

Norwich City Council

Biodiversity Strategy 2022 – 2032

DRAFT

**Post Public Consultation Draft for
Stakeholder Consultation**

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1. Foreword

Foreword by Councillor Adam Giles - Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing

- 1.1 Norwich City Council has declared Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies. This new Biodiversity Strategy and its associated Development Plan are a key part of delivering against the priorities and ambitions set within the Council's overarching Environmental Strategy 2020-25 (Appendix A).
- 1.2 We are rightly proud of our beautiful, unique and diverse city and its natural environment - with many hidden green space gems, heathland, parks, woodland, allotments and waterways, providing Green Flag award-winning places for us to appreciate. This habitat is of course also home to a variety of wildlife and nature, whose survival is dependent on human behaviour. In turn our future prosperity is reliant on biodiversity being able to thrive.
- 1.3 Since the council's previous biodiversity strategy was published in 2002, significant efforts have been made to improve the quality of our local nature reserves and wildlife sites. These include Green Flag Status for Eaton Park, Waterloo Park, and Mousehold Heath, as well as management plans in place for those sites with prioritised habitats and species. £300,000 in CIL funding was secured to invest in the creation of new habitats at Kett's Heights to boost biodiversity.
- 1.4 At Mousehold Heath a grant of £30,600 was secured from Natural England for a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement to improve the quantity and quality of heathland and acid grassland, nationally important habitats. This work has led to the identification of: a number of scarce and threatened bee and wasp species; a number of butterfly species, such as small copper and green hairstreak; and a number of moth species, including true lover's knott, heath rustic, and beautiful yellow underwing. The installation of bentonite clay linings at the Vinegar Pond and the Mustard Pond have seen a good number of dragonfly and damselfly species prosper, including the Norfolk Hawker, a nationally threatened and scarce Red Data book species.
- 1.5 Exceptional partnership work and valuable projects have been delivered with our environmentally passionate community and key stakeholders. A biodiversity event held at St Andrew's & Blackfriars Hall on 30th November 2021, highlighted a vast range of additional ideas that we can look to take forward together. More than ever we need to work collectively and also look to draw on the experience of the Norwich 2040 City Vision partnership to reach out to all sectors of our community.
- 1.6 Our broader Environmental Strategy (2020-25) complements this Biodiversity Strategy through provision for reduced carbon emissions and air pollution.

- 1.7 The City Council has an important leadership role to play as an anchor institution in creating sustainable communities where biodiversity can thrive. Positive action through innovative management techniques of parks and open spaces, excellent conservation of our natural areas, and ambitious expectations of housing developers all support our goal to create a place where our residents, visitors and the environment can all flourish.
- 1.8 The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to local green spaces and nature, both for physical health and mental wellbeing. Biodiversity must be protected and enhanced if Norwich is to remain an attractive place to live and work for our residents.
- 1.9 In order to maintain and improve biodiversity across the city, action will need to be taken at every level. From individuals to large organisations. From gardens to our road verges, our green spaces, to our industrial estates and new developments. We need to be much more connected to, and aware of, the nature that surrounds us, our impact upon it, the benefits it brings, and take the opportunities to support biodiversity available to us.
- 1.10 We have set ourselves ambitious targets and plans and pledge to use our planning powers to produce Biodiversity Net Gain on all redevelopments, taking a genuinely radical approach to sustainable development that enhances biodiversity.
- 1.11 It will be equally important to work closely with and influence key partners and stakeholders, including Norfolk County Council, who have responsibility for transport, highways and verges, lighting and education in our area. We will continue to strive to lead by example in positively managing our own treasured and unique habitats.

I am delighted we are continuing to demonstrate our commitment to put biodiversity at the centre of what Norwich City Council does, support our wider aim of responding effectively to the Climate Emergency, and lead on educating us all in the immense value of our biodiversity being able to prosper.

A. Giles

Councillor Adam Giles - Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing



2. Executive Summary

This new Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032 (hereafter ‘the Strategy’) and its associated Biodiversity Development Plan (hereafter ‘the Plan’) set out the Council’s comprehensive and ambitious response to redress the Biodiversity Emergency it declared in 2019, as well as delivering on the 2040 City Vision commitment of ‘*Protecting and maintaining our green and open spaces to improve biodiversity*’.

