

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCILCOMMUNITY SERVICES AND OPEN SPACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
– 2ND FEBRUARY 2021EXECUTIVE – 8TH FEBRUARY 2021Report by the Director of Environment and Community Services on the Wandsworth Biodiversity StrategySUMMARY

The Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy demonstrates what will be done within the borough to protect and enhance biodiversity and to make nature accessible to all. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to two statutory duties: "biodiversity duty" to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of policy and decision making; and the "duty to cooperate" by providing a mechanism for work with neighbouring boroughs, statutory agencies and other landowners or land managers; to ensure that biodiversity is suitably protected and improved. The strategy considers biodiversity both within the boundaries of the borough and at the landscape level and species which are relatively mobile across large areas. It also ensures that where protected or designated sites cover more than one borough, the means are in place to deliver a consistent and inclusive approach to effective management. A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) will be produced in 2022 by a partnership including relevant landowners, land and water managers, biological recorders, community representatives and policy makers. This partnership will work together to agree priorities for borough-wide and area specific action at the landscape scale based on the principles of "bigger, better, more, joined up and promote".

This report acknowledges that the strategy and the subsequent biodiversity action plan are only the starting point. Through partnership working and community engagement, the council will build on this strategy to develop and deliver actions to benefit biodiversity across the next ten years. This will include challenging everyone who lives and works in Wandsworth to participate to increase the quality and quantity of biodiversity.

The Director of Resources comments that there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs of development of the first Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy and future partnership working to devise and deliver the first Wandsworth Biodiversity Action Plan by 2022 will be met from within existing approved budgets. Any actions identified which cannot be met from within existing resources will be the subject of future reports to the relevant committee.

Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy

GLOSSARY

BAP	–	Biodiversity Action Plan
INNS	–	Invasive Non-native Species (those recognised as being detrimental to biodiversity, society or the economy)
LWS	–	Local Wildlife Site
Millennium Ecosystem Assessment	–	The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment assessed the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. This involved the work of more than 1,360 experts worldwide. Their findings provide a scientific appraisal of the condition and trends in the world's ecosystems and the services they provide, as well as the scientific basis for action to conserve and use them sustainably
SINCs	–	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (also known as Local Wildlife Sites)
WESS	–	Wandsworth Environment and Sustainability Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Community Services and Open Spaces Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to support the recommendations to the Executive in paragraph 3.
2. If the Community Services and Open Spaces Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves any views, comments or additional recommendations on this report these will be submitted to the Executive and/or the appropriate committee(s) for consideration.
3. The Executive is recommended to:
 - (a) Approve the first Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy as detailed in Appendix 1;
 - (b) Authorise partnership working to devise and deliver the first Wandsworth Biodiversity Action Plan by 2022 as detailed in paragraph 6.

INTRODUCTION

4. Wandsworth is home to 24 different biodiversity habitats and over 3,149 different individual species. The habitats range from nationally important heathland on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath through to the internationally renowned River Thames; from lakes on housing estates and college campuses, to woodlands and grasslands on Wandsworth and Tooting Commons; and of course, private gardens. 23% of the borough footprint is designated as Local Wildlife Sites (sometimes called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, or "SINCs" in London) with roughly half of these sites being parks, commons or other greenspaces for which Wandsworth Council has responsibility.
5. This first Biodiversity Strategy identifies the key principles which will guide the priorities for borough-wide collaborative action at the landscape scale to protect and enhance biodiversity and to make nature accessible to all:
 - (a) Better: improving the quality of existing priority habitats and landscapes
 - (b) Bigger: expanding the areas of priority habitats and landscapes
 - (c) More: creating new areas of habitat or new landscapes

- (d) Joined-up: improving links and connectivity between habitats at the landscape scale
 - (e) Promote: informing local individuals and communities about how they can understand and appreciate priority habitats and landscapes and crucially the role they have in the delivering measures to nurture wildlife on their doorstep.
6. It makes a commitment to coordinating a Wandsworth Biodiversity Partnership, to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) by 2022. The plan will be flexible to reflect the dynamics of our borough's landscape. This partnership will include relevant landowners, land and water managers, biological recorders, community representatives and policy makers. The group will then meet biannually to review progress against strategy and BAP targets and to deliver forthcoming priorities. It is also clear that the strategy as a whole will require its first full review following the assent of the Environment Bill 2019-2021.
 7. Details for actions across strategic themes outline the measures required to ensure that the evidence base is kept up to date, that priority places, habitats and species are protected, well managed and enhanced, and that overarching issues such as invasive non-native species, and biodiversity net gain are understood and necessary guidance is made available. There is an emphasis on the key role individual residents and communities can take, including commitments to support this through the provision of advice on good gardening for wildlife and participating in environmental education. Action will also be targeted on an area by area basis to ensure focus and localised response.
 8. The developing Tree Strategy for the borough, to be presented to a future Community Services and Open Spaces Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will compliment, reference and highlight synergies with the principles adopted for the Biodiversity Strategy.

