14** Other priority habitats in Blaby which cover <10 ha but still contribute considerable value to the diversity of the ecological network, include lowland dry acid grassland (8 ha), lowland meadows (4 ha) and traditional orchards (2). Such small fragments of priority habitat are particularly sensitive to management or land use changes.

**2.15** Blaby's ecological network includes approximately 92 km of rivers<sup>3</sup> and 4km of canals, which support semi-aquatic and aquatic species such as kingfishers, water voles and odonata. **Figure 4 in Appendix A** displays these waterbodies and shows their ecological condition, as assessed through the Water Framework Directive<sup>4</sup>. The percentage of rivers within each ecological classification is displayed below:

- 59% are moderate.
- 34% are poor.
- 6% not assessed (Grand Union Canal).

**2.16** Rivers in poor condition include the River Sence from Countesthorpe Brook to Soar (EA main River), the Soar Brook from source to Soar, the River Soar from Sence to Rothley Brook (EA main River) and Thurlaston Brook Catchment (tributary of the River Soar).

### Wider Green Infrastructure

**2.17** The wider green infrastructure, which provides key connections within the district's ecological network, covers 4% of the district (506 ha). Public parks, gardens and playing fields offer the largest extent and make up 2% of the district (272 ha). Golf courses represent 1.5% of the district (184 ha). Allotments and community growing spaces cover 0.2% of the district (27 ha). Religious grounds and cemeteries cover 0.2% of the district (23 ha).

**2.18** Tree canopy cover, which takes the National Forest Inventory, trees outside of woodland (TOW) and traditional

orchards into account, and is a key asset for biodiversity, air quality and climate resilience, is estimated to cover 1,325 ha (9.5% of the district<sup>5</sup>). This is below the national tree canopy cover target of 16.5% (by 2050)<sup>6</sup>.

### Access to Nature

**2.19** The Tree Equity Score measures how well the benefits of trees are reaching communities living on lower incomes and others disproportionately impacted by extreme heat, pollution and other environmental hazards. The score is calculated at the neighbourhood level (Lower Super Output Areas in England). The score ranges from 0 – 100. The lower the score, the greater the priority for tree planting. A score of 100 means the neighbourhood has enough trees. The wards' ratings are mapped in **Figure 5 in Appendix A**. The average tree equity score across all of Blaby is 87.5. One ward (2%) (Blaby 002A, in Leicester Forest East<sup>7</sup>) has a tree equity score of 100. One ward has a tree equity score <70 (Blaby 006C, located to the east of Enderby<sup>8</sup>) meaning that low tree canopy cover is disproportionately impacting the communities that live there. This is an area where future tree planting could be focused to improve access to nature and to provide health benefits.

### Climate Change

**2.20** The Climate Just tool<sup>9</sup> shows that heat socio-spatial vulnerability, a measure of how climate change-induced higher temperatures will affect certain populations, varies within the Blaby district (displayed in **Figure 6 in Appendix A**). Blaby and Braunstone have been assessed as having a similar vulnerability in comparison to the UK average, whilst all other areas within the district have a relatively low vulnerability. This disparity is linked to a greater exposure to heat within urban areas compared to rural areas.

**2.21** Some communities within Blaby district have a higher-than-average neighbourhood flood vulnerability as shown in **Figure 6 in Appendix A**. Communities which have a high risk (a 3.3% chance of a flood occurring each year) are often those

<sup>3</sup> Ordnance Survey (2025). OS Open Rivers. Available online: <https://docs.os.uk/os-downloads/products/water-portfolio/os-open-rivers>

<sup>4</sup> Environment Agency (2019). WFD Surface Water Bodies in England: Classification Status and Objectives - Cycle 2. Available online: <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/41cb73a1-91b7-4a36-80f4-b4c6e102651a/wfd-classification-status-cycle-2>

<sup>5</sup> National Forest Inventory (n.d.). Available online: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/national-forest-inventory/>

<sup>6</sup> DEFRA (2025). Tree canopy and woodland cover Environment Act target delivery plan. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-canopy-and-woodland-cover-environment-act-target-delivery-plan/tree-canopy-and-woodland-cover-environment-act-target-delivery-plan>

<sup>7</sup> MapIt UK (n.d.) Blaby 002A, Available at: <https://mapit.mysociety.org/area/126150.html>

<sup>8</sup> MapIt UK (n.d.) Blaby 006C, Available at: <https://mapit.mysociety.org/area/91768.html>

<sup>9</sup> Climate Just tool (2025) Available online: <https://www.climatejust.org.uk/map.html>

situated in close proximity to rivers, streams and canals<sup>10</sup>. The total area classified as at high risk of surface water flooding within Blaby district is 421 ha (3.22% of the district).

**2.22** The Council Climate Action Scorecard is an assessment of the action that UK Councils have taken towards net zero<sup>11</sup>. The Climate Action Scorecard is run by Climate Emergency UK, an external voluntary body who assess all Councils in the UK. Data for assessment was provided to Climate Emergency UK by Blaby District Council via a freedom of information (FOI) request. This information was verified (where possible) with background checks. In 2025, Blaby scored 29%, below the national average of 36%. Within the biodiversity section, which scores Councils on their action to protect and increase biodiversity, Blaby scored 23%. This score is slightly lower than the national average score of 28%. Areas where Blaby can approve their Climate Action Scorecard are:

- Four or more parks achieving Green Flag Status.
- Avoiding the use of pesticides on all council owned and managed land.
- Employing a planning ecologist to scrutinise planning reports for improvements to biodiversity in new developments, such as BNG.
- Implementing a tree canopy cover target and having an agreed tree management plan detailing how newly planted trees will be irrigated and cared for.

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<sup>10</sup> Environment Agency (2025). Risk of flooding from surface water (RoFSW) map. Available online: <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/map>

<sup>11</sup> Climate Emergency UK (2025). Action Scorecards. Available online: <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/councils/blaby-district-council/>

## Chapter 3

### Meeting the Biodiversity Duty

This chapter sets out the plans, policies and strategies that form the principal instruments to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Blaby and the actions for nature the district has committed to through the delivery of its functions.

### The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty

**3.1** The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (EBD) was introduced under the Environment Act 2021. It requires all public authorities in England to consider how they can actively conserve and enhance biodiversity.

**3.2** Public Authorities must report their consideration, actions they've carried out to comply with the EBD and how they will comply with it over the next five years.

**3.3** By law, the report must include:

- The policies and objectives they have set to meet the biodiversity duty and the actions completed to date.
- What strategies (including the LNRS) have influenced their policies, objectives and action and how they have contributed to their preparation.
- How they plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period.
- Any other information they consider appropriate.

**3.4** Reports from local planning authorities must also include:

- Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations.
- Details of gains resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans they've approved.
- Plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

## Local Context and Progress

**3.5** This section reviews Blaby District Council's local policies, strategies and plans which refer to biodiversity.

**Appendix B** pulls together all targets and actions within these plans and summarises Blaby District Council's progress to date.

### Corporate Plan

#### Blaby District Plan 2024 – 2028<sup>12</sup>

**3.6** This plan sets the strategic vision and direction for the Council. The plan embodies Blaby District Council's commitment to enhancing the district to ensure it remains a 'great place to live, work and visit'.

**3.7** It contains five strategic themes, one of which is to 'enhance and maintain our natural and built environments', which will be achieved through the following:

- Promoting biodiversity in new developments.
- Increasing biodiversity within parks and open spaces.
- Improving access to open green spaces.

#### Corporate Action Plan 2025 – 2026<sup>13</sup>

**3.8** Each year Blaby District Council agrees a list of specific timestamped objectives for the year ahead that deliver against the five overarching strategic themes outlined in the Blaby District Plan 2024-28.

**3.9** Although one of the strategic themes is to 'enhance and maintain our natural and built environments', none of the objectives relate specifically to biodiversity for 2025/26.

### Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents

#### Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document (DPD)<sup>14</sup>

**3.10** Blaby District Council's Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan document (DPD), adopted in February 2013, includes the vision, strategy, objectives, core policies and monitoring and implementation framework for the spatial planning of the district up to 2029.

**3.11** One of the strategic objectives of the Local Plan is 'to protect the important areas of the district's natural environment (species and habitats), landscape and geology and to improve biodiversity, wildlife habitats and corridors through the design of new developments and the management of existing areas by working with partners'.

**3.12** Policies which set out how the Council seeks to deliver the strategy and which relate directly to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through planning include:

- Policy CS14 – Green Infrastructure
  - The Council will seek to improve the Green Infrastructure network comprised of sports pitches, play areas, footpaths, cycle routes and open countryside, within the district and will explore ways in which to improve access to the River Soar and River Sence corridors and the Grand Union Canal. Other key landscape features such as woodlands and ponds should also be incorporated to link high quality open spaces. The provision of new Green Infrastructure will primarily be delivered as part of new developments.
- Policy CS15 – Open Space
  - Development proposals will be required to meet certain standards in terms of open space provision if they are to be supported. For example, 2.6 ha (1,600 metres) of natural greenspace must be provided per 1000. Development on existing open space will not be supported unless alternative provision of equivalent quality, quantity and accessibility, or better, can be provided in the local area.
- Policy CS16 – Green Wedges
  - The Council will look to create new Green Wedges to prevent the merging of settlements and provide urban areas with accessible natural green spaces, thus conserving important habitats for wildlife. Current Green Wedges will also be maintained, and management will be undertaken to improve the environmental quality, recreational value and accessibility of this land.
- Policy CS18 - Countryside

<sup>12</sup> Blaby District Council (2024). Blaby District Plan 2024 – 2028. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/ixteutxw/blaby-district-plan-2024-2028.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Blaby District Council (2025). Blaby District Council – Corporate Action Plan 25026. Available online:

<https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/kw3dtfbm/corporate-action-plan-bdc-25-26.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Blaby District Council (2013). Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy). Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/4107/adopted-core-strategy.pdf>

- Development which will have a significantly adverse effect on the appearance or character of the landscape will not be supported within areas designated as *Countryside*. This will ultimately preserve ecological assets and maintain important commuting links for species.
- Policy CS19 – Biodiversity and geodiversity
  - Development that has the potential to affect SSSIs, LNRs or LoWS will likely be refused. If impacts cannot be avoided then mitigation, buffering and compensatory habitat creation will be required. The Council will also work with partners to ensure the creation and designation of new LoWS and the enhancement of existing sites and networks that connect them. New developments should incorporate biodiversity enhancements into their initial scheme designs.
- Policy CS21 – Climate Change
  - Development which incorporates interventions such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), green roofs, and planting schemes, which mitigate and adapt to climate change will be supported.
- No permissions of inappropriate uses in Countryside that would undermine its open character.
- Increase the number of LoWS from the baseline position.
- No planning applications permitted to have a harmful effect of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS).

### Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)<sup>16</sup>

**3.16** Blaby District Council's Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning document (SPD) sets out the approach to Section 106 (S106) planning obligations in the absence of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.

**3.17** Planning obligations can be secured to support the delivery of a wide range of infrastructure, including natural green space in developments.

**3.18** Planning obligations are required to follow the standards provided in the Council's adopted Local Plan documents. Blaby District Local Plan Delivery DPD Policy CS15 states that 2.6 ha (1,600 metres) of natural greenspace must be provided per 1000 population in new developments.

### Blaby District Local Plan (Delivery) DPD<sup>15</sup>

**3.13** Blaby District Council's Local Plan Delivery DPD, adopted in February 2019, sets out the site allocations for housing and employment uses and the Development Management (DM) policies used to assess planning applications.

