



The Steadings



Policy Name: Cotswold District Green Infrastructure Strategy

BwN Award: Policy, (Excellent)

Applicant: Cotswold District Council

Design Name: The Steadings Outline Planning Application

Development Name: The Steadings

Location: Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Type of Project: Mixed-use

Applicants: Bathurst Development Ltd, HarperCrewe Ltd

BwN Assessor: Pete Widdrington, edp

BwN Award: Design, Full (Good), subject to post-construction sign off

Key stakeholders: Bathurst Estates Ltd

The Steadings OPA and The Steadings Phase 1A

The Steadings development, brought forward by Bathurst Development Ltd, is a mixed-use development to be comprised of 2350 new homes, 705 of which are affordable housing with 60 for the elderly community. The development will also provide 9ha of employment land for commercial and community facilities, green cycle links and multi-use greenspace. The Outline Planning Permission was assessed for BwN Design Award, and planning permission granted, in part, due to the inclusion of the Standards. The subsequent Reserved Matters details were then assessed for the Full Award, with changes made here due to advice from the Design assessment, as well as further influence from the CDC GI strategy.

Phase 1A of The Steadings, developed by HarperCrewe Ltd, includes 74 dwellings and was granted planning approval, in part because it successfully applied for a BwN Full Award, in line with the requirement from Cotswold District Council. The developer was guided upon aspects for change by BwN, including moving the Local Area of Play to the central

greenspace, further guidance for correct maintenance of hedgerows and the creation of a wider green margin on the development to allow further tree growth.

A Building with Nature Policy Award externally certifies that a policy document meets the BwN Standards and will ensure delivery of high-quality green infrastructure.

A Building with Nature Design Award externally certifies that a design meets the BwN Standards and delivers high-quality green infrastructure. This award is used at an early stage of design i.e. an outline planning application in larger schemes.

A Building with Nature Full Award externally certifies that a scheme meets the BwN Standards and delivers high-quality green infrastructure, at both pre- and post-construction stages.

Introducing Building with Nature

At Building with Nature our mission is to put high-quality green infrastructure at the heart of placemaking in the UK, maximising benefits for people and wildlife. By bringing people closer to nature and building great places for us to live, work and play, development can make a major contribution towards better health and wellbeing in our communities and tackling the climate and ecological emergencies.

Building with Nature is the first evidence-based benchmark for high-quality green infrastructure in the UK. The BwN Standards Framework has been created in partnership with planners, developers, and other key stakeholders, providing a shared understanding of ‘what good looks like’ throughout the whole lifecycle of green infrastructure – from the policy framework and early-stage design, through to implementation, and long-term management and maintenance. The BwN Standards are free to use and can be downloaded from the BwN website. Building with Nature also provide a voluntary accreditation process, helping developers and other stakeholders move through the planning process more effectively, and providing an independent verification of quality when it comes to green infrastructure assets.

This case study demonstrates how this scheme’s green infrastructure meets the BwN Standards, illustrated through the BwN themes of Core, Wellbeing, Water and Wildlife.

Cotswold District Council Strategy Context

The Cotswold District Council’s (CDC) Green Infrastructure Strategy (2021) was created with the aim to protect and enhance the green infrastructure of the district for people, wildlife and the wider environment, being a driving force for climate change adaptation and mitigation through nature-based solutions within development.

The strategy was written in line with Building with Nature Standards, allowing it to gain the BwN Policy Award. The policy was then effectively considered and implemented into the design of The Steadings scheme, allowing it to align with BwN Standards and gain a BwN Full Award more rapidly. The process demonstrates the efficiency of green infrastructure standards when implemented from beginning to end, or from policy to development.

The target audience of the CDC Green Infrastructure Strategy encompasses the wide range of planning applicants. With such a range of stakeholders, the Strategy can ensure a wider understanding and application of green infrastructure assets at a district scale.

The Steadings

The Project demonstrates how adhering to BwN Standards can help to deliver co-benefits for the natural environment, developers and the community.

The CDC Green Infrastructure Strategy was successfully integrated throughout the planning application. It served to enhance the plan’s viability by enabling it to achieve the required housing demands of the region. Even more so, it ensured that the surrounding valuable landscape was protected and improved throughout the development.

These objectives were carried out by futureproofing the development. The developer adhered to a standard of 20% improvement over the current building regulations. The included Sustainability Strategy commits to the natural environment by aiming for a 14.09% Biodiversity Net Gain.