EVIDENCE BASE

9. The Strategy lays out the importance of an up to date evidence base, including maps, detailing the distribution of priority places, habitat types and species within the borough. These data originate from many sources and include records of species and habitats generated by land managers, recording schemes and societies and individual wildlife recorders, both volunteer and professional. The support needed to facilitate the ongoing capture of these records on a regular and systematic basis is highlighted so that decisions continue to be made based on up to date and accurate information that forms a trusted evidence base.

PRIORITY PLACES

10. Priority places for biodiversity are often given the name Local Wildlife Site (LWS) or Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and are core areas of high biodiversity value. They are identified and selected locally using scientifically determined criteria. Currently there are 31 Local Wildlife Sites in Wandsworth of which 15 are owned and managed by Wandsworth Council. The strategy details the protection currently afforded to these places through the Local Plan and highlights the ways in which positive conservation management can be defined and delivered.

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11. Some of Wandsworth's other Local Wildlife Sites are adjacent to or cross over into other neighbouring boroughs or are physically connected to nearby sites through linear habitat features. In such cases the strategy highlights the opportunities to cooperate to ensure that the management of these sites is not compromised by inappropriate activities, and that the condition and integrity of all such sites is maintained or improved. This is particularly important in terms of securing and delivering a healthy and well established 'green infrastructure' for the borough, through continuous green corridors that provide benefit for people and wildlife alike.

PRIORITY HABITATS

12. Priority habitats have been selected for inclusion in the strategy if they are regional, national or local habitats that can be found in Wandsworth and that are home to rare and declining or characteristic species. Conservation effort is required to maintain and enhance both the spatial area of these habitats and the quality and condition of them, to prevent harm or loss to the species they support.
13. Nature recovery networks, sometimes referred to as "urban greening" seek to join up areas of habitat that sit outside protected places and allow wildlife to thrive and move through the landscape. Actions, as defined in the strategy, are required to improve, expand and connect habitats, to address wildlife decline and also to provide wider environmental benefits for people.

PRIORITY SPECIES

14. Many species are afforded legal protection and for some that protection extends to where they live, roost, feed or routes they use to travel through the landscape. In many cases these places and habitats are already recognised and protected for their biodiversity value. However, some key species are not solely reliant upon protected places or habitats but have adapted to share features within the built environment which might not otherwise be recognised as having biodiversity value. It can often be difficult to ensure that the protections afforded to these species are understood and applied.
15. Priority species have therefore been specifically identified within the strategy where they would benefit from a raised profile and a specific focus on measures to conserve and enhance them. This will allow actions to protect the species themselves, the landscapes that they rely on and to guide how built features and surrounding landscapes can be enhanced to better support them.

INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES AND BIOSECURITY

16. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment lists invasive non-native species (INNS) as one of the main threats to biodiversity worldwide, second only to habitat loss. They are also economically damaging, costing Britain an estimated £1.7 billion per year. They have an impact on biodiversity by displacing or preying upon native species, by destroying habitats, or by introducing new diseases or parasites. Biosecurity is the name given to procedures or measures designed to protect the wider environment from the harm caused by INNS. When undertaking work to prevent, control or eradicate INNS it is imperative that biosecurity measures are put in place to prevent the inadvertent introduction or spread of unwanted species.

17. The strategy explains how INNS will be identified in Wandsworth and prioritised for control and eradication, including assigning the required biosecurity. It also outlines a commitment to prevent the use of INNS in the landscaping of new developments or on land and water bodies owned and managed by the Council.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

18. This is an emerging development planning tool which is expected to become mandatory in the planning process following the assent of the Environment Bill 2019-2021. It is the mechanism by which measurable ecological enhancement is secured as an additional tier in the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy. The strategy includes a commitment to develop how this policy is delivered in Wandsworth once relevant legislation and guidance is published.

RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

19. Private domestic gardens cover 716 hectares in the borough, which is almost exactly 20% of the total area (3,522 hectares). Increasingly the borough is also home to 'communal' areas of green space within or surrounding privately owned housing estates, social housing and around small to medium business premises. This provides borough residents and business with a significant opportunity to make positive contributions to biodiversity on their doorstep. The strategy is clear that local biodiversity will benefit significantly from positive action by communities and that a concerted effort to significantly improve the quality and quantity of information available to guide this is required.
20. Environmental education is the best method to encourage access to and positive engagement with nature for everyone in the borough. It fosters an appreciation of priority places and habitats and nurtures an enjoyment of and empathy for priority species. Environmental education should be available to all, regardless of age and should be delivered in ways that cause no harm to, and leave no trace within, the places and habitats being studied. Again, the strategy identifies ways in which this can be supported within the borough.