**3.14** DM 1: Development within the Settlement Boundaries and DM 2: Development in the Countryside both include the strategic objective '*to protect the important areas of the district's environment and to improve biodiversity, wildlife habitats and corridors through the design of new developments and the management of existing areas*'.

**3.15** The Delivery DPD contains an updated monitoring framework from the Core Strategy DPD with targets to ensure that the policies are achieving the objectives. Targets which relate to biodiversity include:

- 100% of new housing developments to provide onsite play and open space facilities.
- To create a new Green Wedge as part of the Sustainable Urban Expansion (SUE).

### Neighbourhood Plans

**3.19** The Localism Act 2011 gives Parish Councils and other relevant bodies powers to prepare statutory neighbourhood plans to help guide development in their local area. These powers give local people the opportunity to shape new development as planning applications are determined in accordance with national planning policy and the local development plan. A neighbourhood plan forms parts of this local planning framework.

**3.20** Four neighbourhood plans have been formally adopted by Blaby District Council and now form part of the Local Plan for the District. These plans have visions, objectives, policies and guidance which aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the areas that they cover.

<sup>15</sup> Blaby District Council (2019). Blaby District Local Plan (Delivery). Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/15ebnxns/blaby-district-adoped-local-plan.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Blaby District Council (2024). Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/050napxt/planning-obligations-and-developer-contributions-supplementary-planning-document-2024.pdf>

### Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2029<sup>17</sup>

**3.21** This Neighbourhood Plan covers 10 Parishes situated in the southwest part of Blaby District, representing 41% of the total district area.

**3.22** The Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through both economic, social and environmental objectives. The environmental objective requires the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and the improvement of biodiversity within the area. Policies which relate specifically to conserving and enhancing biodiversity include:

- **Policy FV4: Biodiversity**
  - Development which minimises impacts on and provides net gains for biodiversity and enhances resilience to current ecological pressures on habitats at Fosse Meadows Nature Park will be supported.
  - Development will also be expected to maintain and enhance existing ecological corridors and landscape features (such as watercourses, hedgerows and treelines) to support biodiversity.
- **Policy FV5: Local Green Spaces**
  - Development which maintains the openness of a Local Green Space will be supported, unless special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space are provided.
- **Policy FV6: Design**
  - Development which protects features such as hedgerows and trees will be supported.

### Glenfield Neighbourhood Plan 2022 – 2029<sup>18</sup>

**3.23** This Neighbourhood Plan covers the Parish of Glenfield, located in the north of Blaby district.

**3.24** The Plan has a vision to make Glenfield ‘a vibrant, healthy, well-balanced community [...] with a variety of open spaces’.

**3.25** Nine objectives are proposed in order to achieve the sustainable development of Glenfield. The sixth objective relates specifically to the protection and enhancement of locally important open spaces and biodiversity so that Glenfield continues to be an ‘exemplar for its approach to improving biodiversity’.

**3.26** The following policies also relate directly to conserving and enhancing biodiversity:

- **Policy H5: Design Principles**
  - Development should preserve ancient, veteran and mature trees and maintain and enhance biodiversity through measures such as bird and bat boxes, boundary planting to increase ecological connectivity and include deciduous trees, vines and climbers.
- **Policy ENV2: Important Open Spaces**
  - Development which will adversely affect open spaces which are of high value for community-led biodiversity enhancement will not be supported unless it is no longer required or replaced by equivalent or better provision.
- **Policy ENV 3: Sites of Natural Environment Significance**
  - Development affecting sites identified for their locally significant natural environment features e.g., LoWS should deliver a BNG of 10% onsite wherever possible.

### Leicester Forest East Neighbourhood Plan 2006 – 2029<sup>19</sup>

**3.27** The Plan covers the Parish of Leicester Forest East.

**3.28** The plan has a vision for Leicester Forest East to be ‘a sustainable and desirable place to live, protecting our limited natural environment and supporting appropriate development that meets local needs’.

**3.29** Policies that relate directly to conserving and enhancing biodiversity include:

- **Policy ENV 3: Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridor**
  - Development is required to safeguard locally significant habitats and species and to create new habitats for wildlife where possible.
  - Development should not adversely impact the wildlife corridor within Leicester Forest East.
- **Policy ENV 4: Sites of High Environmental Significance**
  - Development should protect the features (habitats and species) found within the two sites of high environmental significance (Leicester Forest East Spinney and Flood Relief Basin).

<sup>17</sup> Fosse Villages (adopted 2024). Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan. Available online: <https://www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk/np/fosse-villages-np>

<sup>18</sup> Glenfield Neighbourhood (2023). Glenfield Neighbourhood Plan. Available online: <https://www.glenfield-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

<sup>19</sup> Leicester Forest East Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee (2020). Leicester Forest East Neighbourhood Plan. Available online: <https://www.leicesterforesteast-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan>

### Cosby Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023 – 2039<sup>20</sup>

**3.30** The plan area covers the large village of Cosby, located in the southern part of Blaby district.

**3.31** Policies which seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity include:

- *Policy CNDP1 – Development within and affecting the setting of Cosby Conservation Area*
  - Development will be supported if it retains open spaces, watercourses, mature trees and hedgerows.
- *Policy CNDP4 - Protecting Local Green Space*
  - Development will only be permitted within these nine spaces when consistent with national Green Belt policy.

## Other Plans, Strategies and Frameworks

### Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024 – 2034<sup>21</sup>

**3.32** The Strategy aims to ensure that all Council owned parks and open spaces are managed well for both people and nature.

**3.33** It has a vision *‘to ensure Blaby District Council owned parks and open spaces are sustainable, high quality, accessible and continue to provide value to people, place, and nature’*.

**3.34** 11 strategic objectives, each with specific actions, are provided to deliver this vision. Those which relate directly to conserving and enhancing biodiversity include:

- *Objective 7: To consider how parks and open spaces can be managed to enhance biodiversity and wildlife through more sympathetic maintenance, appropriate planting schemes, and other ecological enhancements. To achieve this the Council will:*
  - Implement site management plans within budget. - Conduct yearly site quality assessments using relevant criteria.
  - Explore rewilding sites with wildflowers and trees.

- *Objective 3: To ensure all parks and open spaces are considered for any future BNG benefits. To achieve this the Council will:*

- Work with planning team to grasp BNG opportunities.
- Find the most suitable BNG sites and gather data for a feasibility study.

**3.35** Supporting this strategy, the ten strategic sites each have their own site-specific management plan. All ten management plans include provisions for biodiversity.

### Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030<sup>22</sup>

**3.36** This strategy sets how Blaby District Council will meet its ambition to be Net Zero by 2030 and support the district in becoming Net Zero by 2050.

**3.37** One of the six overarching themes within the strategy is to *‘protect the environment’*. The Council aim to achieve this through the following measures that simultaneously mitigate the causes of climate change and increase the provision of biodiversity within the district:

- Create space for nature and improve biodiversity.
- Work with partners and communities to protect, conserve and enhance green infrastructure and connect wildlife populations through green corridors.
- Work with communities to provide ecological, economic, health and social benefits through nature-based solutions.
- Improve our parks, open spaces and public rights of ways.

### Active Travel Strategy 2024<sup>23</sup>

**3.38** This strategy has a goal *‘to create a transportation system that benefits both residents and businesses while also reducing its environmental impact’*.

**3.39** This will be achieved through long-term green investments to create greener neighbourhoods, which are better connected. This approach has the potential to benefit biodiversity through the provision of plants, hedgerows and trees along footpaths and cycle ways.

<sup>20</sup> Cosby Parish Council (2022). Cosby Neighbourhood Development Plan. Available online: <https://www.cosbyparishcouncil.gov.uk/uploads/cosby-neighbourhood-plan-published-made-version.pdf?v=1702573731>

<sup>21</sup> Blaby District Council (2024). Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024 – 2034. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/grybojai/parks-open-spaces-strategy-2024-34.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Blaby District Council (2020). Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/3874/blaby-district-council-climate-change-strategy-2020-2030.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Blaby District Council (2024). Active Travel Strategy 2024 – 2034. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/chteo33t/blaby-district-council-active-travel-strategy-2024-1.pdf>

### Tourism Action Growth Plan 2025 – 2030<sup>24</sup>

**3.40** This plan presents the ambition and five strategic priorities to be delivered to maximise the economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism within the district, whilst also encouraging innovation across the tourism sector.

**3.41** The third strategic priority is to ‘*champion regenerative and sustainable tourism practices*’. Under this priority, three actions will contribute to enhancing biodiversity, conservation efforts, and the long-term resilience of area’s landscapes:

- Developing sustainable tourism practices which focus on protecting green spaces, waterways, and heritage sites.
- Promoting eco-friendly travel such as cycling and walking.
- Enhancing blue and green spaces through the creation of trails, waterways, and green spaces to support biodiversity, reduce pollution, and improve access.

### Blaby Economic Development Framework (EDF) 2023<sup>25</sup>

**3.42** This framework sits under the Blaby District Plan and aims to create a district that is a ‘*great place to live, work and visit*’. Its vision is further expanded to include ‘*a successful economy where everyone can build dynamic businesses, careers and lives, supported in a green and environmentally friendly way, with superb connectivity.*’

**3.43** The framework includes five priority themes, one of which is ‘*growing and supporting the Green Economy*’ which is, in part, underpinned by biodiversity.

## Regional Context and Progress

**3.44** This section reviews regional policies, strategies and plans to which Blaby District Council contribute and which refer to biodiversity. **Appendix B** pulls together all targets and actions within these plans and summarises Blaby District Council’s progress to date.

### Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)<sup>26</sup>

**3.45** The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS was published in August 2025<sup>27</sup>.

**3.46** As a supporting authority, Blaby District Council contributed to the preparation of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS through contributions made via the LNRS planning steering group.

**3.47** The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS outlines nine key aims for restoring nature. These can be summarised as:

- Increase the area of land which is managed for nature.
- Improve habitat condition.
- Improve habitat connectivity.
- Reinststate natural processes.
- Protect and enhance green space in urban environments.
- Promote sustainable agriculture.
- Reduce major pressures and threats including invasive species.
- Improve understanding and monitoring of the state of nature in Leicestershire.

**3.48** 113 priority species which require bespoke action to protect and enhance their populations have been identified. These include one amphibian (palmate newt), one reptile (adder), 12 birds (including turtle dove), one crustacean (white-clawed crayfish), six invertebrates (including glow worm), three fish (including brown trout), six mammals (including hedgehog), 77 rare vascular plants (including purple milk vetch) and six lichens.

**3.49** The LNRS also contains Landscape Scale Priorities and Measures which are essential for improving large areas of landscape and overall ecosystem health. These are:

- Landscape Hedgerow Optimisation
- Landscape Roadside Grass Verges
- Landscape Invasive Non-Native Species and Pest Management
- Landscape Woodland Management
- Landscape Nature-Friendly Farming

<sup>24</sup> Blaby District Council (2025). Blaby District Tourism Growth Plan 2025 – 2030. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/yvzbqfiv/blaby-tourism-growth-plan-2025-30.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Blaby District Council (2023). Blaby Economic Development Framework (EDF) September 2023. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/usdj4c01/economic-development-framework.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2025) Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS, Available at: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/leicestershire-leicester-and-rutland-local-nature-recovery-strategy>

<sup>27</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2025). Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Available online: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/LLR-Local-Nature-Recovery-Strategy.pdf>

- Landscape Grassland Management
- Landscape Freshwater and Wetland Management
- Landscape Flood Management and Natural Solutions

**3.50** How Blaby District Council will take account of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS is included in **Chapter 7** of the report. Progress Blaby District Council has made in achieving these priorities in the LNRS will be recorded in future EBD reporting cycles.

### Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2024 - 2026<sup>28</sup>

**3.51** The Leicestershire County Council's refreshed Strategic Plan 2024-2026 sets out the Council's long-term vision and priorities for the next two years. It has five strategic outcomes including '*Clean and Green – the need to protect and enhance the environment and tackle climate change*'.

**3.52** Underneath this strategic aim is two ambitions relating to biodiversity. These are:

- Nature and the local environment are valued, protected and enhanced.
- People act now to tackle climate change and protect the environment.

**3.53** Aims in the plan which relate to biodiversity are:

- By 2026 there will be an '*increase the percentage of county land which promotes diversity of habitat and species.*'
- By 2026 '*more residents actively involved in tackling climate change and protecting the environment*'.

Blaby District Council contributes to increasing the percentage of county land which promotes biodiversity primarily via the Community Green Grants scheme which provide funding to voluntary sector organisations to enhance the natural environment in Blaby. Other actions include setting aside areas for nature in amenity spaces with low footfall, the get big tree giveaway (giving away 150 trees to local residents) and exploring nature restoration opportunities at the Huncote site, turning a decommissioned landfill site into a sanctuary for

nature (see **Chapter 4**). Biodiversity enhancements are also being funded via BNG (see **Chapter 6**).

### Leicestershire Environment Strategy 2018 – 2030<sup>29</sup>

**3.54** This strategy sets out the vision, aims, objectives and targets which will be used to drive improved environmental performance across Leicestershire.

**3.55** The strategies vision includes '*Leicestershire County Council will minimise the environmental impact of its activities and will improve the wider environment through local action. We will play our full part to protect the environment of Leicestershire*'.

**3.56** The strategy has a set of external objectives regarding '*biodiversity, habitats and local environment*'. Those relating to biodiversity include:

- Work with partners to support wider biodiversity and natural capital feature improvements across Leicestershire.
- The Council will support the creation protection, enhancement and management of sustainable green infrastructure in Leicestershire.

**3.57** Blaby District Council minimises its impact on the environment by implementing reduced management regimes in parks where feasible and by only using hazard-free, non-residual pesticide where possible (see **Chapter 4**).

### Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy 2023 – 2045<sup>30</sup>

**3.58** The strategy outlines the County Council's approach to working with others to achieve the net zero target for Leicestershire and takes a long-term view to 2045.

**3.59** The vision of the strategy is '*In 2045, Leicestershire has ended its contribution to global warming and has adapted to the impacts of climate change. The transition to net zero has created a cleaner, greener Leicestershire for people, prosperity and planet; supporting healthy, resilient communities, enabling sustainable growth, and enhancing biodiversity*'.

**3.60** The strategy includes an Action Plan<sup>31</sup> on how to achieve net zero. It includes a section entitled '*Nature and Land Use*' and the following actions which impact on biodiversity:

<sup>28</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2024) Strategic Plan Refresh 2024 – 2026, Available at:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/LCC-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2018) Leicestershire Environment Strategy 2018 – 2030, Available at:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2020/7/13/Environment-Strategy-2018-2030-delivering-a-better-future.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2023) Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy 2023 – 2045, Available at:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/net-zero-leicestershire-strategy.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2023) Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy Action Plan, Available at:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/2050-Net-Zero-Leicestershire-Action-Plan.pdf>

- Deliver the LNRS for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland in line with Government guidance.
- Work with local planning authorities when opportunities arise to explore how carbon sequestration and storage can be achieved through Biodiversity Net Gain and the LNRS.
- Deliver the County Council's tree strategy and commitment to plant 700,000 trees by 2030.
- Deliver the Council's statutory biodiversity duty and report on it every five years.

**3.61** Blaby District Council has contributed to the actions within this strategy by inputting into the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS, delivering six BNG units, organising the get big tree giveaway increasing the number of trees in the district and by complying with the enhanced biodiversity duty (see **Chapters 3,4, and 6**).

#### Leicestershire Transport Plan (LTP) 2025 – 2040<sup>32</sup>

**3.62** The LTP is a requirement of the Local Transport Act 2008, and the key mechanism for delivering integrated transport at a local level. It helps to promote transport as an enabler to address existing and future challenges, explains how transport impacts local communities and puts in place plans for infrastructure, initiatives and solutions to help people and goods travel around.

**3.63** The plan has five core themes including '*protecting the environment*' and the vision includes that Leicestershire's transport system will '*safeguard the environment*'. The plan also states that the transport system should, where feasible, provide benefit to the environment.

## National Context and Progress

### Environmental Improvement Plan

**3.64** The Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 sets binding national targets for habitat restoration, species recovery, tree cover, and protected area expansion. Key commitments include restoring or creating 500,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042, halting species decline by 2030 and protecting 30% of England's land and sea for nature by 2030.

**3.65** Blaby District Council contributes to the Environmental Improvement Plan through delivery of the LNRS, the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, local planning policy and other Council strategies outlined in **Chapter 3**. Habitat creation and enhancement projects (such as the nature restoration of

Huncote and removing invasive species from woodland sites detailed in **Chapter 4**) support the national ambition of wildlife rich habitat restoration. Species-specific actions such as the installation of bat boxes contribute to halting species decline. With 3% of the borough (382 ha) under a form of national or local wildlife designation, Blaby District Council contributes to underpinning the national 30 by 30 target. Tree planting (see **Chapter 4**) has contributed to a tree canopy cover to 9.5%, below the national target of 16.5% (see **Appendix B**).

<sup>32</sup> Leicestershire County Council (2025) Leicestershire Transport Plan 2025 – 2040, Available at: <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s186569/Appendix%20A%20-%20Local%20Transport%20Plan%20for%20Leicestershire%20-%20Core%20Document%202025-2040.pdf>

[20-%20A%20Local%20Transport%20Plan%20for%20Leicestershire%20-%20Core%20Document%202025-2040.pdf](https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s186569/Appendix%20A%20-%20Local%20Transport%20Plan%20for%20Leicestershire%20-%20Core%20Document%202025-2040.pdf)

## Chapter 4

### Integrated Action

This chapter sets out what actions Blaby District Council has taken for nature, across all departments, through the delivery of its functions and duties since 2020. While the previous chapter outlined the statutory targets and strategic commitments at national, regional, and local level, this chapter focuses on delivery, highlighting how those ambitions are being translated into concrete projects, policies, and partnerships on the ground.

**4.1** This chapter is based on data collated for the purposes of the report via:

- Researching key strategies, policies and plans,
- An online officer workshop,
- Targeted engagement with Council officers, and
- Analysis of data made available by open source.

**4.2** It intends to present an efficient and effective process of data collation, analysis and reporting through bringing together the disparate work streams of the Council to identify how it is delivering for nature and climate resilience across its many functions.

### Strategic Sites

**4.3** Blaby District Council developed management plans for ten Strategic Sites identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024-2034. These Strategic Sites all met the 'Green Flag' standard. Examples of works undertaken to improve these Strategic Sites for biodiversity included:

- Removal of invasive and non-native species such as Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed at river based Strategic Sites.
- Implementation of species-specific interventions such as bat boxes at the newly restored Ice House at Bouskell Park.
- Creation of 'nature zones' within Strategic Sites which involves fencing off more ecologically valuable habitats to reduce recreational disturbance. For example, at Countesthorpe Country Park, the balancing ponds were fenced off to allow sensitive aquatic and terrestrial species to thrive without disturbance<sup>33</sup>.



**Figure 4.1** Fencing around ponds at Countesthorpe Country Park

Source: Blaby District Council

## Managing Land to Improve Biodiversity

**4.4** Beyond the ten Strategic Sites, Blaby District Council delivered numerous projects and altered land management techniques at parks and open spaces across the district to integrate ecological gains with public realm improvements and maintenance. Actions included:

- Participation in the annual No Mow May campaign at Council-owned amenity spaces and along road verges to allow wildflowers to be flower which benefits pollinator species.
- Reduction in the use of pesticides at Council-owned amenity spaces. Mechanical management is now preferred, and non-hazardous pesticides are only used when essential.

- Nature restoration at the former landfill site at Huncote has started through wildflower and grass planting which created a refreshed open space of 3.2 ha.
- Biodiversity improvement projects delivered by the Canal and Rivers Trust funded by Blaby District Council
- Pond creation and bird and bat box installation at Kilby woodland funded via the Capital Green Grant Scheme (see **Chapter 6**).
- Development of a community garden on Mill Lane, Blaby funded via the Capital Green Grant Scheme funded the (see **Chapter 6**).
- Creation of a wildflower garden at Leicester Forest East funded via the Capital Green Grant Scheme (see **Chapter 6**).

## Trees

**4.5** Blaby District Council supported tree planting projects within Council-owned parks, open spaces, residential gardens and community land. Examples included:

- Small tree planting projects at several Strategic Sites, including Countesthorpe Country Park, and other open spaces within Blaby district.
- In 2022, giving away 2,000 native trees and shrubs to residents to plant in their gardens as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative. Species included hazel, crab apple and dog rose, all of which provide foraging opportunities for invertebrates and birds.
- In 2024, providing 160 trees to Parish Councils, schools and community groups for them to create small woodland area or orchards on their land via the Big Tree Giveaway.
- Hedge laying and tree planting at Glenfield Millenium Green funded via the Capital Green Grant Scheme (see **Chapter 6**).

## Education and Engagement

**4.6** Projects delivered or supported by Blaby District Council sought to increase awareness and engagement with nature. Examples included:

- Supporting Blaby Youth Council, a group who represent the views of young people throughout the district, to deliver a presentation on how biodiversity is protected

<sup>33</sup> Blaby Council (2025). Park improvements benefit visitors and nature. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/your-council/news-and-awards/news/park-improvements-benefit-visitors-and-nature/>

through the planning process to raise awareness of biodiversity decline.

- Running the 'A Place To Grow' community garden site in Enderby. Open gardening sessions were held three times a week and events on a wide range of topics were delivered. These sessions and events engaged Blaby residents in community projects which deliver local biodiversity improvements through pond creation and planting of native plants, vegetables and flowers <sup>34</sup>.



*Figure 4.2 A Place to Grow Community Garden in Enderby*

*Source: The High Sheriff of Leicestershire*

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<sup>34</sup> Active Blaby (n.d.). A Place To Grow. Available online: <https://www.activeblaby.org.uk/programmes/a-place-to-grow/>

## Chapter 5

# Biodiversity Net Gain – a Tool for Action

This chapter draws out information specifically relating to BNG. It provides a complete overview of the actions taken and the gains achieved and anticipated resulting from BNG.

**5.1** BNG has created a world-first regulatory nature market with ground-breaking policy and legislation. Launched in 2024, the regime is still bedding in; many development types entered scope at different times, and LPAs are only now (early 2026) approving some of the first biodiversity gain plans.

**5.2** In terms of BNG monitoring for EBD reporting, Defra has only recently published the high-resolution inputs required for EBD reporting. Therefore, timing and data availability currently limit the BNG impacts that can be reported.

