

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE

FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY AT THE ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES PDS COMMITTEE

Date: ECS PDS: 11 March 2021
Executive: 31 March 2021

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Key

Title: BROMLEY BIODIVERSITY PLAN 2021-2026

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Chief Officer: Peter McCready, Assistant Director of Environment

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report recommends that the new Bromley Biodiversity Plan (BBP) is adopted. The document is provided at Appendix 1. The BBP aims to prevent the decline of species and habitats and promote their conservation through active management of land and promotion of biodiversity gains through the planning system. The BBP provides guidance to developers, planners and land managers on how biodiversity should be protected and enhanced in the borough in support of the delivery of a number of elements of different Council plans and strategies including the Local Plan.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **That the Executive adopt the updated Bromley Biodiversity Plan at Appendix 1 (noting that there may be design and minor formatting changes prior to publication).**

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: No impact
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Planning Policy and Strategy
 4. Total current budget for this head: £0.596m
 5. Source of funding: Existing Revenue Budget for 2020/21
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 10 FTE
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement - Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
 2. Call-in: Applicable
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): N/A
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Bromley Biodiversity Plan (BBP) aims to support the Council in assisting in the conservation of habitats and species through active management of land and the promotion of biodiversity gain through the planning system. The BBP provides guidance to developers, planners and land managers on how biodiversity should be protected and enhanced in the borough.
- 3.2 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) places a duty on local authorities to conserve biodiversity, including the restoration and enhancement of species populations and habitats. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF outlines that planning policies and decisions should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity. The drive for biodiversity net gain is also reflected in Policy G6 of the Publication London Plan (2020). The drafting of a new BBP is therefore required in order for the Council to comply with this legislation and put in place clear and targeted guidance to protect and enhance biodiversity. This will help to deliver a number of Council objectives across several plans and strategies, including the delivery of the Nature Conservation and Development policies (Policies 68-79) of the Bromley Local Plan.
- 3.3 Working in partnership with the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership, whose membership includes experts from a range of local organisations with an excellent understanding and knowledge of biodiversity in Bromley, an updated BBP has been drafted (see Appendix 1). This document will replace the outdated current BBP (2015-2020) to provide detailed guidance on current planning legislation and policy, important habitats and species, and new guidance for users of the planning system to ensure biodiversity is comprehensively considered as part of the planning process. The new document also includes guidance on achieving biodiversity net gain so that future development may comply with the aims of the Environment Bill, NPPF and Publication London Plan (2020).
- 3.4 As part of the new BBP, individual Species Action Plans (SAPs) have been written to provide further detailed guidance on the protection, conservation and enhancement of habitat for some of the important and declining species in Bromley, including swifts, bats (all species), dormouse, hedgehog, toad and white admiral butterfly. The SAP documents form part of the BBP and should be read in conjunction with it. The SAP documents are included as part of Appendix 1.
- 3.5 There are substantial benefits to having an updated BBP. The document provides information on Bromley's important habitats and species, along with threats faced, opportunities and management guidance for each. The BBP highlights Bromley's commitment to biodiversity gain and the conservation and management of these important habitats. The BBP signposts users of the planning system to relevant and important information to ensure that all future development takes account of biodiversity and delivers a biodiversity net gain. The BBP will constitute a material planning consideration and will empower the Council by providing up to date information on its current position on biodiversity and the expectations required for planning of future development and management of land.
- 3.6 This report recommends that the Council's Executive formally adopts the updated BBP. Once adopted, the document will be made available on the Council's website. There may be changes to the design of the document and formatting prior to publication (including the introduction of a foreword) but the document at Appendix 1 represents the final version in terms of content.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The BBP provides detailed guidance for planners and developers in order to fully consider biodiversity when preparing development proposals. The BBP will therefore constitute a material planning consideration and will support the Council's objective of conserving species and habitats whilst improving biodiversity across the borough.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The BBP has no specific ongoing financial implications. Costs associated with the publication of the BBP will be minimal and met by the Planning Policy and Strategy team.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty to conserve biodiversity on local authorities, including to the restoration and enhancing of populations and habitats. The Environment Bill sets out a clear strategy for tackling biodiversity loss, climate change and reducing environmental risk to public health and once passes into law will set out legally binding biodiversity targets.

Non-Applicable Sections:	IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Bromley Local Plan 2019 The Publication London Plan, December 2020 Bromley Biodiversity Plan 2015-2020