

Swindon Borough Council

Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report

Swindon Borough Council

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

March 2026



Swindon Borough Council

Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report
Swindon Borough Council

Project Number
 17053

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1.	Draft V01	R. Palfrey E. Blackman	R. West	R. West	12.03.2026
2.	Draft Report V02	R. Palfrey E. Blackman	R. West	R. West	24.03.2026

Bristol
 Cardiff
 Edinburgh
 Glasgow
 London
 Manchester
 Sheffield

 landuse.co.uk

Land Use Consultants Ltd
 Registered in England
 Registered number 2549296
 Registered office:
 250 Waterloo Road
 London SE1 8RD

 100% recycled paper

Landscape Design
 Strategic Planning & Assessment
 Development Planning
 Urban Design & Masterplanning
 Environmental Impact Assessment
 Landscape Planning & Assessment
 Landscape Management
 Ecology
 Historic Environment
 GIS & Visualisation
 Transport & Movement Planning
 Arboriculture



FS566056



EMS566057



OHS627041



Executive Summary

The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (EBD) was introduced under the Environment Act (2021). It requires all public authorities in England to consider how they can actively conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) requires all Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and Local Authorities to report and publish what actions they have taken, during the reporting period and plan to take over the next five years to meet the EBD. The first EBD report is due within 12 weeks from the 1st of January 2026 and will continue in five-year cycles.

The Swindon Plan 2024 – 2027 has three priorities which are ‘fairer, better and greener’. An objective within the plan is to ‘protect and enhance biodiversity’. The corporate plan is supported by the Decarbonisation Framework (the Council’s plan to reach net zero), which has ‘green spaces’ as a core theme. The Swindon Local Plan 2026, which sets the guidelines for development in the borough, includes strategic objectives and policies for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Relevant policies include Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Community Forest and the Green Infrastructure Network. These policies are supported by four supplementary planning guidance documents (SPDs), six neighbourhood plans and a residential design guide which all provide further guidance on how biodiversity should be preserved and enhanced through planning.

Across the borough, habitat creation and enhancement projects have improved biodiversity within both designated greenspaces and the public realm. The Trees for Climate project resulted in 563 ha of trees being planted (equivalent to 447,338 trees) within the Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) area. The Swindon Forest Meadows Project resulted in the restoration of 170 ha of grassland. Biodiversity enhancements have been delivered via new developments including 186 trees and more than 23,000 plants, bulbs and shrubs being planted as part of the Heart of Swindon regeneration. Swindon Borough Council has supported residents and communities to volunteer in nature restoration projects. For example, between July and September 2025, 52 participants logged 892 volunteer hours as part of the Swindon Forest Meadows project.

Since April 2025, Swindon Borough Council has received 46 planning applications which require Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). As of the start of March 2026, 32 BNG plans have been approved by the LPA. As of March 2026, there are two BNG sites in Swindon where biodiversity units are either under preparation or for sale. Swindon Borough Council are in the process of developing a network of BNG sites on council-owned and in-borough land to ensure biodiversity gains are secured locally. Swindon Borough Council has also been successful in applying to become a responsible body enabling the council to hold conservation covenants with landowners, which can be related to BNG.

Over the next five years, Swindon Borough Council will work with partners to deliver the priorities and measures of the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). In alignment and alongside this, Swindon Borough Council is set to adopt a new green infrastructure strategy, country parks strategy and forest plan. Biodiversity enhancement projects such as ‘Forest Meadows’ and ‘Trees for Climate’ will continue, supported by the continued action of external and volunteer groups. The Council will also look to deliver on the ~£83k Water Restoration Fund obtained to deliver environmental improvements at Coate Water Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Bristol
Cardiff
Edinburgh
Glasgow
London
Manchester
Sheffield

landuse.co.uk

Land Use Consultants Ltd
Registered in England
Registered number 2549296
Registered office:
250 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8RD

100% recycled paper

Landscape Design
Strategic Planning & Assessment
Development Planning
Urban Design & Masterplanning
Environmental Impact Assessment
Landscape Planning & Assessment
Landscape Management
Ecology
Historic Environment
GIS & Visualisation
Transport & Movement Planning
Arboriculture



OHS627041



Contents

Chapter 1		BNG Banking	20
Introduction	1		
Purpose of Report	1		
Why Nature Matters	1		
The Swindon Area	2	Council Resourcing	22
Swindon Borough Council	2	Funding Secured	22
Legal and National Policy Context	2	Service Level Agreements	23
Methodology	3	Planning Related Mechanisms	23
		Partnerships	23
Chapter 2			
Meeting the Biodiversity Duty	4	Chapter 6	25
The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty	4	Looking Ahead for Nature	
		Context and Challenges	25
Chapter 3		Visibility and Resourcing	26
Integrated Action	15	Vision	26
Managing Land to Improve Biodiversity	15	Policies and Strategies	26
Development Management	16	Taking Account of the LNRS	27
Trees	17	Delivery Actions	28
Education and Engagement	18	Monitoring and Evaluation	28
Chapter 4		Chapter 7	
Biodiversity Net Gain – a Tool for Action	19	Summary and Conclusion	31
Actions Taken to Meet BNG Obligations	20	Headline Achievements	31
Legal Agreements	20	Next Steps	32

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Swindon Borough Council to meet the requirements of their EBD, as per the reporting requirements for the period of 1st January 2024 – 1st January 2026.

1.2 The report brings together existing work including policies, strategies and action plans that Swindon Borough Council have completed or have in progress. It sets out what actions Swindon Borough Council has taken for biodiversity since 2020 and takes a forward look at future actions to 2030.

1.3 Beyond Defra guidance, the inclusion of elements focussing on climate resilience seek to emphasise the importance of joined up thinking and the reality of climate risks for now and the future, and how best to ameliorate them and work with nature-based solutions for people, nature and the climate.

1.4 The EBD reporting process brings together different teams within the council whose work delivers, or can better deliver, for biodiversity. It helps to compile achievements, prompt and promote cross-team communications and streamline resourcing in achieving tangible gains for biodiversity.

Why Nature Matters

1.5 Nature is essential for all life on earth. We depend on it for the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. It boosts health and wellbeing, captures and stores carbon and has a vital role to play in climate change adaptation. Nature underpins all economic activity, and the benefits received from nature is estimated to be valued at £95 trillion pounds.

1.6 Nature also has intrinsic worth beyond the quantifiable value we attribute it via natural capital and ecosystem services thinking. It enriches us spiritually, brings us great joy and warrants an ethical consideration beyond the framework we conventionally ascribe value; an intangible, but important, aspect of our humanity and our connection with nature.

1.7 In Swindon, the conservation and enhancement of nature is key to delivering on the '*greener*' priority within the corporate plan 2024 - 2027 and a council objective to '*protect and enhance biodiversity*'. Enhancing biodiversity will also help meet the ambitions and targets of other related strategies and

plans across the borough including a goal in the Swindon Decarbonisation Framework to ‘*create, protect and enhance biodiversity in the borough*’ and the spatial vision of the Local Plan that ‘*Swindon will be at the centre of a network of multifunctional green spaces linking the town to the wider countryside*’ (see **Chapter 2**).

1.8 Swindon Borough Council’s approach to climate change, including the Decarbonisation Framework, is heavily integrated with its work with nature. This reflects the interdependencies of the twin-crises and effort to mitigate and increase resilience. This report also includes emphasis on climate resilience to emphasise this interdependence and outline thinking on how to tackle the twin-crises of climate and nature in a joined-up way.

The Swindon Area

1.9 Swindon borough is an area of 230 km² (89 square miles). The borough encompasses an area forming the north-east corner of Wiltshire and is bordered by two other counties, Gloucestershire (to the north) and Oxfordshire (to the east).

1.10 The borough has a population of 233,400 residents (2021 estimate) an increase of 11.6% from the 2011 census¹.

1.11 The borough consists of the town of Swindon itself (in the centre of the borough), the market town of Highworth, the large village of Wroughton, and several smaller villages and hamlets.

1.12 The southeast of the Swindon borough is situated within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

Swindon Borough Council

1.13 As a unitary authority, Swindon Borough Council has the powers and functions of both a non-metropolitan county and district council. In its capacity as a ‘district council’ it is a billing authority collecting council tax and business rates, it processes local planning applications, and it is responsible for housing, waste collection and environmental health. In its capacity as a ‘non-metropolitan area’ it is a local education authority, responsible for social services, libraries and waste disposal.

1.14 The council’s principal decision-making body is its Cabinet, which comprises the leader and (as of 2022) nine portfolio-holding members.

Legal and National Policy Context

1.15 This section summarises the national background context for the EBD and associated reporting and national conservation targets. MDC’s progress in fulfilling the national duties is presented in **Chapter 2**.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

1.16 The NERC Act 2006 first introduced the Biodiversity Duty, requiring all public authorities in England to consider what action they can reasonably take for the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2021

1.17 The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the Biodiversity Duty and amends the NERC Act. Under the strengthened duty, public authorities must consider what they can do to both conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Act also introduced LNRS and BNG, amongst other key instruments for conserving and enhancing nature. LNRS, prepared by a Responsible Authority, identify priorities for nature recovery locally and propose actions in locations identified using local evidence and input from local stakeholders. BNG mandates that developers must deliver a biodiversity uplift of at least 10%, in some circumstances. The Environment Act 2021 requires public authorities to “have regard” for the LNRS.

The Environment Improvement Plan (EIP)

1.18 The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025 took forward the delivery of the Environment Act 2021. It sets out the legally binding targets and actions needed for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Defra will use EBD reporting to assist in their requirements to monitor the delivery of the EIP.

Levelling Up and Regeneration (LUR) Act 2023

1.19 The LUR Act 2023 instructs Public Authorities to “take account” of the LNRS. The Act also strengthened the duty on Local Authorities to ‘seek to further’ the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. The EBD provides a clear opportunity for these bodies to articulate how they have or are planning to deliver on these duties.

