

Title: Biodiversity and Green Space

Description: To develop a programme of projects, activities and funding streams to

- achieve a species rich habitat on the new development (MOR006) appropriate to the public use of the green space
- deliver the NDP Biodiversity and Green policies and projects
- utilise the green spaces in the parish to
 - maintain and improve the quality and diversity of the natural environment
 - increase species diversity and numbers, and
 - where possible, enhance and extend the green corridors and routes
- encourage the younger generation to become actively involved with the natural environment.

NOTE: The NDP Green Spaces project to

‘Develop parish cycleways, in particular investigate and if possible provide a pedestrian/cycleway:-

- *linking Burghfield & Mortimer*
- *away from the road connecting the village with St Mary’s Junior School and the station’*

will be addressed in other parts of the NDP implementation and is excluded from this proposal.

Need/Reason: New developments can reduce the areas of green space and species-rich land, and can block existing wildlife routes. Similarly the sub-division of existing large gardens in the parish reduces wildlife habitat. As such it is essential that while improving existing areas that new developments are made as environmentally friendly as possible. A well-planned new development provides a real opportunity to enhance and extend wildlife habitats of Mortimer. At the same time existing areas and corridors in the parish could be enhanced to aid biodiversity.

Extending the scale, green nature and diversity of the environment will make the parish a more interesting and attractive place, and will contribute to the health, social and cultural well-being of the community.

History: National policy is to minimise the impact of developments on biodiversity and to provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. The objective is to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

The NDP consultations – exhibition, questionnaire – identified a considerable interest in the preservation and extension of the wildlife. An overwhelming majority of respondents support the proposition that all new developments should be wildlife friendly with a range of wildlife areas.

As a consequence the NDP includes a set of biodiversity and green space policies and projects.

Requirements:

Land: It is not envisaged that additional land will be required but will seek to utilise existing green spaces, in particular to take the opportunity of the green space on the new development (MOR006) to provide a new and diverse habitat. If, in the future, additional land/green spaces becomes available for whatever reason then this land could be used to further enhance and extend the natural environment.

Permissions: If existing green spaces and/or woodlands are to be developed to create enhanced habitat and biodiversity then the owners'/trustees' permission would have to be granted.

Money: Initially some 'seed corn' funds (Est £5000) will be required to establish the programme by way of professional expertise advising, and possibly undertaking wildlife, green space and habitat surveys. Subsequently funding will be required to undertake significant projects and for the maintenance of new or enhanced habitats.

People: The people resources ideally will include

- A team of enthusiastic volunteers (a sine qua non), initially a small core team of say 3/4 to get things moving but significantly enlarged if individual projects are to progress in a timely manner.
- Schools
- TA Fisher and/or their environmental consultants
- Land owners and green space trustees as appropriate
- Expertise from appropriate organisations e.g. Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.

Difficulties: Bringing together a team of enthusiasts, developing their knowledge and skills required by the projects programme, development and subsequent maintenance of habitats and establishing a funding stream.

Process: Establish a core team of volunteers aided and supported by experts with Parish Council 'seed corn' funding to develop and assess ideas and establish a practical and funded programme of work:

- Collate from the various sources what is currently known about wildlife and habitats in the parish
- Undertake a programme of essential surveys to establish a baseline of knowledge about the habitats a species diversity and numbers.
- Work with St John's and St Mary's schools to develop a plan of suitable involvement of the schools pupils
- Design and implement a programme to develop the knowledge and skills of the volunteers appropriate to the projects programme
- Work with TA Fisher or their advisors design and oversee the implementation of an environmentally diverse habitat on the new development in particular the 3ha of green space and SuDS features
- Communicate and involve the wider community to generate interest, enthusiasm and volunteers for the project

- Identify potential funding stream for the proposed programme of projects
- Involve expertise as appropriate.

Having prepared a proposition with supporting funding requirements, present it to the Parish Council to decide if and how it wished to progress a long term plan to improve the natural environment and green spaces seizing the opportunity provided by the new development.

Subsequent to approval undertake the implementation of the approved programme.

Timescale: Once a core volunteer team has been established and 'seed corn' funding agreed, c 6 months to prepare a proposal to be put to the Parish Council.

Pros: Enhanced habitat, greater diversity and numbers of flora and fauna, more interesting parish, school children involvement, enhanced green space on the new development.

Cons: This is a significant piece of work and will require expertise to be successful. On-going maintenance of the habitats will be necessary.

Conclusion: The Parish Council should approve the formation of a core group with £5000 seed corn funding to undertake the initial studies outlined above.

7th September 2017