FUNDING AND RESOURCING

21. As a direct result of the "biodiversity duty" on public bodies this strategy has a key role in directing and prioritising existing effort and finances to secure the greatest gains for biodiversity. It also affords a clear framework to seek to secure third party funding to deliver discreet actions where a collaborative approach to delivery requires clear and distinct coordination.

MEETING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WANDSWORTH ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY (WESS)

22. The Biodiversity Strategy is the first step towards the completion of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Wandsworth by 2022. The WESS included a commitment to publish a BAP to demonstrate measures to protect and promote biodiversity and to produce literature as guidance and advice for residents on measures they can take to nurture wildlife in their residential gardens.

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COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

23. The Director of Resources comments that there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs of development of the first Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy and future partnership working to devise and deliver the first Wandsworth Biodiversity Action Plan by 2022 will be met from within existing approved budgets. Any actions identified which cannot be met from within existing resources will be the subject of future reports to the relevant committee.

CONCLUSION

24. The first Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy and the resultant Biodiversity Action Plan will steer collaborative working to protect and enhance biodiversity at the landscape scale. It sets out clear measures to inform and support efforts across the community to ensure meaningful contributions for wildlife from individual private gardens to cross borough working for the benefit of priority habitats.

The Town Hall
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PAUL CHADWICK
Director of Environment and Community Services

25th January 2021

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (<https://democracy.wandsworth.gov.uk>) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the Democratic Services Officer (Chris Kelly, 020 8871 6021 or email Chris.kelly@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk) can supply it if required.

Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy 2020

1. **Introduction:**

Our vision for biodiversity in Wandsworth is that effective actions are taken to ensure it is recognised, valued, conserved, enhanced and wisely used; that we are maintaining ecosystem services and improving their resilience; that through these measures we are contributing to sustaining a healthy planet and the wellbeing of our communities.

2. **What is biodiversity?**

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms (including animals, plants, and fungi) and all its interactions. It matters, in and of itself: many people agree that we have a moral duty to protect the other species of animals and plants with which we share this planet and to maintain diversity and genetic variety. It is important for people: most of us to enjoy being in natural landscapes, interacting with wildlife and being amongst wildlife habitats such as woodlands and grasslands and there is clear evidence that contact with nature is beneficial to our physical and mental wellbeing. Biodiversity also provides economic and functional benefits known as ecosystem services: from habitats that help reduce flooding by absorbing, slowing the flow and storing water, through to individual species that pollinate food crops, to habitats that ameliorate the effects of climate change and extreme weather events

3. **What biodiversity do we have in Wandsworth?**

Wandsworth is home to 24 different habitats and over 3,149 different species. The habitats range from nationally important heathland on Wimbledon Common & Putney Heath through to the internationally renowned River Thames; from lakes on housing estates and college campuses to woodlands and grasslands on the Commons; and of course, our own gardens. The species also vary from common garden birds to Red Data Book bees; breeding groups of grey herons to individual roosting bats; and a range of managed species such as fish and plants. 23% of the borough is designated as Local Wildlife Sites with roughly half of these sites being parks, commons or other greenspaces managed by Wandsworth Council.

4. **Why a Biodiversity Strategy for Wandsworth?**

This strategy allows us to clearly explain what can be done within the borough to protect and enhance biodiversity and to make nature accessible to all. It will explain who has responsibilities and opportunities to participate in this work and will prioritise tasks which can secure the best improvements for biodiversity. It allows each of us participating to clearly inform others of our aims and objectives and will provide guidance for best practice.

It also enables Wandsworth Council to deliver their statutory 'duty to cooperate' by providing a mechanism for work with neighbouring boroughs, statutory agencies and other landowners or land managers to ensure that biodiversity is suitably protected and improved. This includes biodiversity both within the boundaries of the borough and at the landscape level and across a wider area, especially in the case of important habitats like heathland, rivers and the Tidal Thames, and for species which are

relatively mobile including birds and invertebrates. It also ensures that where protected or designated sites cover more than one borough, the means are in place to deliver a consistent and inclusive approach to effective management.