¹ The Office of National Statistics (2021) How has life changed in Swindon 2021, Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000030>

Methodology

1.20 This report has been prepared by LUC. The process has included:

- 1. An inception meeting** to discuss the scope, timeline and relevant data to support delivery of the report.
- 2. Targeted research** to identify the key documents and material for data analysis.
- 3. A questionnaire** sent to officers from across the organisation to identify relevant strategic targets and actions undertaken to deliver for biodiversity and climate change resilience.
- 4. Data analysis** of all relevant local, regional and national policies, plans and strategies that are both relevant to Swindon Borough Council and refer to biodiversity, questionnaire responses and online material. These sources were analysed to determine the steps Swindon Borough Council have taken over the past five years and will take over the next five years to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 5. The preparation of this report** efficiently and effectively capturing the research and analysis undertaken and delivering the requirements of the EBD reporting.

Target Audience

1.21 This report will provide key information to Defra to assist in the monitoring of EIP delivery and to enable them to evaluate whether public authorities are delivering their EBD.

1.22 This report will provide a useful overview to Swindon Councillors and officers of the contributions that Swindon Borough Council has made to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the borough to date, helping to bring cohesion and efficiency between the workstreams that the various teams deliver. Importantly, the EBD report sets the trajectory of actions for the next five years.

1.23 This report will be published on Swindon Borough Council's website and provide information to residents to understand what action is being taken for nature in their borough.

Consultation

1.24 This report has been prepared in consultation with Swindon Borough Council officers from a range of council departments.

Chapter 2

Meeting the Biodiversity Duty

This chapter sets out the plans, policies and strategies that form the principal instruments to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Swindon and the actions for nature the borough has committed to through the delivery of its functions.

The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty

2.1 The EBD was introduced under the Environment Act 2021. It requires all public authorities in England to consider how they can actively conserve and enhance biodiversity.

2.2 Public Authorities must report their consideration, actions they've carried out to comply with the EBD, and how they will comply with it over the next five years.

2.3 By law, the report must include:

- The policies and objectives they have set to meet the biodiversity duty and the actions completed to date.
- What strategies (including the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS) have influenced their policies, objectives and action and how they have contributed to their preparation.
- How they plan to comply with the EBD in the next reporting period.
- Any other information they consider appropriate.

2.4 Reports from LPAs must also include:

- Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations.
- Details of gains resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans they've approved.
- Plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

Local Context

2.5 This section reviews Swindon Borough Council's local policies, strategies and plans which refer to biodiversity.

The Swindon Plan 2024 - 2027

2.6 The Swindon Plan sets out the council’s long-term strategic priorities to improve the quality of life for all the borough’s residents from 2024 – 2027.

2.7 The three priorities of the plan are *‘fairer, better and greener’*.

2.8 The greener priority is defined as *‘fully playing our part as a council and a town in combatting climate change. Working with communities to find new ways of doing things that help, not hinder, the natural environment’*.

2.9 An objective within the ‘greener’ priority is to *‘protect the environment’* and two sub-objectives are to *‘protect and enhance biodiversity’* and to enhance *‘resilience to severe weather and climate change impacts’* (see **Figure 2.1**).

2.10 Measures for protecting and enhancing biodiversity are:

- ‘Positive contribution to BNG secured through the planning process’
- ‘Five new or enhanced habitats per year’

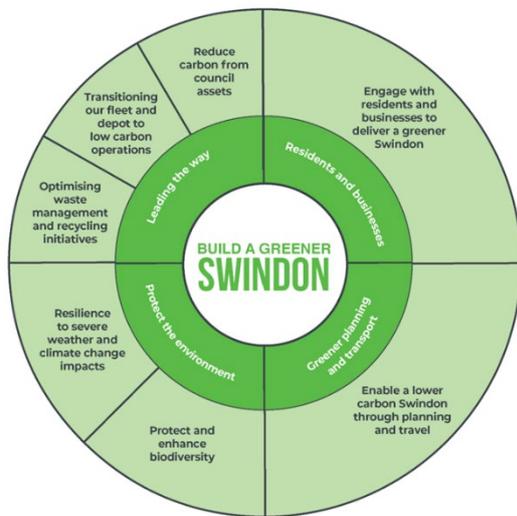


Figure 2.1: Building a Greener Swindon, (Source: Swindon Borough Council)

Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents

Swindon Local Plan 2026²

2.11 The Swindon Local Plan 2026 is used to guide development and inform decisions on planning applications within the borough.

2.12 The spatial vision for the borough includes *‘Swindon will be at the centre of a network of multifunctional green spaces linking the town to the wider countryside. Swindon will have responded to the needs of a growing population in a way that has protected and enhanced our natural and historic environment’*.

2.13 Strategic objectives in the plan (see **Figure 2.1**) which directly impact upon biodiversity include:

- **Strategic Objective 10: Natural, Built & Historic Environment** - to ensure that development respects, enhances, and conserves the best of the existing built, historic and natural environment in the borough.
- **Strategic Objective 9: Green Infrastructure** - to provide an attractive and inspirational environment to live, work, learn and play, by the provision of a far-reaching network of connected and multi- functional green spaces linked to the wider countryside.



Figure 2.2 The Local Plan Strategic Priorities and Objectives, (Source: Swindon Borough Council)

² Swindon Borough Council (2015) Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, Available at:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3988/swindon_borough_local_plan_2026.pdf

2.14 Strategic policies in the local plan with direct impacts upon biodiversity include:

- Policy SD1: Sustainable Development Principles
 - To enable the delivery of sustainable development and support sustainable communities in the borough all development proposals will respect, conserve, and/or enhance the natural, built and historic environments.

2.15 Policies in the Local Plan with direct impacts upon biodiversity include:

- Policy EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - Development will avoid direct and indirect negative impacts upon biodiversity and geodiversity sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment.
 - All development, where appropriate shall protect and enhance biodiversity and provide net local biodiversity gain. Where this is demonstrably not achievable, mitigation and compensation measures will be agreed.
- Policy EN2: Community Forest
 - Development shall contribute towards the aims and objectives of the GWFC in Swindon including a net increase in tree cover and creating or enhancing habitats for biodiversity.
- Policy EN1: Green Infrastructure Network
 - Development shall protect and enhance green infrastructure including the requirement that development must provide for the protection and integration of visually or ecologically important existing trees, hedges and woodlands.
 - Development shall provide and design green infrastructure to integrate with existing green corridors and ensure the sustainable maintenance and management of it.
- Policy EN6: Flood Risk
 - The risk and impact of flooding will be minimised through ensuring wider environmental benefits of development in relation to flood risk.
- Policy EN5: Landscape Character and Historic Landscape
 - Proposals for development will only be permitted when the intrinsic character, diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape within Swindon borough are protected, conserved and enhanced.
- Policy EN3: Open Space
 - Residential development shall provide or contribute towards public open space including allotments.
- Policy EN7: Pollution
 - Development that is likely to lead to emissions of pollutants that may adversely affect existing development and vulnerable wildlife habitats, shall only be permitted where such emissions are controlled to a point where there is no significant loss of amenity for existing land uses, or habitats.
- Policy TR1: Sustainable Transport Networks
 - Swindon Borough Council will support green infrastructure into the design of transport schemes.
- Policy IN2: Water Supply and Wastewater
 - The development or expansion of water supply or sewerage waste/water treatment facilities should not adversely impact on sensitive ecosystems, particularly SSSIs and the River Kennet.
- Policy EN11: Heritage Transport
 - Proposals will be permitted that are designed to develop the Wilts & Berks Canal and North Wilts Canal's recreational and nature conservation potential.
- Policy CM2: Active, Healthy and Safe Lifestyles
 - Active, healthy and safe lifestyles will be enabled by increasing opportunities to experience and engage with nature and green spaces.

Swindon Residential Design Guide (Parts 1³ and 2⁴)

2.16 This document consists of two parts was last updated in June 2016. This document aims to assist all those involved in the development of existing and new residential areas in the town. It provides clear guidelines for high quality design.

2.17 Whilst the foreword of Swindon's Residential Design Guide Part 1 includes that '*new development needs to*

³ Swindon Borough Council (2016) Swindon Residential Design Guide – Part 1, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5123/swindon_residential_design_guide_-_part_1.pdf

⁴ Swindon Borough Council (2016) Swindon Residential Design Guide – Part 2, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5125/swindon_residential_design_guide_-_part_2.pdf

positively contribute to Swindon's natural environment', the remainder of the document makes little reference to the natural environment or biodiversity.

2.18 The Swindon Residential Design Guide Part 2 includes a chapter on public realm quality.

2.19 Paragraph 7.10 states '*Multifunctional use of public realm can provide great benefits ranging from the economic and aesthetic value of attractive areas and streets, to the natural, ecological, physical and mental health benefits that such well-designed spaces and green infrastructure corridors can provide*'.

2.20 Paragraph 7.11 states '*this does not have to be a complex arrangement – trees in a street for example provide shade, seasonal variety, opportunities for wildlife, enclosure, and legibility. SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) are another example where the transference of water above ground in shallow undulations can contribute to public space, habitat, identity and amenity*'.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

Nature Conservation SPG⁵

2.21 This SPG helps developers to determine whether their scheme is likely to affect biodiversity. It sets out what they must do so their planning application is not refused on nature conservation grounds.

2.22 The document explains what biodiversity is, general principles for biodiversity in planning and development, how to incorporate biodiversity into new developments, protected species in Swindon, national biodiversity legislation and a biodiversity checklist for developers.

Community Forest SPG⁶

2.23 This SPG has been produced to ensure that the aims and objectives of the GWCF are incorporated into all new development proposals and not compromised.

2.24 The document states that development proposals considered by the LPA to be of a scale that would significantly impact on the delivery of the aims and objectives of the emerging Forest Plan, shall incorporate the following priorities:

- Habitats - Including planting native species, creating a full range of new areas for wildlife inc. meadows,

woodlands and ponds, creating wildlife only areas and mitigation of any potential lost habitats.

- Tree coverage - Including retaining existing trees and hedgerows, planting local species, linking trees and woodlands to increase connectivity, planting blocks of at least 2 ha and within 400m of residents to improve access and improving environmentally poor areas.

