

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 21 October 2025

Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Document Consultation

Accountable member:

Councillor Mike Collins, Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control

Accountable officer:

Javier Guerrero, Planning Policy Officer

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

One of Cheltenham Borough Council's priorities, as set out in [Cheltenham Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028](#), is to create biodiversity. The Council recognises the importance of biodiversity and its crucial role in sustaining ecosystems. Despite its importance, biodiversity is being lost at an ever-increasing rate. Nature recovery is important for many reasons as set out in the SPD. The goal is to create healthier, more resilient environments that can support a wide variety of species on a large scale.

The SPD not only provides an overview of biodiversity and nature recovery but provides practical examples of measures that should be considered, and at what stage of the planning process. The SPD will need to be consulted on for a minimum of four weeks, in accordance with the relevant Regulations. Following consultation, the main issues will be summarised including how these issues have been addressed. Council approval to adopt the SPD will then be sought.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- 1. approves the draft Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 4) for consultation for a period of 4 weeks under Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).**
 - 2. delegates authority to the Director of Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control to make any necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to the document prior to publication for consultation.**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

None arising from this report.

Signed off by: Ela Jankowska – Finance Business Partner **Date:** 10.09.2025
Ela.Jankowska@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

The recommendations and options set out in this report are reasonable and in compliance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) regulations 2012 (the Regulations). The Report specifically seeks authority from Cabinet to allow for a period of public consultation for the SPD referred to in the report; this requirement is in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations which sets out that consultation is a specific requirement to allow for the validation of an SPD.

Public consultation and subsequent adoption of the SPD should be undertaken in accordance with the requirements set out within the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#).

Signed off by: Charlotte Lockwood, Locum Senior Lawyer,
Charlotte.Lockwood@onelegal.org.uk **Date:** 19.09.2025

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

This guidance aims to ensure that development across the borough avoids the degradation of habitat and biodiversity, encouraging sustainable land use and improving ecosystem services. This will have further associated positive impacts for climate adaptation and resilience through carbon sequestration, natural flood

management and reducing urban heat island effect.

This SPD provides clarity and consistency to ensure developers are aligning to the corporate priority to increase biodiversity in our borough and is how we can fully utilise our planning system to encourage developers to enhance our natural environment and mitigate the impact of new buildings.

A Climate Impact Assessment tool has been completed, as set out in Appendix 3.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann – Climate Officer,
Maizy.McCann@cheltenham.gov.uk **Date:** 19.09.2025

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This SPD will contribute to Key priority 3: Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity. It aligns with the following actions:

- We will drive increased biodiversity in our borough and fully utilise our planning system to encourage developers to enhance our natural environment, mitigating the impact of new buildings.
- We will fulfil our biodiversity net gain (BNG) obligations within the planning system.

The SPD will do this by setting out our Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations, providing guidance on nature recovery to developers, and assuring coherence with our emerging Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) Action Plan and the emerging Tree Strategy.

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

A full equality impact assessment of the SPD will be undertaken once consultation on the SPD has been completed, the main issues identified through the consultation, and how these main issues are intended to be addressed prior to the SPD being considered for adoption.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Through normal service delivery and [reporting on our Biodiversity Duty](#).

2 Background

2.1 A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a document, which details and guides the policies already within the Development Plan. The Development Plan includes the Joint Core Strategy, adopted in 2017, and the Cheltenham Plan adopted in 2020. Those documents were produced in the context of the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at the time of their production. Since then, there have been various policy changes, including the strengthening of the biodiversity duty; the introduction of the Biodiversity Net Gain framework, and the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be produced.

2.2 The production of the Nature Recovery SPD is a Corporate priority. The SPD is intended to be used by a wide variety of different stakeholders, including the development industry, by providing guidance practical which should be followed.

3 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 The SPD explains what biodiversity and nature recovery are, and why they are important. Biodiversity refers to the variety of life forms within natural capital. It is inherently valuable and plays a crucial role in sustaining ecosystem services. Despite being fundamental to our existence, the world is losing its biodiversity at an ever-increasing rate.

3.2 Nature recovery refers to the process of restoring and revitalising ecosystems that have been degraded or lost due to human activity, climate change, or other factors. It involves regenerating natural habitats, creating new ones and protecting them (and the species they support) from degradation. The goal is to create healthier, more resilient environments that can support a wide variety of species on a large scale. Nature recovery is important for a number of reasons, as set out in the SPD, including:

- i) Biodiversity Conservation;
- ii) Climate Change Mitigation;
- iii) Ecosystem Services;
- iv) Resilience to Natural Disasters;
- v) Human Well-Being, and
- vi) Sustainability.

