



BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING IN SURREY - March 2019

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[Appendix I](#) [Appendix II](#)

(separate document)
(separate document)

Ia About this guidance

Protecting and enhancing Surrey's biodiversity

Surrey supports a diversity of wildlife habitats and species, ranging from the chalk grasslands and woodlands of the North Downs, through scarce flood meadows along the rivers Wey and Mole, to the extensive heaths, bogs and acid grasslands of the Thames terrace gravels and Wealden sandstone. Surrey is also home to around 85 specially protected species and at least 300 species recognised as being a priority for conservation.

The original version of this document (2010) was produced by **Surrey Wildlife Trust** (SWT) for the Surrey Biodiversity Partnership, now replaced by the **Surrey Nature Partnership** (SNP). The SNP has a Biodiversity Working Group, which provides advisory resources to promote this important area of work. This fourth version (third revision) of *Biodiversity & Planning in Surrey* reflects both the 2018 and now 2019 revisions of national policy in the **National Planning Policy Framework**. The document's central purpose remains to help those involved in planning in Surrey to ensure that development within the county protects and enhances our valuable local biodiversity, which underpins our **Natural Capital**. Through this we aim to also help local planning authorities to meet their statutory **Biodiversity 'Duty'** under Section 40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act, 2006.

Some of the important sites and species in Surrey are protected by legislation, others by planning policy. National planning policy clearly identifies the need to protect existing biodiversity *and* deliver enhancements to achieve a net gain in biodiversity. Here we bring together legislation and planning policy, alongside information on the biodiversity of Surrey, to help identify when and where biodiversity must be protected by the planning system, **as well as how to identify opportunities to deliver biodiversity enhancements as 'net gains' in the most effective way.**

How to use this guidance

Current national policy on conserving and enhancing the natural environment is in Chapter 15 (previously 11) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). National planning policy continues its central tenet to plan only for **sustainable** future development and economic growth. That sustainability is defined in part as having an overarching objective for development to clearly demonstrate its contribution to protecting and enhancing the natural environment; including by "*helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change*".

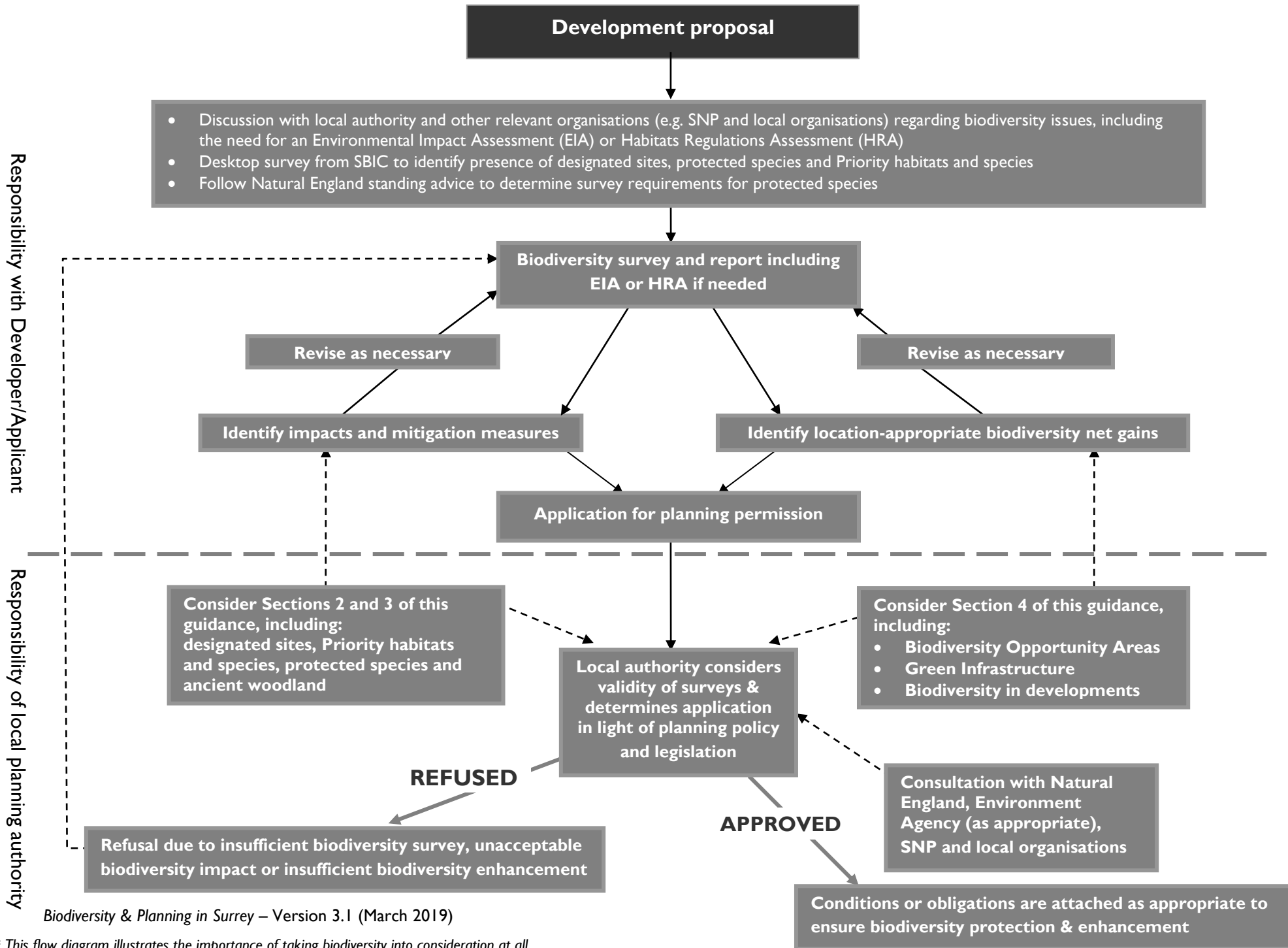
Sections 2 and 3 outline those features which should be protected, and Section 4 outlines opportunities to deliver biodiversity enhancements. A page of information gives an overview of each feature and locally specific information. **Grey** boxes below this provide a summary of relevant legislation or planning policy. **Pink** boxes on 'Further Information' provide sources of more detailed information and guidance. **Yellow** boxes list 'Key Organisations' who you might wish to contact in relation to a particular issue.

For each biodiversity feature, a map identifies the distribution of that feature in Surrey. It should be noted that these maps (produced by the Surrey Biodiversity Information

Centre - SBIC) are intended to provide a strategic overview and only show the situation at time of publication. More detailed and updated site specific information is available from SBIC or, for those working in local authorities, some of this information may be available on GIS layers within your authority.

This document is available on the Surrey Nature Partnership website (www.surreynaturepartnership.org.uk) 'Our Work' page, which will be updated with changes in legislation and policy. Key legislation is outlined in Section 5. [Appendix I](#) and [Appendix II](#) are also on the Surrey Nature Partnership website. Key contacts are provided in Section 7.

A recently-launched additional advisory tool is the online [Wildlife Assessment Check](#) produced by the [Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning](#).



* This flow diagram illustrates the importance of taking biodiversity into consideration at all stages of the planning application process, highlighting the key features to take into account.

Ic Information requirements

The importance of being adequately informed

The NPPF requires that local development plans are shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between planning authorities and relevant local organisations, which includes the Surrey Nature Partnership (as further required through the ‘duty to cooperate’ on cross-boundary matters). The NPPF also requires that development plan policies, and hence development management decisions, are underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence, which is adequate, proportionate and focused on supporting and justifying the policies concerned. This includes information pertaining to the natural environment, including the relevant biodiversity resources of the area. Local development plans continue to require an integral sustainability appraisal legally compliant with the prescribed methods of Strategic Environmental Assessment, which further ensures adequacy of the information used. Policies in local plans are also now required to be reviewed every five years, offering a regular opportunity to reflect new emerging information on the natural environment of the area.

Most standard planning application forms require that applicants identify any protected or Priority species, designated sites, important habitats, or other biodiversity features on or adjacent to the application site. This guidance document gives an overview of these features in Surrey, and more detailed site level information is available from the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre. The NPPF now emphasises the role of pre-application advice and clear guidance on the information required to support an application, so that any shortfall here does not delay the determination process. The use of validation checklists, tailored especially to biodiversity issues, can also be helpful here.

Where it is likely that a proposal will impact on these types of features, up-to-date biodiversity information will need to be provided with a planning application. The type of assessment needed will vary from a biodiversity survey and report (often referred to as Ecological Impact Assessment - EclA) to full Environmental Impact Assessment, and Appropriate Assessment if an internationally designated ‘habitats’ site is involved. It is not within the scope of this guidance to explain how or when to undertake such assessments; there is other national guidance available on this - see the ‘Further Information’ box below.

It is important to bear in mind that the survey work needed to inform such assessments will be seasonally restricted. And this is obviously a key advantage of pre-application discussions relating to biodiversity survey needs, so that these can be comprehensively scoped-in at the earliest opportunity.

As a brief checklist, all ecological reports should include the following:

- i. What biodiversity is present;
- ii. How biodiversity impacts can be avoided;
- iii. If it is not possible to avoid impacts, how they can be mitigated;
- iv. If there is no way of mitigating impacts, what compensation measures have been identified;
- v. How mitigation and compensation measures will be monitored;

- vi. A clear demonstration of how the application can result in an overall enhancement as a ‘net gain’ in biodiversity.
- vii. Avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be clearly stated to enable report recommendations to be conditioned and enforced.

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 3. Plan-making](#) (pp. 8-12)

16(c). ‘Plans should be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees’

20(d). ‘Strategic policies should make sufficient provision for.. conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.’

25. ‘Strategic policy-making authorities should.. engage with their local communities and relevant bodies including Local Nature Partnerships’

31. ‘The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned’

[NPPF: Chapter 4. Decision-making](#) (pp.13-16)

40. ‘Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage.. They should also.. encourage any applicants to engage.. where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.’

43. ‘The right information is crucial to good decision-making, particularly where formal assessments are required (such as Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitats Regulations assessment and flood risk assessment). To avoid delay, applicants should discuss what information is needed with the local planning authority and expert bodies as early as possible.’

Further information

- [A Quick Guide to the Habitats Regulation Assessment](#) (East Hants DC/SDNP)
- [Ecology Survey Calendar](#) (Middlemarch Environmental)
- [Natural England - Standing Advice on protected sites & species in relation to planning](#)
- [Strategic Environmental Assessment: Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans](#) (RTPI 2018)
- [Accounting for Biodiversity in Planning: A toolkit for Local Planning Authorities in England](#) (Environment Bank 2017)
- [Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK & Ireland](#) (CIEEM 2018)
- [Planning Naturally: Spatial planning with nature in mind](#) (RSPB/RTPI/CIEEM 2013)
- BS42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning & development (BSI licence purchasable only); see article [here](#) on the British Standard for planning and biodiversity.