The Strategy is premised on a new biodiversity policy statement, which is to ‘*create a city where biodiversity can sustainably recover and thrive, halt species decline and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030 or sooner*’, affirming the Council’s commitment to lead and coordinate nature recovery in the City. By aligning the Council’s own operations and collaborating with organisations responsible for significant nature assets and other interested parties (including Norwich businesses, institutions, VSCEs and residents), a new Nature Recovery Network (NRN) will be developed across the city.

The main objective is for the NRN to be significantly complete, to halt species decline and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030. The development of the NRN will be guided by the principles of the Lawton Report¹, to identify, create, protect, connect and enhance diverse blue¹ and green natural assets.

The NRN will comprise nature cores, such as existing wildlife sites and parkland, connected by nature corridors which may take the form of designated streets, green spaces on and around buildings, and highway verges. Opportunities to create stepping stones within the network will be sought in the form of smaller green spaces in the built environment, such as residents’ gardens, on a voluntary basis.

Other objectives exist around climate change mitigation and adaption, health and wellbeing, educational benefits, food production, visitor experience, and the growth of the green economy.

The Strategy acknowledges the need to successfully integrate with the *national* NRN² and other local strategies and plans, as well as being evidence based with measurable outcomes. Management, assurance and reporting will be provided by a new Biodiversity Working Group comprising officers of the Council.

The Biodiversity Working Group is responsible for delivering the Plan, which sets out in a separate document, interdependent tasks categorised according to a series of thematic workstreams. The Plan is based on a three-year ahead rolling horizon, with engagement, planning and integration tasks notionally being undertaken during 2023, and implementation of natural asset development tasks from 2024 onwards.

¹ Pertaining to surface water assets such as ponds, broads, rivers and streams

² A requirement of the Environment Act 2021

3. The Need and Context for this New Biodiversity Strategy

The paragraphs below firstly define biodiversity, and then go on to set out the need and context for this new Biodiversity Strategy

- 2.1 Biodiversity is the collective term for the variety and abundance of forms of life found in an area, including animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms like bacteria. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web to maintain, balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including, food, oxygen, clean air, clean water, medicine, and shelterⁱⁱ.
- 2.2 The current global loss of biodiversity is unprecedented in human history. The 2020 global Living Planet Index shows an average 68% fall in populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016ⁱⁱⁱ.
- 2.3 Thriving biodiversity and sustainable ecosystems are essential for our survival, wellbeing and our local economy. We are inextricably connected with nature; we are part of the ecosystem and not separate from it.
- 2.4 In response to this, Norwich City Council (hereafter ‘the Council’) declared a climate and environmental emergency in September of 2019.
- 2.5 The Environment Act 2021^{iv} (hereafter ‘the new Environment Act’) aims (amongst other things) to halt species decline and improve our natural environment. Part of Central Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan^v, it sets out a framework for developing Nature Recovery Networks, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), Protected Site and Species Conservation Strategies and gives councils new powers to ensure 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) is achieved in new developments.
- 2.6 Norwich’s tree canopy cover is higher than the national average^{vi} with the city providing generous levels of open spaces, two river valleys, extensive undeveloped flood meadows and marshes and other significant habitats and species. This strategy aims to build on the existing knowledge of Norwich’s biodiversity and the success of existing strategies, management plans, and arrangements.

4. Council Biodiversity Policy and the 2040 City Vision

Taking action to redress the climate and environmental emergencies are key policy priorities for the Council and form central planks of the Norwich 2040 City Vision (hereafter ‘the Vision’).

- 4.1 Existing policy statements include:

a) Environmental Policy

Appendix A of the Environmental Strategy 2020-25 states that the Council will monitor its resource for

Protecting and enhancing habitat and biodiversity

b) Development Plan Policies, which are listed in Appendix Section 11.1

4.2 New Policy Statement

The following *new* policy statement has been agreed as part of the process of producing this Strategy. This statement supersedes the previous statement made in Appendix A of the Environmental Strategy 2020-25^{vii}:

Create a city where biodiversity can sustainably recover and thrive, halt species decline and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030 or sooner

4.3 One of the 5 themes of The Vision is to create a *Liveable City*, which includes:

Protecting and maintaining our green and open spaces to improve biodiversity

4.4 The aims and objectives of this Strategy describe how Council policy and the Vision will be effectively and reliably delivered upon, and how legislation will be adhered to.