The plan encourages biodiversity through wildlife conservation, land restoration and nature protection. Water standards are upheld by minimising water usage and enhancing water collection across the site.

Finally, long-term maintenance of green infrastructure features integrated throughout the site is ensured by the Community Management Trust (CMT) established during the OPA development stage. A Landscape, Ecological and Arboriculture management Plan (LEAMP) will guide the detail.

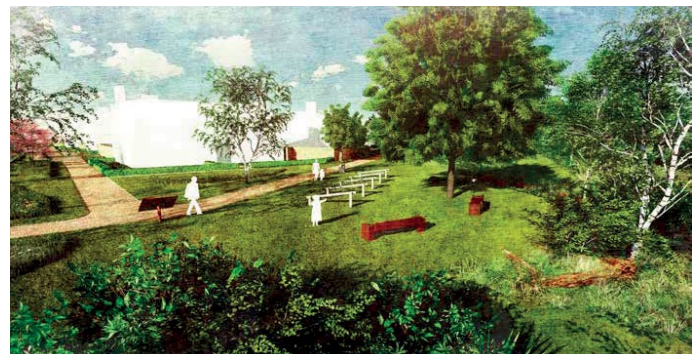


Figure 1: Impression of the trim trail

CORE Standards

- Standard 1** Optimises Multifunctionality and Connectivity
- Standard 2** Positively responds to the Climate Emergency
- Standard 3** Maximises Environmental Net Gains
- Standard 4** Champions a Context Driven Approach
- Standard 5** Creates Distinctive Places
- Standard 6** Secures Effective Place-keeping

The Steadings offers a context driven green infrastructure approach by the developer along with the **Cotswold Design Code**. Multifunctionality focused on natural resources, and community engagement is prioritized throughout the scheme. The result is a design with a natural open space, trails, a Local Area of Play and a newly created wildlife habitat.

The design themes running throughout the development reflect the nature of the Cotswolds. It informed and enhanced the character of the existing landscape and resulted in the inclusion of low stone walls and hedgerows throughout the wider built environment.

An adherence to the **Cotswold Design Strategy** and **BwN Standards** weren't the only influences on the site design. The developer's response to the climate emergency resulted in the inclusion, positioning and species selection of tree species throughout public areas. This response promotes urban cooling, carbon storage and biodiversity resilience.

The long-term management, maintenance and monitoring of green infrastructure features will be critical to the long-term success of green infrastructure benefits proposed. As such, the CMT will have overall control of the management of green infrastructure in perpetuity and will also manage the community hub (once built), activities and information for new residents. The LEAMP includes details of how appropriate management of the green infrastructure will be monitored, remediated and enforced. And the SuDS on site will be the responsibility of Bathurst Estates Ltd.



Image 1: Lord Bathurst and Peter Clegg, CEO of Bathurst Development Ltd, reviewing The Steadings plans with Dr Gemma Jerome, Building with Nature

- Key**
-  Site Boundary
 -  Existing trees and hedgerows for retention where possible and appropriate
 -  Enhanced planting/new planting/public open space and routes
 -  Public Open Space over the SAM
 -  Public Open space (including play and SuDS)
 -  Two swathes of green space including play and SuDS
 -  Allotments
 -  Sports and recreation
 -  Alignment of existing pylons



Figure 2: Green infrastructure will be assessed at the Post-Construction Check as part of the Full Accreditation sign-off

WELLBEING Standards

- Standard 7** Brings Nature Closer to People
- Standard 8** Supports Equitable and Inclusive Places

A focus on increased accessibility throughout the entire site worked to promote **BwN Wellbeing Standards**, as well as encouraging an accessibility-friendly green infrastructure strategy. This two-pronged design intention led to the development of linking cycle and pedestrian routes on the site, in line with the Cotswold Design Code’s promotion of accessibility, including **‘hard to reach’ groups** who may require specific provision. Cycle and pedestrian routes were designed with a green infrastructure-driven approach, meaning they were made from permeable materials.

Beyond the directives outlined in the CDC Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards and the BwN Assessor greatly influenced the accessibility of the design’s green spaces and community routes. This influence can be seen mirrored in The Steadings Green Infrastructure Asset mapping, the corresponding central greenspace and travel routes that promote **low-carbon transport**.

BwN specifically recommended the **movement** of the Local Area of Play to the Central Green Space between the Outline Proposal and Reserved Matters. This guidance ensured its accessibility within the development and the wider community. This suggestion was in line with the Fields in Trust Guidelines.