**5.3** A short overview of the state of BNG within Blaby is provided in **Table 5.1** below.

**Table 5.1 Overview of BNG in Blaby**

Criteria	Number
Number of BNG plans approved	3
Number of BNG plans approved securing BNG through on-site intervention	2
Number of BNG plans approved securing BNG through off-site intervention	1
Total net change (units)	Habitat area: 3.3159 Hedgerow habitat: 2.979 Watercourse: 0
Total net change (%)	Habitat area: 65.43% Hedgerow habitat: 77.44% Watercourse: 0

## Actions Taken to Meet BNG Obligations

**5.4** BNG is predominantly a planning matter with the assessment, processing and approval of planning applications requiring BNG a responsibility of the planning team and the ecologists embedded within, or advising, that function. As a result, the majority of actions relate to how these applications are processed and assessed within that function.

**5.5** Blaby District Council uses a Management System to record and monitor BNG data. This provides the Council with an easy interface to assess BNG applications, ultimately saving time and provides a robust database of reports that can be used for validation and long-term monitoring.

and ponds (non-priority). A second habitat bank in the district is currently awaiting registration, having recently being approved.

**5.8** In addition, there are other registered sites in Leicestershire including the Newton Harcourt Habitat Bank (BGS-060625001), covering 26.11 ha, which is situated in a neighbouring authority and provides 209.98 area habitat units from lowland meadow, ponds (non-priority), mixed scrub, neutral grassland and rural trees to LPAs within Leicestershire.

### Highlights & Challenges

- At the time of writing Blaby District Council is in the process of updating their Local Plan. It is due to be published in April 2026 and this will embed the statutory 10% BNG requirements.
- The uptake of management software allows Blaby District Council to manage their statutory responsibilities for monitoring developers' progress towards their BNG targets over a 30-year period.

## Legal Agreements

**5.6** Leicestershire County Council has published a Section 106 Charging Policy and Schedule<sup>35</sup>, which Blaby District Council can utilise in securing BNG delivery through Section 106 (S106) agreements. Leicestershire County Council Ecology Advice Service will monitor compliance on behalf of Blaby where this framework is utilised. At the time of writing, no statement on S106 agreements, was available for the time period from the introduction of mandatory BNG in February 2024. It was therefore not possible to evaluate the extent to which legal agreements have been used so far secure BNG within Blaby.

## BNG Banking

**5.7** The National Biodiversity Gain Site Register (Defra) lists all legally secured biodiversity gain off-site units (i.e. habitat banks) in England. As of February 2026, one site has been registered within Blaby district. This site is Kilby Habitat Bank (BGS-251024001) and is owned by the Environment Bank. This site provides Blaby District Council with an effective off-site BNG solution within the district. The site covers 15.78 ha and provides 118.76 area habitat units of lowland meadow

<sup>35</sup> LCC (n.d.). Section 106 Charging Policy and Schedule. Available online: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Section-106-Charging-Policy-for-Biodiversity-Net-Gain.pdf>

## Chapter 6

### Investment in Nature

This chapter describes funding for nature-related activities in the district. Delivery examples are signposted in Chapter 4. The structure of governance for nature is also outlined.

#### Council Resourcing

**6.1** Blaby District Council has no in-house ecologist and there are no posts exclusively dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. However, several roles across different Council teams contribute to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including:

- Net Zero Programme Delivery Officer,
- Group Manager for Neighbourhood Services,
- Executive Director for Place,
- Group Manager for Planning & Strategic Growth,
- Funding & Awards Officer; and
- Performance & Information Manager.

#### Service Level Agreements

**6.2** A service level agreement (SLA) is in place between Blaby District Council and Leicestershire County Council, who have an Ecology and Biodiversity team and provide expert ecological advice during the planning process. The team at Leicestershire County Council comment on planning applications when required, advise the planners and make recommendations for how they determine the application, but they do not make the final decision on biodiversity matters.

## Council Led Grant Funding

### The Capital Green Grant Scheme

**6.3** The Capital Green Grant Scheme<sup>36</sup> launched in 2021/22 and as of the end of 2025 has funded 29 projects. The scheme is running until 2030.

**6.4** Grants of up to £5,000 are available to voluntary and community groups to deliver projects for the benefit of Blaby district residents. Between 2021 – 2025, five of these projects, totalling £10,500 in grant funding, had a direct link to increasing biodiversity. This included the creation of a pond and the installation of bird and bat boxes at Kilby woodland, hedge laying and tree planting at Glenfield Millenium Green, the development of a community garden on Mill Lane in Blaby and the development of a wildflower garden at Leicester Forest East.

### Funding Secured

**6.5** Blaby District Council has been successful in securing external funding to deliver biodiversity enhancements across the district. These include:

- £133,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to deliver enhancements within Blaby's parks and open spaces for both biodiversity and visitors. These included the delivery of protected 'nature zones' through fencing and footpath creation to reduce recreational disturbance and tree planting<sup>33</sup>.
- Some of £156,000 awarded to Blaby District Council by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore the Bouskell Park Ice House was used to provide new bat boxes<sup>37</sup>.

## Planning Related Mechanisms

**6.6** Blaby District Council leverages statutory planning tools to secure funding for nature, through Section 106 Agreements.

### Section 106 (s106) Agreements

**6.7** S106 agreements take the form of financial payments or through the delivery of on-site habitat enhancements.

**6.8** Blaby District Council has spent monies received from S106 agreements on projects which have improved open spaces within the district including:

- In the 2023-2024 monitoring period, £371,491.08 of S106 financial contributions were spent on public open space projects, some of which have conserved and enhanced biodiversity, including the purchase of land at Winston Avenue<sup>38</sup>.
- In the 2022-2023 monitoring period, £52,874.84 of S106 financial contributions were spent on public open space projects, including £23,286.06 on extending the cemetery at Enderby<sup>39</sup>.
- In the 2021-2022 monitoring period, £181,162.14 of S106 financial contributions were spent on public open space projects, including £51,000.00 on the footpath within Blaby Oaks to prevent footpath erosion and recreational disturbance of valuable woodland habitats<sup>40</sup>.
- In the 2020-2021 monitoring period, £580,151.48 of S106 financial contributions were spent on public open space projects, including £9,040.00 on the creation of ditches at Countesthorpe Country Park to improve drainage and diversity of habitats on site<sup>41</sup>.

## Partnerships

**6.9** Blaby District Council sustains biodiversity action with a wide network of delivery partners to deliver specific biodiversity projects. Often, these projects are community-led, allowing nature recovery to be delivered efficiently and equitably. These include:

<sup>36</sup> Blaby Council (n.d.). Community Grants. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/leisure-health-and-community/voluntary-and-community-sector/community-grants/>

<sup>37</sup> Blaby Council (n.d.). Bouskell Park Ice House. Available online: <https://www.visitblaby.org.uk/heritage/bouskell-park-ice-house/>

<sup>38</sup> Blaby Council (2024). Infrastructure Funding Statement. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/amgyfycx/infrastructure-funding-statement-november-2024.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Blaby Council (2023). Infrastructure Funding Statement. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/pxrcenko/infrastructure-funding-statement-2022-23.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Blaby Council (2022). Infrastructure Funding Statement. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/xvnljr4v/infrastructure-funding-statement-2021-22-accessible-version.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Blaby Council (2021). Infrastructure Funding Statement. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/weylf1vd/infrastructure-funding-statement-2020-2021.pdf>

- **Green Circle Nature Regeneration CIC** who have a 20-year lease on Fosse Meadows from Blaby District Council to carry out management on the site. Recent initiatives include the selective felling of trees to improve the condition of the woodland and the creation of protected 'nature zones' to allow more wildflowers to establish<sup>42</sup>.
- **Friends of Groups**, including Friends of Fosse, who organise voluntary environmental stewardship initiatives such as invasive species removal, planting trees and dead-hedging, with the goal of improving biodiversity<sup>43</sup>.
- **Canal and Rivers Trust** are part of the Council-led Active Blaby initiative and deliver socially prescribed canoe, paddle board and walking sessions along canals and rivers, thus improving people's access to nature and blue spaces<sup>44</sup>.
- **A Place To Grow** is part of the Council-led Active Blaby initiative and involves volunteers, supporters and organisations, including the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust and Wild Pond Trust, who work together to maintain the community garden and pond habitat and deliver events to educate people on gardening and nature.
- **The Trent Rivers Trust Catchment Partnership** hosts the Soar Steering Group<sup>45</sup>. Blaby District Council is part of this group, which work together to improve the profile and status of the river through nature-based solutions.

#### Case Study: Green Living Leicestershire (GLL) Partnership<sup>46</sup>

- This partnership involves eight local authorities, including Blaby District Council, who work collaboratively to deliver projects supporting sustainability and the environment across Leicestershire.

- One of their seven focus areas is nature recovery.
- In 2023, the GLL Partnership launched the Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact<sup>47</sup> which brings together individuals, businesses and voluntary groups to tackle the climate and ecological crises. Blaby District Council has signed this Pact, highlighting its commitment to tackling nature decline.
- The GLL Partnership have also created a Net Zero toolkit<sup>48</sup> which provides tips and advice to Town and Parish Councils and residents on how biodiversity can be preserved and enhanced, particularly through community action.

#### Other stakeholders in Blaby

**6.10** Many organisations are working to enhance biodiversity across the Blaby district, although a formal partnership with Blaby District Council is not yet established. Their contributions are recognised below.

- **The Woodland Trust** manages Blaby Oaks, a woodland covering 5.7 ha. The Trust installed a surfaced path in 2020 to reduce footpath erosion and recreational disturbance within the woodland<sup>49</sup>.
- **Kilby Woodland Trust**, a volunteer run charity who manage and enhance the 6.07 ha woodland through tree planting, hedgerow laying and installing bird boxes<sup>50</sup>.
- **Glenfield Millenium Green**, a community garden who organise events to encourage gardening and wildflower planting, which improve access to nature and support pollinator species<sup>51</sup>.
- **Wombles Groups** who engage local communities in environmental initiatives such as litter picking and deliver

<sup>42</sup> Blaby Council (n.d.). Fosse Meadows. Available online: <https://www.visitblaby.org.uk/attractions/fosse-meadows/>

<sup>43</sup> Blaby Council (2025). Volunteering. Available online: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/leisure-health-and-community/voluntary-and-community-sector/volunteering/>

<sup>44</sup> Active Blaby (n.d.). Blue Social Prescribing. Available online: <https://www.activeblaby.org.uk/programmes/blue-social-prescribing/>

<sup>45</sup> Trent Rivers Trust (2026). Soar. Available online: <https://www.trentriverstrust.org/your-rivers/soar/natural-flood-management-in-the-soar-catchment/>

<sup>46</sup> GreenerFuture Leicestershire (2026). Green Living Leicestershire. Available online: <https://greenerfutureleicestershire.co.uk/green-living-leicestershire>

<sup>47</sup> GLL Partnership (2023). Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact. Available online: <https://greenerfutureleicestershire.co.uk/uploads/leicestershire-climate-and-nature-pact.pdf?v=1764930460>

<sup>48</sup> GLL Partnership (2025). Net Zero Toolkit. Available online: <https://www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk/uploads/net-zero-toolkit-feb-25.pdf?v=1738697474>

<sup>49</sup> The Woodland Trust (2024). Blaby Oaks Plan Period – 2024 to 2029. Available online: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/53601/4945-blaby-oaks.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Kilby Woodland Trust (2025). News & Blog. Available online: <https://www.kilbywoodlandtrust.org.uk/news-blog>

<sup>51</sup> Glenfield Millenium Green (2025). About Us. Available online: [https://glenfieldmillenniumgreen.co.uk/?page\\_id=234](https://glenfieldmillenniumgreen.co.uk/?page_id=234)

educational sessions in schools to inspire children to clean up their local environment<sup>52</sup>.

