



# **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

## **Greenspaces Strategy (Draft - final)**

**April 2025**

Quality, integrity, professionalism

**Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd**

Company No: 9145032 (England)

**MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS**



Cert Num: 6543-QMS-001

Registered Office: 1 -2 Frecheville Court, off Knowsley Street, Bury BL9 0UF

T: 0161 764 7040 E: [mail@knp.co.uk](mailto:mail@knp.co.uk) [www.knp.co.uk](http://www.knp.co.uk)

Quality assurance	Name	Date
Report origination	Paul Barrett/Chris MacFarlane	17.12.24
Client comments		
Final approval		

# Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

## Draft Greenspaces Strategy

---

### Contents

Part 1: Introduction .....	1
Purpose – why is this strategy being developed? .....	1
How greenspaces can address key challenges faced in Reigate & Banstead. ....	3
Map of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council owned greenspaces .....	6
Part 2: Vision and themes .....	10
Vision: .....	10
Themes: .....	10
Part 3: Strategic priorities and actions .....	13
Theme 1: Health and Wellbeing .....	13
Theme 2: Nature and Biodiversity .....	16
Theme 3: Thriving Communities .....	21
Part 4: Monitoring and review .....	25
Implementation and Monitoring .....	25
Appendix one: Policy review .....	26
National Context .....	26
Local context .....	28
Healthy Surrey: Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019-2030) .....	30
Appendix two: Consultation findings .....	31
Focus groups and in-person meetings .....	31
Community survey .....	32
Appendix three: List of consultees .....	38
Appendix four: Case studies .....	40

### **Part 1: Introduction**

This is the Reigate & Banstead Borough Council - Greenspaces Strategy. It has been prepared by leisure management consultants KKP (Knight Kavanagh and Page). It has been developed via a process of detailed engagement which has included a community survey, a series of consultation sessions with key council officers and community stakeholders. It has also incorporated an extensive review of council information, including the emerging Corporate Plan (2025-2030) and Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024) to ensure that strategy aims and objectives mirror the key themes and strategic priorities in other council planning and policy documents - to ensure strategic consistency.

It covers a ten-year period, and its scope focuses on the parks and greenspaces managed and maintained by the Council. Greenspaces is the collective term used to describe parks, public gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, children's play areas, woodlands, nature reserves, allotment gardens, linear and other open space. This definition, however, excludes public space that is primarily built development plus agricultural land and private (residential) gardens.

### **Purpose – why is this strategy being developed?**

The decision to produce a Greenspaces Strategy stems from the growing recognition of the pivotal role that parks, and open spaces play in enhancing quality of life for our residents, contributing to and enhancing environmental sustainability, and supporting our wider corporate objectives; including those set out in the emerging Corporate Plan (2025-2030).

The Strategy establishes the principles and objectives guiding our activities related to Greenspaces services. It will serve as a comprehensive framework to inform and direct the ongoing work of our Greenspaces Team. Our team is responsible for a range of services including arboriculture management, countryside management, grounds maintenance for parks and open spaces, cemeteries, play area provision

# **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

## **Draft Greenspaces Strategy**

and maintenance, and other services. The Strategy will underpin future action and operational decisions, ensuring that its work is aligned with and reflects our other ambitions and required outcomes. It is also a key mechanism for delivering a number of objectives set out in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024) and supporting the Local Plan objectives.

There are several statutory duties which apply to the work carried out by the Greenspaces service, relating to maintaining and supporting the biodiversity within the borough. It is also important to provide spaces for the public to use for recreation to support their health and wellbeing, which has the potential to, on occasion, create a conflict with the need to support biodiversity. This strategy aims to balance these two conflicting demands, ensuring that biodiversity can thrive and increase.

The synergies between this Strategy and our other core strategic documents reflect the co-benefits and shared ambitions between greenspaces and wider environmental and social matters including ecology and habitat, nature recovery, health and wellbeing, water management and climate change.