3.3 In essence, nature recovery is crucial for maintaining the delicate balance between human progress and environmental health, ensuring a sustainable future for both people and the planet.

3.4 The [Environment Act \(2021\) \(as amended\)](#) mandates that new development must achieve a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity. The SPD provides guidance about how the mandatory BNG policy needs to be considered throughout the planning process. A flowchart is included which seeks not only to capture the various steps but also who is responsible at every stage of the process.

3.5 The Environment Act also set out the requirement for Local Nature Recovery

Strategies (LNRS) to be produced. The responsible authority for producing the LNRS is Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), who are working with Gloucestershire Nature Partnership. Cheltenham Borough Council are one of the partners. The LNRS is still in the process of being produced but the SPD sets out how it will need to be used. LNRS' contain:

- i. A list of priorities for habitats and species across the area they cover, and
- ii. A collection of maps showing where these priorities should be applied in the area they cover.

3.6 Cheltenham Borough Council is also in the process of producing a Tree Strategy. The strategy will play a vital role in supporting the Borough's wider ambitions for nature recovery, such as seeking to increase tree canopy cover. The SPD signposts key elements of the tree strategy.

3.7 The SPD also provides examples of practical guidance about how nature recovery should be incorporated into development at the different stages of the planning process. It gives an overview of legal agreements and how long-term management, and monitoring will be undertaken, as well as briefly setting out where enforcement action may be undertaken. Finally, a nature recovery checklist is provided to help guide applicants.

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 An alternative option would be not to produce an SPD. However, this would be contrary to Cheltenham Borough Council's Corporate Plan evidencing its commitment to nature recovery.

5 Consultation and feedback

5.1 The development of the SPD has been informed by informal consultation with various specialists across the Council, including those from planning, climate change, trees and open space. Input from Members has been garnered. The draft SPD has also been informed through engaging with the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, who are experts in the field of nature and biodiversity.

5.2 This SPD was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRA) screening in consultation with Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. Appendix 5 contains the Statement of Reasons and Determination that was completed for this process.

5.3 This report seeks Cabinet approval for a 4-week public consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Consultation on the SPD will also need to comply with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement 2023. Representations (comments) on the SPD will then be reviewed. The main issues will be

summarised including how these issues have been addressed. Council approval to adopt the SPD will then be sought.

6 Key risks

6.1 The key risk is set out in the risk register at Appendix 1.

Report author:

Javier Guerrero, Planning Policy Officer, javier.guerrero@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. Climate Impact Toolkit Assessment
- iv. Draft Nature Recovery SPD
- v. SEA/HRA Statement of Reasons and Determination from screening

Background information:

[Statement of Community Involvement 2023](#)

[Cheltenham Corporate Plan \(2025 – 2028\)](#)

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the SPD is not produced, Cheltenham Borough Council will be in a weaker position in terms of seeking to ensure that applicants consider biodiversity and nature recovery.	Director of Communities & Economic Development	4	2	8	Accept	Consultation with various stakeholders including development industry in the preparation of the SPD	Director of Communities & Economic Development	Cabinet decision 21 October 2025

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: John Spurling	Service Area: Planning
Title: Planning Policy Manager (Interim)	Date of assessment: 28 July 2025
Signature: John Spurling	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Strategy

If other, please specify:

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Is this new or existing?

New or proposed

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

In line with the Corporate Plan

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims: To ensure that nature recovery is fully considered throughout the planning process.

Objectives: Providing guidance and examples of how nature recovery can be addressed.

Outcomes: Improvements to nature recovery, through the production of the SPD.

Benefits:	As above

e. What are the expected impacts?

Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.

No

Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?

No impact expected

Please provide an explanation for your answer:

At this stage, the SPD is in draft form. Following consultation on the SPD and the consideration of representations (comments) made, the expected impacts will be reviewed prior to progressing to the next stage of the SPD process, which will be to consider adopting the document.

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

f. Identify next steps as appropriate

Stage Two required

No

Owner of Stage Two assessment

N/A

Completion date for Stage Two assessment

N/A

Please move on to Stage 2 if required ([intranet link](#)).