5. Taking an Integrated Strategic Approach

To redress the environmental emergency, it is recognised that this Strategy shall successfully identify dependencies with other associated Council strategies and those of relevant external actors and ensure their successful integration. Associated policies, strategies and plans are detailed in Appendix Section 11.2.

6. Working in Partnership and with Interested Parties

To deliver the strategic objectives set out in Section 10 below, partnerships shall be established with key external organisations concerned with the management of significant nature assets, strategic planning and funding to improve biodiversity; these organisations are referred to as *Strategic Partners*.

The Council shall also engage with other parties to deliver the objectives, including charities, VSCEs³, business, institutions and residents; referred to herein as *Interested Parties*.

A register of Strategic Partners and Interested Parties is proposed in Appendix Section 11.3, and this shall be maintained and developed for the purposes of delivering the Plan.

7. Biodiversity Strategy Document Aims

The aims of this Strategy document are to set out:

- a) The generalities of the Council's approach to delivering its biodiversity policy commitments;
- b) How relevant parts of the 2040 City Vision will be realised and
- c) How the Council will ensure its duties, with regards biodiversity, are met in a coordinated and effective way.

It is envisaged that this Strategy is reviewed and amended every 5 years to ensure it continues meet its strategic aims, or as required.

8. Management and Assurance

- 8.1 The implementation of Biodiversity Strategy and Development Plan will be managed, measured, updated and communicated by the Council's Biodiversity Working Group, as part its Environmental Management System assurance arrangements.
- 8.2 The Biodiversity Working Group shall comprise officers of the Council with reporting lines to the Corporate Leadership Team, Portfolio Holders and/or Cabinet, as required.
- 8.3 The Biodiversity Working Group shall maintain registers concerning environmental aspects, compliance, risks and opportunities, funding opportunities, key strategic partners and interested parties.

9. Consultation and Communication

This Strategy is informed by a comprehensive consultation exercise including members of the public, officers and members of Norwich City Council, subject matter

³ Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises

experts, partner organisations and interested parties. Communication of this Strategy will be managed by the Biodiversity Working Group.

10. The Strategic Objectives

This section describes how the Council will meet its policy commitments to address the environmental emergency with regards biodiversity, and how it will realise the relevant parts of the Vision.

The strategic objectives are:

- 10.1 Develop a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) in the city to bring about a sustained recovery in biodiversity. The city's NRN shall be part of the *national* NRN as set out in the new Environment Act, the proposed aims of which are summarised in Appendix section 11.4.

Norwich's NRN shall:

- a. Identify, connect, protect, create and enhance diverse blue and green habitats, in order to promote species recovery^{viii};
- b. Recognise the potential habitat value of all non-built space as well as potential habitats which may exist within the curtilage of buildings;
- c. Consist of nature cores such as existing wildlife sites and parkland, connected by nature corridors which may take the form of designated parts of the city including streets, green spaces on and around buildings and highway verges. Opportunities to create stepping stones within the network will be sought in the form of smaller green spaces in the built environment, such as back gardens and smaller green areas^{ix}, and
- d. Norwich's NRN will be significantly complete and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030.

The NRN shall be enabled by, or comprise, the following elements:

- e. The Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy which shall be a principal driver of the NRN in the Greater Norwich Area;
- f. The *national* NRN may, when details become known, require change to the requirements of the city's NRN to ensure alignment. It is acknowledged that implementation of the National NRN is a duty of Norfolk County Council;

- g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Species Conservation Strategies and other mechanisms of the New Environment Act, to establish species and place-based priorities;
- h. Nature assets owned and/or managed by partner organisations such as nature reserves;
- i. A significant portion of the parks, open spaces and undeveloped land owned and managed by the Council;
- j. Existing buildings owned and managed by the Council with regards the potential for green roofs, balconies and green areas adjacent to buildings;
- k. Existing buildings owned and managed by commercial entities, contributing on a voluntary basis, with regards the potential for green roofs, balconies and green areas adjacent to buildings;
- l. Existing buildings owned and managed by members of the public, contributing on a voluntary basis, with regards the potential for green roofs, balconies, back gardens and green areas adjacent to buildings, and
- m. New developments providing at least 10% biodiversity net gain, through either onsite or offsite arrangements.

