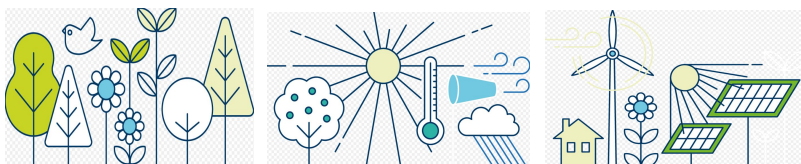


Sutton's Environment Strategy FAQ

Topic: Biodiversity/ Protecting Green Spaces

The council consulted on its Environment Strategy for eight weeks in August 2018. As well as answering the questions, participants were invited to provide comments. We received nearly 700 comments, all of which were reviewed and influenced the final draft of the strategy. A lot of the comments were very similar, and we have curated these comments into a comprehensive FAQ documents giving the answers for the public to view.



1. How can you ensure the security and protection of our parks?

The Council has already undertaken a significant amount of work on target hardening (strengthening buildings/ area to reduce the risk of attack or theft) in our boroughs parks and open spaces. We have committed an additional £180,000 to be spent during 2019 on further barriers, gates and locking systems to make parks harder to enter unlawfully. Legal measures have been taken, including gaining an injunction that can be applied against anyone fly tipping or setting up an encampment on parks and open spaces. While it is impossible to entirely eradicate unlawful encampments, these measures will provide Sutton's open spaces with the best protection anywhere in the country.

2. How can you ensure the protection of our existing green spaces and wildlife?

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) are covered under Policy 26 of the Local Plan and the Technical Guidance Note: Building a Sustainable Sutton. Back garden land is covered under Policy 13 of the Local Plan and, at times, Policy 26, depending on the land and landscape.

A number of parks could be improved for nature and wildlife but require increased funding to undertake habitat creation and suitable ongoing management. Further detail on plans for open spaces will be forthcoming in the Open Spaces Strategy currently under development.

3. More work needs to be done to enhance biodiversity as well as protect existing nature reserves against developments.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) are covered under Policy 26 of the Local Plan and the Technical Guidance Note: Building a Sustainable Sutton. A number of sites are being enhanced, through, for example, conservation grazing, work towards agri-environment schemes, such as Higher Level Stewardship and recent improvements to Queen Mary's Woodland, after its transfer to the Council from the developer. For a bigger and more visible Biodiversity Team, further resources would need to be made available to recruit more staff.

Protecting and managing habitats correctly is the main way of dealing with wildlife health and care.

4. What is meant by Biodiversity? It needs to be qualified in terms of native species which should be encouraged.

Biodiversity is the shortened form of two words "biological" and "diversity." It refers to all the variety of life that can be found on Earth (plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms) as well as to the communities that they form and the habitats in which they live. Therefore, 'biodiversity' cannot be solely qualified in terms of native species. However, in regards to promoting local wildlife, the Biodiversity Team undertakes work on protecting and enhancing semi-natural habitats, which includes increasing the variety of native species within that habitat, to increase niche diversity and structural heterogeneity (the quality or state of being diverse in character or content.). In addition, through work on commenting on planning applications for the creation of Green Infrastructure and soft landscaping, the Biodiversity Team recommend the use of a preponderance of native species, as well as some non-native species of known value (primarily for pollen or nectar production) to increase the overall value of created habitats in an urban area.

5. The council should be working with residents and businesses to discourage solid fences and concrete gravel boards which are inhospitable for certain species.

Planning applications that are commented on by Biodiversity recommend the use of permeable landscaping to increase mobility between gardens / developments, where this is likely to have an impact.

6. I would like to see an explicit commitment to protect and enhance wildlife in the borough with specific actions, such as ensuring the great majority of new trees and other planting are native species.

The forthcoming Biodiversity Strategy has specific actions to maintain, enhance and create new habitats within the borough, including woodland and scrub, rivers and wetlands and Green Infrastructure. Maintenance and enhancement of existing habitats is undertaken using native species; whilst soft landscaping for developments (on biodiversity sites) is recommended by the Biodiversity Team to have predominantly local and native species (generally 60:40), with non-native species being of known wildlife value, that can help extend the resource season (through earlier or later flowering etc.).

7. Will you reinstate the wildlife hospital in Beddington?

The wildlife hospital was run independently by a charity, not a Council service. There is no requirement for Local Government to provide such facilities.

8. How do you plan to protect the borough's green belt land?

Policy 24 of Sutton's new Local Plan (February 2018) maintains the council's strong policy stance against permitting new developments on green belt land. While the green belt boundary has been amended in two locations as part of the Local Plan review to allow for the extension of the gypsy and traveller site at the land south of The Pastures, Carshalton Road (1.5 hectares) and to remove the existing housing estate adjacent to Stanley Park High School (9.3 hectares) – which did not perform any of the functions for green belt land identified in the Government's national planning policy framework (NPPF) - no new green belt developments have been granted planning permission in contravention of the council's policy for over 10 years.