- **Blaby and District Lions Club** has planted over 8,000 wildflowers and seed along a disused railway between Narborough and Enderby<sup>53</sup> increasing the opportunities for invertebrates and birds.
- **Blaby Rotary Club** has delivered tree planting projects within several parks and open spaces across the district.

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<sup>52</sup> The Wombles Community Charity (n.d.). South Leicestershire Litter Wombles. Available online: <https://thewomblescommunity.com/wombles/south-leicestershire-litter-wombles/>

<sup>53</sup> Blaby and District Lions Club (n.d.). Whistle Way Wild Flower Project. Available online: <https://e-clubhouse.org/sites/blaby/projects.php>

## Chapter 7

### Looking Ahead for Nature

**This chapter sets out how Blaby District Council will fulfil the biodiversity duty over the coming reporting period to 2030. It first considers the challenges facing Blaby and how these will be overcome to deliver on the vision and targets of Blaby District Council.**

**7.1** As evidenced in the previous chapters, Blaby District Council have taken steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district, fulfilling the requirements of their EBD. Looking to the future, continuing to meet the EBD has implications for strategic planning and delivery across Council functions. Delivering on the priorities of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS and Blaby's parks and open spaces strategy and climate change strategy may be challenging but will contribute to conserving and enhancing biodiversity across the district. The next five years will see greater integration of biodiversity considerations within Council teams and their work areas.

#### Context and Challenges

**7.2** Blaby District Council could experience several different challenges over the next five years. These include but are not limited to:

- Reduction in core government funding for Council-provided services, including the management of green spaces. A funding shortfall of up to £3 million is expected by the 2027/2028 financial year due to the cost and demand for services having increased in recent years<sup>54</sup>.
- A reduction in the ability of external funding limits what the Council can do to deliver for biodiversity.
- Increased pressure from housing and transport development. Under the Central Government's national

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<sup>54</sup> Blaby District Council (2024). Blaby's budget consultation results to be considered by committee. Available online:

<https://www.Blaby.gov.uk/news/article/12898/Blaby-s-budget-consultation-results-to-be-considered-by-committee>

housing target, Blaby District Council plan to deliver 2,475 new homes by 2030<sup>55</sup> putting pressure on greenspace.

- Changes to national planning policy including the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and a restriction on Council's to require over 10% wholesale BNG in the National Planning Policy Framework could limit how much the Council is able to deliver for nature.
- Blaby District Council has limited land ownership. Moreover, much of the available open land is for amenity use. These factors limit how much Blaby District Council can benefit from BNG and to what extent they can deliver for biodiversity.
- New, or exacerbation of already present, invasive and non-native species and diseases affecting native species and impacting the health of natural habitats. Himalayan balsam has been recorded at Narborough Bog SSSI, Whetstone Brook and Countesthrope Country Park. Other invasive species recorded include Japanese knotweed and floating penny wart<sup>56</sup>.
- Climate change is leading to more extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding, which affect ecosystem function and in particular tree survival rates.

## Visibility and Resourcing

**7.3** Currently the Council has no dedicated ecologist in planning to provide ecological input to planning applications or to guide BNG. The Council procures expertise and advice from Leicestershire County Council. The Council could explore options to recruit an in-house ecologist or BNG officer.

**7.4** Whilst the Council has a dedicated champion for Net Zero, which incorporates sustainable use of the environment, there is no dedicated champion for biodiversity. This is something that could be explored over the next five-year period.

## Vision

**7.5** A strategic theme in Blaby's District Plan 2024 – 2028 is *'enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment'* and the Council aim to do this by *'increasing biodiversity and improving access to open green spaces'*.

**7.6** The Council's Climate Strategy 2020 – 2030 includes a key theme to *'Protect the environment and enhance biodiversity'* and the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024 – 2034, the main strategy for green spaces in the district has a

vision to *'ensure Blaby District Council owned parks and open spaces are sustainable, high quality, accessible and continue to provide value to people, place, and nature'*.

## Policies and Strategies

**7.7** Blaby District Council is set to review and update several plans, policies and strategies spanning the next reporting period. These strategies and policies all have the potential to incorporate aims, objectives, targets and actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity:

- **Emerging Local Plan** – Blaby's new local plan is due for publication in December 2026. Revisions to existing policies and new policies, including those related to BNG and the LNRS, can help to both help to conserve and enhance biodiversity across Blaby.
- **The Blaby District Plan** – The Blaby District Plan will renew in 2028. The current plan contains a strategic theme of *'enhancing and maintaining the natural environment'*. This could be strengthened to make direct reference to biodiversity.
- **Annual Corporate Action Plan** - Each year the Council agrees a list of specific actions and priorities for the year ahead that deliver against the overarching strategic themes and objectives outlined in the Blaby District Plan 2024-28. For the period 25/26 the Corporate Action Plan includes no targets related to enhancing or conserving biodiversity. There are opportunities to include biodiversity related targets in future Corporate Action Plans.
- **Leicestershire Wide Climate Risk Assessment and Adaption Action Plan** – Blaby District Council are working in partnership with all Leicestershire Districts to develop a country wide climate action plan which could include working with nature-based solutions and provisions to enhance biodiversity.

## Strategic Opportunities

**7.8** Over the next five years, opportunities exist to deliver biodiversity enhancements within Council-owned sites such as the Huncote site, leverage external funding with a particular focus on developing green finance plans with local businesses and deepening partnerships with community groups such as Green Circle Nature Regeneration CIC who could assist in the manage of green spaces across the district.

<sup>55</sup> West Bridgford Wire (2025). 2,500 new homes in five years for Blaby's government target. Available online:

<https://westbridgfordwire.com/2500-new-homes-in-five-years-for-Blabys-government-target/>

<sup>56</sup> INNS Mapper (2026). Available online: <https://innsmapper.org/map>

## Taking Account of the LNRS

**7.9** Published in August 2025, Blaby District Council will take account of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland LNRS over the next five years by integrating the priorities and measures proposed in the LNRS into the delivery of their policies and plans and how the Council plans to meet their EBD duty. Blaby District Council are also looking to update their emerging Local Plan at Reg 19 stage to include a policy relating to the LNRS and BNG.

## Delivery Actions

**7.10** Blaby District Council intends to deliver the following actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity over the next five years:

- Continue to deliver the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024-2034.
- Continue to implement site management plans for parks, in line with available budget.
- Continue to deliver the Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030.
- Continue to deliver 10% BNG in line with statutory legislation.
- Continue to pursue biodiversity enhancements within planning proposals, in line with the Local Plan.
- Continue to offer Green Grants as part of Community Grants Scheme and to promote the schemes use to deliver benefits to biodiversity.
- Continue to work in partnership with Green Circle at Fosse Meadows to drive forwards biodiversity improvements at the site.
- Continue to explore opportunities for reduced mowing and 'setting land aside for nature' within parks and open spaces.
- Continue to explore opportunities to deliver benefits for biodiversity at Huncote.
- Run the Big Tree Giveaway 2026 giving away~150 more mature trees (3 - 5 years old) to community groups and schools within the district.
- To support Big Green Week across the district promoting environmental awareness and eco-friendly practices across the district.

## Priorities

**7.11** Derived from the 'State of Nature' (see **Chapter 2**) and the Leicestershire and Rutland LNRS (see **Chapter 3**) Blaby

District Council could prioritise the following actions to meet national, regional and local biodiversity targets across the next five period:

- Deliver nature restoration and enhancement projects at Narborough Bog SSSI which is in unfavourable condition to support the national Environmental Improvement Plan target of '50% of SSSIs with actions on track to reach favourable condition by 2028'.
- Increase the number of LNRs in the district to meet the NEGEI standard of 1ha of LNR per 1,000 population. The district currently has a shortfall of 62 ha. LNR designations could be in areas of priority habitat which is currently under no wildlife designation.
- Increase canopy cover above 9.5%, in line with the national target of 16.5% by 2050. Within the LNRS, tree planting is suggested around Croft Quarry and north of Enderby to connect priority habitat woodlands, reduce habitat fragmentation and create wildlife corridors.
- Continue to protect, restore and enhance urban green and blue space and improve connectivity between these spaces, as outlined in the Leicestershire and Rutland LNRS.
- Implement natural flood management techniques alongside rivers and brooks in the district to reduce flood risk and improve water retention as directed in the Leicestershire and Rutland LNRS. This could include re-meandering rivers, wetland creation, woodland and scrub planting, leaky dams, buffer strips, gully blocking and pond and scrape creation
- The Leicestershire and Rutland LNRS identifies 113 species priority species which require bespoke action to protect and enhance their populations. The list is made up of 1 amphibian (palmate Newt), 1 reptile (adder), 12 birds (including turtle dove), 1 crustacean (white-clawed crayfish), 6 invertebrates (including glow worm), 3 fish (Including brown trout), 6 mammals (including hedgehog), 77 rare vascular plants (including lily-of-the valley) and 6 lichen (including *Lasallia pustulata*). Blaby District Council could liaise with the LRERC to determine priority species for Blaby and implement suggested measures included within the LNRS priority species list<sup>57</sup>.

## Climate Change Resilience

**7.12** Though not among the requirements identified by Defra, consideration of the effects of climate change over the next five years and identification of actions to be taken to build climate resilience are essential. The climate and biodiversity

crises are inextricably linked, and the rapidly changing climate will affect biodiversity in the UK.

**7.13** Blaby District Council has a Climate Change Action Plan in place to build climate resilience across the district. The ongoing monitoring and reporting of these strategies will enable efficiencies moving forward for capturing relevant data for EBD reporting.

**7.14** Possible options that Blaby District Council could continue to explore to build climate resilience include:

- Focussing on tree planting and the installation of green infrastructure in Blaby and Braunstone Town where communities have the highest heat socio-spatial vulnerability in the district (although note this is recorded comparable with the UK average).
- Implement SuDS in urban areas across the district to enhance biodiversity and reduce localised flood risk.
- Work to improve Blaby's Climate Action Scorecard to be in line with the national average of 36%.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

**7.15** There are several measures and metrics that Blaby District Council could collect to track progress against national, regional and local targets. A suggested framework is set out below.

**Table 7.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

Target / Action	Source of Target	Metric	Data Sources	Baseline 2025
SSSIs in favourable condition	Environmental Improvement Plan	% of units / features in favourable condition	Natural England	44.3% of SSSIs in Blaby are in favourable condition.
30 x 30 target (30% of all land across the UK effectively managed for nature by 2030).	Environmental Improvement Plan	% of district within a formal designation	Natural England	382 ha (3%) of Blaby is under a form of national or local wildlife designation.
Increase woodland and canopy to 16.5% by 2050 across all the UK	Environmental Improvement Plan	Increase woodland and canopy to 16.5% by 2050	NFI / Trees Outside of Woodlands / Traditional Orchards	9.5%
Plant 700,000 trees by 2030 across all of Leicestershire	Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy 2023 – 2045	Number of trees planted.	Leicestershire County Council, Blaby District Council and partners.	150 trees were given to residents to plant as part of the Big Tree Giveaway in 2025.
1 ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population. Calculated as 103 ha using 2021 census population	Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework	Area of Local Nature Reserve	Blaby District Council and partners	39 ha
Increase the percentage of county land which promotes diversity of habitat and species	Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026	Priority Habitat	Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory Area (ha) of wildlife rich habitat created within the district	320 ha (2.5% of the Borough is designated as priority habitat). Wildflower planting at Huncote – 3.2 ha
More residents actively involved in tackling climate change and protecting the environment	Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026	No. of volunteers attending a place to grow sessions No. of active 'friends of' groups	Blaby District Council and partners	No Data 1 Friends of group – Friends of Fosse

Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report

February 2026

Target / Action	Source of Target	Metric	Data Sources	Baseline 2025
BNG delivered in Leicestershire	Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy 2023 – 2045	BNG units delivered	Blaby District Council	Habitat area: 3.3159 Hedgerow habitat: 2.979 Watercourse: 0
Increase number of Local Wildlife Sites.	Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document	Number of Local Wildlife Sites	Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre	80 Local Wildlife Sites covering 141 ha (1% of the district)
0 permitted planning applications have a harmful effect on SSSIs or RIGS.	Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document	No. of permitted planning applications which have a harmful effect	Blaby District Council	No Data
Increase biodiversity	Blaby District Plan 2024 – 2028	Ha of parks 'set aside for nature'  Ha of sites where biodiversity has been actively improved.	Blaby District Council and partners.  Blaby District Council and partners.	Small margins of parks have been set aside for nature.  3.2 ha at the Huncote site has improved for the benefit of nature.