10.2 Apply evidence and science-based approaches to improving biodiversity, by:

- a. Establishing measurable key indicators using methodologies which are supported by recognised science;
- b. Recording biodiversity baselines and subsequent ecology change using surveys and recognised methodologies, to measure the success of this Strategy and related activity, and to inform the evolution of future iterations of this Strategy;
- c. Promoting sustainable ecosystems through recognised ecology theory and practice whilst also enabling innovation, and by recognising the need for ecology to adapt to climate change, and
- d. Developing approaches which minimise the impacts of climate change.

This objective is informed, in part, by the guidance set out in Appendix D of DEFRA's Measuring environmental change: outcome indicator framework the 25 Year Environment Plan^x

10.3 In the planning, development and maintenance of the NRN, the Council shall seek to:

- a. Create new policies and strategies as necessary to deliver the NRN and meet new statutory requirements such as realising at least 10% biodiversity net gain in new developments^{xi};
- b. Achieve savings and develop revenue streams aligned with biodiversity improvement, such as through nature-based solution offerings and off-site biodiversity net gain arrangements for new development;
- c. Reduce negative impacts on biodiversity through measures relating to the design and operation of its buildings and other assets;
- d. Reduce negative impacts on biodiversity through measures relating to how the council procures goods and services;
- e. Reduce heat, drought, flood risk and improve air and water quality, through biodiversity improvement schemes and nature-based solutions;
- f. Improve wellbeing through improved access to nature;
- g. Create educational opportunities
- h. Produce food, albeit with the emphasis on biodiversity improvement
- i. Enhance tourism and improve visitor experience;
- j. Grow the green economy with regards promoting biodiversity and ensuring alignment between this Strategy and strategies and plans for economic growth;
- k. Deliver our policy commitments, plans and the relevant sections of the Vision in relation to this Strategy and Development Plan;
- l. Act as Leader to co-create opportunity and coordinate action and external funding and investment, by proactively and collaboratively engaging with partners and interested parties, and
- m. Manage financial decisions associated with Norwich City Council's NRN in line with our Corporate Plan priorities and internal planning processes.

A Biodiversity Development Plan will be produced setting out how each of these objectives will be realised.

11. Appendix

11.1 Development Management Policies and Plans

a) Current Development Management Policies

Policy DM3 Delivering high quality design

All new development will be expected to make appropriate provision for both the protection of existing and the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the overall design which complements and enhances the development.

Policy DM6 Natural environmental assets

Development is expected to take all reasonable opportunities to avoid harm to and protect and enhance the natural environment of Norwich and its setting, including both sites and species

Policy DM7 Trees and development

Trees and significant hedge and shrub masses should be retained as an integral part of the design of development except where their long-term survival would be compromised by their age or physical condition or there are exceptional and overriding benefits in accepting their loss.

b) Future Proposed Development Plan Policies

Greater Norwich Local Plan

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is in two parts - the Strategy and Sites Plan. The Strategy outlines the broad approach to housing and jobs growth, along with policies to ensure sustainability, protect our environment and provide infrastructure.

The Sites Plan identifies the sites which we propose to allocate to meet housing and employment needs to 2038, as well as the allocations we propose to carry forward from the current Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk local plans. At this point the Sites Plan excludes villages within South Norfolk which will be addressed through a separate housing sites allocation document and will form part of the development plan for the area

Supplementary Planning Document

A supplementary planning document will be produced to give guidance to developers around the requirement for at least 10% biodiversity net gain, currently expected at the end of 2023.

11.2 Associated Policies, Strategies and Plans

a) Associated Policies, Strategies and Action Plans owned by Norwich City Council

- Environmental Commitment Policy Statement
- Environmental Strategy
- Environmental Action Plan
- Strategic Asset Management Framework March 2022
- Asset management strategy for housing
- Parks and open spaces
- Allotments and cemeteries
- Trees
- Pesticide use
- Nutrient Neutrality
- Climate change adaption
- Carbon management plan
- Water reduction
- Waste reduction and recycling

b) Policies, Strategies and Plans owned by external actors

- Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan
- Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS)
- National Planning Policy Framework^{xii}
- HM Government 25 Year Environment Plan^{xiii}
- River Wensum Strategy
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Species Conservation Strategies
- Protected Site Strategies
- Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework
- The Broads Plan 2022-2027
- Water Resources East Emerging Water Resources Regional Plan 2022