Landscape Character Areas SPG⁷

2.25 This SPG explains the methodology, specific characteristics and highlights the key issues relating to each landscape character area that should be addressed when considering development proposals.

2.26 The document includes a series of landscape guidelines and considerations for different landscape character areas in the borough.

2.27 Considerations which impact upon biodiversity in the Thames Vale landscape character area include:

- Where appropriate, provide planting that reinforces existing hedgerows, compensating for the trees lost to Dutch Elm disease during the 1970's,
- Where appropriate, restore former landscape features such as meandering river channels, where these would benefit the landscape and its wildlife.

2.28 Considerations which impact upon biodiversity in the Vale of White Horse landscape character area include:

- Where opportunities arise, provide additional tree planting to increase tree cover by creating blocks of woodland.
- Where opportunities arise, provide planting that reinforces existing hedgerows to compensate for the trees lost to Dutch Elm disease during the 1970's.

2.29 Considerations which impact upon biodiversity in the Wroughton Vale landscape character area include:

- Ensure existing ponds and wildlife habitats, and sites that adjoin, abut or link these with other wildlife habitats, are conserved and where possible enhanced.
- Proposals should be accompanied by planting, whether woodlands, tree lines or hedgerows.

2.30 One consideration impacts upon biodiversity in the Scarp landscape character area. It is to '*integrate into the*

⁵ Swindon Borough Council (2007) Nature conservation supplementary planning guidance, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5194/nature_conservation_development_control_guidance_note.pdf

⁶ Swindon Borough Council (2004) Community Forest Supplementary Planning Guidance, Available at:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5193/community_forest_supplementary_planning_guidance.pdf

⁷ Swindon Borough Council (2004) Landscape Character Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5191/landscape_character_areas_supplementary_planning_guidance.pdf

scarp slope with careful attention paid to new planting and maintaining the wooded appearance of the slope’.

2.31 One consideration impacts upon biodiversity in both the Downs Plains and Midvale Ridge landscape character areas. It is ‘where opportunities arise, provide for additional tree planting that maintains the scale and dispersed pattern of existing woodlands’.

2.32 One consideration impacts upon biodiversity in the Lydiard Ridge landscape character area. It is to ‘ensure linkages with Swindon through the borough’s network of strategic green corridors are retained’.

Tree Protection on Development Sites SPG⁸

2.33 This SPG provides guidance in respect of the preservation of ‘appropriate trees’ within development schemes.

Marlowe Avenue Renewal Area – Masterplan Vision and Design Guide

2.34 This document has been prepared to shape the upcoming phases of the Marlowe Avenue renewal area regeneration.

2.35 The plan has four principles including ‘access to nature - Residents within the neighbourhood will have direct access to nature and open space along the Green Corridor’.

2.36 The document includes ten objectives. Those related to biodiversity include ‘appreciation of existing assets including natural features’ and ‘enhanced and connected green infrastructure including SuDS (inc. flood mitigation) and BNG’.

2.37 The design guide includes several recommendations for nature including:

- Network of spaces - Developments should aim to connect to the existing and wider green infrastructure via trees, scrub and hedgerow planting, creation of wildflower meadows, grasslands and riparian habitats were appropriate. The possibility of community orchards could also be explored.
- Water / SuDS - SuDS should be designed and integrated into residential areas with a preference for swales and rain gardens.
- Biodiversity / Net Gain - All new areas of development must achieve a minimum of 10% BNG.

- Street trees - Retention of existing trees should be a priority as part of all new developments. New tree species should be predominantly native and local to the area.

Vision for the heart of Swindon⁹

2.38 This document sets out the forward-thinking vision for achieving the three missions of the heart of Swindon regeneration project of ‘fairer, better and greener’.

2.39 The document has eight ambitions including ‘A green and healthy centre - Swindon will be a green and healthy town, with a strong and innovative response to the impacts of climate change. It will be attractive, comfortable in extreme weathers, and be a leader in environmentally sustainable design’.

2.40 The document includes 53 propositions; those related to enhancing biodiversity include:

- Developing a town-wide community park. ‘Swindon will become greener, with investment in our public spaces and parks. Corridors for nature and increased greenery, including street trees [...] It will draw in the beautiful countryside, and truly make Swindon a town that is connected with its green surroundings’.
- Planting new street trees to maintain and improve air quality, sequester carbon and support biodiversity.
- Integrate sustainable drainage across the centre with permeable surfaces, pocket parks and rain gardens.
- Creating new incidental green spaces and urban growing initiatives.

Mitigation Strategies

North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023 – 2028

2.41 This is a joint strategy prepared by Swindon Borough Council, Wiltshire Council and Cotswold District Council in partnership and Natural England.

2.42 The Strategy sets out a strategic approach to mitigate recreational impacts associated with new development on the North Meadow component of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC. Development is required to adhere to

⁸ Swindon Borough Council (2004) Tree protection on development sites supplementary planning guidance, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5164/tree_protection_on_development_sites_supplementary_planning_guidance.pdf

⁹ Swindon Borough Council (2025) Vision for the Heart of Swindon, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/11236/vision_for_the_heart_of_swindon

the strategy to ensure adverse effects on the SAC are avoided / mitigated.

2.43 Evidence based Zones of Influence (Zol) have been determined. Within the inner Zol (0-4.2km), all new relevant development will be expected to provide mitigation, both at North Meadow, via a contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures and through the provision of additional measures which provide alternatives for potential local users of North Meadow e.g. improved natural greenspace.

2.44 Within the outer Zol (4.2-9.4km), all new relevant development will be expected to provide mitigation at North Meadow in the form of a contribution towards SAMM measures.

Neighbourhood plans

2.45 The Localism Act 2011 gave Parish Councils and other relevant bodies powers to prepare statutory neighbourhood plans to help guide development in their local area. These powers give local people the opportunity to shape new development as planning applications are determined in accordance with national planning policy and the local development plan. A Neighbourhood Plan forms parts of this local planning framework.

2.46 Six neighbourhood plans have been formally adopted by Swindon Borough Council and now form part of the Local Plan for the borough. These plans have visions, objectives, policies and guidance which aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the areas that they cover.

Blunsdon East Neighbourhood Plan (BENP)¹⁰

2.47 This Neighbourhood Development Plan details general planning policies for the development and use of land in Blunsdon Parish.

2.48 The Plan has four themes including '*conserving nature and the environment*'. Objectives under this theme include:

- Supporting the development of the community forest and provide habitats which sustain and provide biodiversity.
- Preserving, improving and enhancing green infrastructure, open spaces and environmental assets within the BENP area.

2.49 Policies in the plan which impact upon biodiversity include:

- Policy 11 – Protection of Trees and Hedgerows
 - Existing trees and hedgerows should be retained. If removed, replacement planting should be of sufficient value to compensate for the loss of amenity of mature trees hedgerows and the biodiversity they support.
- Policy 12 – Dark Skies
 - External lighting should be designed to minimise light pollution.
- Policy 1: Allocation of Sites for Housing
 - Proposals will be supported where there are no adverse impacts on the natural environment or that impacts are mitigated, a comprehensive planting regime is submitted including retention of existing trees and how BNG will be achieved.
- Policy 2: Housing Development on non-allocated sites
 - Proposals will be supported where they conserve and enhance the natural environment of the BENP area.
- Policy 9: The Designation of Local Green Space
 - Allotments are protected from development unless alternative provision can be made.

Chiseldon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022 – 2037¹¹

2.50 This Neighbourhood Development Plan details general planning policies for the development and use of land in Chiseldon Parish.

2.51 It includes in its vision that '*by 2037, residents will enjoy a healthy environment*'.

2.52 The plan includes the following policies which relate to biodiversity:

- Policy 3: BNG and Local Nature Recovery
 - Proposals that are required to provide BNG must consider how the Wiltshire LNRS affects the site or any site that might be utilised for off-site BNG and ensure that BNG is delivered within this context.

¹⁰ Blunsdon Parish Council (2021) Blunsdon East Neighbourhood Development Plan, Available at: https://lemonbooking-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/lb_blunsdon_village_hall/ji1UpX0392/blunsdon-east-neighbourhood-plan-qAcc8.pdf

¹¹ Chiseldon Parish Council (2025) Chiseldon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022 – 2027, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11850/chiseldon_neighbourhood_development_plan.pdf

- Policy 4: Local Green Spaces

2.53 The plan also refers to the Chiseldon Design Code and Guidance¹² which includes guidance for the design of open spaces and trees.

Hannington Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2026¹³

2.54 This Neighbourhood Development Plan details general planning policies for the development and use of land in Hannington Parish.

2.55 The plan has an objective to '*protect the open countryside in the Parish*'.

2.56 Policies in the plan which relate to biodiversity include:

- HPOC3 Protection of Bird Habitats
 - Development proposals should not cause the destruction of any green spaces which are the habitat of wild birds (including hunting grounds of birds of prey).

Highworth Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2026¹⁴

2.57 This Neighbourhood Development Plan details general planning policies for the development and use of land in Highworth, including the hamlets of Sevenhampton and Hampton.

2.58 Environment is one of five core themes in the plan. An objective within this theme is to '*promote biodiversity and protect and preserve local wildlife sites*'.

2.59 Policies with impact upon biodiversity include:

- Policy 12 – Local Wildlife and Biodiversity
 - Areas of local wildlife and biodiversity value will be protected and development which harms these sites will not be permitted.
 - Acceptable mitigation of potential damage is permitted.
 - New development is encouraged to include new areas of wildlife and biodiversity value.
- Policy 11 - Protection of Trees and Hedgerows
 - Proposals must seek to retain trees and hedgerows where possible.

- Proposals must seek to retain trees and hedgerows where possible.

- Policy 9 – Local Green Spaces

- Policy 10 – Open space

South Marston Village Neighbourhood Plan¹⁵

2.60 This Neighbourhood Development Plan details general planning policies for the development and use of land in South Marston Parish.

2.61 Policies in the plan which impact upon biodiversity include:

- NP Policy 10 – Hedges
 - Hedges will be retained. Replacement planting should be of sufficient value to compensate for the loss of mature hedgerows and the biodiversity they support.
- NP Policy 9 – Green Infrastructure
 - Green Infrastructure will be retained.
- NP Policy 13 – Flood Risk
 - SuDS should be built and maintained.
- NP Policy 4 – Highway Network
 - Streets will complement and enhance the public realm, green infrastructure and footpath network.

Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan 2016 - 2026¹⁶

2.62 This Neighbourhood Development Plan details general planning policies for the development and use of land in Wroughton Parish.

2.63 The plan includes an objective to '*conserve and enhance the woodlands and other open spaces within the parish*'.

2.64 Policies which impact upon biodiversity include:

- HV1 – Green spaces in the heart of the village should be protected.

¹² AECOM (2023) Chiseldon Design Code and Guidance, Available at: <https://www.chiseldon-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Chiseldon-Design-Codes-and-Guidance.pdf>

¹³ Hannington Parish Council (2018) Hannington parish neighbourhood development plan, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5152/hannington_parish_neighbourhood_plan_2018-26.pdf

¹⁴ Highworth Parish Council (2015) Highworth Neighbourhood Plan, Available at:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5154/highworth_neighbourhood_plan_2015_to_2026.pdf

¹⁵ South Marston Parish Council (2017) South Marston Village Neighbourhood Plan, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5153/south_marston_village_neighbourhood_plan.pdf

¹⁶ Wroughton Parish Council (2016) Wroughton Neighbourhood Development Plan, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/6357/wroughton_neighbourhood_plan_2016_to_2026v.pdf

Strategic Plans and Policies

Swindon Decarbonisation Framework¹⁷

2.65 The Decarbonisation Framework outlines the key actions Swindon Borough Council will take to ensure that the borough plays its part in meeting the UK's 2050 climate commitments.

2.66 The framework has five core themes including 'Green Spaces' and includes key goals around this theme. These are:

- Increase quality of green space in existing communities and ensure sufficient green spaces in new communities within the borough.
- Create, protect and enhance biodiversity in the borough.
- Ensure every ward achieves the national space standard within the Open Spaces Audit.
- Adopt and complete the Green Infrastructure Strategy, Country Park Strategy, and the Forest Plan.
- Protect and enhance water quality within the borough.

2.67 Objectives in the framework which impact upon biodiversity include:

- Complete the habitat creation programme of "Forest Meadows" in partnership with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT).
- Complete the "Trees for Climate" tree and woodland planting by the Great Western Community Forest.
- Improve tree equity within the urban environment.
- New development should include 10% BNG, and integrate wildlife corridors into developments where possible
- Improve natural habitats in the urban and peri-urban settings in the borough.
- Ensure the Local Plan requirement for new major residential developments makes provisions for allotments to be achieved.
- Improve the urban environment through intelligent green infrastructure within the Heart of Swindon.

2.68 Further actions include:

- Mobilise and expand a skilled volunteer network to support the creation and maintenance of green spaces, habitats, wildlife corridors, and tree planting, supplementing staff capacity and helping share specialist knowledge across the community.

- Enter into discussions with Thames Water to discourage their use of the waterways in the borough.

Swindon Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026

2.69 Swindon's Local Transport Plan is composed of two parts. Part one is an over-arching strategy document and part two is an implementation plan setting out the proposals for the delivery of the policies contained in the strategy document.

2.70 The development of Swindon's over-arching transport strategy included a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Biodiversity is highlighted as an area where the transport strategy could have negative impacts.

2.71 Through the SEA process, recommendations to enhance biodiversity were included in the plan, such as:

- Where possible, sustainable drainage measures should be incorporated into any infrastructure schemes, including walking and cycling measures.
- Any schemes for walking and cycling, and other infrastructure schemes, as appropriate, should be undertaken in accordance with Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Where possible opportunities for biodiversity and flood risk mitigation should be incorporated.

Swindon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) 2014

2.72 The LFRMS is a strategic overview of flooding and flood risk management within Swindon borough.

2.73 An aim of the strategy is to '*ensure that actions and measures proposed to manage flood risk deliver multiple benefits, including environmental, social and economic*'.

Swindon's Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight Strategy 2023 – 2033

2.74 This strategy sets out the vision and strategic objectives needed to ensure Swindon's residents can achieve and maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

2.75 The vision of the strategy is '*Together we will create an inclusive environment that supports everyone in Swindon to have a healthy weight*'.

2.76 The strategy states that a cross-sector approach is required and actions to improve parks, open spaces and the environment can help meet the strategies goals.

¹⁷ Swindon Borough Council (2025) Swindon Decarbonisation Framework, Available at:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/8904/decarbonisation_framework.pdf

2.77 A priority of the strategy is ‘*improving the physical activity environment and promoting physical activity*’.

Objectives within this priority are:

- Improve the physical environment in Swindon to promote physical activity.
- Provide opportunities and encouragement for Swindon residents to move more e.g. provide opportunities for active travel and enjoyment of open spaces such as parks, woodland and allotments.

2.78 Although this strategy does not explicitly refer to biodiversity enhancements, it seeks to improve the quality of open spaces and parks, of which biodiversity enhancements could play a part.

Regional Context

2.79 This section reviews regional policies, strategies and plans which refer to conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Swindon Borough Council has contributed to the preparation of these strategies and could also play a part in their delivery.

Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)¹⁸

2.80 The Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS was published in October 2025.

2.81 As a supporting authority, Swindon Borough Council contributed to the creation of the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS. Representatives of Swindon Council sat on the LNRS Oversight Group. This group provided guidance on political processes and maintained communication with the political leadership of both Wiltshire Council and Swindon Council to support smooth signoff and address any concerns or risks in a timely manner.

2.82 Swindon Borough Council provided maps and data to support the creation of the local habitat map and council officers input into themed habitat workshops and commented on drafts.

2.83 The Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS can be summarised into 11 core aims:

- Maintain and enhance existing habitats (Calcareous, Neutral and Acid Grassland, Woodlands, Heathland, Acid Bog, Open and Mixed Habitats, Rivers, Streams, Wetlands and Chalk Streams).
- Create more habitats (as above)
- Improve biodiversity near to where people live.

- Improve urban biodiversity and permeability of the built environment for wildlife.
- Increase the wildlife value of farmland and delivery of wider environmental benefits.
- Maintain, enhance and create nature friendly productive forestry.
- Maintain, enhance and create green and blue access corridors.
- Increase the number and habitat quality of ponds across Wiltshire and Swindon.
- Increase the distribution and connectivity of Hedgerows and Dry Stone Walls.
- Support and fund projects that deliver nature recovery and wider environmental benefits across Wiltshire.
- Increase the population of priority species listed within the LNRS.

2.84 Key priorities and measures in Swindon include wetland creation in the north of the borough near Cricklade, creating and improving green infrastructure with Swindon town centre and creating and restoring woodland in the northeast of the borough near Highworth.

2.85 Priority species within the Wiltshire LNRS recorded in Swindon borough include the bat assemblage, farmland bird assemblage, lapwing, Eurasian curlew and arable plant assemblage.

2.86 How Swindon Borough Council will take account of the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS is included in **Chapter 7** of the report. Progress Swindon Borough Council has made in achieving the priorities in the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS will be recorded in future EBD reporting cycles.

Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) Plan

2.87 The GWCF is one of 15 England-wide community forests, with Swindon at its centre. Currently, there are 15 Community Forests across England, which collectively form the largest environmental regeneration initiative in the country.

2.88 Community Forests in England are delivering a network of projects established to improve the natural environment in and around urban areas. They work closely with local communities, landowners and various organisations to plant trees and create green spaces.

2.89 The vision of the GWCF management plan is ‘*to continue to create, maintain, and restore a multi-purpose Community Forest embracing Swindon and its environs. The*

¹⁸ Wiltshire County Council (2025) Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Available at:

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/8288/Wiltshire-and-Swindon-Local-Nature-Recovery-Strategy>

forest will comprise a unique mosaic of individual trees, woods, farmland, open spaces, towns and villages, and help to celebrate the heritage and archaeology of the area’.

2.90 The overall approach to delivering the vision is to:

- Enhance – actively monitor and manage woodlands for the benefit of local wildlife.
- Expand – tree planting and greening to expand woodland and woodland associated habitats
- Engage – collaborate with stakeholders and communities to raise the profile of the forest, strengthen its identity and use it as an education resource.

2.91 There are five core themes for the forest plan, each with their own objectives. Those relating to biodiversity are:

- Enhancing Biodiversity – including objectives to protect sites of nature conservation and create new sites, create new woodlands, hedgerows, community orchards and meadows and bring existing ones under conservation management, focus on native and varied tree species that benefit biodiversity, protect veteran trees, create links to other forests, actively engage in deer management groups and contribute to the habitat mitigation zone of North Meadow SAC.
- Maintaining and increasing canopy cover – including objectives to maintain woodlands through an active management plan, plant 400ha of new woodland over the next five years, restore and create coppice woodlands, and address issues of tree equity.
- Building Climate Resilience – including objectives to regenerate environments in the green belt, strengthen green infrastructure corridors, focus on ‘smart tree planting’ and help farmers build resilience through vertical crops or elder trees and productive hedgerows.

2.92 Targets in the plan include:

- 1,000 new street trees in Swindon
- £250K funding raised by 2050
- 750 volunteers involved in the next five years
- 3,860 hectares total new woodland planted by 2050
- plant 400 hectares of new woodland by 2030
- 22% canopy cover by 2050
- 125 businesses involved in the next five years
- 80% of woodland sustainably managed by 2050

Swindon and Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy 2020 – 2036

2.93 The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership is led by Wiltshire and Swindon Borough Councils. The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy 2020 – 2036 sets out the partnership’s plans for development of the region’s economy and productivity.

2.94 The strategy’s vision is ‘to ensure all of our communities benefit from inclusive and sustainable growth, making the Swindon and Wiltshire area world-renowned for its convergence of innovation, entrepreneurialism and great quality of life.’

2.95 Strategic priority 11 is ‘Understanding the value of our Natural Capital’.

2.96 The strategy states that the partnership is immensely proud of the beauty of their natural environment and will continue to work to enhance it further. Furthermore, they are currently working with the University of Bath’s Economics Department to establish a baseline of natural capital assets across Swindon and Wiltshire. The partnership will also work to understand how natural capital considerations can be embedded into decision making of the partner organisations.