## Chapter 8

# Summary and Conclusion

**This chapter concisely summarises the achievements that Blaby District Council has delivered to meet its biodiversity duty to January 2026, and concludes the actions required to deliver this to 2030.**

### State of Nature

**8.1** Blaby District Council's natural environment is comprised of a mosaic of ancient and deciduous woodlands, grasslands, wetlands and rivers.

**8.2** The designated site network is 382 ha covering ~3% of the district, this increase to 8% (1,039 ha) when including potential LoWS. 2.5% of the district (320 ha) is classified as priority habitat. 19% of this is under a wildlife designation.

**8.3** 44.3% of SSSIs in the district are classified as in favourable condition, above the national average of 35%. 43.6% of SSSIs are classified as unfavourable – recovering (above the national average), suggesting that the condition of Blaby district's SSSIs are on an upward trajectory, helping to meet the national Environmental Improvement Plan target of *'50% of SSSI features to have actions on track to achieve favourable condition by December 2030'*.

**8.4** Tree canopy cover is at 9.5%, below the national average of 15.8% and the national target of 16.5% by 2050.

### Headline Achievements

**8.5** Blaby has taken steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity. One of five strategic themes in the Blaby District Plan is to *'enhance and maintain our natural and built environments'*. Blaby's Local Plan, which directs development in the district includes strategic objectives and policies which relate to conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Blaby has climate change and parks and open spaces strategies which both include commitments and actions to deliver benefits for biodiversity.

**8.6** Blaby has taken action to enhance biodiversity and green spaces across the district. Key examples include

developing management plans for ten Strategic Sites identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024-2034, the creation of 'nature zones' in parks and green spaces, habitat creation efforts at Huncote (to be expanded beyond the EBD reporting period) and small tree planting projects including the giving away of 2,000 native tree as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

**8.7** Blaby supports residents and local communities to play a part in biodiversity enhancements. Highlights include the Capital Green Grant Scheme which has led to £10,550 being used to enhance biodiversity across the district. Funded projects include the creation of a pond and the installation of bird and bat boxes at Kilby woodland, hedge laying and tree planting at Glenfield Millenium Green, the development of a community garden at Mill Lane Farm and the development of a wildflower garden at Leicester Forest East. Other highlights include a 20-year lease with Green Circle Nature Regeneration CIC for the management of Fosse Meadows.

## Next Steps

**8.8** Over the next five years, Blaby District Council will continue to carry out their duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and meet local, regional and national biodiversity targets.

**8.9** Policies in the Local Plan will require developers to both conserve and enhance biodiversity. BNG will also offer further opportunities for habitat creation in the district.

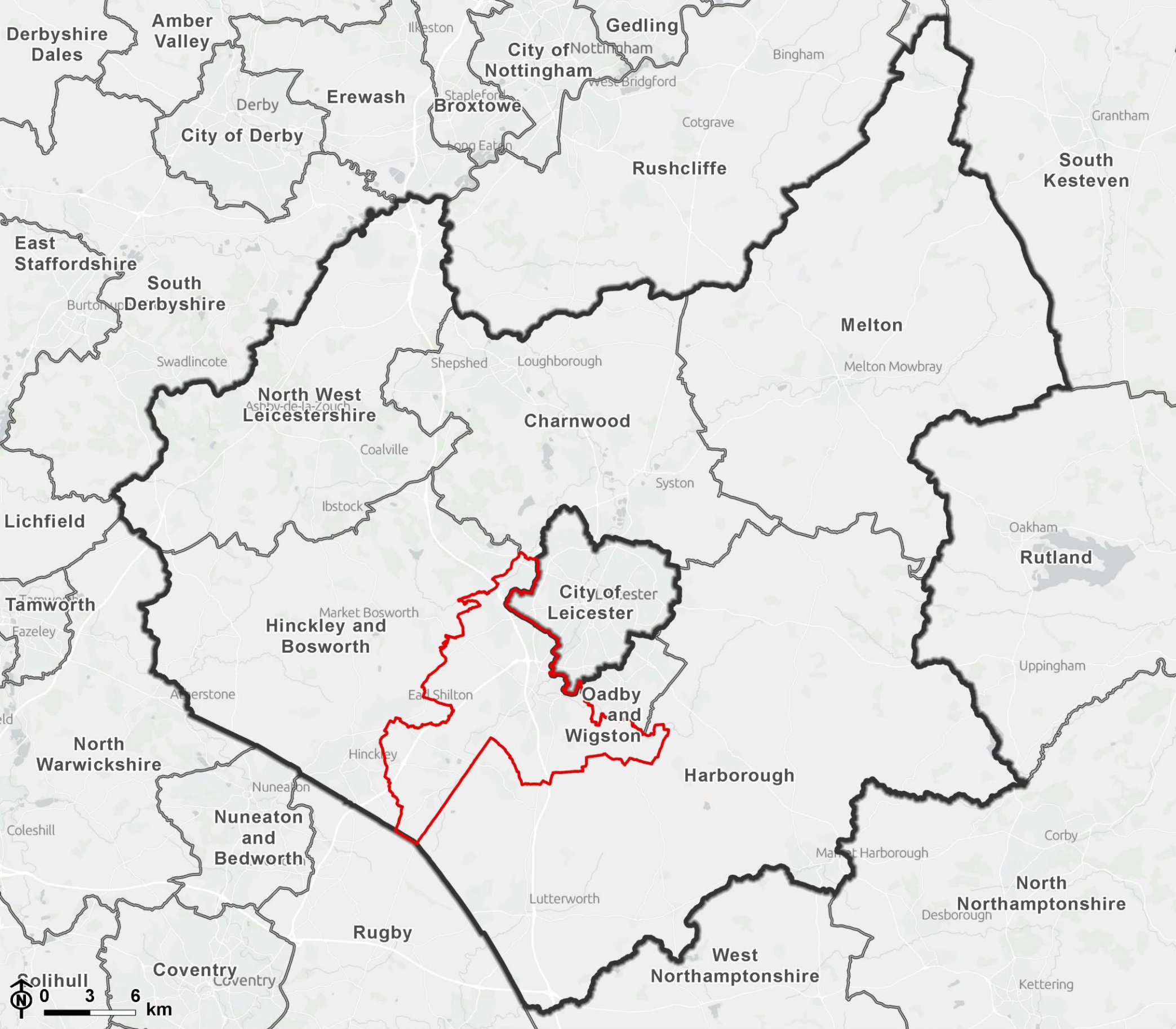
**8.10** Actions that Blaby District Council will continue to take to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district include delivering on their strategies including those for parks and open spaces and climate, continuing to offer Green Grants, continuing to explore opportunities for nature zones in parks and changing management techniques to enhance biodiversity to explore opportunities to deliver benefits for biodiversity at Huncote.

**8.11 Appendix 2** provides a table of the national, regional and local targets and actions for Blaby over the next five years.

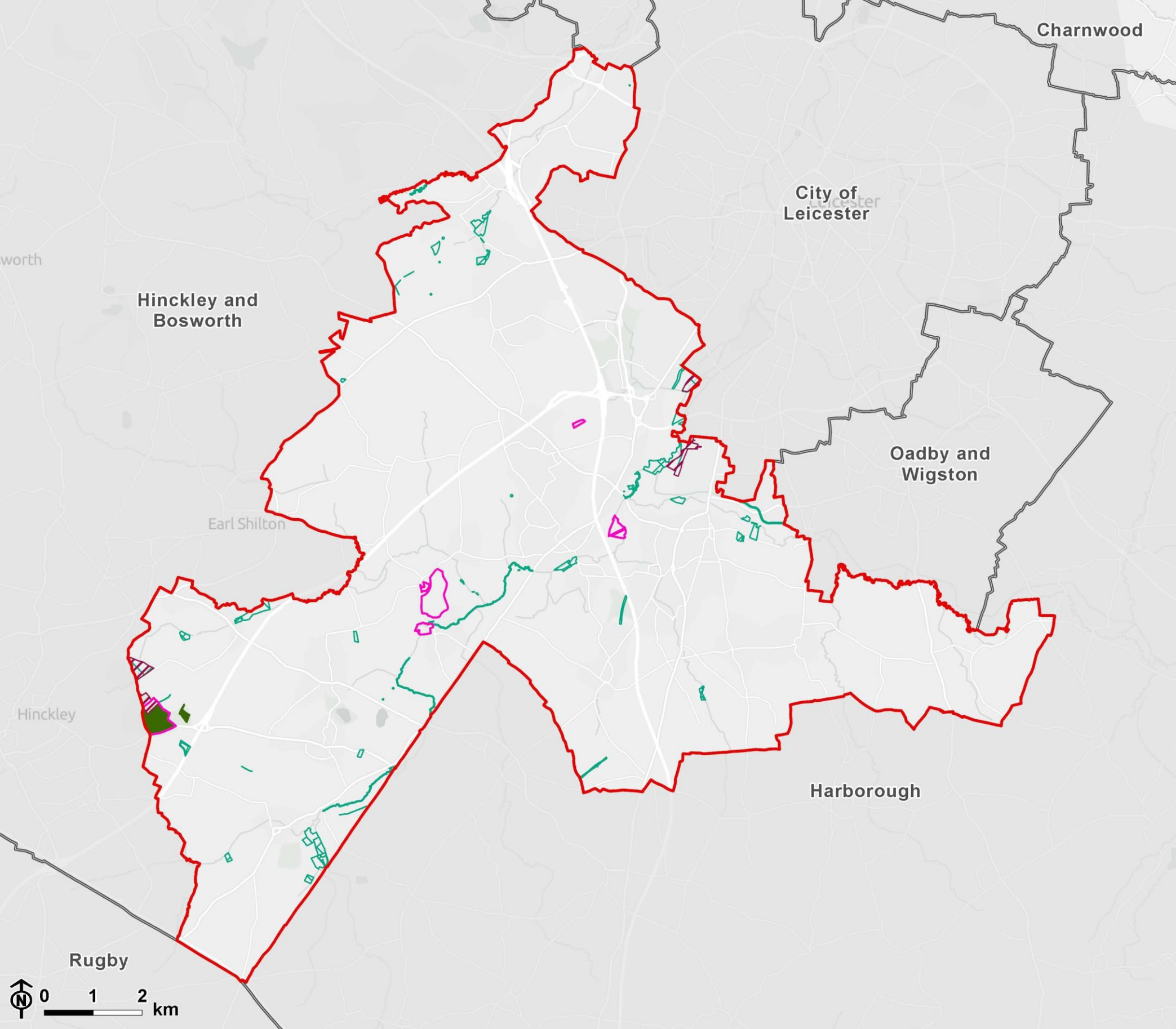
# Appendix A

## Figures

- A.1 Location of Blaby.
- A.2 Designated Sites within Blaby.
- A.3 Priority habitats with Blaby.
- A.4 Access to Nature within Blaby.
- A.5 Climate Vulnerability within Blaby.
- A.6 Water Quality within Blaby.