2a Internationally and nationally designated sites

Internationally designated ('Habitats') sites: Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) & Ramsar¹ sites

Surrey has six sites designated at this level which fall partly or entirely within the county; they are shown on **Map I**. The law is very strict with regard to these sites; development proposals which will adversely affect these sites are not permitted* (see below).

If a development is proposed that could possibly impact on a SPA or SAC, the applicant will need to submit an assessment of potential impacts and their significance with their planning application. This information is then used by the local authority to make an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications for the SPA/SAC, whereupon the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' will not apply.

Impacts that will need to be considered include direct impacts, for example habitat loss through land take, and indirect impacts such as changes to water quality or quantity, air pollution or increased recreational pressure. Indirect impacts could result from development proposals some distance from a SPA/SAC; impacts on internationally designated sites in other counties should also be considered.

** In exceptional circumstances a proposal that would impact negatively on a SPA/SAC may be permitted but only where there are no alternative solutions and the proposal is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest. Where this is the case, compensatory measures will definitely be required.*

Surrey's Natura 2000 Sites (SPAs & SACs)

- **South West London Waterbodies SPA (inc. Ramsar Site):** A complex of reservoirs and restored aggregates pits important for overwintering wildfowl (esp. Gadwall and Shoveler).
- **Thames Basin Heaths SPA:** Blocks of extensive yet fragmented lowland heathland, supporting significant populations of three specialist ground-nesting birds - Nightjar, Woodlark & Dartford warbler.
- **Wealden Heaths SPA:** A further extensive area of lowland heathland supporting significant populations of the three birds listed above.
- **Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC:** A large area of chalk grassland, scrub and woodland in the North Downs, rich in native orchid species and with the only area of Box scrub in the UK.
- **Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC (inc. Thursley & Ockley Bog Ramsar Site):** Complex of sites partially overlapping the two heathland SPAs above, supporting lowland heathland and bog with extremely important assemblages of rare reptiles, dragonflies, invertebrates and plants.

¹ The UK ratified [The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat](#) (Ramsar Convention or Wetlands Convention) in 1976. The UK has generally chosen to underpin the designation of its Ramsar sites through prior notification of these areas as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and extends the same protection to Ramsar sites in respect of new development as that afforded to SPA/SACs.

- **Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC:** Ancient wood-pasture site with the greatest number of veteran oaks in the country and very important for invertebrates dependent on these, including several rare species for which this is the only known site in the UK.
- **Ashdown Forest SPA & SAC:** is located in East Sussex and therefore beyond Surrey, but indirect impacts could be generated from within the county.

Legislation

Designation of Special Protection Areas is required under the ‘Birds Directive’ (European Union Directive 2009/147/EC), and Special Areas of Conservation under the ‘Habitats Directive’ (Directive 92/43/EEC). In the UK, their legal regulation is and will continue to be² effected through [The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017](#) (the ‘Habitats Regulations’).

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

177. ‘The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.’

SPAs & SACs are identified on proposals maps within Local Plans, and may be accompanied by some explanatory text.

Further information

- [A Quick Guide to the Habitats Regulation Assessment](#) (East Hants DC/SDNP)
- [Guidance on competent authority coordination under the Habitats Regulations](#) (Defra 2012)

Nationally designated sites: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

SSSIs are a series of sites selected from across the UK, which represent a sample of the country’s best habitats. There are 63 SSSIs in Surrey, covering a total of 7,295 ha (see list in Appendix II). SSSIs are designated for their biological or geological interest; they are also shown on **Map I**. Surrey’s SPAs & SACs are also designated as SSSIs, although the ‘notified features’ for which the different types of site have been designated may differ.

SSSIs are given a high level of protection through both the planning and legal system. Normally development which would adversely affect a SSSI is not acceptable. Only in special cases, where the importance of a development outweighs the impact on the SSSI, would an adverse effect be permitted. In such cases, planning conditions or obligations would be used to mitigate the impact.

There is not a requirement for the ‘Appropriate Assessment’ process for SSSIs, but for developments likely to impact on a SSSI an Environmental Impact Assessment will probably be necessary.

² Until such time as any successor legislation comes into effect.

Legislation

[Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)

[Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000](#)

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

175(b). 'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest'

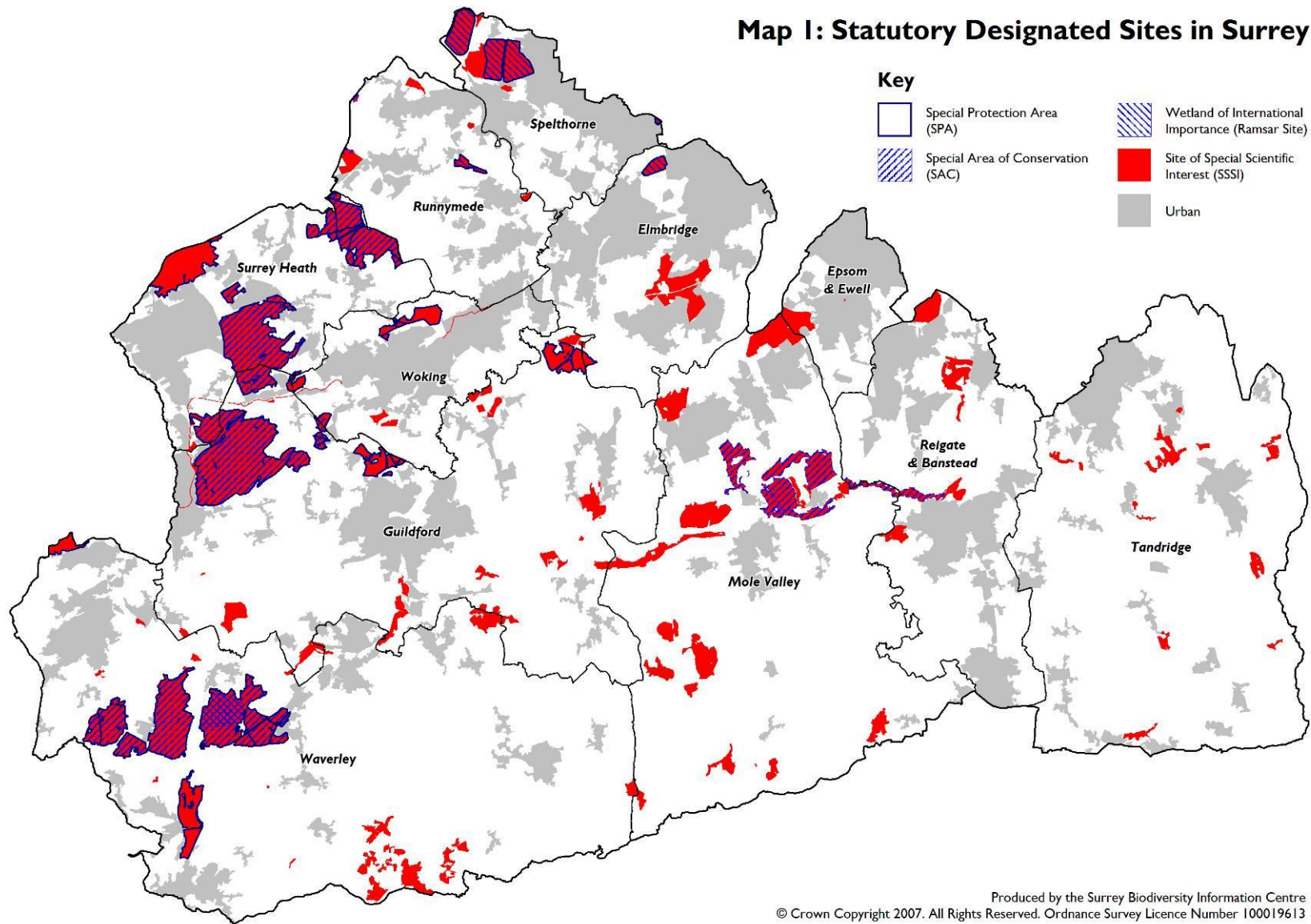
Key organisations

[Environment Agency](#)

Local authorities

[Natural England](#)

Map I: Statutory Designated Sites in Surrey



2b Legally protected species

Protected species occur throughout the county

The distribution of current records is provided on **Map 2**. A full list of protected species occurring in Surrey, and the level of protection they receive, can be found in **Appendix I**.

The species receiving the strictest protection are generally referred to as 'European Protected Species' (EPS) since they are protected under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) applying to member states of the European Union. Their legal protection in the UK is currently effected² by the *Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations* ('Habitats Regulations') 2017. The EPS you are most likely to come across in relation to development in Surrey include the **Great crested newt** and various species of **bats** (all are equally protected although they vary considerably in their comparative rarity). Another fairly widespread EPS in Surrey is the **Hazel/Common dormouse**, but the **Otter**, **Sand lizard**, **Smooth snake**, **Natterjack toad** and **Early gentian** are all highly localised. These species are protected against killing, injury, disturbance in their place of shelter, taking and selling.

Examples of activities that could breach the legislation include: in-filling or earthworks near to a Great crested newt pond; felling of trees or demolition of buildings used by bats; clearance of woodland or hedgerows supporting Dormice; or work on watercourses near to an Otter holt.

Where a development may give rise to an offence involving one or more EPS, the local planning authority must consider the planning application in light of three critical 'tests', which underpin the species protection afforded by the Habitats Regulations 2017. These are:

- The purpose of the development must be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, or for public health and safety;
- There must be no satisfactory alternative site; and
- Favourable conservation status of all the EPS involved must be maintained.

A developer can help the local planning authority by providing information to address these tests, showing how they might be met. This information will eventually also assist the developer if/when applying for a development/conservation licence from Natural England (see below).

Species can receive varying levels of protection under the *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981* (WCA); Surrey species receiving protection only under this act include the **Water vole**, **Common lizard**, **Slow-worm**, **Adder**, **Grass snake** and **Roman snail**; all these species are protected against killing and injury, sale and advertisement for sale. It is also illegal to take (ie. to catch and retain) a Roman snail or a **White-clawed crayfish**. Water voles receive full protection under this Act, making it additionally illegal to obstruct access to or destroy a Water vole burrow, or to disturb a Water vole in its burrow. The WCA makes it illegal to pick, uproot or destroy certain rare plants and fungi, of which there are records of around 23 species in Surrey (see list in Appendix I).

Development will need to avoid impacts on protected species, and where this is not possible, mitigation or compensation will be necessary. If there is a possibility that a

development proposal will impact on a protected species, surveys will need to be submitted with a planning application to determine the impacts. **Note: surveys to determine the presence of protected species need to be provided upfront with a planning application and should not be made a condition of planning permission, since the local authority will need this information to inform their decision** (see Govt. Circular 06/05, p.9). If planning permission is granted, a development licence, or conservation licence, from Natural England may be required.

Birds

All bird nests, eggs and young are protected under the *Wildlife & Countryside Act*. Therefore, removal of any bird nesting habitat such as trees or scrub (or buildings in the case of birds such as Barn owls, Swifts, Swallows, House martins and House sparrows) should only take place outside of the bird breeding season.