Protected Landscapes

2.97 There is one Protected Landscape within Swindon: the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Swindon Borough Council is part of the formal partnership for the national landscape, contributing funding and resourcing.

2.98 Each National Landscape must have a management plan which sets out the partnership’s policies and the aspirations for the landscape over the plan period. Following the Colchester Declaration¹⁹, all National Landscapes must also have a Nature Recovery Plan. The plan sets out targets for nature recovery and potential actions for how these can be achieved. In 2024, the government published the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) a set of ambitious targets for Protected Landscapes to achieve to help reach the nature recovery goals set out in the EIP. The goals and targets within the PLTOF are reflected in each of the Protected Landscapes nature recovery plans. Swindon Borough Council inputs into the North Wessex Downs management and nature recovery plans and plays an instrumental part in the delivery of those plans.

¹⁹ [National Landscapes - The Colchester Declaration](#)

North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan

2.99 This plan set the aims, objectives and policies for the management of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape between 2019 – 2024, it was extended until November 2025.

2.100 Theme three of the plan is biodiversity. Strategic objectives within this theme are to identify and conserve habitats and species which are characteristic of the North Wessex Downs and are not at favourable conservation status and to explore opportunities to promote BNG opportunities.

2.101 Policies B1 – B16 include supporting and encouraging work to conserve and enhance biodiversity through delivering national biodiversity targets, landscape-scale nature recovery projects, projects which deliver/ include benefits to water quality, habitat connectivity, innovative use of Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), ground nesting birds, eradication of invasive species, conservation grazing and implantation of BNG.

2.102 A revised North Wessex Downs National Landscape Plan covering the period 2025 - 3030 was published in November 2025. How Swindon Borough Council have contributed to delivering the aims and objectives on that plan will be recorded in the next reporting cycle.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan

2.103 The vision of the plan is *'the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; a farmed landscape, abundant in wildlife, resilient, mitigating and adapting to climate change. A special place with thriving biodiversity, where people who live, work and visit, connect with nature'*.

2.104 The targets within the plan reflect the targets of the EIP and PLTOF. In the North Wessex Downs these targets translate to:

- 1,916 ha of SSSI achieving favourable condition by 2030.
- 3,058 ha of new woodland creation by 2030.
- 2,632 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites created/restored by 2030.
- Creation of one species action plan with an aim to remove it off the threatened species list by 2030.
- 52,000 ha of land protected for nature by 2030.
- 13,158 ha of habitat created or restored by 2042.
- 70% of land covered by nature friendly farming practices by 2030.

National Context

Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

2.105 The EIP 2025 sets binding national targets for habitat restoration, species recovery, tree cover, and protected area expansion. Key commitments include restoring or creating 500,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042, halting species decline by 2030 and protecting 30% of England's land and sea for nature by 2030.

Chapter 3

Integrated Action

This chapter sets out what actions Swindon Borough Council has taken for nature, across all departments, through the delivery of its functions and duties since 2020. While the previous chapter outlined the statutory targets and strategic commitments at national, regional, and local level, this chapter focuses on delivery, highlighting how those ambitions are being translated into concrete projects, policies, and partnerships on the ground.

3.1 This chapter is based on data collated for the purposes of the report via:

- Review of key strategies, policies and plans,
- A questionnaire to Council Officers; and
- An internet search.

3.2 It intends to present an efficient and effective process of data collation, analysis and reporting through bringing together the disparate work streams of Swindon Borough Council to identify how it is delivering for nature and climate resilience across its many functions.

Managing Land to Improve Biodiversity

3.3 Swindon Borough Council delivered numerous projects and altered land management techniques to conserve and enhance biodiversity within both parks and greenspaces and the wider public realm. Actions included:

- The Swindon Forest Meadows Project – a partnership between Swindon Borough Council and the WWT to

create, restore, enhance and better manage grassland sites. The project area covered approximately 170 hectares and focused on 12 sites (mostly along the River Ray corridor). The project included the reintroduction of wildflowers and more traditional management of the meadows. The project also created new areas of woodland, scrub and grassland at Mouldon Hill country park and new woodland and river restoration at the Rivermead Flood Storage area.

- Swindon Borough Council alongside WWT were successful in applying to the Water Restoration Fund for the Coate Water SSSI fund. The project (to be delivered in 2026) will focus on restoring the lake's habitats, which support a wide range of birdlife and aquatic species (see **Figure 3.1**).



Figure 3.1: Coate Water SSSI, (Source: Swindon Advertiser)

- Swindon Borough Council created 3,220m² of wildflower meadow on Greenbridge roundabout in Swindon and conducted a review to identify other suitable locations for wildflower meadow creation across the borough.
- Swindon Borough Council implemented an altered mowing regime across country parks and select open spaces leaving patches of longer grass to grow to support pollinators.
- Three town parks in Swindon borough were awarded Green Flag Status (Town Gardens, Penhill Park and St Marks Park). Green Flag awards include biodiversity within the judging criteria.

Development Management

3.4 Swindon Borough Council secured several biodiversity improvements as part of new developments. These included:

- 10.5 acres of new public open space, several SuDS (planted basins, rain gardens, a pond and irrigation swales) and a community orchard as part of the development at Burcot Farm (see **Figure 3.2**).



Figure 3.2: Biodiversity Provisions at Burcot Farm (Source: Vistry Group²⁰)

- 186 trees and more than 23,000 plants, bushes and shrubs at Fleming Way as part of the 'Heart of Swindon' regeneration in Swindon Town Centre (see **Figure 3.3**)²¹.



Figure 3.3 Green Infrastructure as part of Swindon regeneration, (Source: Swindon Borough Council)

²⁰ Vistry Group (n.d.) Sustainability and Drainage, Available at: <https://burcotfarm.consultationonline.co.uk/sustainability-and-drainage/>

²¹ Swindon Borough Council (2025) Fleming Way improvements, Available at: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20136/transport_strategy/1089/fleming_way_improvements

- Tree, shrub and flower planting at ‘the parade’ redevelopment adjoining Fleming Way (see **Figure 3.4**).



Figure 3.4 Flower planting at the parade, (Source: Swindon Borough Council)

- Installation of a purpose-built bat cave, 100 bat boxes and habitat creation including ponds, orchards, grasslands and a wetland as part of the Wichelstowe development (see **Figure 3.5**)²². The development also included the restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal.



Figure 3.5: Bat Cave installed at Wichelstowe development, (Source: Wichelstowe)

- The creation of allotments as part of the development at Manor Road.

Trees

3.5 Swindon Borough Council supported extensive tree planting in the borough creating new woodlands, community orchards and increasing the provision of street trees. Tree planting in the borough included:

- In partnership with the GWCF and WWT, Swindon Borough Council delivered a Trees for Climate Project. Since 2020, ~586.3 ha has been planted with trees across the Community Forest area (see **Figure 3.6**). Since 2020, the GWCG has supported 180 tree planting and woodland creation projects. Although some of this may be outside of the borough of Swindon, the Trees for Climate project is creating a connected network of woodlands and trees across the landscape, with Swindon at its heart. Examples of funded projects in Swindon include the planting of a mini woodland (1,000 trees) at Westcott Recreation Ground and the planting of a small orchard consisting of 20 apple, plum, damson and pear trees at Buckhurst Field.



Figure 3.6: Planting at Shaw Forest - Trees for Climate Project (Source: Wiltshire Wildlife Trust²³)

- As part of the forest meadows project, five community pocket woodlands, a forest garden and tree nursery were created in 2024.
- To honour the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Swindon Borough Council planted 80 oak trees in a labyrinth at Lydiard Park.
- In 2023, Swindon Borough Council supported South Swindon Parish Council to create a 30m blossom circle in Great Western Railway (GWR) park. The circle

²² Wichelstowe (n.d.) Spooktacular new bat cave opens at Wichelstowe, Available at: <https://wichelstowe.co.uk/spooktacular-new-bat-cave-opens-at-wichelstowe/>

²³ Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (n.d.) Trees for Climate, Available at: <https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/trees-climate>

comprises of 11 blossom trees around a circular path. The project also involved recreating the formal flowerbeds on the eastern side of the park²⁴.

- Funded via Trees for Climate, GWCF is supporting local farmers on a range of agroforestry projects improving biodiversity within the farming landscape.

Education and Engagement

3.6 Many projects delivered or supported by Swindon Borough Council sought to increase awareness and engagement with nature. Residents, schools and local groups contributed time, skills and stewardship to support biodiversity across the borough. Examples included:

- Swindon Borough Council supported several residents to help plant trees through the Trees for Climate Project (see **Figure 3.7**).



Figure 3.7 Community Tree Planting, Source (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust)

- Swindon Borough Council, in partnership with WWT offered a range of conservation volunteering opportunities through the Swindon Forest Meadows project. Sessions included tree planting, coppicing, path clearance, working in a tree nursery, general conservation management, and habitat / wildlife surveying. Between July and September 2025, 52 volunteers took part in the project logging 892 hours (although this may be an underestimate as not all volunteers log their hours).

- Taking inspiration from Wiltshire Council, Swindon Borough Council, WWT and the Tree Council launched a Swindon tree warden scheme. Several tree wardens are now volunteering to help maintain and manage trees across the borough.
- Swindon Borough Council consulted with the public on the creation plans and strategies within the borough through the platform 'Let's talk Swindon'²⁵. Most recently, the Council ran a public consultation for the creation of the emerging Country Parks Strategy.
- Swindon Borough Council commissioned WAY Swindon to conduct research with almost 100 children and young people into their views and concerns around climate change and impacts within Swindon²⁶.
- Museums and galleries in Swindon hosted exhibitions and events to engage residents with nature. Exhibitions included 'the gharial' (an ancient Indian crocodilian) alongside creatures in Wiltshire that are on the critical list such as the west European hedgehog and the lapwing.
- Libraries in Swindon offered several adult workshops and children's activities which helped engage residents with nature. Initiatives included nature-based themes in story, rhyme and craft sessions.