### How greenspaces can address key challenges faced in Reigate & Banstead

In common with every local authority, we face a variety of significant challenges. Having high quality and accessible greenspaces can, to some extent, help address these. The challenges and opportunities include:

#### Improving health and wellbeing

- ◀ Several key health issues have been identified which affect the borough's residents. These include the fact that 58% of adult population is overweight or obese (ONS) [date to be added] and 18% of reception age children are identified as having excess weight (ONS) [date to be added].
- ◀ An increase in sedentary lifestyles is reducing the overall health of the public.
- ◀ The reported proportion of mental health disorders in the area is the third highest among young people in Surrey.
- ◀ Providing good quality greenspaces where people can visit, socialise and undertake physical activity can help address these challenges.

#### Increasing biodiversity

- ◀ Recent national legislation including the Environment Act 2021 and changes to section 40 of the National Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 extends the biodiversity duty on public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity alongside conservation by way of creating "*the general biodiversity objective*".
- ◀ We have already identified a local need to maximise ecological habitats and opportunities. The emerging Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy will also reflect this priority. These include adding trees, hedgerows and wildflower meadows to existing greenspaces. This also has important crossover with helping to achieve carbon reduction targets via the offsetting benefits that greenspaces provide.

# **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

## **Draft Greenspaces Strategy**

- ◀ Enhancing biodiversity supports and improves local wildlife whilst vegetation also absorbs carbon and other pollutants, helping to achieve carbon reduction targets.
- ◀ Opportunities for urban greening such as tree planting or green roofs can provide shade and cooling.

### **Climate change mitigation and adaptation**

- ◀ Ensuring our parks and greenspaces are helping to adapt and develop resilience to the predicted future climate and extreme weather events.
- ◀ For example, using nature-based solutions (e.g. restoring woodlands, hedgerows and wetlands) to help mitigate the future costs of climate adaptation, and exploring funding for future greenspaces maintenance and improvement activities.

### **Net zero target**

- ◀ In line with national and local targets, aiming to achieve net zero emissions as set out in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024).

### **Current and future financial pressures**

- ◀ In financial year 2024-25, the net cost of maintaining parks and greenspaces was £1.4 million.
- ◀ We maintain a large amount and variety of greenspaces; this places significant pressure on council budgets.
- ◀ A decline in the natural environment has potential negative impacts on the local economy (e.g., income generated by recreational visits, air pollution etc).
- ◀ Reflecting this, and to ensure efficiency, there are opportunities we can explore, such as maximising the scale of, and optimising, available grants and collaboration with third sector partners.

# **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

## **Draft Greenspaces Strategy**

### **Population growth**

- Over the next 10 years, the borough's population is expected to grow by 7.3% (ONS), particularly amongst older age brackets.