Some birds, listed on Schedule 1 of the *Wildlife & Countryside Act* receive an extra level of protection which means that they cannot be disturbed during the breeding season; those most likely to be found in Surrey include Kingfisher, Barn owl, Hobby, Dartford warbler, Woodlark, Little ringed plover and Peregrine. A full list can be found in Appendix I.

Badgers

Badgers are a fairly common species and are therefore quite likely to be encountered on a potential development site. Whilst not a rare species, badgers receive legal protection due to persecution and animal welfare issues.

Badgers are protected under the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992* against killing, injury or taking. Badger setts are also protected against damage, destruction or obstruction and it is illegal to disturb a badger in its sett.

A badger survey and report will be needed if a development is likely to impact on a badger sett, and appropriate mitigation will need to be put in place if impacts cannot be avoided.

Legislation

[Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017](#)

[Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 \(as amended\)](#)

[Protection of Badgers Act 1992](#)

Planning policy

The NPPF does not cover protected species specifically since they are protected by law.

Further information

- [Protected species: how to review planning applications](#) (Natural England)
- Standing advice on surveys & mitigation for development projects (Natural England 2015)
[Badger](#); [Bats](#); [Great crested newt](#); [Hazel/common dormouse](#); [Otter](#) (2014)
[protected plants](#); [reptiles](#); [Water vole](#); [wild birds](#)
- [Planning a brighter future for the Great crested newt](#) (Natural England, 2016)

- [Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations & their impact within the Planning System](#) (ODPM/Defra 2005)
- [EPS and the Planning Process](#) (Natural England, 2010)

Key organisations

[Environment Agency](#)

Local authorities

[Natural England](#)

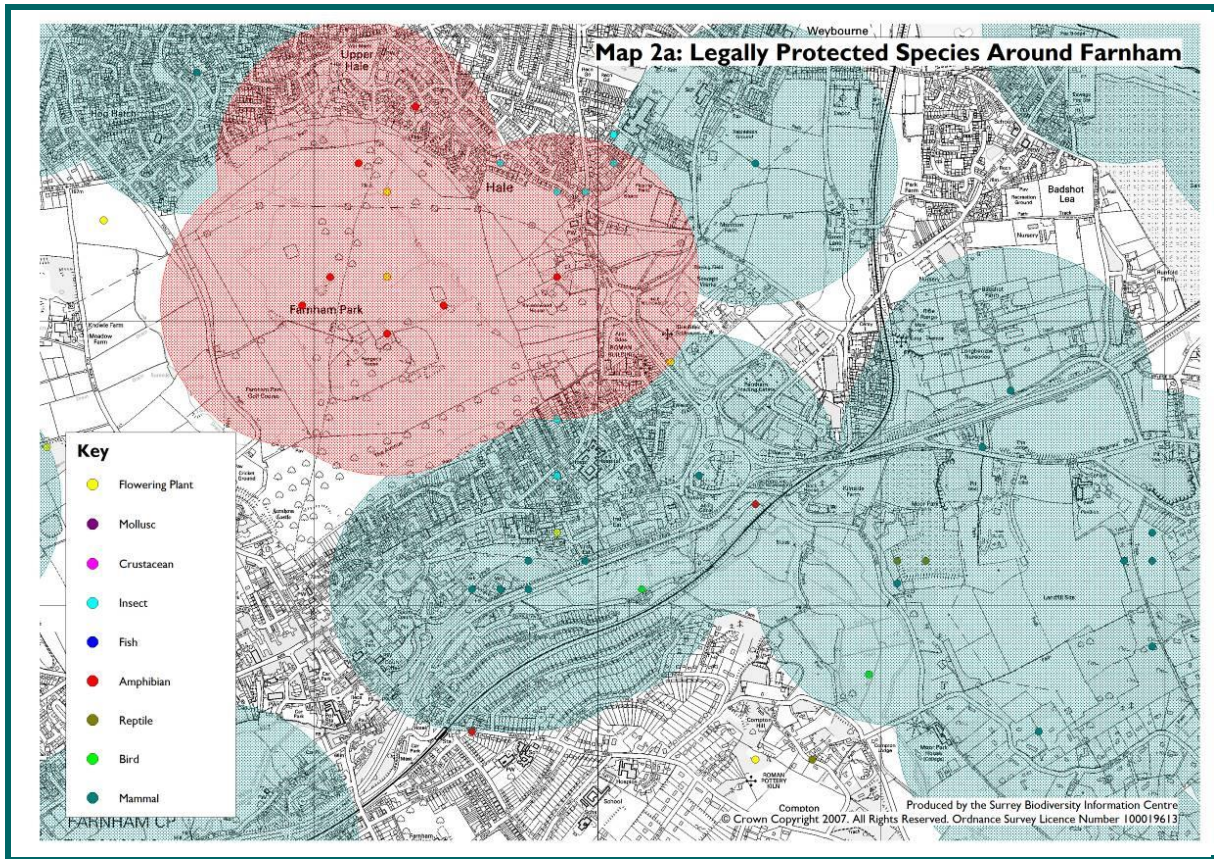
[RSPB](#)

Where are protected species likely to occur?

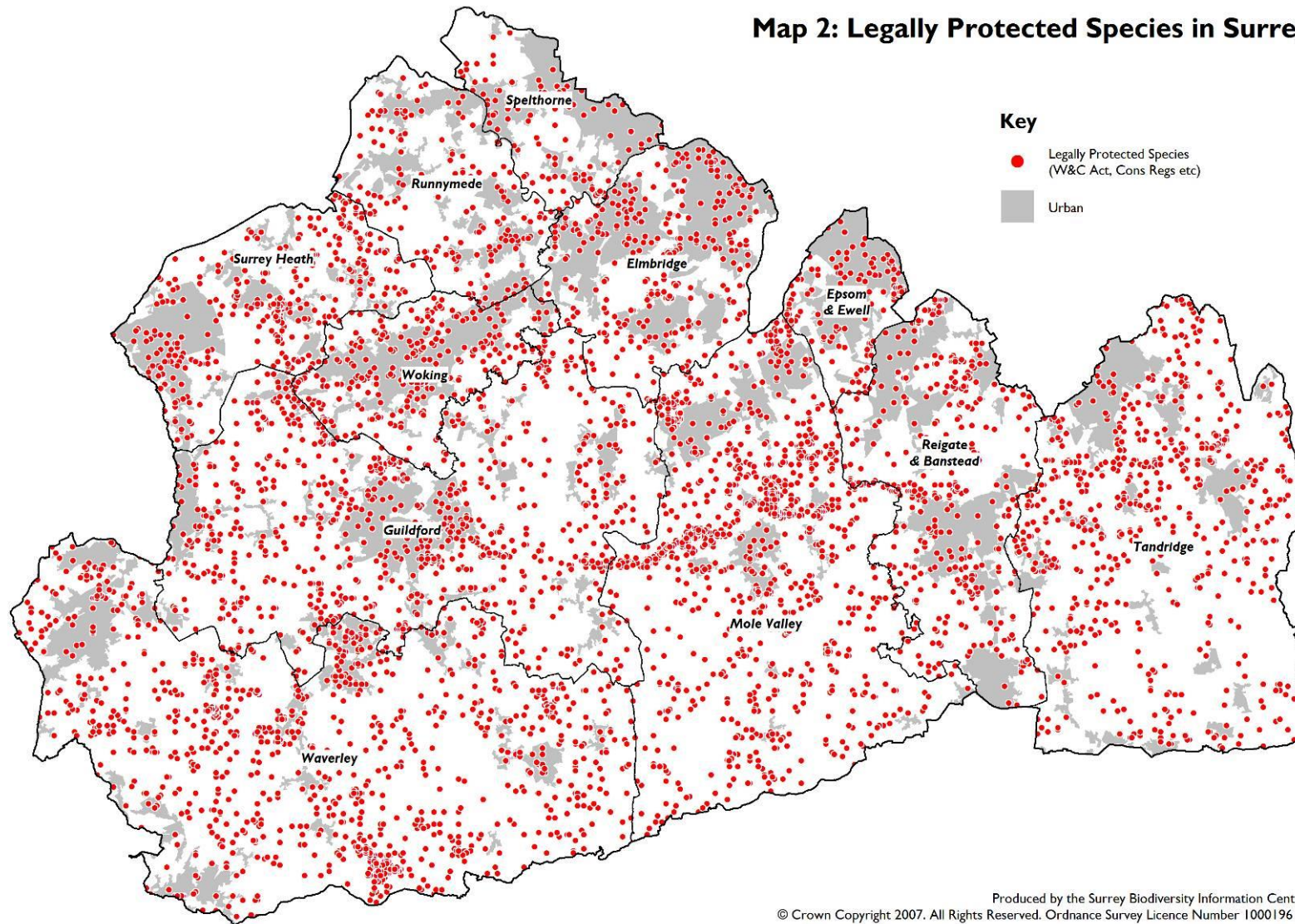
As **Map 2** demonstrates, there are many records for protected species across the county. The map below (**2a**) is an example of information produced by SBIC to aid local authorities in determining the likely occurrence of protected species in relation to planning issues; it shows the locations where protected species have been recorded around Farnham. Buffers have been applied around the records for mammals and Great crested newts to give an indication of where there is a high likelihood of this species occurring.

Local authorities can use this information to help work out when protected species survey information needs to be provided to help determine a planning application.

It is important to bear in mind that protected species surveys **can usually only be undertaken at certain times of year**. For example, surveys of ponds for Great crested newts must be undertaken between mid-March and mid-June when newts return to ponds to breed.



Map 2: Legally Protected Species in Surrey



3 Local sites and Priority habitats and species

Protection through the planning system

The following biodiversity features do not receive legal protection, but are protected through the planning system:

- **Local Sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Importance & RIGS)**
- **Ancient woodland & Veteran trees**
- **Priority habitats**
- **Priority species**

Normally, development which would adversely affect these features is not acceptable. Only in special cases, where the importance of a development outweighs the impact on the feature, would an adverse effect be permitted. In such cases, planning conditions or obligations would be used to mitigate the impact.

Where a development has the potential to impact on a local site, or a Priority habitat or species, a biodiversity survey and report will be required; in some circumstances an Environmental Impact Assessment may be needed.

The following pages give information on these features as they occur in Surrey.

3a Local Sites

Valuable sites for Surrey's local wildlife

These are sites of substantive nature conservation value or geological interest and in Surrey, consist of wildlife sites (called **Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - SNCI**), and geological sites (known as **Regionally Important Geological Sites - RIGS**). In total, there are 787 Local Sites in the county (including 761 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance adopted in Local Plans, and 26 RIGS); these are shown on **Map 3**.

All Local Sites which meet the necessary criteria are designated; this differs significantly from the system for selecting SSSIs, as the latter are only a representative sample of sites. Thus, Local Sites can be equal in their quality to SSSIs. **Local Sites do not have statutory status, but do receive protection through the planning system** (see below).