5. **Strategy implementation and review:**

Implementation: this strategy will be implemented through the creation and delivery of a subsidiary Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which will be devised by a partnership including relevant landowners, land and water managers, biological recorders and policy makers. This group will work together to agree priorities for borough-wide action at the landscape scale based on the following principles:

- i. Better – improving the quality of existing priority habitats / landscapes
- ii. Bigger – expanding the areas of priority habitats / landscapes
- iii. More – creating new habitats / landscapes
- iv. Joined-up – improving links and connections between habitats at the landscape scale
- v. Promote – informing people about how they can enjoy access to priority landscapes and work with us to benefit biodiversity

Ongoing engagement: Implementation relies on a partnership approach to ensure that these aims of “better, bigger, more and joined up” can be achieved and promoted across the borough. Along with individuals who own private gardens, the borough is host to a variety of different landowners and land managers including Wandsworth Council (various departments), Network Rail, Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, Transport for London, NHS, and HMP Wandsworth. Most of these are public authorities and hence have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity when carrying out their activities and in order to do this will have their own Biodiversity Action Plans or Strategies. Where these are relevant to specific places within Wandsworth or where they target habitats or species which we have in common, their aims will be reflected in the BAP and where practical vice versa. For example, London Underground highlight the woodland habitats along the District Line in their biodiversity action plans and the Council’s Housing Horticultural Services team are reviewing their baseline habitat information and identifying where the creation of new habitats can aid biodiversity connectivity across the borough.

For monitoring the implementation of the strategy, key partners will meet twice yearly, to review the past six months progress and to identify and to focus on the next six months priorities. An update will then be made publicly available via the Enable Leisure and Culture website.

The Government Single Data List (SDL) indicator no. 160 for local nature conservation / biodiversity also provides a mechanism for an annual summary of progress. This requires the submission of data about the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites (which are also known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, or SINC in London) where positive conservation management is being achieved.

Action:

- A partnership will be formed and will devise and deliver a Biodiversity Action Plan
- Relevant partners will meet twice a year to monitor the implementation of this strategy and the biodiversity action plan
- Information about the management of Local Wildlife Sites will be collated from relevant landowners to inform the annual SDL160 submission.

Review: This Biodiversity Strategy will be reviewed at appropriate intervals (no longer than ten-year intervals). The need for review may be influenced by for example changes to legislation in relation to biodiversity; changes to locally important strategic documents such as the Council's Local Plan; or new information advising us of changes in the quality of habitats or distribution of species.

- It is intended that the first review is undertaken once the Environment Bill 2020 receives royal assent to ensure the principles remain aligned with national legislation.

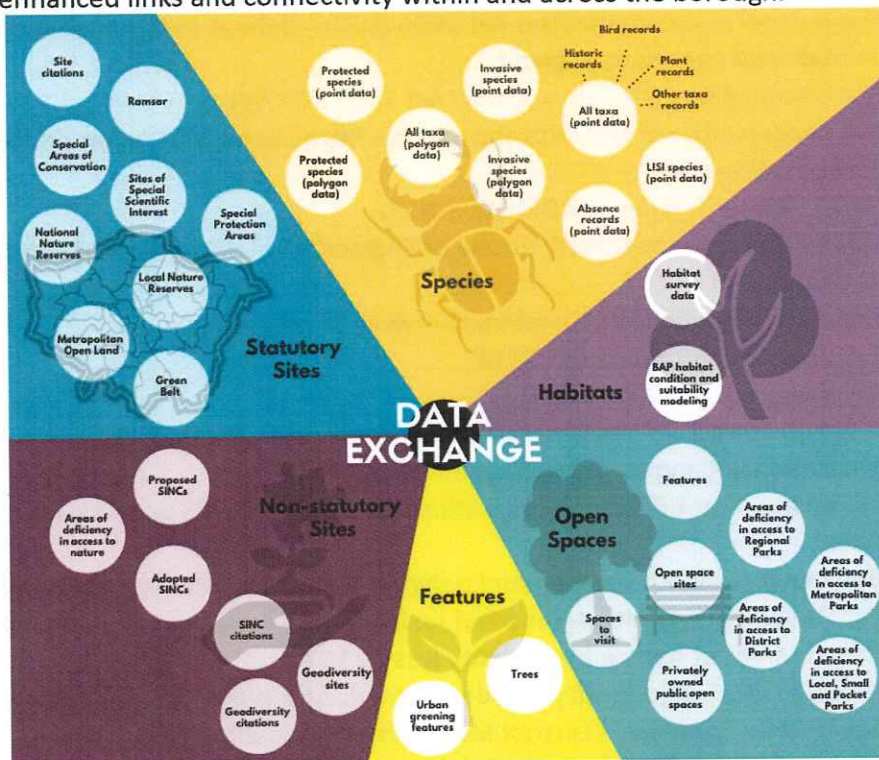
6. Background – Policy and Legislation: This strategy recognises that wide range of European, national, regional and local legislation, policy and guidance has a bearing on biodiversity conservation, including (but not limited to):