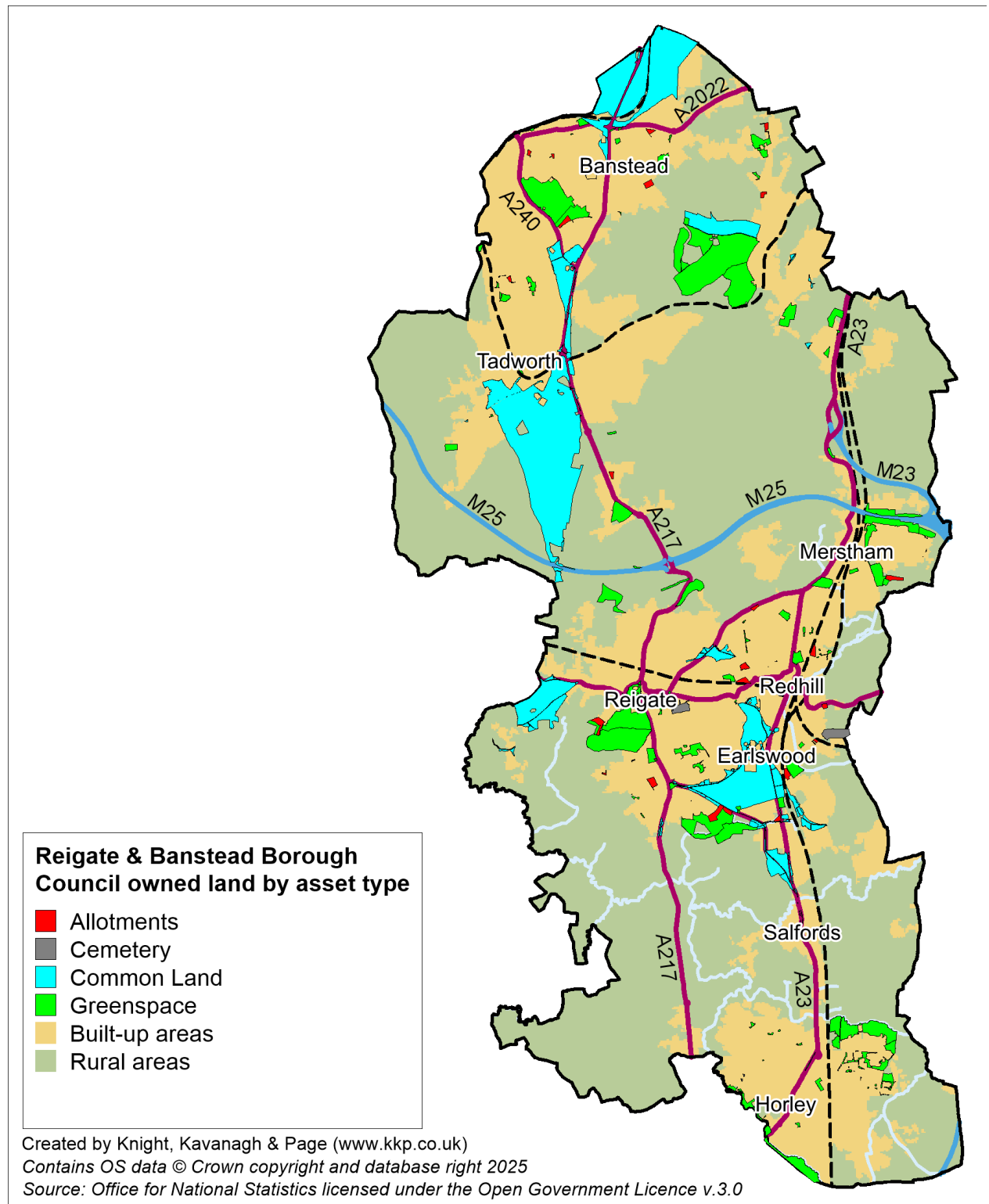
### **Housing Growth**

- While much of that growth may be in older age groups, planning policies often require new play areas within new housing developments.
- It is important that we continue to seek developer contributions (Section 106 and CIL) and other funding sources to fund such provision, thus ameliorating the financial pressures being faced.

### **Greenspaces in Reigate & Banstead**

Reigate & Banstead sits either side of the M25 motorway in Surrey. The four main population centres are Reigate, Horley, Redhill and Banstead Village. Parts of the borough are located within the Surrey Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)).

Map of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council owned greenspaces



# Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

## Draft Greenspaces Strategy

As a council, we own approximately 3,200 acres (1,300 hectares) of rich and diverse greenspace comprising a variety of countryside, including large areas of open space such as Reigate Heath, and the Redhill, Earlswood, and Banstead Commons; along with some very rare and important habitats.

We work with many partners across the borough to support the management of our land. Whilst the principles of this strategy apply across all the greenspace land that we own, the implementation plans, and their relative priority, sit with the organisation which manages the land.

As a result of the Metropolitan Commons (Banstead) Supplemental Act of 1893, the Banstead Commons are managed by the Banstead Commons Conservators (BCC). The BCC exists to “protect and enhance Banstead Commons, ensuring the continuation of free and legal access for all”. The Act conferred upon the Conservators a statutory duty to ensure safe and free access for the public to the commons and to protect the commons from damage and trespass.

