

Planning Statement – Worthing Local Plan 2023

The Planning Inspector's Report on the Worthing Local Plan was received on 14 October 2022, and the Plan was formally adopted by Worthing Borough Council on 28 March 2023. The Worthing Local Plan 2023 now forms part of the statutory development plan for Worthing and supersedes the Worthing Core Strategy (2011) and the remaining saved policies of the Worthing Local Plan (2003).

Whilst the principles contained within former Core Strategy Policies 5, 13 and 16 remain relevant, they have been carried forward and updated within the adopted Worthing Local Plan. The application should therefore be assessed principally against the policies of the Worthing Local Plan 2023.

Policy DM12 – The Visitor Economy

The proposal seeks to regenerate previously unused and overgrown land to provide a seasonal community space that will support recreation, tourism and local businesses. The proposal will encourage visitors to Worthing and promote locally sourced food and drink from Sussex-based suppliers, thereby contributing to the local economy and supporting the Council's objectives of strengthening the visitor economy and enhancing the town's attractiveness as a destination.

Policy DM18 – Biodiversity

The proposal will retain the majority of the site as open green space and provide opportunities for biodiversity enhancement through habitat retention and additional planting. Approximately 10% of the site will remain as natural habitat, with further tree and planting proposals increasing ecological value and providing opportunities for carbon sequestration and wildlife enhancement. The proposal therefore represents an improvement over the site's previous unmanaged and neglected condition and contributes positively towards biodiversity objectives.

Policy DM8 – Planning for Sustainable Communities and Community Facilities

The proposal will provide an accessible, managed community space that supports health, wellbeing and outdoor recreation. Facilities including toilets, baby-changing facilities and a publicly accessible defibrillator will enhance the site's social value and improve the experience of residents and visitors alike. The proposal also seeks to create opportunities for community interaction and inclusive recreational use whilst maintaining the site's predominantly open character.

The proposal delivers social, economic and environmental benefits consistent with the overarching objectives of sustainable development set out within the National Planning Policy Framework. It regenerates long-neglected land and brings it into beneficial use without introducing permanent built development that would fundamentally alter the open nature of the site.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to accord with the objectives and principles of Policies DM12, DM18 and DM8 of the Worthing Local Plan 2023 and should be regarded as sustainable development that delivers clear and lasting benefits for the community, biodiversity and the local visitor economy.

The proposal is not seeking to urbanise or develop Goring Gap with permanent buildings, but rather to provide a seasonal, predominantly open and community-focused use that enhances public enjoyment, biodiversity and the visitor economy.