Figure 3: Plan for The Steadings Phase 1a showing distribution of GI

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Figure 4: Showing permeability and movement for people and wildlife

WATER Standards

- Standard 9** Delivers Climate Resilient Water Management
- Standard 10** Brings Water Closer to People

The integration of SuDS features into the development was a key focus of The Steadings strategy, specifically from a perspective of **developer engagement with the Council**. The result of this engagement with the CDC was a Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy that heavily advised the SuDS design on site. The physical results included advanced water management principles such as a large attenuation balancing pond, controlled outflow to a drainage network and permeable paving in parking zones.

The focus wasn't only on proper integration of water management features. The SuDS design on site benefits

biodiversity and its visual amenity. For example, around the attenuation pond, extra enhancements were included such as drought tolerant species of wildflowers, trees and shrubs. This diversity promotes resilience in the face of climate change.

Within the Reserved Matters, a **SuDS Maintenance and Management Plan** was included, highlighting the original matters brought up in the Outline Planning decision notice. Since the CDC's Strategy falls closely in line with BwN values, the policies aided in the Assessment and Accreditation process.

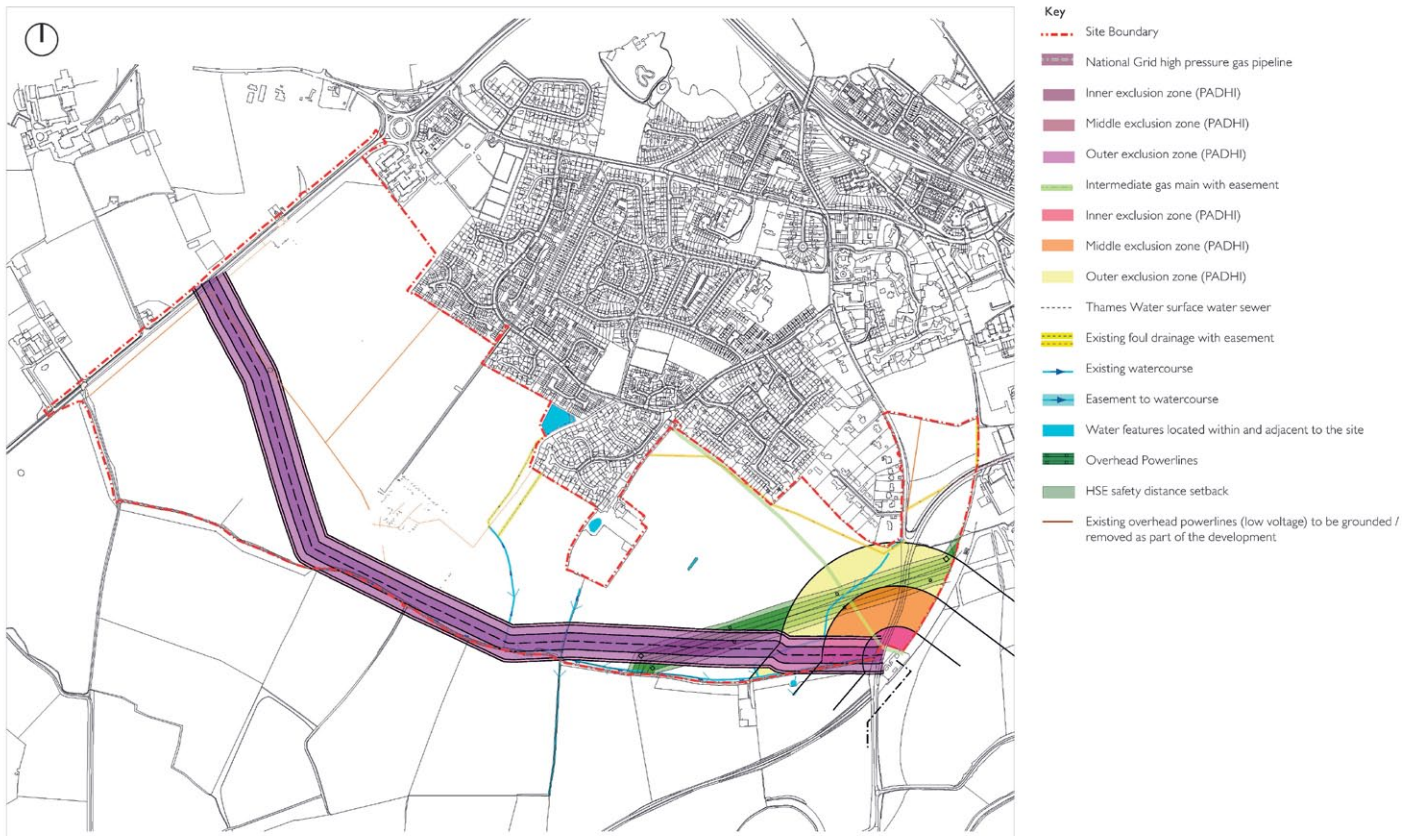


Figure 5: Showing context for water management and other constraints affecting location and management of GI on site