The identification and selection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance is an ongoing process, including monitoring and review, which is undertaken by the **Surrey Local Sites Partnership (SLSP)** - see below). Lists of SNCIs by borough/district are available in **Appendix II**, but as the number of SNCIs in any one borough may change with new site selections and de-selections, **the master list on the SLSP page of the Surrey Nature Partnership website should be consulted for the most up-to-date information**. This can then be confirmed with Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre.

To be formally selected, the nature conservation importance of 'candidate SNCIs' must be of a certain high standard as set by established criteria. For this to be tested they have to be adequately surveyed. SNCIs at any stage of their designation process (which can become quite protracted), require due regard in development management and a biodiversity survey and report will be necessary to establish any likely impacts. A guidance document explaining the background and importance of SNCIs in Surrey; the role of the SLSP in identifying, selecting and recommending SNCIs for designation; and how local authorities can adopt and protect SNCIs in local plans is linked below in 'Further Information'.

Surrey's Local Sites Partnership

SNCIs are selected at a county level and the process is overseen by the Surrey Local Sites Partnership. This is chaired by Surrey County Council with representatives from Surrey Wildlife Trust, the borough and district councils and county wildlife experts. Natural England is also a partner.

The annual performance of local authorities on biodiversity conservation is currently measured under the Government's Single Data List reporting mechanism by assessing the number of SNCIs in 'positive conservation management'. SBIC gathers the data and Surrey County Council is responsible for reporting this indicator. In 2017 49% of sites were considered to be in positive management.

Legislation

Local Sites are non-statutory sites: no additional legislation applies

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp. 49-53)

174. 'To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and **locally designated sites** of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation'

171. 'Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and **locally designated sites**; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.'

Further information

- [Local Sites, Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management](#) (Defra 2006)
- [Single Data List](#) (MHCLG 2018)
- [Policies and Procedures for the Identification & Selection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance in Surrey & Surrey Local Sites Partnership - Terms of Reference](#) (Surrey Nature Partnership 2019)
- [Guidance for the Selection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance \(SNCl\)s in Surrey](#) (Surrey Wildlife Trust 2008)

Key organisations

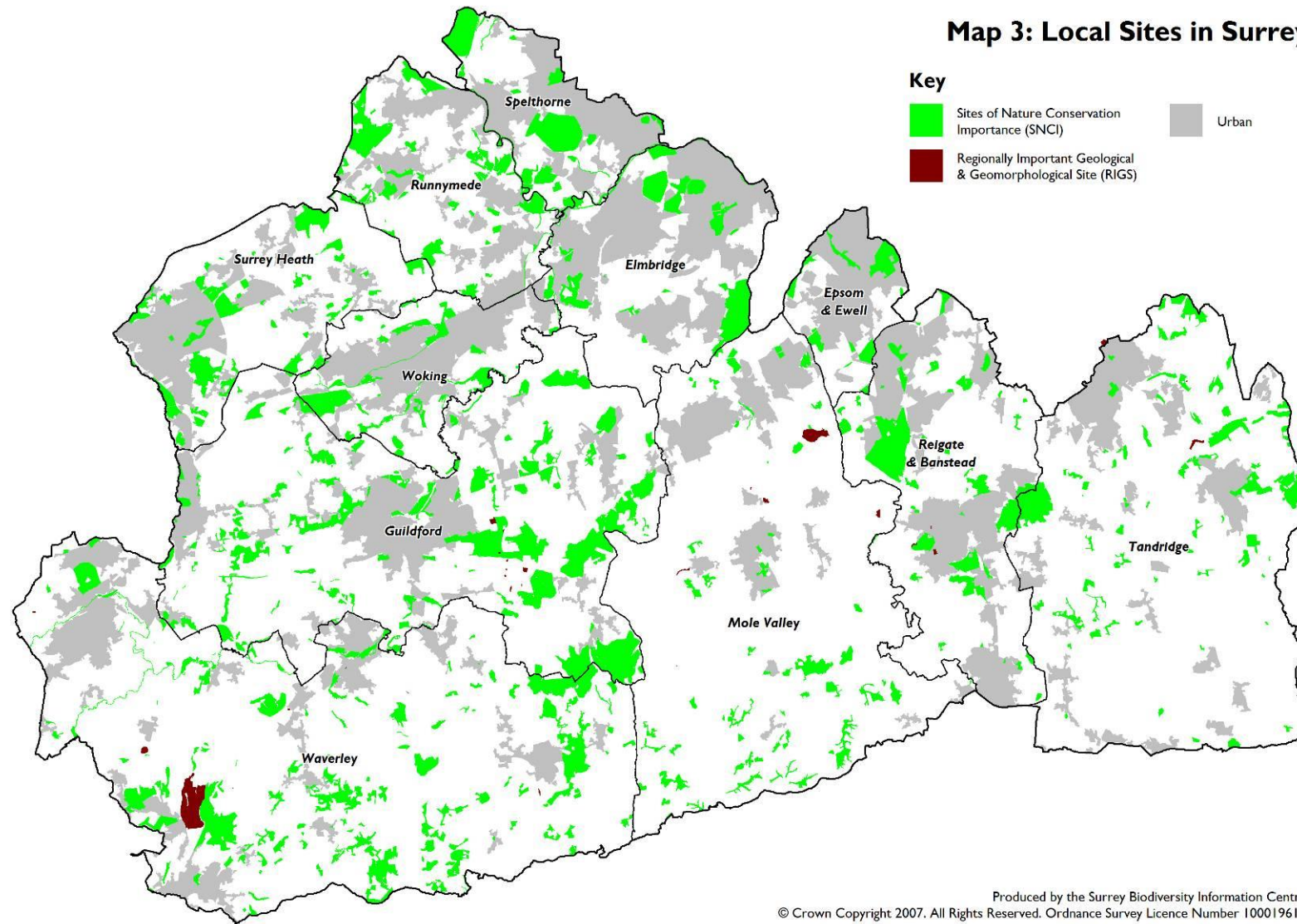
[Surrey Local Sites Partnership](#)

[Surrey Wildlife Trust](#)

Local authorities

[Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre](#)

Map 3: Local Sites in Surrey



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3b Ancient woodland & veteran trees

Trees and woodlands

At least 4% of Surrey is ancient woodland; indeed we are England's most wooded county. Ancient woods are those that are known to have had continuous tree cover since at least 1600 AD. They are found throughout Surrey, with particular concentrations in the North Downs and the Weald. Natural England's **Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory** maps 12,031 ha of these woodlands in Surrey - these are identified on **Map 4**.

Ancient and veteran trees are impressively old trees and may be associated with woodland, wood pasture & parkland, hedgerows or traditional orchards (these are all Priority habitats - see next section). They may also stand alone, for example, old trees are often found as historic markers on parish boundaries. *Ancient* trees are often in the third and final stage of their life, while *veterans* are usually in the second or mature stage and are 'old' relative to other trees of the same species. Because of their age, size and/or condition, all are of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value.

Ancient woodlands, and ancient and veteran trees, may be protected by **Tree Preservation Orders**, but they are also protected by planning policy (see below). When assessing the potential impact of a development on trees and woodlands, potential impacts on tree roots must be taken into account as well as the above ground features, as issues such as compaction or alterations to drainage could have significant impacts on trees.

Biodiversity of ancient woodlands and veteran trees

Ancient woodlands are likely to have greater biodiversity interest than more recently planted woodlands; some ancient woodlands will also be Priority habitats. Many woodland plants with limited dispersal capability are associated with ancient woodlands - some of these are used to help identify the presence of an ancient woodland and are known as 'ancient woodland indicators'. In addition to ground flora interest, ancient woodlands are likely to support protected species, such as bats and dormice, as well as localised woodland birds and butterflies, and rich fungal communities.

It has been estimated that Britain supports 80% of Europe's veteran trees. Veteran trees are particularly important for the invertebrate communities they support, as well as providing good roosting habitat for bats and nesting sites for birds. Old trees are also likely to support a rich variety of lichens and mosses.

Legislation

[Town and Country Planning Act 1990: Tree Preservation Orders](#)

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

175(c). 'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as **ancient woodland** and **ancient** or **veteran trees**) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists'

Further information

- [Ancient Woodland & veteran trees: protecting them from development](#) (Natural England 2018)
- [Ancient Tree Guide No. 4: What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest?](#) (Ancient Tree Forum/Woodland Trust 2008)
- [Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory for Surrey](#) (2011)
- [Surrey Woodland Study 2008](#) (Surrey County Council)
- [Ancient Tree Inventory](#) (Woodland Trust)

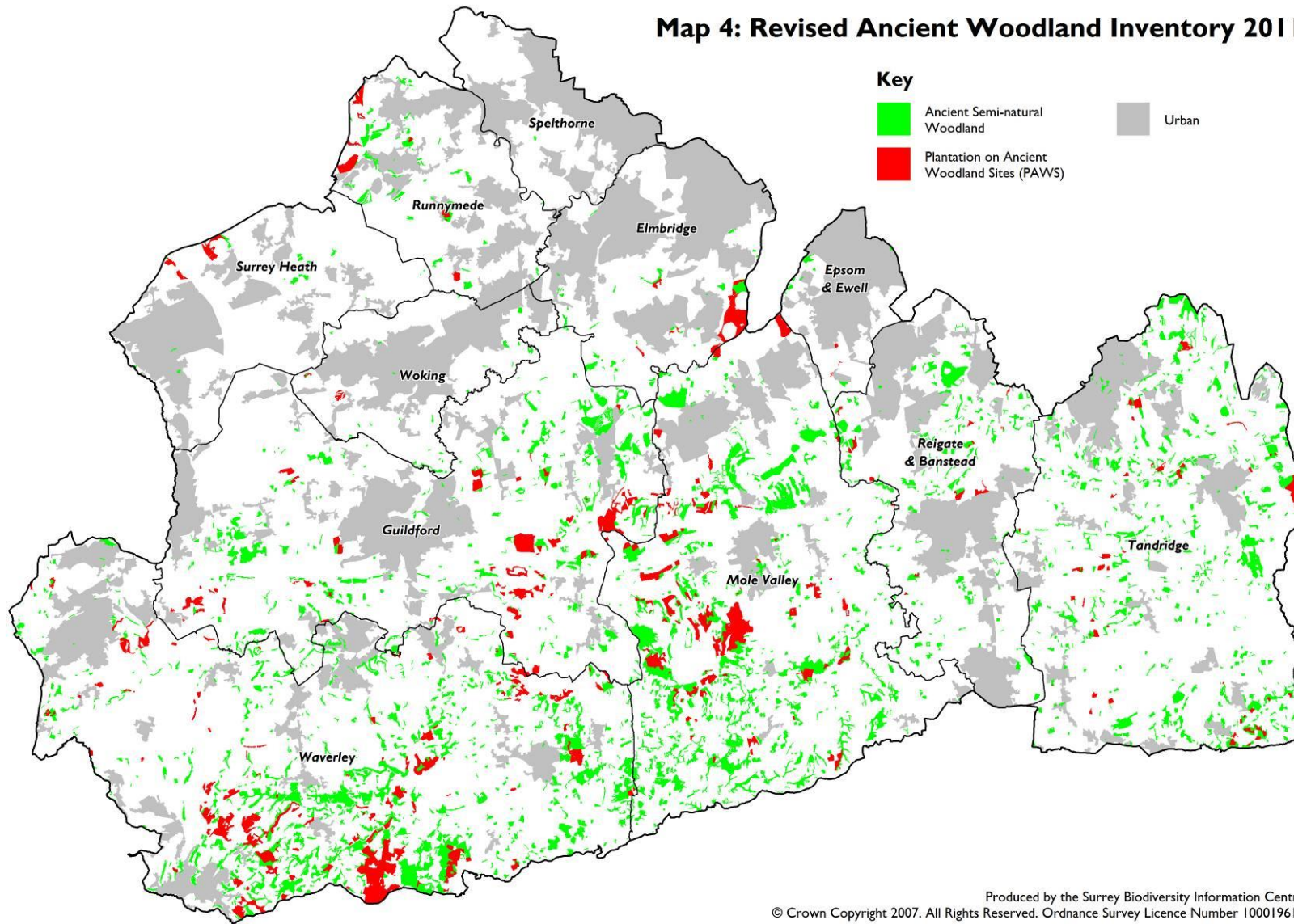
Key organisations

[Natural England](#)