²⁴ South Swindon Parish Council (n.d.) Improvement to GWR Park – Heritage Action Zone, Available at: <https://southswindon-pc.gov.uk/heritage-action-zone/>
<https://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s143849/Appendix>

²⁵ Let's Talk Swindon (n.d.) Let's Talk Swindon, Available at: <https://letstalk.swindon.gov.uk/>

²⁶ Way Swindon (2026) Greener Swindon – Children and Young People's report, Available at:

Chapter 4

Biodiversity Net Gain – a Tool for Action

This chapter draws out information specifically relating to BNG. It provides a complete overview of the actions taken and the gains achieved and anticipated resulting from BNG.

4.1 BNG has created a world-first regulatory nature market with ground-breaking policy and legislation. Launched in 2024, the regime is still bedding in; many development types entered scope at different times, and LPAs are only now (mid-late 2025) approving some of the first biodiversity gain plans.

4.2 In terms of BNG monitoring for EBD reporting, Defra has only recently published the high-resolution inputs required for EBD reporting. Therefore, timing and data availability currently limit the BNG impacts that can be reported.

4.3 A short overview of the state of BNG within Swindon is provided in **Table 4.1** below:

Table 4.1 Overview of BNG in Swindon between April 2025 and March 2026

Criteria	Number
Number of planning applications received which are eligible for BNG	46
% of all planning applications received which are eligible for BNG	47%
Number of BNG plans approved	32
Total number of units gained from approved BNG plans:	a) 227.98
a) On site	b) 5.22
b) Off site – in borough	c) 0
c) Off site – out of borough	d) 0
d) Through statutory credits	

Criteria	Number
Type of habitat and quantity of units provided in the approved BNG plans:	a) Habitat units – 160.22
	Hedgerow – 62.52
	Watercourse – 5.24
a) On site	b) Habitat units – 3.89
b) Off site – in borough	Hedgerow – 1.33
c) Off site – out of borough	Watercourse – 0
d) Through statutory credits	c) 0
	d) 0

Actions Taken to Meet BNG Obligations

4.4 BNG is predominantly a planning matter with the assessment, processing and approval of planning applications requiring BNG a responsibility of a dedicated biodiversity officer and other case officers within Swindon Borough Council. As a result, most actions relate to how these applications are processed and assessed within that function.

4.5 Since February 2024 for major developments and April 2024 for minor sites, all applicable developments must prove a 10% BNG using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Planning applications lacking this may be refused or not validated.

4.6 Swindon's new Local Plan 2043 (Regulation 18) supports the mandatory 10% BNG for developments through policy CSE8: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery. BNG plans are encouraged to prioritise on-site delivery so that biodiversity enhancements are delivered locally rather than delivered off-site or through the purchase of statutory credits.

4.7 Case officers within Swindon Borough Council have been given specific BNG training by the biodiversity officer so that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to efficiently assess whether planning applications meet BNG requirements.

4.8 Parish and Ward councillors across Swindon have attended BNG training courses provided by WWT.

4.9 Swindon Borough Council's website provides information on BNG and guidance on submitting the correct information within planning applications so that developers understand that they must consider ecology at the outset of development projects.

Highlights & Challenges

- BNG is now a formal requirement. Swindon Borough Council's strategic planning tools (current and new Local Plan and Swindon Decarbonisation Framework) embed BNG requirements and guidance.
- Through the employment of a dedicated biodiversity officer and BNG training sessions for case officers, Swindon Borough Council has taken steps to accurately and efficiently review BNG plans.
- Remaining challenges include hiring and retaining staff who have BNG knowledge and skills within Swindon Borough Council.

Legal Agreements

4.10 Swindon Borough Council secures biodiversity delivery through legal frameworks, primarily Section 106 agreements which embed long-term obligations into development projects.

4.11 Section 106 agreements, comprised of financial or non-financial obligations, can be set up between developers and Swindon Borough Council to ensure that works related to BNG are undertaken on-site and those habitats are secured as planning obligations for 30 years using a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

4.12 In total, Swindon Borough Council has secured approximately £5.8 million from developer contributions, including £5.6 million from the Panattoni scheme, to be allocated toward enhancing the borough's country parks.

4.13 Swindon Borough Council is one of 13 local authorities who have successfully applied to be a Responsible Body. This means the council can enter into legally binding agreements, known as Conservation Covenants, with landowners to secure the protection of the natural or heritage features of a landholding for a specified time period. One of the main uses of Conservation Covenants at present is to secure the long-term biodiversity commitments associated with the delivery of BNG. The role of a Responsible Body is to legally secure land and its associated conservation objectives and to ensure the commitments of the landowner are achieved, through undertaking regular monitoring and evaluation of the land. Responsible Bodies can take legal enforcement action to mitigate or remediate any failings.

BNG Banking

4.14 The National Biodiversity Gain Site Register lists all legally secured BNG sites in England. As of March 2026, two sites have been registered within Swindon borough.

4.15 One of the sites is located at Hannington Wick in the north of the borough. It covers an area of 59.44 ha and is managed by Lushill Habitat Ltd. The biodiversity units from this site are currently under preparation, but once complete, it will offer 462.2 biodiversity units from both area and hedgerow habitats.

4.16 The second site, Highworth Habitat Bank, is located at Castle Eaton on the northwest border of the borough. It covers an area of 2.83 ha and is managed by the Environment Bank. Since 2025, 12.47 biodiversity units have been made available to purchase through the creation of lowland meadow, ponds (priority) and rural trees. These habitats are situated along the River Thames and support a range of wildlife including rare species of bird such as lapwing.

4.17 A third site is situated near Highworth Habitat Bank, just outside of Swindon borough and within the county of Wiltshire. This is Marston Meysey Habitat Bank, which features 24.3 ha of species-rich floodplain grazing meadow along the River Thames. The enhancement and extension of existing habitats here provide approximately 122 biodiversity units, covering both area and hedgerow habitat types. These biodiversity units have only recently been made available for purchase since Autumn 2025.

4.18 Overall, both the Hannington Wick and Highworth Habitat Banks offer an effective local off-site BNG solution for Swindon Borough Council, ultimately ensuring biodiversity gains remain within the borough. If more BNG units are required than those offered within Swindon borough then Meysey Habitat Bank offers additional off-site BNG units (outside the LPA) in close proximity.

4.19 In addition, Swindon Borough Council, in partnership with WWT, is in the process of identifying and preparing a network of BNG sites on Council-owned land and on other open spaces²⁷. These will be used to meet the upcoming BNG demand from developments and to secure local long-term biodiversity gains within the borough. Swindon Borough Council will also engage Parish Councils within this process with the aim that they can identify and set up additional BNG sites.

Highlights & Challenges

- The establishment of two BNG sites within the borough means that developers and Swindon Borough Council can deliver biodiversity enhancements locally.
- With the continued high pressure for new housing development, the challenge remains to supply enough BNG units to meet demand and ultimately preserve and enhance biodiversity within Swindon borough.
- Swindon Borough Council has registered as a Responsible Body.

²⁷ Carrie Starbuck (2025). Swindon BNG Proposal.

Chapter 5

Investment in Nature

This chapter describes funding for nature-related activities in the borough. Delivery examples are signposted in Chapter 4. The structure of governance for nature is also outlined.

Council Resourcing

5.1 Swindon Borough Council has a dedicated biodiversity officer who provides ecological expertise, reviews BNG plans within planning applications and works with external stakeholders to deliver biodiversity enhancement projects across Council owned greenspaces.

Funding Secured

5.2 Swindon Borough Council have been successful in securing external funding to deliver biodiversity enhancements across the borough. These include:

- £3.5 million capital funding awarded in 2025 to GWCF, who work in partnership with Swindon Borough Council and other partners. This funding is being used to deliver 120 hectares of woodland across the Swindon borough²⁸.
- Through the Trees for Climate project (part of the Nature for Climate Fund), GWCF has gained ~£3million capital funding per annum up to 2030.
- £83,306 from the Water Restoration Fund was awarded to the Coate Water SSSI Restoration Project in 2025. The fund allocates money collected from fines issued to water companies to deliver environmental improvement projects, with a particular focus on improving water quality and biodiversity²⁹.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is a grants programme funded by Defra which supports projects in

²⁸ Swindon Advertiser (2025). Swindon town centre, verges and parks among areas set trees. Available online: <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/25264074.thousands-trees-planted-swindon-many-come/>

²⁹ Swindon Advertiser (2025). Coate Water to get more than £83,000 in government funding. Available online <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/25515782.coate-water-get-83-000-government-funding/>

National Parks and National Landscapes that help recover nature, reduce the impacts of climate change, protect and enhance cultural heritage and improve access to and enjoyment of national parks and landscapes. FiPL has supported two projects within the Swindon borough. These include £13,916.55 to fence 13.8 ha of land at Parsonage Farm and £5,589.36 to lay 240m of hedgerow to improve habitats and prevent field runoff.

- The Helping Communities Blossom fund ran by the National Trust facilitated the planting of 11 blossom trees in GWR in 2023. This funding was awarded to South Swindon Parish Council, Swindon Borough Council and Historic England who worked together to deliver the project³⁰.

Service Level Agreements

5.3 Swindon Borough Council holds a service level agreement (SLA) with the Wiltshire Local Records Centre for the maintenance of environmental data.

5.4 Swindon Borough Council holds Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with 21 Parish Councils across the borough to look after certain parks, open spaces and grass verges. These MOUs discharge activities for the Parish Councils to undertake such as hedge cutting, tree maintenance and grass cutting, with the focus more on maintaining habitats than maximising biodiversity.

Planning Related Mechanisms

Section 106 Agreements

5.5 Swindon Borough Council leverages statutory planning tools to secure funding for nature, principally through Section 106 Agreements.

5.6 Section 106 Agreements can take the form of financial contributions from developers to be used by the council to deliver infrastructure to support residential developments in line with the Local Plan policies. Swindon Borough Council spent £1,753,360.50 derived from Section 106 contributions on biodiversity protection and enhancement projects between 2020 and 2025. This allowed projects to be carried out across the borough, including Mouldon Hill, Stanton Park and Lydiard Park and improved a variety of habitats, including woodland, grasslands and allotments.