- a) The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended (WCA)
- b) The Natural and Communities Act 2006 (NERC) defines national priority habitats and species in England
- c) The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)
- d) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 as amended (Habitats Directive)
- e) The EU Water Framework Directive 2000
- f) Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network 2010
- g) England's Wildlife and Ecosystems Services Strategy 2011
- h) National Pollinator Strategy 2014
- i) Infrastructure Act 2015
- j) 'A Green Future' 25 Year Environmental Plan 2018 (DEFRA 2018)
- k) The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)
- l) The Environment Bill 2020 (once adopted – currently still awaiting royal assent)
- m) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (DEFRA 2011) concentrates instead on landscape scale conservation, with an overall target of halting biodiversity loss by 2020
- n) BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development
- o) The Thames River Basin District Management Plan 2015
- p) The London Plan 2016 (adopted)
- q) The London Environment Strategy 2018
- r) Connecting with London's Nature: The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy
- s) All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance 2012
- t) The Wandsworth Local Plan specifically Policy PL4 and DMO4

Relationship to local plans and strategies for the wider environment: this strategy has emerged in response to actions identified in the Wandsworth Environment and Sustainability Strategy 2019, WESS (as amended). It will inform and support the revised Wandsworth Local Plan including the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment update, and the Habitats Regulation Assessment. It will also inform the emerging work of the Healthy Streets Forum and the Council’s Climate Change Steering Group including any plans and strategies that are produced by them.

7. The evidence base:

Throughout this strategy there is reference to priority places, habitats and species but how do we determine where and what these are? A service level agreement is in place with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) in accordance with “Guidance for Local Authorities on accessing biodiversity information¹”. Under this SLA, GiGL regularly provides accurate and current data, including maps, detailing the distribution of priority places, habitat types and species within the borough. This information can be used to analyse changes in the area and condition of habitats and by extension inform any changes to Local Wildlife Sites or changes in any Areas of Deficiency in access to nature (AoD). It can also be used to analyse the spatial distribution of priority species to inform works to improve supporting habitats and features. Modelling the data can also inform us about the best locations to seek enhanced links and connectivity within and across the borough.



¹ Guidance for Local Authorities on accessing biodiversity information published jointly by Association of Local Environmental Record Centres, National Biodiversity Network and Association of Local Government Ecologists

GiGL data is incorporated into Wandsworth Council's own geographical information mapping (GIS) systems and is then used to inform current and future planning policy, for example revisions to the Local Plan. It also informs decisions made by planning officers regarding development applications on and adjacent to priority sites or locations where protected or priority habitats and species are recorded, or within any existing AoD for access to nature. It is also used by Enable Leisure and Culture officers to inform the management of priority places and habitats to ensure that maintenance actions achieve the aims of improving biodiversity quality and targeting specific actions for priority species.

The data curated by GiGL originates from many sources and includes data generated by land managers, recording schemes and societies and individual wildlife recorders, both volunteer and professional. However, there is an ongoing need to ensure that data is captured on a regular and systematic basis so that it remains up to date and accurate and can be a trusted evidence base. Efforts to continue to collect data and indeed to support wildlife recording will be crucial to assess the effectiveness of actions to benefit biodiversity and to inform the regular review of this Biodiversity Strategy.

Action:

- Undertake regular surveys of existing and candidate Local Wildlife Sites to ensure the Local Plan evidence base remains fit-for-purpose.
- Co-ordinate and support existing and new volunteer biological recorders to manage biological records ensuring links with GiGL and appropriate networks are maintained and enhanced
- Support the evolving Wandsworth Wildlife and Nature Conservation group which aims to deliver science-based conservation efforts to record, educate and conserve
- Coordinate and deliver training programmes to volunteers in standard survey methods for priority species.
- Seek and support a "biodiversity champion" within each greenspace Friends group.

8. Priority Places:

These are often given the name Local Wildlife Site (LWS) or Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and are the core areas of high biodiversity value. They are identified and selected locally using scientifically determined criteria and based on surveys, as advised by the London Wildlife Sites Board which also offers help and guidance. Currently there are 31 Local Wildlife Sites in Wandsworth which were selected in 2000 based on survey data from 1999. Of these 15 are owned and managed by Wandsworth Council, with ownership of the remainder falling to other local authorities, Network Rail, educational bodies, commercial and private sectors.

Protection for Priority Places: Local Wildlife Sites are generally afforded protection from development harm through the Local Plan process and the approach taken when determining individual planning applications. In considering a planning application, the

council has a statutory duty to have regard to the provisions of the Local Plan and any other "material considerations" such as Local Wildlife Sites designations.