Local authorities

[Surrey Woodland Forum](#)

Map 4: Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory 2011



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3c Priority habitats

Habitats of principal importance

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) describes the UK's biological resources and sets out a plan for their protection. This was our national response as signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, with a commitment to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010 (see page 34). Following reorganisation of the UK response to CBD after 2011, the **Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework** was published to maintain national co-ordination within the period 2011-2020.

The Surrey Nature Partnership has since reviewed the former Surrey local BAP to align it with objectives of the current national strategy to continue this work, with a spatial prioritisation for conservation action within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (see Section 4a). Some boroughs, such as Epsom & Ewell and Spelthorne, have identified priorities in their own local BAPs.

The distribution of known UK BAP Priority habitats in Surrey is identified on **Map 5**. As a biodiversity designation these habitats do not receive statutory protection, but are protected by planning policy (see below). There is however considerable overlap with the notified habitats within statutory designated sites, where they are so protected. Thus they are found both within and beyond other of the designated sites described here, and still further areas may exist not yet identified on Map 5. Priority habitats correspond to those referenced in Section 41 of the *Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act* as 'habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England'; due regard for which all local authorities must observe when exercising their functions. They are, therefore, protected by planning policy (see below).

Priority habitats in Surrey

- **Lowland heathland**: a key habitat, important for breeding birds, reptiles, invertebrates and rare wetland plants. Surrey has 13% of the national resource.

Grasslands

- **Lowland dry acid grassland**: often associated with heathland on sandy and gravelly soils. Important for rare plants, fungi and invertebrates. Sensitive to nutrient changes.
- **Lowland calcareous grassland**: a key habitat, associated with areas of chalk and limestone geology, such as in the North Downs and over a minor outcrop of calcareous sandstone in the Weald known as Bargate stone. Flower-rich, important for invertebrates (particularly butterflies). Sensitive to nutrient changes.
- **Lowland meadows** (Neutral grassland): uncommon in Surrey but important for flowers, invertebrates and birds. Sensitive to changes in hydrology, nutrients and management.

Woodlands

- **Wood-pasture & parkland**: important for veteran trees, invertebrates, fungi and bats. Found mainly on old estates, and often incorporating one or more of the above grassland types.
- **Lowland beech & yew woodland**: a key habitat, mainly in the North Downs but also the Low Weald.

- **[Lowland mixed deciduous woodland](#)**: can have rich ground flora. Also important for bats, woodland birds and butterflies, occasionally support Dormice.
- **[Wet woodland](#)**: of restricted distribution, mainly adjacent to waterbodies or part of a wetland habitat mosaic in river corridors. May support rare invertebrates.
- **[Traditional orchards](#)**: restricted distribution, dependent on traditional management methods. Important for bats, invertebrates, lichens.

Wetlands

- **[Floodplain grazing marsh](#)**: a key habitat associated with river floodplains. Sometimes flower-rich, important for wading birds. Particularly sensitive to changes in hydrology and nutrients.
- **[Lowland fens](#)**: restricted distribution but important for rare invertebrates and plants, often associated with wet heathland as 'valley mires'. Sensitive to changes in hydrology and nutrients.
- **[Eutrophic standing waters](#)**: likely to be found in old gravel pits and reservoirs, often important for waterbirds.
- **[Ponds](#)**: may be rich in plants and invertebrates. Likely to be breeding sites for amphibians. Sensitive to changes in hydrology and nutrient status.
- **[Reedbeds](#)**: restricted distribution. Important for birds, may also support Harvest mice or rare plants. Sensitive to changes in hydrology.
- **[Rivers](#)**: provide important wildlife corridors. Habitat of Water voles, Otter, and a range of aquatic invertebrates.

Other

- **[Hedgerows](#)**: an important linking habitat used by foraging birds and bats, Dormice and a range of invertebrates. (Subject to the [Hedgerow Regulations 1997](#)).
- **[Open mosaic habitats](#)**: on previously developed land; examples include former quarries, gravel pits and ash lagoons - important for birds, invertebrates and specialist plants.
- **[Arable field margins](#)**: strips around field edges managed to provide benefits for wildlife - can provide important food sources for farmland birds and invertebrates.

Legislation

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 41](#) refers to the Secretary of State's list of habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

174(b). 'To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of **priority habitats**, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of **priority species**; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.'

Further information

- [UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework](#) (JNCC/Defra 2012)
- [UK BAP priority species and habitats](#) (JNCC)

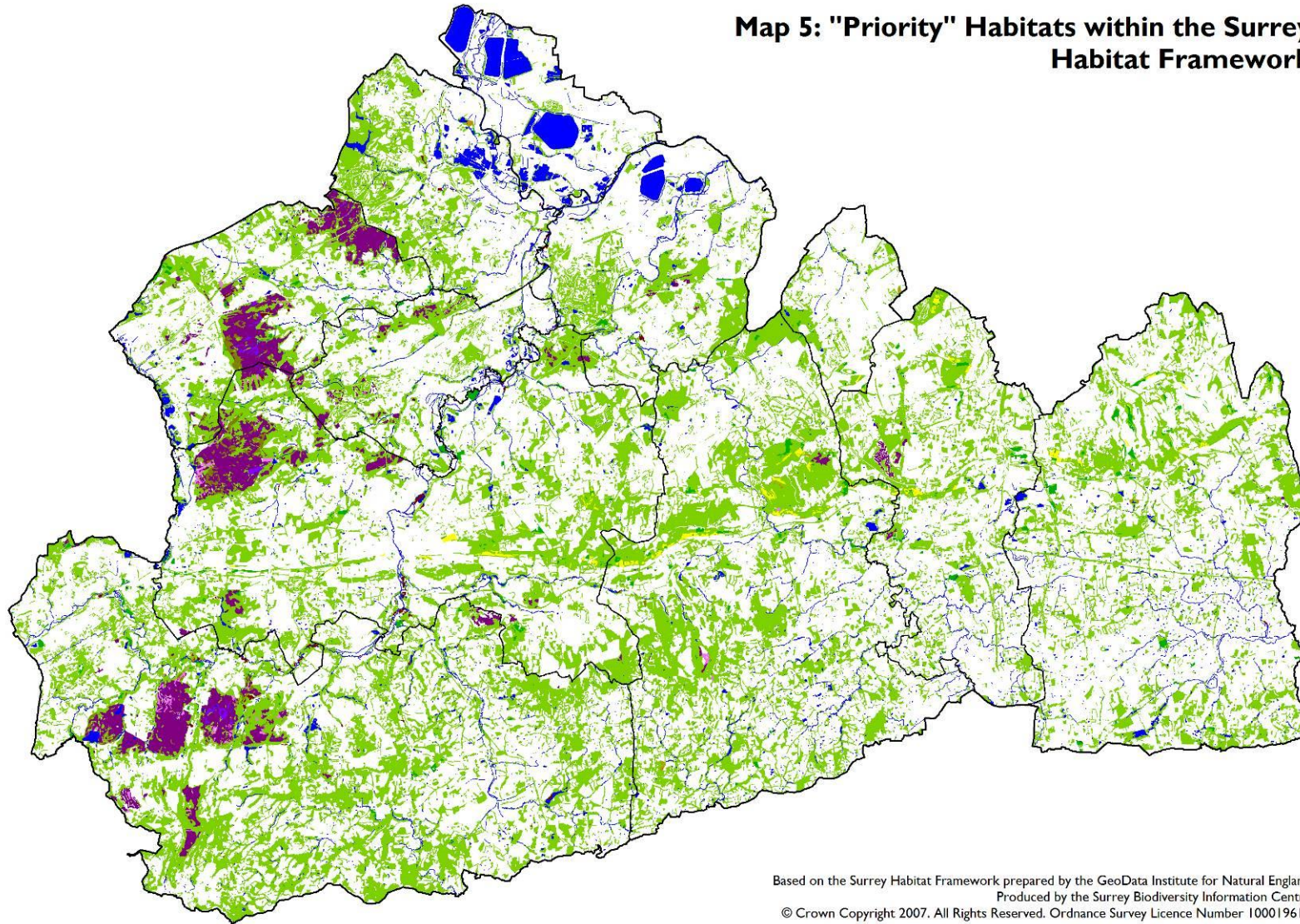
- [UK BAP list of Priority habitats](#) (JNCC)
- [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife & ecosystem services](#) (Defra 2011)

Key organisations

[Surrey Nature Partnership](#)

[Natural England](#)

**Map 5: "Priority" Habitats within the Surrey
Habitat Framework**



Based on the Surrey Habitat Framework prepared by the GeoData Institute for Natural England
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3d Priority species

Species of principal importance

In addition to listing Priority habitats (see Section 3c) the UK BAP also identifies Priority species for conservation in the UK. There are 1,149 BAP species nationally and at least 406 of these have at some time belonged to the biodiversity of Surrey. Locations where Priority species have been recorded in Surrey are identified on **Map 6**. Priority species are likely to be found both within and outside of designated sites; many will be associated with Priority habitats, but not exclusively so.

Priority species are mostly now rare having undergone major declines in the UK over the last half-century. They include mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, flowering plants and bryophytes, lichens and fungi, as well as a great many invertebrates.

Inclusion on the list of Priority species does not imply legal protection although some Priority species are also protected by law (see Section 2b). The UK BAP species list has informed the list of '*species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England*', required under Section 41 of the *Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act*, which are protected by planning policy (see below).