Monitoring Fees

5.7 Swindon Borough Council charges a fee of 5% of the value of the planning obligation to cover fees associated with monitoring planning obligations. This includes biodiversity monitoring.

Social value weighting

5.8 Swindon Borough Council apply social value weighting to purchasing policies. The subsequent funding is used to deliver community projects across the borough. Projects must contribute to the Council's ambition to be *'fairer, better and greener'*³¹.

5.9 The woodland heritage project at Lydiard Park involving WWT and the GWFC is one of the six projects allocated a total of £105,000 in 2026.

Partnerships

5.10 Swindon Borough Council works with numerous partners to deliver specific biodiversity projects. Often, these projects are community-led, allowing nature recovery to be delivered efficiently and equitably. Organisations who directly partnered with Swindon Borough Council to enhance biodiversity include:

- Swindon Borough Council are a member of the **Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Partnership (LNP)**. The LNP is collaborative cross-sector partnership working to drive nature's recovery and deliver wider environmental, social, and economic benefits.
- Swindon Borough Council is a contributing member of the **'Council of Partners' for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape**. The Council works to an agreed five-year management plan and oversees the work of the National Landscape team.
- **Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)** who deliver numerous collaborative projects, most notably the Swindon Forest Meadows project which aims to create, restore and enhance 170 ha of grassland. To achieve this, the WWT organise volunteering sessions which involve cutting back rides, sowing wildflower seeds, coppicing, tree planting, and removing Himalayan balsam³². Swindon Borough Council also work with the WWT to undertake a series of great crested newt surveys across the borough.

³⁰ South Swindon Parish Council (2023). Improvements to GWR Park – Heritage Action Zone. Available online: <https://southswindon-pc.gov.uk/heritage-action-zone/>

³¹ Swindon borough council (2026). Six community projects to benefit from council's social value commitment. Available online:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/news/article/1316/six_community_projects_to_benefit_from_councils_social_value_commitment

³² WWT (2026). Swindon Forest Meadows. Available online: https://volunteering.wiltshirewildlife.org/volunteers/opportunity/10190014?fbclid=IwAR3HIY1noY_Y0qbVXXvBamk-4Duoyde8zZERoQ4qfuF9TzsBCsxQQnpfM

- **Parish Councils**, specifically Central Swindon North, South Swindon and Haydon Wick, who are creating five community pocket woodlands in 2024, improving access to nature within urban areas and supporting urban wildlife³³.
- **GWCF** has a 32-year partnership between Swindon Borough Council, WWT, Parish Councils and volunteers, with the aim of increasing tree cover up to 30% across the GWCF area and improving access to nature through woodland creation³⁴. From 1996 to 2024, approximately 60,000 trees had been planted through this partnership. Of these, since 2020, approximately 447,338 trees have been planted³⁵.
- **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust** who are restoring the canal at Mouldon Hill. In 2025, work began to clear the towpaths to allow space for future hedgerow and tree planting. The Waterways Recovery Group and Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group are additional project partners who deliver technical expertise³⁶.

Other stakeholders in Swindon

5.11 Many organisations are working to enhance biodiversity across the Swindon borough, although a formal partnership with the council is not yet established. Their contributions are recognised below:

- **Bee Roadz group** who have led the restoration of Toothill pond and have delivered a campaign which encourages homeowners and councils to reduce mowing regimes to increase the occurrence of wildflowers within the borough.
- **West Swindon Flowers and Butterflies (FAB) group** who run volunteering sessions at various locations, including Shaw Ridge and Lydiard Park, with the aim of improving wildlife habitats and increasing biodiversity.

³³ Swindon Borough Council (2024). Swindon forest meadows project. Available online: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20183/nature_conservation_and_creation/1326/swindon_forest_meadows_project

³⁴ BBC (2024). Community forest helping connect people for 30 years. Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9dy0223yjxo>

³⁵ WWT (2024). The Great Western Community Forest. Available online: https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/gwcf%20leaflet_portrait_v2.pdf

³⁶ Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (2026). Swindon – Mouldon Hill Country Park. Available online: <https://wbct.org.uk/swindon-mouldon-hill-country-park/>

Chapter 6

Looking Ahead for Nature

This chapter sets out how Swindon Borough Council will fulfil the biodiversity duty over the coming reporting period to 2030. It first considers the challenges facing Swindon and how these will be overcome to deliver on the vision and targets of Swindon Borough Council.

6.1 As evidenced in the previous chapters, Swindon Borough Council have taken great steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the borough, fulfilling the requirements of their EBD. Looking to the future, continuing to meet the EBD has implications for strategic planning and delivery across all Council functions.

Context and Challenges

6.2 Swindon could experience several challenges over the next five years. These include but are not limited to:

- **Reduction in government funding for Council-provided services**, including the management of green spaces. Swindon Borough Council is facing an estimated budget gap of £27.8m for 2026/27. Moreover, 84% of the Council's budget is spent on adult and children's social care leaving 16% for all other services³⁷.
- **A lack of suitable land available in which to deliver nature recovery** due to the need to balance access and recreational use and dedicated areas for nature recovery.
- **Increased pressure from housing and transport development**. Under the central Government's national housing target, Swindon is required to build 26,000 new homes by 2044³⁸. This could have implications for the

³⁷ The Ink (2025) Swindon Borough Council faces estimated £27.8m budget gap in 2025/26, Available at: <https://theinkswindon.substack.com/p/swindon-borough-council-faces-estimated>

³⁸ Swindon Advertiser (2025) Map shows where 26,000 houses could be built in Swindon, Available at: <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/25314948.map-shows-26-000-houses-built-swindon/>

quality, quantity and connectivity of green and natural spaces within the borough.

- **Population growth.** Across the Swindon borough, the population size has increased by 11.6%, from 209,200 in 2011 to 233,400 in 2021. Swindon's population saw the third-largest percentage increase in the Southwest. This increase and potential future increases in population will create additional land use pressure.
- **Changes in BNG legalisation** in relation to the exemption of smaller sites and a restriction on Council's to require over 10% wholesale BNG in the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) could limit how much Swindon is able to deliver for nature. Impacts of the new NPPF are predicted to reduce BNG to 6% in some cases.
- **New, or exacerbation of already present, invasive and non-native species (INNS) and diseases affecting native species and impacting the health of natural habitats.** Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, Parrot's feather, water fern, American skunk cabbage and American mink have all been recorded within Swindon on INNS Mapper. American mink can have a devastating effect on water vole populations. A severe case of Canadian pond weed was reported at Peatmoor Lake³⁹. Parakeets which may compete with native bird species, have also been reported in the area⁴⁰.
- **Climate change** is leading to more extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding, which affect ecosystem function and tree survival rates.

Visibility and Resourcing

6.3 At present, Swindon Borough Council has one biodiversity officer who is responsible for the provision of ecological and biodiversity support within the planning process.

6.4 Hiring employees who have ecological knowledge and skills, including those required for reviewing BNG plans, has been highlighted by the Council as a current challenge. Other ways to strengthen the Council's BNG review capacity such as through external training or software could be explored over the next five years.

Vision

6.5 Swindon has a priority of '*greener*' within their corporate plan. An objective of the corporate plan (known as the Swindon Plan) is to '*protect and enhance biodiversity*'.

6.6 The Decarbonisation Framework has a core theme of '*Green Spaces*' and sets out a series of goals and actions for the Council to deliver over the life plan of the framework which could help to enhance biodiversity (see **Chapter 7 – Delivery Actions**).

6.7 The spatial vision in the local plan, which directs development within the borough is '*Swindon will be at the centre of a network of multifunctional green spaces linking the town to the wider countryside. Swindon will have responded to the needs of a growing population in a way that has protected and enhanced our natural and historic environment*'.

6.8 At present, Swindon Borough Council do not have a dedicated biodiversity or nature strategy however, there is a commitment to adopt and complete a Green Infrastructure Strategy, Country Park Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and a Forest Plan within the next five-year EBD reporting period (see **Chapter 7 - Policies and Strategies**).

Policies and Strategies

Documents due for renewal

6.9 Swindon Borough Council is set to review and update several plans, policies and strategies over the next five-year EBD reporting period. These updated documents could include aims, objectives actions and targets to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

6.10 At the time of writing, Swindon Borough Council are preparing a new **Swindon Local Plan 2043** to guide growth and development to 2043, with a wider vision to 2055. It will set a strategic vision for housing, employment, infrastructure, transport and the environment to support sustainable growth that meets the needs of residents, businesses and the community.

6.11 Chapter 9 of the draft local plan is entitled '*an environmentally sustainable Swindon*' and contains the following policies:

- SP6 – Climate Stability and the Environment
- CS1 – Green Infrastructure in New Developments
- CSE4 – The Green Infrastructure Network

³⁹ BBC (2025) Invasive weed threatening future of beauty spot's lake, Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c77d31y277lo>

⁴⁰ This is Wiltshire (2025) Parakeets spotted in Swindon now 'unstoppable', experts say, Available at:

<https://www.thisiswiltshire.co.uk/news/25202819.parakeets-spotted-swindon-now-unstoppable-experts-say/>

- CSE5 – Great Western Community Forest
- CSE6 – Trees
- CSE7 – Landscape and Areas of Non-Coalescence
- CSE8 – Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery

6.12 Policies require that development proposals must promote and encourage approaches to protect and enhance biodiversity, incorporate high quality GI, meet an urban green factor of 0.4 for residential developments and 0.3 for non-residential development, be consistent with the objectives of the GWCF, achieve a future canopy cover of 25% of the site through retention of existing trees/hedges, new planting and other green infrastructure, deliver 10% BNG and deliver enhancements for species diversity.

6.13 Other existing plans and strategies due for renewal include:

- **North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023 – 2028**, which guides how recreational disturbance can be mitigated.
- **Swindon Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026**, which could be strengthened to identify how the transport network can contribute to biodiversity enhancements across the borough.
- **Neighbourhood plans.** Several neighbourhood plans are due for renewal. The extent to which current neighbourhood plans have policies regarding biodiversity is highly variable. All plans could be strengthened to have a policy relating biodiversity conservation and enhancement.
- **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy** – due for update in March 2026. An aim of the strategy is to '*ensure that actions and measures proposed to manage flood risk deliver multiple benefits, including environmental, social and economic*'. Provisions for biodiversity could be made more explicit through the strategy.

