

## **BIODIVERSITY: LOCAL PLAN BACKGROUND PAPER**

**Head of Service/Contact:** Ruth Ormella, Head of Planning  
**Urgent Decision?(yes/no)** No  
**If yes, reason urgent decision required:**  
**Annexes/Appendices (attached):** Annex 1: Biodiversity Background Paper  
**Other available papers (not attached):**

### **Report summary**

Council's officers have prepared a Biodiversity Background Paper as evidence for the emerging Local Plan.

The background paper is at a stage where Members can comment on the proposed approach for the preparation of the Local Plan.

### **Recommendation (s)**

**That the Committee:**

- (1) notes the content of the Biodiversity Background Paper attached at Annex 1; and**
- (2) subject to any additions or amendments, endorses the approach as set out in section 8.0 of Annex 1, for the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.**

### **1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy**

- 1.1 The delivery and implementation of the Epsom & Ewell Local Plan contributes towards all of the Council's Key Priorities.
- 1.2 The Biodiversity Background Paper will form part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.

# Licensing and Planning Policy Committee

## 23 January 2020

### 2 Background

- 2.1 It is important that the emerging Local Plan is prepared having regard for the biodiversity and nature conservation of the borough. The Local Plan needs to be prepared taking account of national planning policy guidance, relevant legislation and case law, local and regional monitoring data.
- 2.2 The new Local Plan will consider all aspects of planning for Epsom & Ewell's natural environment. While this background paper specifically focuses on the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Epsom & Ewell, biodiversity and related matters will also be considered within other Local Plan evidence on open space, green infrastructure and as part of the health and well-being of residents.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 The background paper details the biodiversity of the borough, identifying the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), non-statutory designations including Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodlands and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs). The background paper also identifies the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA's) in the borough.
- 3.2 Having regard for the evidence it is proposed, in section 8.0 of the background paper, attached at Annex 1 that the emerging Local Plan be prepared as follows:

#### 3.2.1 Epsom and Ewell Ecological Assets

Identify (or confirm) the following local networks as the 'Epsom and Ewell ecological network' for protection in the new Local Plan:

- International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity;
- Surrey Priority Habitat and Species (and their habitats);
- Habitat buffer zones, wildlife corridors and the stepping stones that connect them.

#### 3.2.2 Recreational Disturbance

- Measures should be proposed to ensure sites of biodiversity significance are protected from excessive disturbance from unacceptable erosion or pollution.

#### 3.2.3 Water Quality

- Acknowledge the water quality issues and gaps in the evidence base in the Local Plan, and that it will be necessary to respond to emerging evidence to determine whether housing in the later stages of the plan period would require appropriate mitigation

# Licensing and Planning Policy Committee

## 23 January 2020

- Pursue higher water efficiency standards in the new Local Plan in order to be consistent with other local authorities in the sub-region and to recognise the water stress issue in the south-east of England.

### 3.2.4 Air Quality

- Take account of any emerging evidence on air pollution and the impacts on habitat sites from the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan and other sources.
- Highlight air quality concerns as key issue for the Council's HRA and Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

### 3.2.5 Achieving Net Gains in Biodiversity

- Include outline advice on achieving net gains in development proposals in the Local Plan, based on a knowledge of the local ecological networks and include reference to examples.
- Advise that the Council's approach to biodiversity will be supplemented by further advice in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) at a later date.

### 3.2.6 Appraisal of the Local Plan

- Ensure HRA and SA processes are fully integrated into plan-making, including the consideration of strategic projects, and informs the development of the Local Plan at all stages.

## 4 Financial and Manpower Implications

4.1 The Biodiversity Background Paper has been prepared by officers. The proposed approach for preparing the emerging Local Plan as set out in Section 8.0 of the Background Paper includes ensuring the Local Plan has been prepared along with a HRA and SA. The HRA has been commissioned and is being prepared by external experts, with the SA being prepared by officers.

4.2 The Background Report highlights that there may be a need in the future as part of an adopted Local Plan for a SPD to be produced to further ensure a biodiversity net gain approach is secured.

4.3 ***Chief Finance Officer's comments:***

## 5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 ***Monitoring Officer's comments: none arising from the contents of this report.***

# Licensing and Planning Policy Committee

## 23 January 2020

### **6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications**

- 6.1 The preparation of a sound Local Plan requires evidence which the Biodiversity Background Paper is a part. The Local Plan contributes towards the Council's objectives for maintaining and enhancing the Borough as a sustainable place to live, work and visit.

### **7 Partnerships**

- 7.1 None for the purposes of this report.

### **8 Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 The Biodiversity Background Paper sets out the legislative framework relating to biodiversity and nature conservation, and evidences the assets in the borough. The Local Plan needs to be prepared in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and associated legislation. By ensuring the emerging Local Plan is supported by a HRA and SA, this key risk is managed.

### **9 Conclusion and Recommendations**

- 9.1 The Committee are requested to note the content of the Biodiversity Background Paper and subject to any additions or amendments, endorse the approach as set out in section 8.0 for the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);