The Wandsworth Local Plan is currently under review as this Strategy is being written however the currently approved plan protects local wildlife sites very specifically through the Core Strategy Policy relating to open space and the natural environment PL4 e: *The biodiversity value of the borough will be protected and enhanced including that of the River Thames, River Wandle and Beverley Brook and species and habitats identified in the London Biodiversity Action Plan and through Local Nature Partnerships and Policy PL4 f: New development should avoid causing ecological damage and propose full mitigation and compensation measures for ecological impacts which do occur. Where appropriate new development should include new or enhanced habitat or design and landscaping which promotes biodiversity, and provision for management, particularly in areas identified as deficient in nature conservation.*

The associated Development Management Policies Document Policy DMO4 Nature Conservation states : a. *Development which would cause harm to a Special Area of Conservation, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (see Appendix 2), other site with important bio/geodiversity value, or any protected species will not be permitted unless any damaging impacts can be prevented by appropriate mitigation measures or use of conditions and b. All development proposals should aim to provide gains for biodiversity. New habitats and biodiversity features should consider native and priority species, taking into account species' adaptability to climate change. Development proposals in areas deficient in access to nature, as defined by GiGL and made available via their website, will be required to incorporate enhancements to nature conservation.*

Management of Priority Places: There are no specific management responsibilities conferred on owners of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) although those that are public bodies have a statutory duty to have regard to biodiversity conservation in carrying out their functions, including land management. Additionally, there is a DEFRA requirement on the local authority to report annually (Single Data List 160-00 formerly called NI197 or ENV10) on the percentage of Local Wildlife Sites in positive conservation management. Their effective conservation is key to meeting national and international objectives for biodiversity and so the figures from this report also contribute to England biodiversity indicator 16 "Integrating biodiversity considerations into local decision making".

Positive conservation management has been defined as being delivered in several ways including the implementation of a site-specific management plan, participation in agri-environment schemes, collaborative working with relevant specialist organisations e.g. Butterfly Conservation, appropriate horticultural maintenance contract specifications and so forth. By participating in active management of their Local Wildlife Sites, public bodies can also demonstrate their commitments to

delivering their statutory duty to have regard to biodiversity when undertaking their functions.

Some of Wandsworth's Local Wildlife Sites are adjacent to or cross over into other neighbouring boroughs or are physically connected to nearby sites through linear habitat features. In such cases it is essential that we cooperate through appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the management of these sites is not compromised by inappropriate activities, and that the condition and integrity of all such sites is maintained or improved. This is particularly important in terms of securing and delivering a healthy and well established 'green infrastructure' for the borough, through continuous green corridors that provide benefit for people and wildlife alike.

Action:

- To ensure that the areas of greatest value for biodiversity are recognised, borough wide habitat (and in some cases specific species) surveys will be undertaken at intervals no greater than 10 years apart.
- Local Wildlife Sites will be afforded protection from development through appropriate policies in the Wandsworth Local Plan
- The Council will ensure that all its Local Wildlife Sites will have 10-year management and maintenance plans and will annually review the progress of actions arising.
- Support and advice will be provided to other landowners and managers, including for sites with shared responsibilities, to develop relevant biodiversity management and maintenance plans or programmes for their sites.

9. Priority Habitats:

Priority habitats have been selected as they are regional, national and local habitats found in Wandsworth that are home to rare and declining or characteristic species. Conservation effort is required to maintain and enhance both the spatial area of these habitats and the quality and condition of them, to prevent harm or loss to the species they support. Habitats are more resilient to adverse impacts if they are bigger in size, better in quality, if there are more parcels and if these parcels are joined up².

Nature recovery networks: Sometimes referred to as "urban greening" these networks join up areas of habitat that sit outside protected places and allow wildlife to thrive and move through the landscape. Actions are required to improve, expand and connect habitats, to address wildlife decline and also to provide wider environmental benefits for people. Contributory habitats can be managed or created through housing estates, across existing greenspaces, using road verges, along river and railway corridors, jumping through private domestic gardens and leaping across the roofs of tall buildings.

² *Making Space for Nature Sir John Lowton 2010*

Priority habitats in Wandsworth are:

- Acid Grassland
- Neutral (wildflower) grassland
- Rivers inc Tidal Thames
- Lakes, ponds and reedbeds
- Woodland and scrub (including veteran trees and dead wood)

Priority nature recovery networks are:

- Semi-natural habitats associated with transport corridors
- Open mosaic habitat inc where such habitat is provided as a biodiverse roof

As with priority places, priority habitats can be afforded protection from development via the Local Plan. However, with priority habitats the greatest threat to them comes from benign neglect or through inappropriate maintenance and management action. Focussed plans for the continued conservation, and enhancement, of existing priority habitats and to direct the establishment of nature recovery networks will prioritise resources and effort to ensure the best benefits for biodiversity. Where possible existing wildlife corridors will be strengthened and gaps in connectivity redressed. Opportunities to contribute to wider urban greening initiatives will be maximised in order to achieve these aims.