Priority species in Surrey

A full list of the Priority species still believed to occur in Surrey can be found in **Appendix II**, where the overlap with legally protected species is also clarified. Examples of Priority species that could be protected or enhanced through the planning system in Surrey include:

Small blue: our smallest butterfly, the Small blue forms highly localised colonies in calcareous grassland and has declined substantially across the UK. The larvae feed in the flower heads of Kidney-vetch, its sole larval food-plant. Surrey's remaining populations are all small and threatened, but still represent a significant national stronghold for the species. All are in the North Downs, between Pewley Down above Guildford and Banstead Downs on the edge of Greater London (where there are further isolated colonies in the London Boroughs of Sutton and Croydon). All the occupied sites are now managed by conservation bodies but the Small blue's recovery remains far from assured. The meagre size of most populations and relative complexity of its life-cycle leaves the species extremely vulnerable to chance factors that influence its breeding success. This tiny butterfly is easily overlooked, however, and as yet unknown colonies could certainly exist.

Birds of farmland and the wider countryside, including Skylark, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Reed-bunting, Grey partridge, Bullfinch, Starling, Song thrush and Turtle dove have shown dramatic declines within the last 30 years. Although all individual birds are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act, opportunities should be taken whenever possible to maintain and enhance the dwindling populations of these birds.

Development could impact on these species by direct loss of habitat, but also through increased recreational disturbance, especially associated with residential developments. Ground-nesting birds such as Skylarks can be protected by restricting access to areas they use during the breeding season. Some species can benefit from the provision of suitable nest sites and structures.

Wet grasslands along river valleys such as those of the Wey and Mole provide important remnant habitat for wetland birds such as Common snipe and Lapwing. Development should avoid habitat fragmentation and impacts on the hydrology of these areas. Opportunities should be taken to improve and extend suitable habitat; this may be combined with the management of areas secured for flood protection.

Legislation

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 41](#) refers to the Secretary of State's list of species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

174(b). *'To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:*

- *Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of **priority habitats**, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of **priority species**; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.'*

Further information

- [UK BAP list of Priority species](#) (JNCC)
- [Section 41 Species - Priority Actions Needed](#) (Natural England 2013)
- [The State of Surrey's Nature](#) (Surrey Nature Partnership 2017)

Key organisations

[Surrey Nature Partnership](#)

[Natural England](#)

[Environment Agency](#)

[Bat Conservation Trust](#)

[Mammal Society](#)

[People's Trust for Endangered Species](#)

[Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#)

[Surrey Wildlife Trust](#)

[Surrey Amphibian & Reptile Group](#)

[Surrey Botanical Society](#)

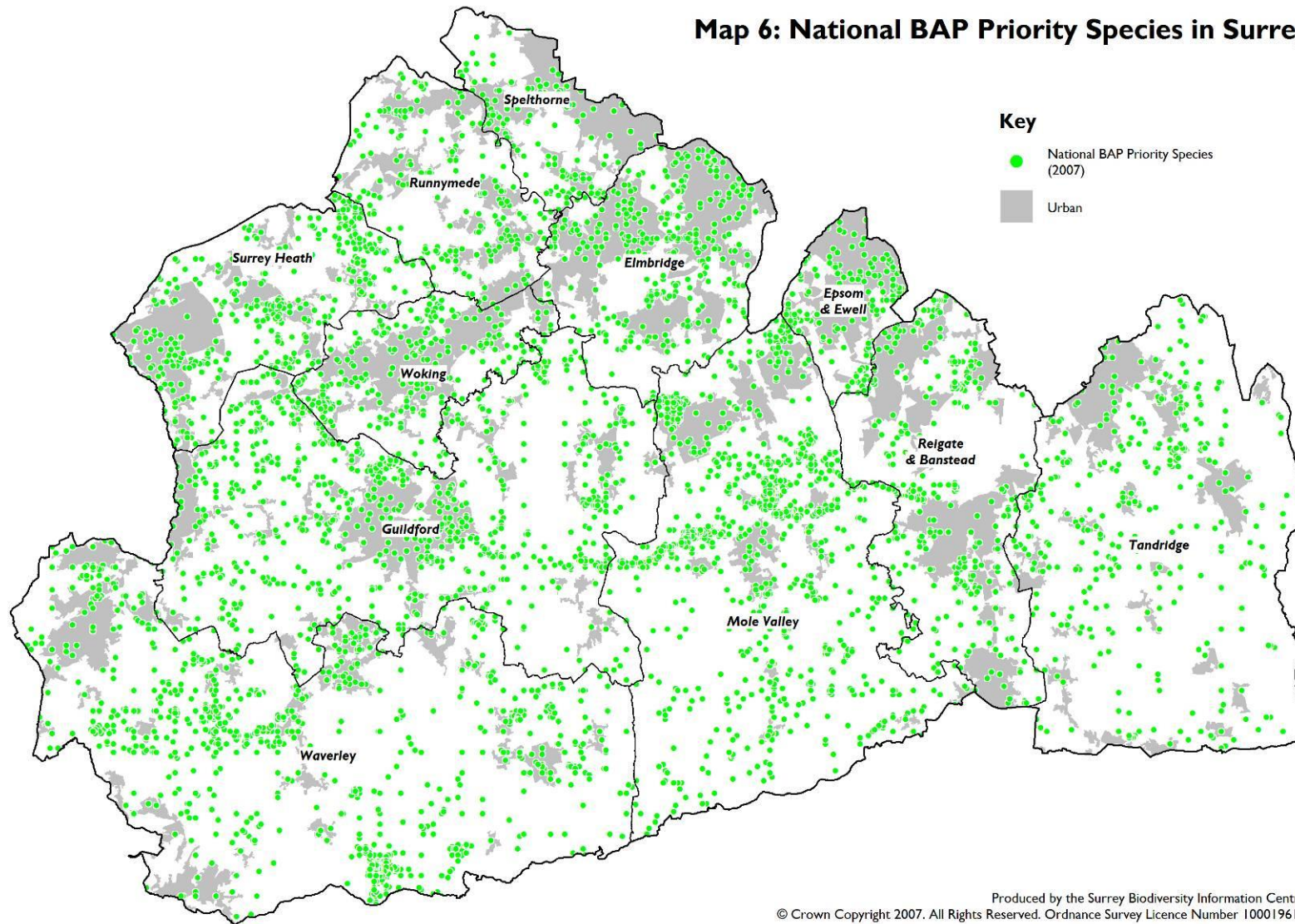
[Surrey Bat Group](#)

[Butterfly Conservation \(Surrey & SW London Branch\)](#)

[Surrey Bird Club](#)

Local authorities

Map 6: National BAP Priority Species in Surrey



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3e Other areas of importance for biodiversity

There are a number of areas and sites of importance to biodiversity within the county that are identified via other mechanisms, and in addition to the biodiversity planning policy and legislation covered by this document. These include various types of nature reserves, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and within the wider Green Belt.

Nature Reserves

The term 'nature reserve' is used to describe a range of different types of site important for wildlife and people. Some of these nature reserves have a statutory designation in their own right; in other cases, the term 'nature reserve' does not in itself imply any special protection. However, most of these sites will receive another form of designation (SPA, SAC, SSSI, SNCI) and most, if not all, support protected species or Priority habitats or species. See **Map 7** for the range of nature reserves found in Surrey.

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) protect sensitive biodiversity or geological features, provide sites for ecological research and offer opportunities for people to experience the natural environment. NNR is a statutory designation made by Natural England. Surrey has three NNRs:

- **Chobham Common** is also a SPA, SAC and SSSI and is owned by Surrey County Council but managed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust.
- **Ashted Common** is also a SSSI and is owned and managed by the City of London.
- **Thursley** is also SPA, SAC, part-Ramsar site and SSSI, and is owned and managed by Natural England.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are important for people and wildlife; they have features of local biodiversity or geological interest and offer opportunities for learning. LNR is a statutory designation made by local authorities. Some are also SSSI or SNCI. There are 45 LNRs in Surrey (see list in Appendix II).

Conservation Road Verge nature reserves were originally identified by the Surrey Biodiversity Partnership and Surrey County Council; these are primarily important for their locally characteristic flora.

Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) Nature Reserves: SWT manages 82 nature reserves across Surrey to protect important biodiversity, and to provide opportunities for people to enjoy local wildlife. Many SWT nature reserves have SPA, SAC, SSSI or SNCI status.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Farnham Heath: The RSPB owns and manages this nature reserve in the south-west of Surrey.

Woodland Trust woods: There are 18 woods owned and managed by the Woodland Trust in Surrey, some have SSSI or SNCI status, and most are ancient woodland.

Legislation

National Nature Reserves are designated under the [Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 \(Section 35\)](#) and the [National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949](#)

Local Nature Reserves are designated under the **National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949** (Section 21)

Planning policy

Policies described in Sections 2 and 3 should be applied according to the wildlife interest and any statutory designation that applies to the nature reserve, and biodiversity enhancements should be sought in line with the NPPF, as described in Section 4.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)

AONBs are landscapes designated for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty (including conservation of flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features) of an area. There is one AONB entirely within Surrey: Surrey Hills. A small area of the High Weald AONB overlaps far south-eastern Surrey.

AONBs support a large number of designated nature conservation sites and Priority habitats. A significant proportion of Surrey's Biodiversity Opportunity Areas are within the Surrey Hills AONB (see Section 4a).

AONBs have AONB Management Plans which are statutory plans and include reference to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity as a component of natural beauty. The Surrey Hills AONB management plan is endorsed by Surrey County Council and adopted by all constituent authorities.

Green Belt

(Metropolitan) Green belt is a planning designation derived from Government policy and defined by local authorities to control urban growth. One of the stated purposes of Green belt designation is safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, while a key benefit is to secure nature conservation interests.

