

Urban Habitat Action Plan

1. Introduction

The contribution that urban areas can make in supporting a range of habitats and species is frequently overlooked and opportunities can be missed to contribute to the delivery of landscape-scale Green Infrastructure networks. Increased pressure to allocate land for housing creates urgency as well as opportunity to promote development that integrates habitats and connects greenspace across and within urban areas.

We need to ensure that biodiversity is given adequate and appropriate consideration within development control forward planning and policy. Another challenge will be to ensure that this is communicated through the planning application process to achieve biodiversity net gain on the ground, for the benefit of both people and wildlife living in Worcestershire. In addition, with over 80% of the UK population living in urban areas it is important to recognise that the green infrastructure components of the urban environment offer most people their first contact with wildlife.

2. Current Status

2.1 Description of habitat

Many biodiversity-rich habitats appear in both urban and rural areas and have their own Habitat Action Plans within the Worcestershire BAP. Readers are advised to consult other Action Plans of particular relevance to the urban environment, for example Rivers and Streams, Road Verges, Traditional Orchards and Canals. It is important to emphasise the crucial role that rivers, linking natural habitats to provide functional ecological corridors within and through urban areas.

Well planned and managed green (and blue) infrastructure has multi-functional benefits beyond habitat provision for wildlife, for example flood amelioration and the physical and mental health and well-being of the human population. Certain habitats are unique to, or typical of, the urban environment and it is these that this plan will focus on. They include:

The 'built' environment including both industrial and domestic buildings

Buildings and built infrastructure provide a significant roost and nesting resource in the urban environment. These can be especially important for priority species such as bats and scarcer birds including swift (*Apus apus*), black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) and peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*). Careful connection of such features via green corridors can markedly increase their ecological value.

Municipal parks

Though they are sometimes heavily managed these are of particular importance, not only for the broad

Brownfield sites (i.e. previously developed land)

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time can be extremely important for biodiversity. A number of semi-specialist
species are closely allied to urban brownfield locations, whilst a broad range of
invertebrates and reptiles can often be found.

Allotments

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Allotment sites in Worcester. These are amongst the best sites for slow-worms in the West Midlands and can hold significant breeding

Sites and/or green networks may be identified within Neighbourhood Plans and may receive specific protection through district Local Plans.

Land may be owned by public bodies such as Severn Trent Water and managed appropriately to maximise biodiversity interest.

4.2 Habitat management and programmes of action

Natural England developed and published a set of benchmarks for the provision of access to green spaces. The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) aim to ensure people living in urban areas have access to wildlife-rich green spaces within a certain distance of their home.

The data on accessible woodland across the UK and

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Promote the adoption by local authorities of a pollinator-friendly approach to the management of urban parks and public open space

References and further information

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Building with Nature green infrastructure benchmark

<https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/>

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