Action:

- Priority habitats will be afforded protection from development through appropriate policies in the Wandsworth Local Plan
- Focussed plans for the conservation and enhancement of priority habitats will be devised and implemented by relevant partners.
- The Council will ensure that where it owns or manages land or water which support priority habitats, management and maintenance actions will prioritise their enhancement for biodiversity quality and condition
- Work to create new habitats will be prioritised to focus on the expansion of existing habitat parcels and the creation of new habitats at locations which improve links and connections at the landscape scale.
- Work with owners and managers of priority habitats in adjacent boroughs to improve the connectivity and habitat quality
- The nature recovery network principles will form the core of urban greening proposals to improve connectivity and increase opportunities for people to have connections with nature

10. Priority Species:

Many species are afforded legal protection and for some that protection extends to where they live, roost, feed or routes they use to travel through the landscape. In many cases these places and habitats are already recognised and protected for their biodiversity value. However, some key species are not solely reliant upon protected places or habitats but have adapted to share features within the built environment which might not otherwise be recognised as having biodiversity value. It can often be difficult to ensure that the protections afforded to these species are understood and applied. Legislation implemented through the planning process seeks to go beyond

ensuring there is no breach of wildlife law and is intended to safeguard local species populations from adverse impacts and to maintain the conservation status (numbers and distribution) of priority species. In Wandsworth priority species that are often impacted outside of protected places or habitats include small mammals and some bird species, which can be harmed or displaced through changes to buildings and through alterations to or the introduction of external lighting. They have therefore been specifically identified as priority species which would benefit from a raised profile and a specific focus on measures to conserve and enhance them. This will allow actions to protect the species themselves, the landscapes that they rely on and to guide how built features and surrounding landscapes can be enhanced to better support them.

Priority species in Wandsworth are:

- Bats (all species)
- Hedgehog
- Black redstart
- House Sparrow
- Brown trout
- Peregrine falcon
- Starling
- Swift
- Stag beetles
- Tawny owl
- Pollinators including hoverflies, wild bees, soldierflies and wasps

Action:

- Priority species will be afforded protection from development through appropriate policies in the Wandsworth Local Plan
- Focussed plans for the conservation and enhancement of priority species will be devised and implemented by relevant partners.
- The Council will ensure that where it owns or manages land or water which support priority species, management and maintenance actions will prioritise actions to benefit them
- Opportunities to create and improve existing habitats for mobile protected species will be secured, in particular working with neighbouring boroughs and cross-border landowners and managers.

11. Invasive Non-native Species and biosecurity:

Non-native species are those introduced by humans to areas outside their natural distribution range. They can be introduced for a specific purpose or transported accidentally. There are many non-native species that are not invasive and pose no threat to biodiversity. This is particularly true in London where we have a range of naturalised non-natives that perform important roles in our urban ecosystems. However, invasive non-native species (INNS) make up about 15% of all non-native species and are those recognised as being detrimental to biodiversity, society or the economy. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment lists INNS as one of

the main threats to biodiversity worldwide, second only to habitat loss. INNS are also economically damaging, costing Britain an estimated £1.7 billion per year. They have an impact on biodiversity by displacing or preying upon native species, by destroying habitats, or by introducing new diseases or parasites.

Biosecurity is the name given to procedures or measures designed to protect the wider environment from the harm caused by INNS. When undertaking work to prevent, control or eradicate INNS it is imperative that biosecurity measures are put in place to prevent the inadvertent introduction or spread of unwanted species.

In order to effectively tackle INNS work is often best undertaken methodically and at the landscape scale with partners. For example, the River Wandle Invasive Non-Native Species plan coordinates a single approach to tackling all invasive non-native species (INNS) within the Wandle corridor with actions being delivered from the source downwards to ensure effective and long-term eradication.

Work in Wandsworth will be guided by the London Invasive Species Initiative's "Species of Concern" list which is specific to the London area and aims to provide direction and a means of prioritisation for land managers, by grouping species into different management categories. Land and water managers along with landscape designers and property developers will be actively encouraged to avoid the use of anything listed here and to work to contain or eradicate any such species that exist according to the most up to date advice.

Action:

- Support and advice will be provided to land and water owners and managers, landscape designers and developers about invasive non-native species
- Invasive non-native species (defined as those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended or those identified as a threat by London Invasive Species Initiative) will not be permitted to be planted in the landscaping of new developments or on land owned and managed by the Council
- Continue ongoing partnership working with River Catchment Partnerships (River Wandle and Beverley Brook) specifically to address the impacts of invasive non-native species in river corridors
- The Council will act to control and / or eradicate invasive non-native species on all Council owned and managed land and rivers using authorised methods and in line with relevant legislation.

12. Biodiversity Net Gain:

This is an emerging development planning tool which is expected to become mandatory in the planning process following the assent of the Environment Bill 2020. It is the mechanism by which measurable ecological enhancement is secured as an additional tier in the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy; it is not intended to replace the need to implement the earlier principles as a priority. The biodiversity mitigation hierarchy is a process tool designed to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity caused by development and regeneration planning. It begins with the most beneficial

approach to prevent harm and works up in a series of steps culminating seeking to not only preventing harm but to actively providing gains for biodiversity which would otherwise not be delivered. In some cases, it may allow resources to be secured to deliver further benefits for biodiversity on land not directly under the control of the developer.