Legislation

AONBs are designated under the [Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000](#) and the [National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949](#)

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

172. 'Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in all these areas.. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest'

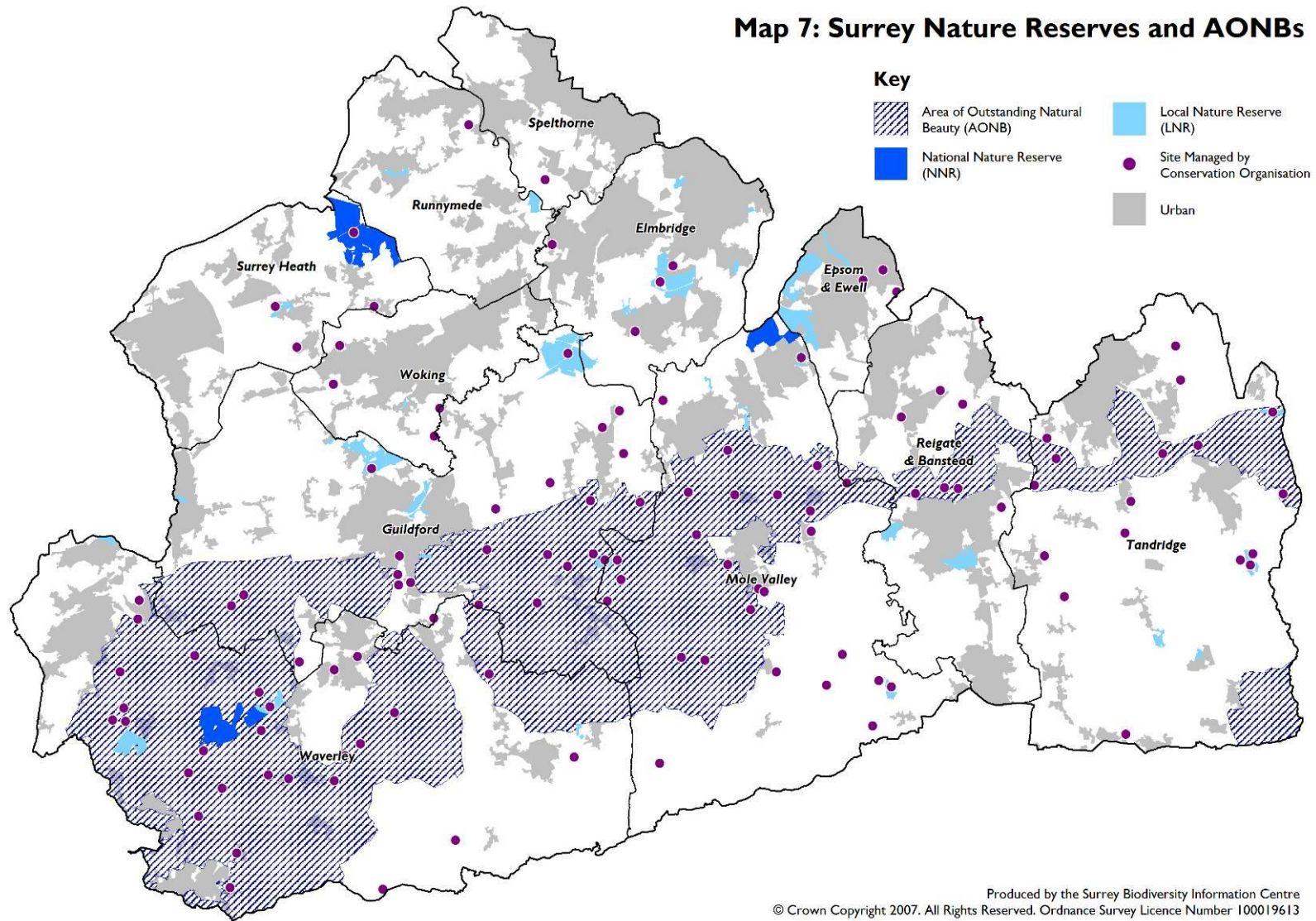
Policies described in Sections 2 and 3 should be applied according to the wildlife interest and any statutory designation that applies to land within an AONB, and biodiversity enhancements should be sought in line with the NPPF, as described in Section 4.

Policy pertaining to appropriate and inappropriate land-uses within the Green belt is set out in Chapter 13 of the [NPPF: Protecting Green Belt land](#) (pp.40-43).

Further information

- [Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan](#)
- [High Weald AONB Management Plan](#)

Map 7: Surrey Nature Reserves and AONBs



4 Recovering nature; biodiversity enhancement as investment in Natural Capital

The national policy direction for our planning system to play a role in the *recovery* of the natural environment, beyond simply safeguarding against further losses in biodiversity, dates back to 2005's Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity & Geological Conservation. This reflected the government's first opportunity to respond to the landmark United Nations [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) requiring signatory states to integrate effective strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into all relevant national plans, programmes and policies.

Regrettably, global measures of biodiversity and ecosystem function continue to show declines despite the many achievements of the CBD. Recognition of the failure to halt the loss of biological diversity by 2010 preceded the launch of the current UN Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Here in the UK, we are now working to the second national biodiversity strategy; **Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services**.

These strategies increasingly recognise the limitations of relying on past nature conservation mechanisms, which sought to protect wildlife within sites selected as units of a coordinated series, but essentially administered and managed in spatial isolation from each other. The need for a 'landscape scale' approach where protected sites might relate better ecologically as a coherent network, with their species populations able to exchange individuals by natural dispersal and migration, has now become widely accepted. This calls for more enlightened management across the wider landscape to achieve the strategic creation of new sites for biodiversity, functioning to effectively connect the original site series via wildlife corridors and intermediary 'stepping stones'.

In order for the natural environment to be afforded the protection it merits through better land-use policy and decision-making, its collective value is now also being presented fiscally, as 'Natural Capital'. This can be evaluated and monetised in terms of the goods and services it provides, on which humankind depends fundamentally for our continued existence. Biological diversity is at the very foundation of the natural environment, and ensures its future viability and the resilient functioning of all its ecosystems. Seen then as Natural Capital, the sustainable management of the natural environment should finally attract the levels of economic investment commensurate with its enormous importance affecting us all.

4a Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

Important areas for wildlife conservation

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) identify the most important areas for wildlife conservation in Surrey, where targeted conservation action will have the greatest benefit. The main aim within BOAs is to recover declining biodiversity at a landscape scale through the maintenance, restoration and creation of Priority habitats. BOAs in Surrey are identified on **Map 8**, and link with BOAs mapped across the whole of south-east England.

The planning policy approach to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas continues to develop. The requirement originating in PPS9 for the identification of areas of opportunity for biodiversity enhancements in Local Plans is emphasised still further in the NPPF (see below). This reflects the aims of the Government's 2011 '**Natural Environment White Paper**' *The Natural Choice* and now also the aspiration for a national Nature Recovery Network contained in **A Green Future** - its 25-Year Plan to improve the natural environment of the UK. Surrey's BOA concept provides the basis for the spatial realisation of this policy, thereby enabling local authorities to implement their policy requirements.

The policy approach currently being considered in several emerging Local Plans is to avoid, on principle, development that would compromise the achievement of the overarching purpose and specific objectives of a BOA. In many cases this involves protecting the designated and Priority habitats and species in the BOA (see Sections 2 and 3), but consideration must also be given to whether development will impact existing or effectively sterilise potentially improved habitat connectivity, both across and beyond it.

As with any development, those proposals falling within or adjacent to a BOA will soon be expected to deliver a mandatory net gain in biodiversity, in the form of tangible enhancements. But within a BOA such enhancements will be most effective when they are tailored to meet the specific objectives of that BOA. The scale of enhancements should be proportional to the size and collective impact of the development, which will become quantifiable using the standardised, equable methodology known as the 'Net Gain Metric'.

Examples of enhancements to achieve a net gain would include:

- Restoration and maintenance of Priority habitats through suitable management secured by planning obligations;
- Priority habitat creation, ideally in preferred locations to link fragmented habitats;
- Funding towards active conservation initiatives in the BOA implementing such projects, secured by planning conditions and obligations; and
- Provision of capital items needed to secure biodiversity enhancements (such as fencing and infrastructure to allow conservation grazing).

Where a development has the potential to impact, either positively or negatively, on the known biodiversity interest of a BOA, a biodiversity survey and report will be required,

to identify both constraints and opportunities. In some circumstances an Environmental Impact Assessment may be needed.

Delivering biodiversity gains in Surrey's Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

There are currently 50 BOAs covering 39% of Surrey, and these are listed in Appendix II. The BOAs were mapped by SBIC in consultation with local authorities and conservation organisations in Surrey. They were identified by taking into account existing concentrations of Priority habitats and important areas for Priority species. The potential for habitat restoration was also considered and took into account geology, topography and hydrology.

Each BOA has a Policy Statement detailing the individual features of biodiversity importance and its specific conservation objectives, as well as targets for maintenance, restoration and creation of Priority habitats, and recovery of Priority species populations. The BOAs provide a focus for co-ordinated, effective biodiversity recovery action in the county, including:

- Biodiversity project work by a range of organisations;
- Delivery of agri-environment schemes;
- Provision of biodiversity enhancements through the planning system.

Oversight and delivery of BOA aims and objectives is co-ordinated by the **Surrey Nature Partnership**. Lead agencies on individual BOA delivery partnerships will vary.

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

170. 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- **Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures'**

171. 'Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; **take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure**; and plan for the **enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale** across local authority boundaries.'

174. 'To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider **ecological networks**, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b) **promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.'**

[NPPF: Chapter 3. Plan-making](#) (pp. 8-12)

20(d). 'Strategic policies should make sufficient provision for.. conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.'

Further information

- [Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: the basis for realising Surrey's local ecological network](#) (Surrey Nature Partnership 2019 (revised))
- [The Wildlife Trusts - Living Landscapes](#)
- [A Living Landscape for Surrey](#) (Surrey Wildlife Trust 2010)
- [Surrey Wildlife Trust's Living Landscapes Strategy](#)
- [The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature](#) (HM Government 2011)
- [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#) (DEFRA 2018)
- [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife & ecosystem services](#) (Defra 2011)

Key organisations

[Surrey Nature Partnership](#)