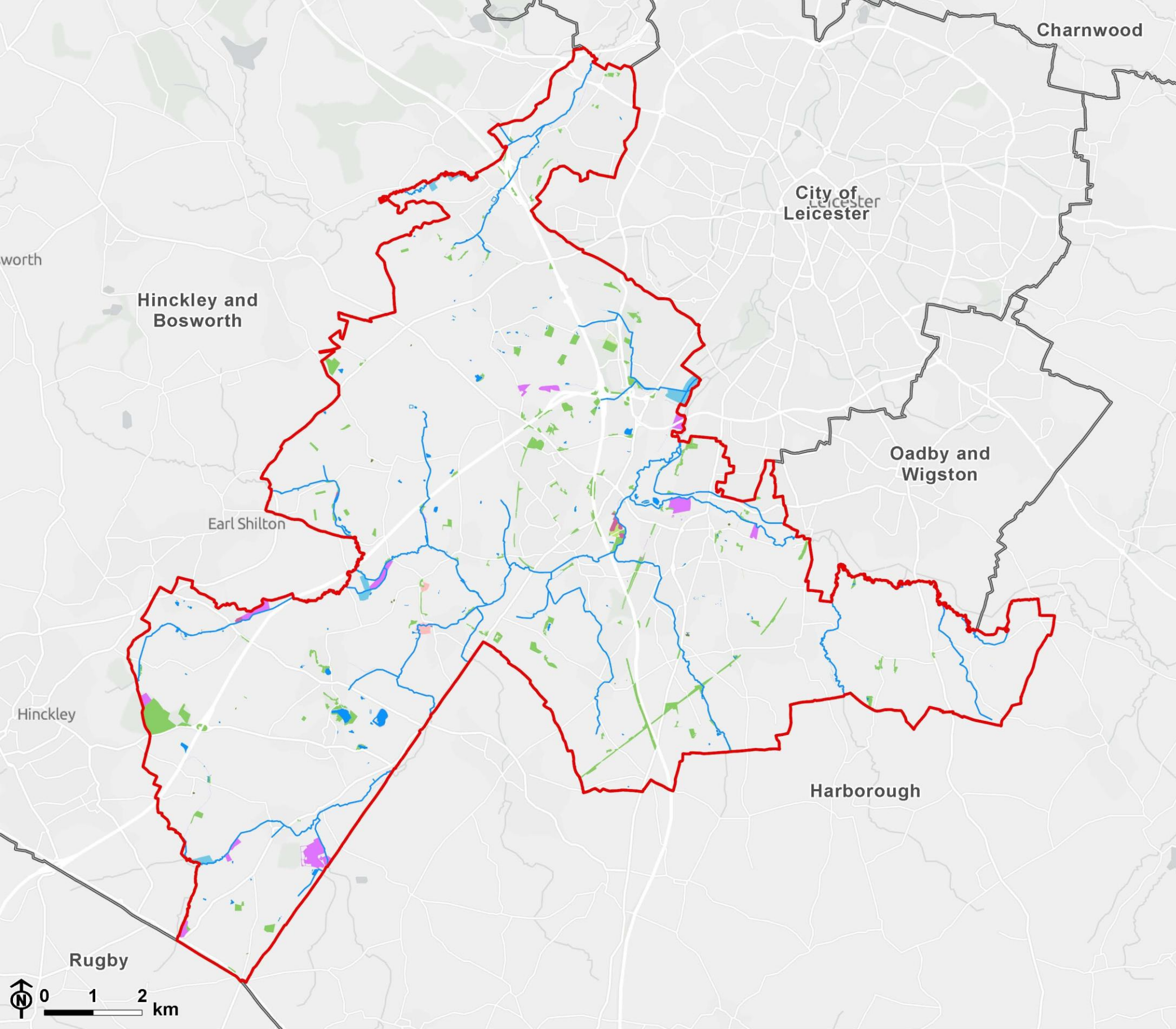
- Legend**
- Blaby district boundary
  - Neighbouring Local Authority boundary
  - Leicestershire county boundary



- Legend**
- Blaby district boundary
  - Neighbouring Local Authority boundary
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
  - Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
  - Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland

Designated Sites	Hectareage (ha)	% cover of Blaby District	% within a designation
SSSI	84.17	0.64	
LNR	38.98	0.30	
LWS	112.78	0.86	
Ancient Woodland	30.75	0.24	83.80

**Note:**  
*The Local Wildlife Sites, provided by the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre, is confidential. This should not be distributed to third parties.*



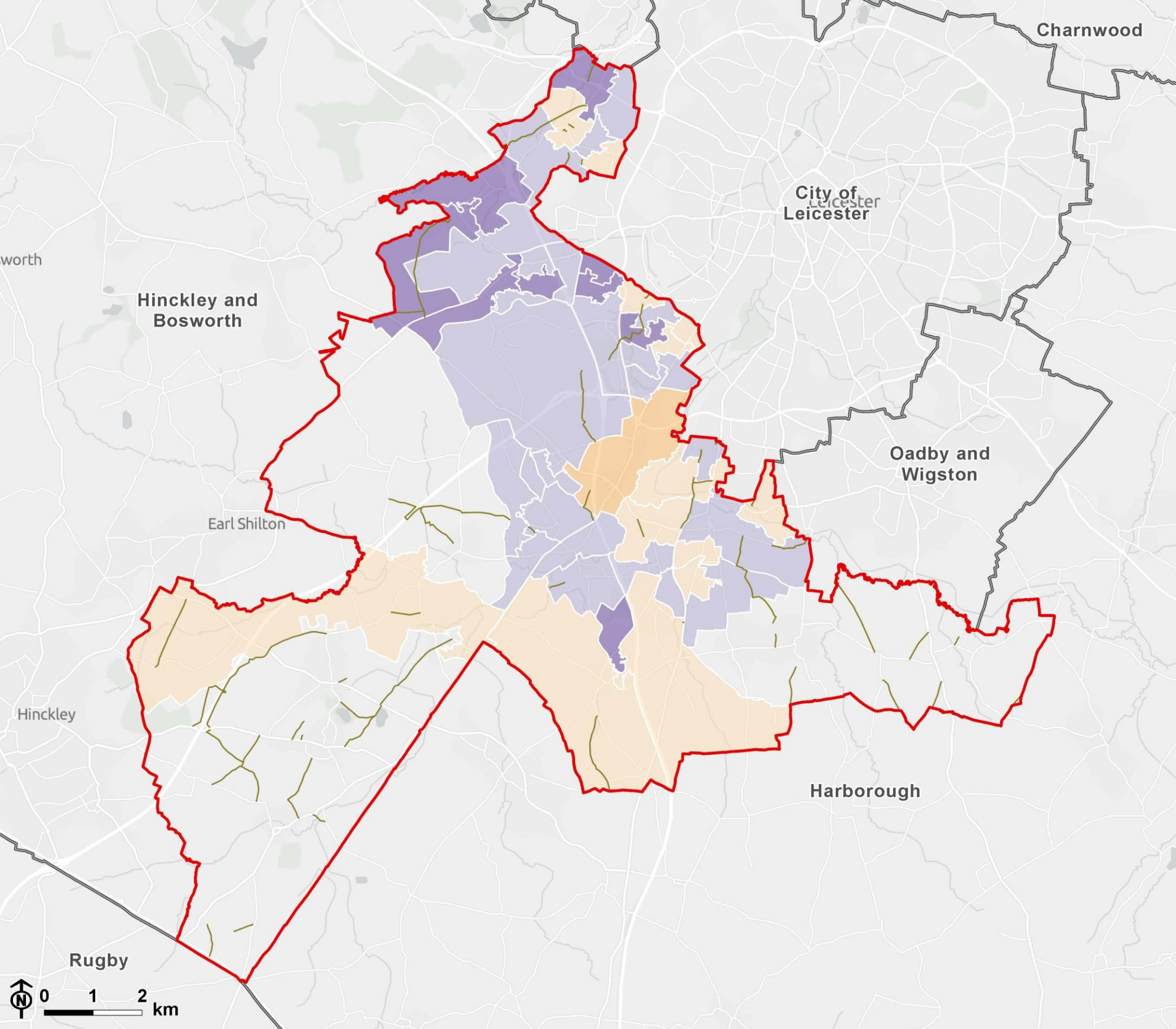
**Legend**

- Blaby district boundary
- Neighbouring Local Authority boundary
- Rivers
- Surface water

**Priority Habitats**

- 1. Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (9.8%)
- 2. Deciduous woodland (66.3%)
- 3. Good quality semi improved grassland (19%)
- 4. Lowland dry acid grassland (2%)
- 5. Lowland fens (1.7%)
- 6. Lowland meadows (0.9%)
- 7. Traditional orchard (0.4%)

Priority habitat	Hectarage (ha)	% cover of Blaby district	% within a statutory designation
1. CFPGM	38.54	0.30	16.72
2. DWOOD	261.90	2.01	15.09
3. GQSIG	74.91	5.76	5.12
4. LDAGR	7.90	0.06	98.33
5. LFENS	6.53	0.05	70.77
6. LMEAD	3.59	0.03	68.33
7. TORCH	1.58	0.01	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>394.94</b>	<b>8.21</b>	<b>14.15</b>