WILDLIFE Standards

Standard 11 Delivers Wildlife Enhancement

Standard 12 Underpins Nature's Recovery

Wildlife Recovery Network mapping plays a key part in the strategy for The Steadings. It has helped highlight areas in need of greater linkages to conjoin existing biodiversity assets with those in development on site. One such area of acknowledgement is to incorporate green features, such as bird or bat boxes, into new and existing buildings to conjoin networks from external areas.



Image 2: Illustrative example of proposed bird box, one type of integral GI feature proposed at Steadings Phase 1a as a biodiversity measure

Other green infrastructure on site enhances the biodiversity goals of the scheme. These features includes hibernacula and hedgehog pathways to pull out key wildlife corridors created throughout the site. Planting of native species also contributes to the enhanced resilience, particularly because of recommendations given by BWN.



Image 3: Site context – existing hedgerows to be retained and enhanced

Further introduction of hedgerows was given between the Outline and Reserved Matters for the continuity of ecological corridors. At BwN recommendation, the planting mix of these was altered from the standard planting palette. These enhanced the site's biodiversity and helped support the Wildlife Recovery Network that was targeted in the CDC's Strategy.



Figure 6: The approach to GI provision at The Steadings aims to create new habitat in and around where people live, optimising access to 'nature on the doorstep'. Key to this will be a commitment to nature-friendly planting and maintenance regimen, with a plan to limit mowing where possible, and maximise biodiversity along the edges of more formal greenspaces, as here in the artist's impression of public open space

Bathurst Development Ltd

Policy Applications

The Steadings meets CDC Local Plan policies. The most relevant policies include Policy EN2: Development Respecting Character and Local Appearance, Policy EN8: Biodiversity and Geodiversity, and Policy EN14: Managing Flood Risk.

The BwN Award offers reassurance to a wide range of stakeholders that The Steadings moves beyond implementation of CDC policies e.g. mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement is met through the developer's 14.1% target, higher than the minimum 10% requirement.

Furthermore, key principles are met, such as 'create and maintain sustainable places' through the Community Management Trust and improving 'health and wellbeing for all' with the pedestrian and cycle path network within and outside of the development.

“ With the Steadings we want to create a space for a new community that is integrated into the town Cirencester, somewhere where people will wish to live and work, with green infrastructure that people can get outside and enjoy. We also wish to address the impact of climate change through the creation of landscaped green infrastructure. For example, planting the right trees in the right places for the right reasons.

Having a BwN Award is great because it gave us a guideline as to what we need to be doing, who we should be consulting with, and what steps we needed to take to create a development that is friendly to nature. With this extra guidance we have been able to introduce a huge amount of

Summary

The Steadings exemplifies the process of working with Building with Nature's approach to policy making and physical development. It demonstrated the positive outcomes and the challenges encountered when taking a process from planning principles into deliverables at the full planning application stage.

The Steadings OPA was a process of multiple stakeholder engagement, particularly between the applicant and the Council. Both were committed to the high ecological and land values of the site. It was this commitment to delivering quality that was primarily responsible for securing the BwN Design Award and The Steadings Phase 1A Full Award.

The Steadings achieved a Full (Good) Award since there were some areas in which the BwN Assessor believed more could be achieved. Examples of these opportunities included drainpipes that could be replaced for swales. It is hoped the lessons learnt here can be applied to the rest of The Steadings Development.

green infrastructure, which will be managed in the long-term through a Community Management Trust.

Lord Bathurst, Bathurst Development Ltd



Figure 7: The design offers meeting spaces with benches set around trees

Useful Links

Building with Nature: www.buildingwithnature.org.uk www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/video-case-studies

Applicant: www.cotswold.gov.uk , www.bathurstestate.co.uk and www.harpercrewe.co.uk

BwN Assessor: www.edp-uk.co.uk

Download the BwN Standards: www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/standards-form



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