- The outputs of the Good Economy Commission

11.3 Proposed Strategic Partners and Interested Parties

Strategic Partners
<i>Natural and built asset owners/decision makers</i>
Norfolk County Council
Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership
Norwich Fringe Project
Broadland District Council and South Norfolk District Council
Breckland Council
Broads Authority
Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Woodland Trust
RSBP
The National Trust
Broadland Housing Association
Cotman Housing Association
Clarion Housing
Flagship Housing Association
Orbit Housing Association
Orwell Housing Association
Saffron Housing
Sage Homes
<i>Strategic Planning and Funding Organisations</i>
The Council Executive, Administration and Councillors
River Wensum Strategy Partnership
Norwich City Vision Partnership
Norfolk Strategic Planning Group
Greater Norwich Growth Board
2040 City Vision Business Leaders' Group

Interested Parties
<i>Local Interested Parties</i>

Residents
Children and Young People
Biodiversity Champions
Citizen Scientists
Community groups with an interest in biodiversity including:
Mousehold Heath Defenders
BTCV in Norwich
The Plantation Garden Committee
Greenhouse Trust
The Norwich Over the Water Group
King Street Neighbours
Friends of Train Wood
Friends of West Earlham Woods
Friends of Strawberry Field
LTC Green Spaces
Norfolk Rivers Trust
Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society
Friends of Earlham Cemetery
Faith Groups
The Floral Project Scrapbox
The Island Community Group
Green Care Network
The Norwich Society
Schools, Colleges and Higher Education Institutions
The Council Executive, Administration and Councillors
2040 City Vision Business Leaders' Group
Norwich City Services Ltd
Garden Centres
University of East Anglia
Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service
River Wensum Strategy Partnership
Norwich City Vision Partnership
Norfolk Strategic Planning Group

Wild East
Greater Norwich Growth Board
Norwich Climate Change Commission
Norfolk Chambers of Commerce Climate Leaders Group
Norwich Business Improvement District
Norwich Health and Wellbeing Partnership
Representation from the Greater Norwich Sport & Physical Activity Strategy
<i>Campaign Groups</i>
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace
Extinction Rebellion
<i>Regional and National Interested Parties</i>
Water Resource East
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Office for Environmental Protection
Natural England
Environment Agency
Forestry Commission
Forestry England

11.4 The National Nature Recovery Network

The *national* Nature Recovery Network proposed aims are:

- Halt the decline in species abundance by 2030;
- Increase species abundance by at least 10% by 2042, compared to 2030 levels^{xiv};
- Improve the England-level GB Red List Index for species extinction risk by 2042, compared to 2022 levels^{xiv};
- Restore 75% of protected sites on land (including freshwaters) to favourable condition so nature can thrive^{xiv};
- Create or restore 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites by 2042, compared to 2022 levels^{xiv};
- Recover threatened and iconic animal and plant species by providing more, diverse and better-connected habitats;

- Support work to increase woodland cover and
- Achieve a range of environmental, economic and social benefits, such as carbon capture, flood management, clean water, pollination and recreation.

ⁱ *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological networks*, 2010, Professor John Lawton

ⁱⁱ Adapted from WWF link here [What is biodiversity? | Pages | WWF \(worldwildlife.org\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Living Planet Index link here [Living Planet Index](#)

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-leading-environment-act-becomes-law> and

^v 25 Year Environment Plan link here [25 Year Environment Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

^{vi} As indicated by the UK Ward Canopy Cover interactive map at

<https://forestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d8c253ab17e1412586d9774d1a09fa07>

^{vii} [Foreword – portfolio holder | Environmental strategy 2020-25 | Norwich City Council](#)

^{viii} Blue and Green means pertaining to land and water based natural assets

^{ix} Concepts taken from *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological networks*, 2010, Professor John Lawton

^x https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925779/25-yep-indicators-2019.pdf

^{xi} This provision is linked to the adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan

^{xii} [15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

^{xiii} [25 Year Environment Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

^{xiv} At the time of writing this target has been proposed in a consultation exercise by the Department of Food, Rural Affairs and Agriculture (DEFRA) [Consultation on environmental targets - Defra - Citizen Space](#)