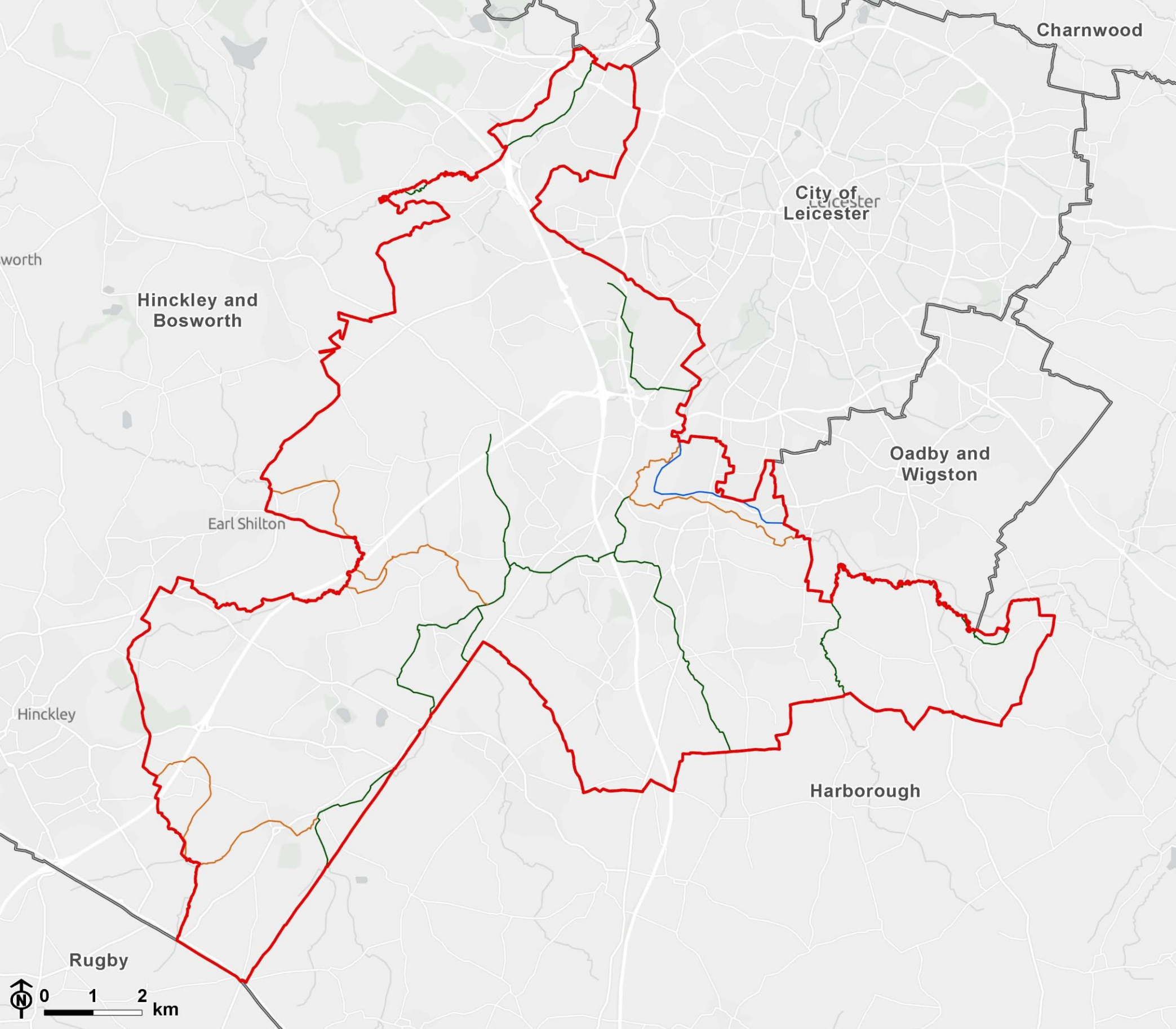


**Legend**

- Blaby district boundary
- Neighbouring Local Authority boundary
- Public Rights of Way

**Tree Equity Score**

- 64 or less
- 64 - 75
- 75 - 84
- 84 - 93
- 93 to 100



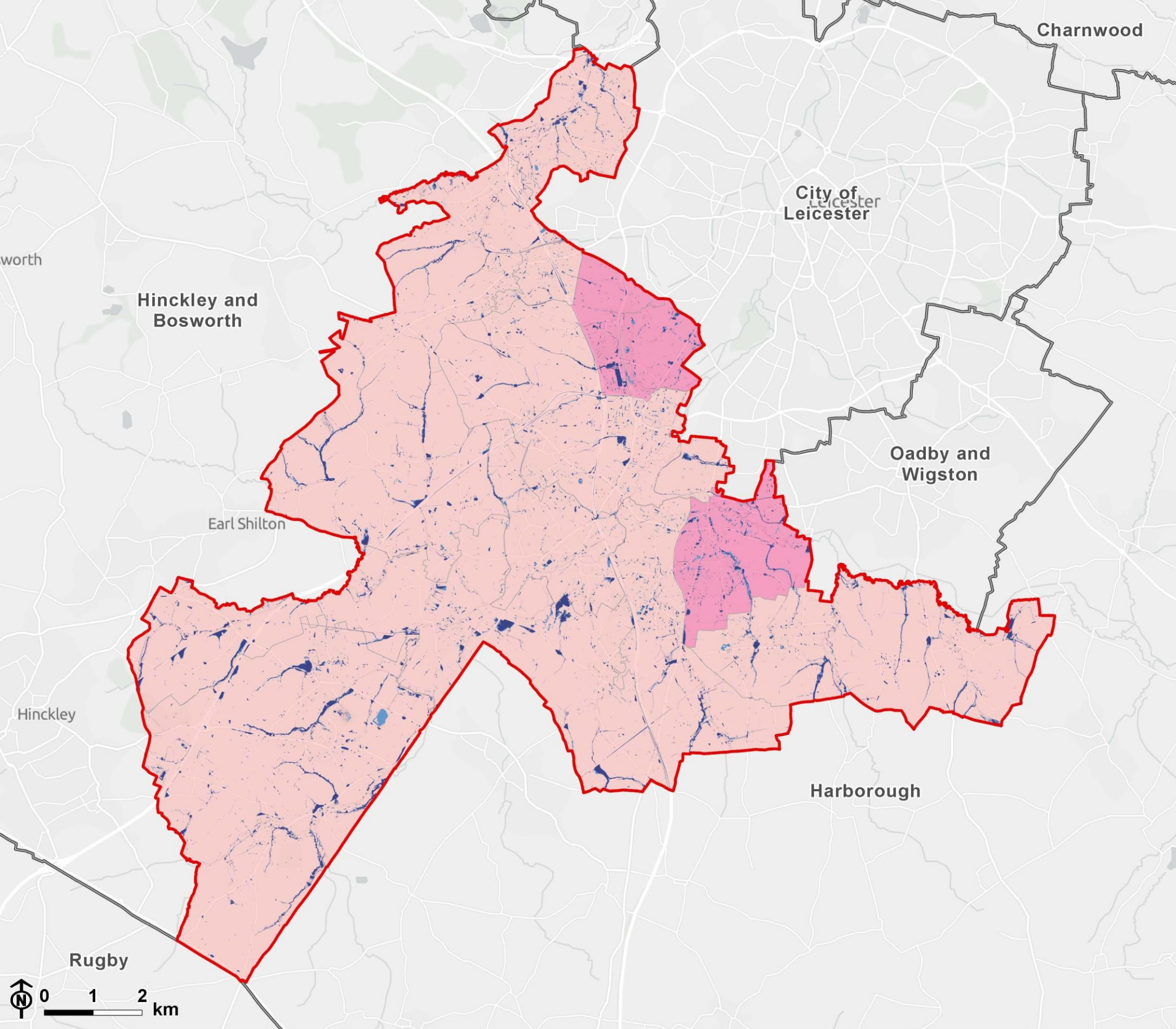
**Legend**

- Blaby district boundary
- Neighbouring Local Authority boundary

**WFD Ecological Classifications for waterbodies (2022)**

- Moderate
- Poor
- Not assessed

**Note:**  
*Certain waterbodies have not yet been classified by the Environment Agency and therefore do not appear on this map*



**Legend**

- Blaby district boundary
- Neighbouring Local Authority boundary

**Risk of surface water flooding (RoFSW)**

- High (1 in 30)
- Medium (1 in 100)

**Heat socio-spatial vulnerability**

- 0.5 to -1.5 (Relatively Low)
- 0.5 to -0.5 (Average)

RoFSW	Hectarage (ha)	% cover of Blaby District
Medium (1 in 100)	234.33	1.80
High (1 in 30)	420.57	3.22



## Appendix B

### Blaby District Council's progress against national, regional and local targets since 2020 to date

**Table B.1 National and regional targets and progress since 2020 to date (Note: These targets inform and influence the work of Blaby District Council and partners and are not expected to all be met by Blaby District Council).**

Source	Theme	Target	Type	Notes	Progress
National					
Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023	Habitat restoration / creation	Restore/create > 500,000 ha wildlife-rich habitat across England by 2042.	Quantitative	Projects such as the wildflower planting at Huncote, setting aside land for nature in parks contribute to this target (see <b>Chapter 4</b> ).	On going
Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023	Species protection	Halt species decline by 2030; increase abundance by ≥ 10% by 2042	Quantitative	Actions including installing bat boxes contribute to this target (see <b>Chapter 4</b> ).	On going
Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023	Protected areas	Protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030	Quantitative	3% (ha) of Blaby is nationally or locally designated (see <b>Chapter 2</b> ).	On going
Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023	Tree cover	Increase woodland and canopy across England to 16.5% by 2050.	Quantitative	Blaby has a canopy cover of 9.5% (see <b>Chapter 2</b> ).  Initiatives such as the Big Tree Giveaway contribute to this target (see <b>Chapter 4</b> ).	On going
Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework	LNR Designations	1 ha of LNR per 1,000 population.	Quantitative	4 LNRs sit within Blaby, covering 39 ha (0.3 % of the total district).  This is 64 ha (62 %) short of the recommended target.	On going
Regional					
Leicestershire County Council	Habitat restoration / creation	By 2026 there will be an <i>'increase the percentage of county land which promotes</i>	Qualitative	Projects such as a rewilding at Huncote, setting aside land for nature in parks	On going

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026		<i>diversity of habitat and species.</i>		contribute to this target (see <b>Chapter 4</b> ).	
Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026	Education and Engagement	By 2026 <i>'more residents actively involved in tackling climate change and protecting the environment'</i> .	Qualitative	Blaby supports several 'friends of' and volunteering groups who help to manage parks and open spaces in Blaby (see <b>Chapter 6</b> ).	On going
Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy 2023 – 2045	BNG	Work with local planning authorities when opportunities arise to explore how carbon sequestration and storage can be achieved through Biodiversity Net Gain and the LNRS	Qualitative	Blaby District Council has delivered ~6 BNG Units (see <b>Chapter 5</b> ).	On Going
Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy 2023 – 2045	Tree Cover	Plant 700,000 trees by 2030.	Quantitative	Blaby District Council contributes to this target via the Big Tree Giveaway (see <b>Chapter 4</b> ).	On Going.

**Table B.2 Local targets and progress since 2020 to date (These targets reflect the goals and ambitions of Blaby District Council as of December 2025 and are subject to on-going review and budget constraints ).**

Source	Theme	Target	Type	Notes	Progress
Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document	Designations	Increase number of Local Wildlife Sites.	Qualitative		On going
Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document	Development	0 permitted planning applications have a harmful effect of SSSIs on RIGS.	Quantitative		On going
Blaby District Plan 2024 – 2028	Habitat restoration / creation	Increase biodiversity and improve access to open green spaces.	Qualitative	Projects such as a rewilding at Huncote, setting aside land for nature in parks contribute to this target (see <b>Chapter 4</b> ).	On going
Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030	Habitat restoration / creation	Create space for nature and improve biodiversity. Work with partners and communities to protect, conserve and enhance our	Qualitative	SLAs such as that with Green Circle Nature Regeneration CIC at Fosse	On going

Source	Theme	Target	Type	Notes	Progress
		district's high quality green infrastructure and connecting wildlife populations through green corridors.		Meadows contribute to this target.	
Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030	Nature based solutions	Work with communities to provide ecological, economic, health and social benefits through natural solutions. Improving our parks, open spaces and public rights of ways.	Qualitative	SLAs such as that with Green Circle Nature Regeneration CIC at Fosse Meadows contribute to this target	On going
Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030	Planning and Policy	Encourage environmentally sensitive development through good planning policies and approaches to listed buildings and the effective application of building regulations, to protect, conserve and enhance our district's high-quality built environment and distinctive heritage.	Qualitative	Blaby's new local plan (due for publication in 2026) will include policies which provide provisions for biodiversity conservation and enhancement	On going
Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024 – 2034	Biodiversity Net Gain	To ensure all parks and open spaces are considered for any future Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) benefits.	Qualitative	Blaby District Council commissioned a report on the potential of BNG across its parks and open spaces.	On going
Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2024 – 2034	Habitat Management	To consider how parks and open spaces can be managed to enhance biodiversity and wildlife through more sympathetic maintenance, appropriate planting schemes, and other ecological enhancements.	Qualitative	Blaby is setting aside land for nature in parks, implementing reduced mowing regimes and have stopped using pesticides.	On going