



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Annex I

### Farnham Town Council Biodiversity Policy Statement 2021

This Statement sets out Farnham Town Council's approach to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the town through policies for the conduct of nature conservation in Farnham with emphasis on coordination with partners.

#### Context

One of the factors making Farnham a popular place in which to live and work is its unique natural setting including an extensive green environment comprising 80 publicly owned sites, much farmland and private gardens which occupy a third of the town's area. Together these support a rich variety of plants and animals as indicated in records held and the number of sites either designated for their protection or managed for nature conservation.

#### Current Situation

These open spaces are managed in a number of ways according to their designation, individual characteristics and ownership. Although there is some management commonality, there is no overarching guidance. Farnham Town Council is actively working as a full member of the Farnham Biodiversity Partnership to prepare an Action Plan designed to conserve and enhance future biodiversity right across the town as part of its response to the Climate Emergency that has been declared.

#### General Considerations

In taking this step the Council recognises that it has a duty under legislation to consider biodiversity conservation within all its functions. This includes, within its limited scope or responsibilities as a Town Council:

- developing policies and strategies and putting them into practice
- managing its role within the planning system and fulfilling the biodiversity aspects of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan
- managing :
  - land and buildings
  - woodlands and nature reserves
  - gardens, parks and public open space
  - community amenities eg sports grounds and cemeteries
  - waste and pollution
  - energy and water
  - wood and plant products
- influencing the development of infrastructure, such as roads, buildings or flood defences
- making decisions about procurement
- implementing relevant economic, environmental and social programmes

Open Spaces large and small contribute to the overall ambience of the town by providing seasonal interest through fruit, colour, fragrance and sight of animals. They also provide excellent spaces for recreational activities such as walking, running and cycling. The combination of these activities and the enjoyment of natural open spaces has positive health and well-being benefits which reduce the burden on physical and mental health services.

Green Infrastructure and wildlife corridors (Note 1) across the town provide important movement and feeding resources for plants and animals which help to increase resilience against Climate Change and strengthen resistance to invasive, non-native species.

Natural landscapes provide welcoming and relaxing backdrops within the urban environment, and provide an environmentally friendly filter whereby trees and woodlands absorb pollution and carbon dioxide from the air, particularly from road vehicles and aircraft.

Well-managed Nature Conservation Sites provide excellent habitats for a wide variety of plants and animals including protected species such as bats, sand lizards and great crested newts for which the town is a hot spot. They are also an excellent educational resource.

Habitats and species do not recognise man-made boundaries drawn on a map, and action taken on neighbouring land such as that incorporated in the surrounding Biodiversity Opportunity Areas can impact upon species and habitats within Farnham.

By understanding and appreciating the benefits that Nature Conservation provides, the Council can commit to strategies that safeguard and maximise opportunities for wildlife.

### **Statutory obligations**

Farnham Town Council understands and is committed to meeting its statutory and other obligations, including:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) as amended
- The Natural and Communities Act 2006 (NERC) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 as amended (Habitats Directive)
- National, Regional and Local policies including:
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The Waverley Local Plan Parts 1 and 2
- The Farnham Neighbourhood Plan
- The Farnham Design Statement 2021

### **Policy Priorities**

Farnham Town Council's approach in determining its Natural Conservation Policies are:

#### **1 Working in Partnership**

Farnham Town Council will work as a full member of the Farnham Biodiversity Partnership to ensure a current Farnham Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is in place to conserve and improve the biodiversity of the town. It will work with partners and landowners to ensure a strategic approach to the protection, enhancement, creation, promotion and management of all open spaces in the town including privately owned land.

In accordance with the NERC Act 2006, Farnham Town Council will consider biodiversity and conservation within the scope of its work.

#### **2 Management of Council owned sites**

Farnham Town Council will ensure that all sites in its ownership have appropriate management plans, and review action plans regularly. Each Management Plan will be compatible with Farnham's Biodiversity Action Plan, and appropriate National and Regional plans as far as possible.

Habitats will be managed using relevant and up-to-date management techniques. Where surveys identify a need for new habitats to be created, the Council will, in partnership with local groups and

organisations, support the creation and management of those habitats, and, if necessary, seeking additional resources.

The Council will use its influence to protect and strengthen wildlife corridors throughout Farnham as appropriate. Where appropriate, Farnham Town Council will seek to achieve the status of Local Wildlife Sites within the Nature Conservation hierarchy on sites owned and managed by Farnham Town Council.

### **3 Protection of Species and habitats**

When a species, their movement or habitat is thought to be under threat on Farnham Town Council owned and managed land the Council will intervene by implementing appropriate actions for their maintenance and protection.

Farnham Town Council will act to reduce and control non-native invasive or damaging species on all Council owned and managed land through approved control programmes as per current legislation and best practice.

Farnham Town Council will, where possible, provide advice to private landowners on how to comply with the Biodiversity Action Plan and also how to comply with statutory legislation. Where there are breaches, Farnham Town Council will report all known incidents to the relevant authority and work with the Police to secure prosecution where possible.

### **4 Planning Applications**

When commenting on planning applications, Farnham Town Council will consider each application with the aim of minimising the impacts on biodiversity.

Where relevant planning applications outside Farnham affect nature conservation within the town, the Council will comment appropriately to safeguard wildlife and habitats.

Planning Applications that affect species and habitats will be reviewed to ensure they contain appropriate best practice surveys in a format as per CIEEM (The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management ) guidance (<https://www.cieem.net/guidelines-for-ecological-report-writing>) and where this is not the case will raise with the Local Planning Authority.

### **Review**

This Policy Statement will be reviewed every 5 years or earlier if required.

### **Note 1: Definition of Green Infrastructure/Wildlife Corridors**

Green infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Green infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls. Reference <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#para027>