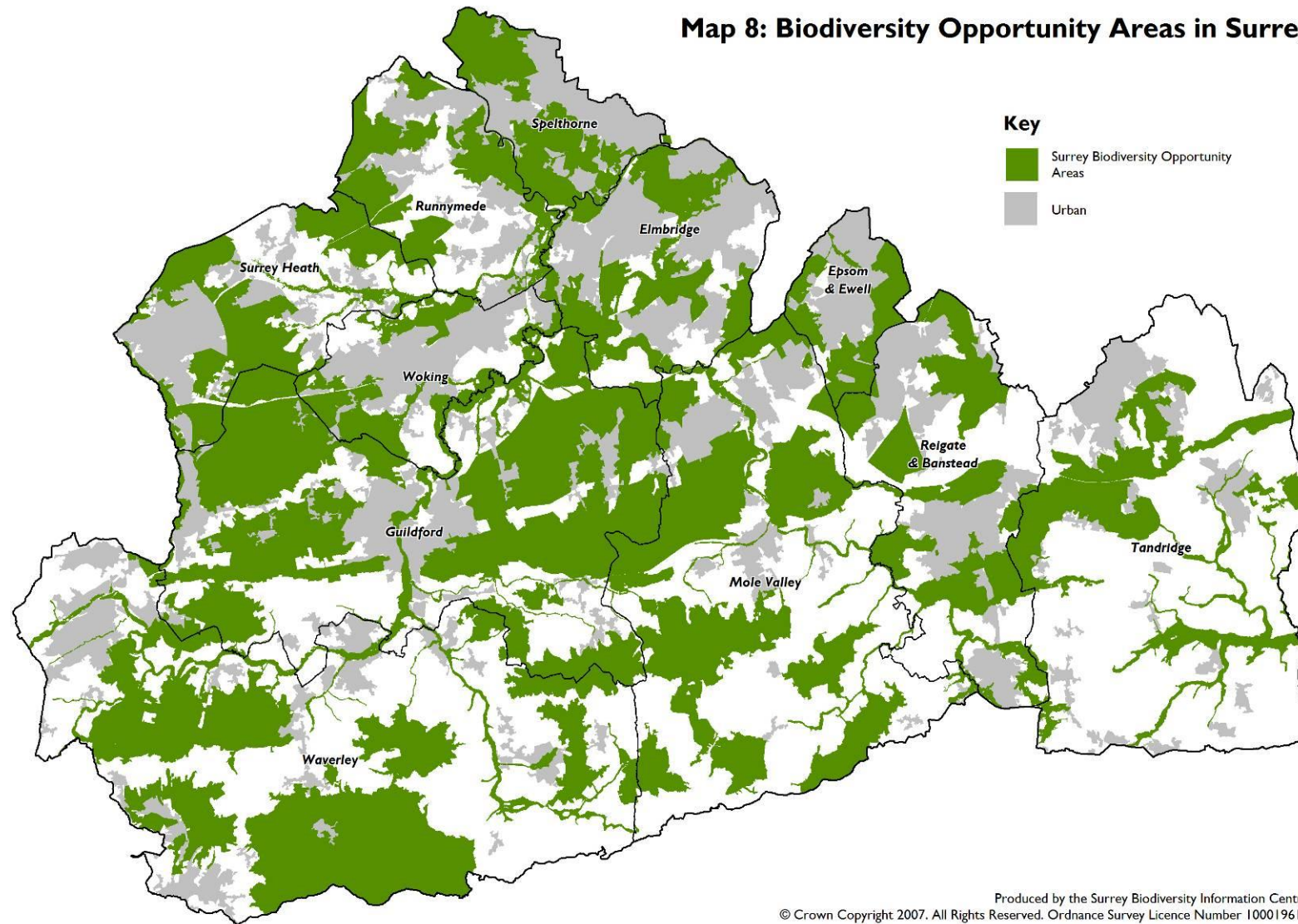
Surrey Wildlife Trust

Local authorities

[Natural England](#)

[Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre](#)

Map 8: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Surrey



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4b Green Infrastructure

Networks of green spaces

Green Infrastructure consists of the green areas in both urban and rural settings. It is entirely multi-functional, providing also for biodiversity conservation alongside delivery of various other environmental, recreational and cultural objectives. Green infrastructure (recently qualified to include but differentiate water-dominated 'blue' infrastructure) can include nature reserves, designated sites, recreational grounds, parks and open spaces, public rights of way, rivers and canals, allotments, cemeteries and many other green areas.

To best benefit biodiversity, green and blue infrastructure should ideally provide a network of interconnected habitats to enable dispersal of species across the wider environment. Open spaces within developments should be linked to biodiverse habitats in the wider countryside, including in designated sites, Priority habitats and in BOAs. Planning of green and blue infrastructure should also recognise its provision of vital 'ecosystem services' such as flood protection, microclimate control, pollination and filtration of air pollutants, and should therefore be integrated with area-based Climate Change Adaptation strategies.

New developments should be designed to maintain existing green and blue infrastructure. In delivering biodiversity enhancements, measures should be taken to contribute to the green and blue infrastructure network to maintain existing habitats and to enhance habitat connectivity. Production of a Green Infrastructure Master-plan should be considered for large scale developments. Development should aim to provide enough accessible natural greenspace relative to the scale of the development to achieve the **Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)** - see below) and meet relevant aims of the [Surrey Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#). Some local authorities have developed their own local standards for the provision of natural/semi-natural greenspace.

Local planning authorities should include policies to address aspects of green and blue infrastructure within their Local Plans, and consider producing a stand-alone **Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy**/Supplementary Planning Guidance document. An example of sub-regional level assessment to inform such a strategy was the ANGSt study undertaken for the Blackwater valley in Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire by SBIC, on behalf of the Blackwater Valley Partnership and Natural England. New development will be expected to contribute towards the achievement of such plans.

The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Access to natural spaces is known to improve quality of life, with benefits to health and well-being, as well as social cohesion. Natural England has developed a standard for the provision of accessible natural greenspace, known as ANGSt; the standards required are as follows:

- An accessible natural greenspace, of at least 2 ha in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- Local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of 1 ha per thousand population;
- At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home;
- At least one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km of home;
- At least one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km of home.

It is recognised that some of these targets cannot be achieved over a short time period, but they should provide a long term goal. In Surrey, access to natural greenspace is relatively good in comparison with some neighbouring counties, however we still fall short of the standard especially for the 'doorstep' type provision closest to home. (see [An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East](#)):

- 23% of households are within 300 m of a 2 ha site;
- 82% of households are within 2 km of a 20 ha site;
- 90% of households are within 5 km of a 100 ha site;
- 76% of households are within 10 km of a 500 ha site.

It is important to note that whilst access to natural greenspace is essential, there will be some areas where allowing too high a degree or indeed any access would be detrimental to sensitive biodiversity.

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 3. Plan-making](#) (pp. 8-12)

20(d). 'Strategic policies should make sufficient provision for.. conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and **green infrastructure**, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.'

[NPPF: Chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities](#) (pp. 27-29)

91(c). 'Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which.. enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs - for example through the provision of safe and accessible **green infrastructure**, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.'

[NPPF: Chapter 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding & coastal change](#) (p.44-48)

150(a). 'New development should be planned for in ways that.. avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of **green infrastructure**'

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

171. 'Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and **green infrastructure**;

181. 'Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants.. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and **green infrastructure** provision and enhancement.'

Further information

- [Natural England - Green Infrastructure guidance](#)
- [Planning for a healthy environment - good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity](#) (TCPA/TWT 2012)
- [Green Infrastructure Partnership Resource Library](#)

- [Building with Nature standards & accreditation](#)
- [Homes for people and wildlife - how to build housing in a nature-friendly way](#) (The Wildlife Trusts 2018)
- [An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East](#) (Forestry Commission 2007)

Key organisations

Local authorities

[The Wildlife Trusts](#)

[Town & Country Planning Association](#)

[Natural England](#)

4c Biodiversity within developments

Biodiversity is not only found in rural areas; the built environment also provides opportunities to deliver enhancements for biodiversity. For large developments, features for biodiversity should be strategically planned to link up to Green Infrastructure and the wider environment. Such biodiversity enhancements can also offer opportunities for climate change adaptation.

Landscaping

Appropriate landscaping within developments can help reduce fragmentation of habitats by allowing wildlife to live within and move through built areas to the wider countryside. Landscaping should aim to retain and enhance existing biodiversity features.

Landscaped areas will be of most benefit to wildlife where native plant species are used as they are likely to support a wider range of native animals. Plant species originating from the local area will be even more beneficial; Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Surrey Nature Partnership can provide useful information in determining the most appropriate plants to use in landscaping schemes in different parts of the county.

Ponds can also provide an important habitat for wildlife. They should be designed with gently sloping edges to allow animals easy access in and out, and a variety of depths so that they are suitable for a range of different plants. Consideration should be given to the design of balancing ponds and appropriate Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS - including 'Rain Gardens') to provide wildlife habitat.

Landscaping should, wherever possible, link up areas supporting biodiversity. For example, native hedgerows could link up open spaces, providing routes along which species such as hedgehogs, butterflies and bats can move. A series of ponds can link with wetland features in the wider countryside.

Street trees can add to the wildlife linkages through developed areas and, again, native species will provide the most benefits. Gardens also contribute to habitat for wildlife within a built area and their layout should be designed to create a network linking with open spaces and Green Infrastructure.

Buildings

Developments are being built to ever-increasing environmental standards, and biodiversity should not be forgotten here. There are very simple steps that can be taken to provide nesting and roosting opportunities for species such as bats and birds within buildings. Nest boxes can be mounted on the outside of buildings, special bat or Swift bricks can be incorporated into the structure, and entire roof spaces can be designed to provide opportunities for bats to roost. A step further is to provide a 'green', or vegetated, roof, which can provide foraging opportunities for birds, and support a range of native plants.

Thought should be given to the impact of lighting on wildlife, especially bats; areas of no or low level lighting along bat foraging routes should be considered.

Roads

Roads can provide a barrier to wildlife, and collisions with animals such as deer can also pose a safety threat. Mammal fencing can be used to exclude mammals from the road, and

underpasses can be created for a range of species including Badger, Hedgehog and amphibians. Green bridges can be created in order to provide a safe crossing for both people and animals.

Protecting wildlife habitats within developments

Both new and existing biodiversity features within, or adjacent to, a development may be sensitive to human impacts such as recreational disturbance and vandalism.

Buffering of biodiversity features from areas of high human activity, such as roads, residential development or play areas can help to reduce impacts. Interpretation materials can be provided in wildlife conservation areas, where suitable. Community involvement in managing local wildlife areas can engender a feeling of ownership and can help ensure the long term survival of such areas.

A monitoring and management plan should be drawn up for green spaces to ensure long term suitable management.

Planning policy

[NPPF: Chapter 15. Conserving & enhancing the natural environment](#) (pp.49-53)

175(d). 'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles: ..opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.'

Further information

- [Pond Creation Tool Kit](#) (Freshwater Habitats Trust)
- [Biodiversity by Design: a guide for sustainable communities](#) (TCPA 2004)
- [UK Green Building Council](#)

Key organisations

[Susdrain](#)

[Freshwater Habitats Trust](#)

[Living Roofs.org](#)

Local authorities

5 Key legislation and policy

Legislation	
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made
Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2001	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents
EIA Regulations	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/293/contents/made
National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/97
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents
Protection of Badgers Act 1992	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents
Policy	
Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations & Their Impact Within the Planning System	http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147570.pdf
National Planning Policy Framework (2019 update)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
NPPF: Planning Practice Guidance portal	http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/

6 Abbreviata

ANGSt	Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASNW	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BOA	Biodiversity Opportunity Area
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
CIRIA	Construction Industry Research and Information Association
CRoW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
EclA	Ecological Impact Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPS	European Protected Species (under the Habitats Regulations 2017)
FC	Forestry Commission
GCN	Great crested newt
GI	Green Infrastructure
HPI	Habitats of Principal Importance (for the conservation of biodiversity in England)
HRA	Habitat Regulations Assessment (also known as Appropriate Assessment)
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LS	Local Site (incorporates SNCI and RIGS)
NE	Natural England
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NIA	Nature Improvement Area
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PAWS	Plantation Ancient Woodland Sites (FC terminology)
PPS9	Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Site
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SBIC	Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre
SNP	Surrey Nature Partnership
SLSP	Surrey Local Sites Partnership
SNCI	Site of Nature Conservation Importance
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPI	Species of Principal Importance (for the conservation of biodiversity in England)
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWT	Surrey Wildlife Trust
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)
WT	Woodland Trust

7 Contacts

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[Appendix I](#)

- Full list of legally protected species known to occur in Surrey (at revision)

[Appendix II](#)

- Full list of Statutory designated sites in Surrey (SAC, SPA, SSSI, NNR, LNR)
- Full list of Non-statutory sites (SNCI, RIGS) for individual Boroughs/Districts (at revision)
- Full list of BOAs in Surrey, by Borough/District
- Full list of HPI (UK BAP Priority habitats), by Borough/District (& BOA)
- Working list of SPI (UK BAP Priority species) in Surrey (at revision)