

6.11 London Plan 2016 Policy 5.5: Decentralised energy networks deals with the Mayor's requirements for decentralised energy. The Council has undertaken its own decentralised energy master planning exercise, which has revealed areas of opportunity that could support a decentralised network in the Borough. There is now a sufficient evidence base to prompt more detailed investigative work. The policy below reflects the requirement of London Plan Policy 5.5: Decentralised energy networks (d) in the use of the planning process in delivering the necessary networks.

6.12 Where connection of a major development to a future decentralised energy network (DEN) is feasible, developers are required to commit to connections via a legal agreement, which will include provision for a financial payment to the Council to enable connection. Within the legal agreement a cut-off point will be defined, which will be the latest point at which a decision can be made in relation to network connection. If it is not possible to agree a connection to a network, due to the network being incomplete, an alternative energy strategy will be enacted.

POLICY DMEI 3: Decentralised Energy

A) All major developments are required to be designed to be able to connect to a Decentralised Energy Network (DEN).

B) Major developments located within 500 metres of an existing DEN, and minor new-build developments located within 100 metres, will be required to connect to that network, including provision of the means to connect to that network and a reasonable financial contribution to the connection charge, unless a feasibility assessment demonstrates that connection is not reasonably possible.

C) Major developments located within 500 metres of a planned future DEN, which is considered by the Council likely to be operational within 3 years of a grant of planning permission, will be required to provide a means to connect to that network and developers shall provide a reasonable financial contribution for the future cost of connection and a commitment to connect via a legal agreement or contract, unless a feasibility assessment demonstrates that connection is not reasonably possible.

D) The Council will support the development of DENs and energy centres in principle, subject to meeting the wider policy requirements of this plan and in particular on design and air quality.

Green Infrastructure

6.13 Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space, both urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental

benefits as well as quality of life benefits for local communities. It includes a wide range of green spaces including natural and semi-urban, rural and urban green spaces such as woodland, forests, wetlands, meadows, rivers and lakes. Parks and gardens, formal and informal, private and public as well as amenity green space such as village greens and green roofs, allotments, rural farmland, hedges, verges, highway trees, cemeteries and churchyards, green corridors, nature reserves and archaeological sites, are all considered part of the green infrastructure of the Borough.

6.14 Green infrastructure provides a fundamental aspect of the Borough's character as well as many valuable assets such as woodlands, river and canal corridors and a network of open green spaces. It also plays an important role in helping to mitigate the effects of climate change and prevent flooding. The Local Plan Part 1 sets out the strategic approach to planning positively for green infrastructure as required by the NPPF.

6.15 The Mayor of London's All London Green Grid SPG sets out a vision and spatial framework for London-wide green infrastructure and identifies opportunities for improving green infrastructure at the strategic level, such as the Colne Valley. The Council will protect and enhance green infrastructure networks, particularly those identified as part of the All London Green Grid. New green infrastructure will be supported in areas of deficiency and links to existing green infrastructure and the London Green Grid promoted.

6.16 All development proposals within the Borough's green infrastructure network will be expected to take account of Hillingdon's Landscape Character Assessment. The document identifies unique landscape typologies across the Borough, noting their sensitivities to change and provides guidelines for future design, management and maintenance of these areas. Development in these areas offers opportunities for the enhancement or restoration of unique characteristics such as hedgerow patterns.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT, METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND AND GREEN CHAINS

6.17 The extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt, areas of Metropolitan Open Land and Green Chains in the Borough is shown on the Policies Map.

Green Belt

6.18 The NPPF provides guidance on what is acceptable or not in the Green Belt and this is reflected below for clarity. Construction of new buildings, change of use or development on land in the Metropolitan Green Belt is inappropriate development unless it is for the following purposes:

- provision of appropriate facilities for agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the

openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided that the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces; and
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

6.19 Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and therefore any proposal for such development will need to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' to set aside the presumption against such development. Very special circumstances to justify otherwise inappropriate development will not exist unless the potential harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other material planning considerations.

6.20 Dwellings are inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land but where they exist, alterations and extensions will be acceptable, provided they do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

Metropolitan Open Land

6.21 Metropolitan Open Land is a London-wide designation which is defined in the London Plan as 'strategic open land within the urban area that contributes to the structure of London'. In terms of its purpose, Metropolitan Open Land fulfils one or more of the following:

- it defines the physical structure of London by being clearly distinguishable from the built up area;
- it includes open-air facilities, especially for leisure, recreation, sport, the arts and cultural activities, which serve either the whole or significant parts of London;
- it contains features or landscapes (historic, recreational, biodiversity) of either national or metropolitan value.

6.22 London Plan 2016 Policy 7.17: Metropolitan Open Land gives London's Metropolitan Open Land the same level of protection as applies

nationally to the Green Belt, including the presumption against inappropriate development and the test of very special circumstances.

Policy DMEI 4: Development in the Green Belt or on Metropolitan Open Land

A) Inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will not be permitted unless there are very special circumstances.

B) Extensions and redevelopment on sites in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be permitted only where the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, and the purposes of including land within it, than the existing development, having regard to:

- i) the height and bulk of the existing building on the site;**
- ii) the proportion of the site that is already developed;**
- iii) the footprint, distribution and character of the existing buildings on the site;**
- iv) the relationship of the proposal with any development on the site that is to be retained; and**
- v) the visual amenity and character of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.**

Green Chains

6.23 Hillingdon's Green Chains provide valuable links between sites both for wildlife and recreation, enabling plants and wildlife to migrate from one area to another and providing attractive corridors for people to walk along and enjoy. They include open spaces, watercourses, tree lined streets, footpaths and bridleways. Development can provide opportunities to create new green infrastructure such as new areas of habitat and amenity space for people. This is especially important for areas of the Borough where Green Chains are deficient and where new Green Chains can link to existing ones.

Policy DMEI 5: Development in Green Chains

A) Development in Green Chains will only be supported if it conserves and enhances the visual amenity and nature conservation value of the landscape, having regard to:

- i) the need to maintain a visual and physical break in the built-up**