↑ positive negative ↓							deliver measurable gain off site	
						deliver on site gain	deliver on site gain	
	no net loss of biodiversity							
	Biodiversity harm	Biodiversity harm	Biodiversity harm	Mitigate	Mitigate	Mitigate	Mitigate	
	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid		
		Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid		
			Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid		
			Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid		
			Avoid	Avoid	Avoid	Avoid		

Action:

- The Council’s planning service will develop how this policy is delivered in Wandsworth following the publication of relevant legislation and guidance.
- Partners will work with GiGL to identify and map existing priority places, habitats and species; identify existing connectivity between these at a landscape scale and use this to inform priorities for improved habitat management, expansion or creation to be delivered through biodiversity net gain

13. Resident and community participation

Whilst Wandsworth has amongst the smallest average garden size in London³ there is compelling evidence that gardens contribute to a significant amount of green space in the capital. Over half of the garden land in London includes vegetation cover – including grassy lawns, flower beds and low-level vegetation, hedges and tree canopy. We know that private domestic gardens cover 716 hectares in the borough, which is almost exactly 20% of the total area (3,522 hectares)⁴. Increasingly the borough is also home to ‘communal’ areas of green space within or surrounding privately owned housing estates, social housing and around small to medium business premises. There are also green spaces surrounding educational buildings, hospitals and prisons and places of worship, which are not freely publicly accessible to all. This provides borough residents and business with a significant opportunity to

³ London: garden city? From green to grey, observed changes in garden vegetation structure in London, 1998-2008 pub 2011 © London Wildlife Trust, Greenspace Information for Greater London, and Greater London Authority

⁴ Figures compiled by Greenspace Information for Greater London for this strategy 2020

make positive contributions to biodiversity on their doorstep. They certainly vary enormously in size, shape, management and suitability for wildlife. There are a number of species of plant and animal which are indicative of a good management for biodiversity within these spaces and these 'local priority species' will benefit significantly from positive action by communities and the increased awareness of biodiversity which will be achieved through the following:

Action:

- Improve the quantity and quality of information about the distribution of local priority species
- Improve the quantity and quality of information about actions to benefit priority species in private gardens, communal greenspace and publicly accessible private land, and private buildings.
- Encourage and promote good gardening for wildlife through improved information sharing, seeking funding for training for gardeners and the direct delivery of wildlife gardening advice sessions
- Create an online knowledge and resources hub to promote good gardening for wildlife
- Seek recognition of good practice in the management of gardens for biodiversity, via awards schemes such as London in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' awards.

14. Environmental Education:

Environmental education is a key way to encourage access to and positive engagement with nature to everyone in the borough. It fosters an appreciation of priority places and habitats and encourages an enjoyment of and empathy for priority species. Environmental education should be available to all, regardless of age and should be delivered in ways that cause no harm to, and leave no trace within, the places and habitats being studied.

Action:

- Meet National Curriculum aims through the provision of teacher training, lesson plans and led sessions for children and young people aged 5-16 focussed on priority habitats and species in Wandsworth
- Support young people wishing to enter land-based careers through the offer of 1-2-1 mentoring from biodiversity professionals
- Support the development and delivery of community learning opportunities in biodiversity topics
- Working with partners and contractors involved with health, wellbeing and community initiatives to deliver programs supporting social and natural prescribing on Local Wildlife Sites.
- Work with organisations like London Environmental Educator's Forum (LEEF) to identify and secure funding or opportunities to deliver environmental activities which are designed to deliver the objectives of this strategy, especially increasing awareness of, engagement with and responsibility for, protecting and improving Wandsworth's biodiversity

15. Funding and resourcing:

As we have already identified public bodies are subject to a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity when carrying out their activities therefore this strategy has a key role in directing and prioritising this existing effort. Many landowners and managers have also already contributed to long standing joint working for biodiversity to ensure that collaborative efforts result in the best use of existing resources. The principle of this strategy is therefore to direct current resources in the delivery of actions that can secure the greatest gains for biodiversity. It also affords a framework to seek to secure third party funding to deliver discreet actions.

Action:

- Existing financial and resource commitments will be reviewed and if necessary reapportioned to ensure the prioritisation of the delivery of actions and principles within this this strategy
- Actions which require additional resources will be tackled at the partnership level to ensure the demonstration of a joined-up approach to landscape scale conservation and to reduce duplication of effort
- Wandsworth Wildlife and Nature Conservation group, Friends of greenspaces groups and other community-based organisations will be supported in making funding bids to assist with direct delivery of actions identified in this strategy or subsequent arising plans of action for specific places, habitats or species