6.14 Furthermore, some planning documents are more than 10 years old and could be updated to reflect new thinking around biodiversity protection and enhancement. These documents include:

- **Swindon Residential Design Guide 2016** - This document was written in 2016 and could be updated regarding provisions that developers need to deliver at the neighbourhood, street and household level to deliver biodiversity enhancements.

- **Supplementary Planning Guidance** – Some of these documents were written in 2004 and could be refreshed to align with new policies within the emerging Local Plan.

New strategies and planning documents in development

6.15 Swindon Borough Council have plans in place to adopt and complete a Green Infrastructure Strategy, Country Parks Strategy, a Forest Plan and a Biodiversity Strategy.

6.16 The **Country Parks Strategy** will identify strategic greening and BNG opportunities at the borough's five country parks. Sitting behind the Country Parks Strategy will be a bespoke management plan for each country park. The priority of these plans will be biodiversity aligned with accessibility. This will include priority areas for BNG and the identification of areas suitable for conservation grazing.

6.17 The **Green Infrastructure Strategy** will provide the basis for a coordinated approach to the creation and sustained management of GI across Swindon borough. Objectives in the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy which directly impact upon biodiversity include:

- **Connectivity** - Improve the connectivity of GI for people and wildlife, including green corridors and green active travel routes.
- **Nature Rich and Beautiful** - Protect, enhance and create GI, designing, implementing and managing it to ensure it is biodiverse and attractive, contributing to a sense of place and incorporating and enhancing heritage where appropriate.
- **Urban Greening** - Embrace the benefits of GI to enhance the urban realm, including the town centre and to play a key role in regeneration, creating synergies with heritage, new architecture and grey infrastructure to provide a sense of place and distinctive character.

6.18 The **Forest Plan** will detail how woodlands across the borough can be better managed to enhance biodiversity.

6.19 The **Biodiversity Strategy** will set priorities and actions for restoring nature and its associated benefits across the borough.

Taking Account of the LNRS

6.20 Swindon Borough Council will take account of the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS over the next five years by integrating the priorities and measures proposed in the LNRS into the delivery of their policies and plans, such as those described above, and how the Council plans to meet their EBD duty. Swindon Borough Council are also looking to update their emerging Local Plan at Reg 19 stage to include a policy relating to the LNRS and BNG.

Delivery Actions

6.21 Actions that Swindon Borough Council may implement over the next five years to conserve and enhance biodiversity include:

- Completion of the habitat creation programme of “Forest Meadows”, in partnership with the WWT.
- Completion of the “Trees for Climate” tree and woodland planting by the Great Western Community Forest.
- Increasing tree equity within the urban environment.
- Pursuing 10% BNG and the integration of wildlife corridors into developments.
- Improving natural habitats in the urban and peri-urban settings in the borough. Examples of how this will be delivered include:
 - The Heart of Swindon Regeneration project which aims to deliver a new linear park along Fleming Way, increasing biodiversity and integrating Kimmerfields into the heart of Swindon’s retail centre and pocket parks, new green spaces and improved public spaces with street trees to create continuous corridors for wildlife throughout the town centre.
 - The New Eastern Village development planned for 2026 which will provide provisions for biodiversity including ‘a nature park’ providing both open spaces and nature areas. The development will also include a visitor centre where people can engage in conservation, the natural environment and local heritage.
 - An MOU between the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust and the council to restore the Wilts and Berks Canal and associated environmental and recreational benefits.
- Ensuring the Local Plan requirement for new major residential developments making provisions for allotments is achieved.
- Mobilising and expanding a skilled volunteer network to support the creation and maintenance of green spaces, habitats, wildlife corridors, and tree planting, supplementing staff capacity and helping share specialist knowledge across the community.
- Continuation of the Coate Water SSSI Restoration Project (see **Chapter 3**).
- Continuing to collect funding via social value contracts. Projects expected to be delivered in 2026 include a new woodland heritage project at Lydiard Park.

- Look to gain Green Flag Status for Swindon’s five Country Parks.

Monitoring and Evaluation

6.22 A variety of metrics can be used to support the monitoring and evaluation of actions, targets and objectives related to conserving and enhancing biodiversity across the borough. Metrics associated with other reporting, such as the Swindon Plan and Decarbonisation Framework, are preferred to avoid duplication. **Table 6.1** is based on national targets and existing commitment actions within Swindon Borough Council’s strategies and includes metrics and measures that the Council could record over the next five-year EBD reporting period.

Table 6.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for conserving and enhancing biodiversity across Swindon Borough Council

Target / Action	Source of Target	Metric	Data Source
SSSIs in favourable condition	EIP	% of units / features in favourable condition	Natural England
Wildlife rich habitat created outside of protected areas	EIP	Area (ha) of wildlife rich habitat created outside of protected areas	Swindon Borough Council and partners
Increase provision of hedgerows	EIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Length (km) of hedgerows planted ■ Units of hedgerow habitat provided via BNG 	Swindon Borough Council and partners
Restore or create 3,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2030	North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan	Area (ha) of wildlife rich habitat created outside of protected areas	North Wessex Downs National Landscape and Partners
Increase tree cover in the North Wessex Downs by 400 ha by 2030	North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan	Area (ha) of trees planted	North Wessex Downs National Landscape and Partners
1,000 new street trees in Swindon	GWCF Management Plan	No. of street trees planted in Swindon	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
£250K funding raised by 2050 across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	£ raised for tree planting in Swindon Borough	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
750 volunteers involved in the next five years across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	No. of volunteers involved in the GWCF from Swindon Borough up to 2030	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
3,860 has total new woodland planted by 2050 across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	Area (ha) of new woodland planted in Swindon Borough by 2050	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
Plant 400 has of new woodland by 2030 across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	Area (ha) of new woodland planted in Swindon borough by 2030	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
22% canopy cover by 2050, 80 new oak trees across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tree Canopy Cover ■ No. of oak trees planted in Swindon borough 	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
125 businesses involved in the next five years across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	No. of businesses involved in the GWCF from Swindon borough up to 2030.	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.
80% of woodland sustainably managed by 2050 across the GWCF area	GWCF Management Plan	% of woodland sustainably managed in Swindon borough	GWCF, Swindon Borough Council and partners.

Target / Action	Source of Target	Metric	Data Source
BNG Delivery	Local Plan	No. of BNG units delivered	Swindon Borough Council
Five new or enhanced habitats per year	Swindon Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No. of new habitats created per annum ■ No. of habitats enhanced per annum 	Swindon Borough Council and partners
Complete the habitat creation programme of “Forest Meadows”, in partnership with the WWT.	Decarbonisation Framework	% complete	Swindon Borough Council and WWT
Complete the “Trees for Climate” tree and woodland planting by the Great Western Community Forest.	Decarbonisation Framework	% complete	Swindon Borough Council and Great Western Community Forest.
Improve tree equity within the urban environment.	Decarbonisation Framework	Tree Equity Score per Local Super Output Area	Tree Equity Score
Ensure the Local Plan requirement for new major residential developments makes provisions for allotments to be achieved.	Decarbonisation Framework	Local Plan Policy	Swindon Borough Council
Improve the urban environment through intelligent Green Infrastructure within the Heart of Swindon.	Decarbonisation Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ m² of new greenspace created ■ No. of street trees planted / SuDS installed ■ No. of wildlife enhancements installed (e.g. bird boxes) 	Swindon Borough Council and partners
Mobilise and expand a skilled volunteer network to support the creation and maintenance of green spaces.	Decarbonisation Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No. of active volunteer groups ■ No. of community project delivered 	Swindon Borough Council and partners

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter concisely summarises the achievements that Swindon Borough Council has delivered to meet its biodiversity duty to January 2026, and concludes the actions required to deliver this to 2030.

Headline Achievements

7.1 Swindon Borough Council have taken many steps to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The council's vision is '*fairer, better, greener*' and the corporate strategy has an objective to '*protect and enhance biodiversity*'. The Decarbonisation Framework has a core theme of '*Green Spaces*' and sets out a series of goals and actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

7.2 Swindon's Local Plan 2026, which directs development in the borough, has a spatial vision that '*Swindon will be at the centre of a network of multifunctional green spaces linking the town to the wider countryside. Swindon will have responded to the needs of a growing population in a way that has protected and enhanced our natural and historic environment*'.

7.3 The Local Plan includes strategic objectives and policies which relate to conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

7.4 Swindon Borough Council has taken action to enhance biodiversity and green spaces across the borough. Key examples include 563 ha of tree planting through the Trees for Climate project and 170 ha of restored grassland through the Swindon Forest Meadows project.

7.5 Swindon Borough Council has delivered several biodiversity enhancements through development management. These include 186 trees and more than 23,000 plants, bulbs and shrubs being planted as part of the 'Heart of Swindon' regeneration project. Housing developments have delivered over 100 bat boxes, community orchards and ponds.

7.6 Swindon supports residents and local communities to play a part in biodiversity enhancements mostly through the Trees for Climate and Swindon Forest Meadows projects.

Next Steps

7.7 Over the next five years, Swindon will continue to carry out their duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and meet local, regional and national biodiversity targets.

7.8 The emerging Local Plan, due for publication in 2026 includes policies which require developers to deliver 10% BNG, meet an urban green factor of 0.4 for residential developments and 0.3 for non-residential development, achieve a future canopy cover of 25%, protect and enhance biodiversity, and deliver high quality green infrastructure.

7.9 Actions within Swindon Borough Council's strategies include completing the 'Forest Meadows' habitat creation programme and 'Trees for Climate' tree planting, adopting a green infrastructure strategy, country parks strategy, biodiversity strategy and a forest plan, improving urban environments for biodiversity (including tree equity scores) and mobilising and expanding a skilled volunteer network to support the creation and maintenance of habitats, wildlife corridors and green spaces.