The BCC manages four separate areas of Council owned land, covering 1350 acres (550 hectares): Banstead Heath, Banstead Downs, Park Downs and Burgh Heath – all in the north of the borough.

Large parts of our greenspaces hold national and local designations<sup>1</sup>. Many hold more than one designation, recognising the unique role and importance of such land. Some of the most recognised designations found across our greenspaces include:

- ◀ Sites of Special Scientific Interest<sup>2</sup> (SSSI)
- ◀ Ancient woodland<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Land can have more than one designation

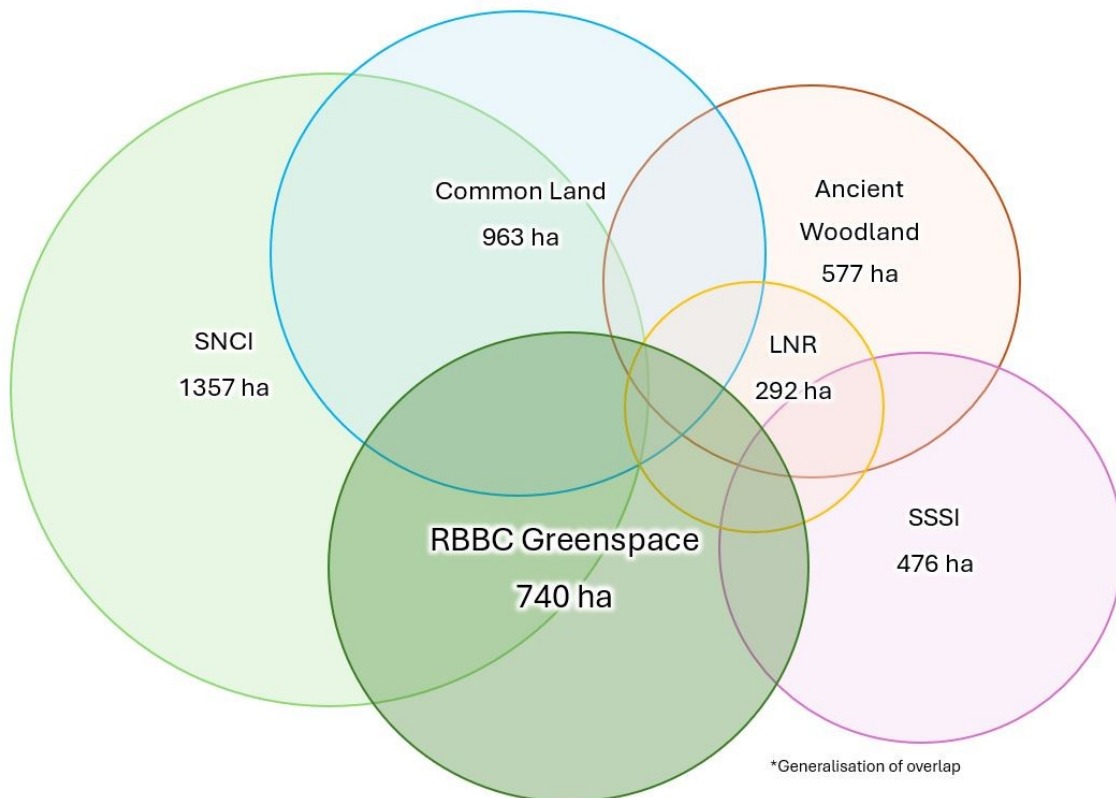
<sup>2</sup> A national formal conservation designation for an area of particular interest to science due to rare fauna or flora species and/or geological or physiological features

<sup>3</sup> Area of woodland that has persisted since 1600 in England

# Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

## Draft Greenspaces Strategy

- ◀ Local Nature Reserve<sup>4</sup> (LNR)
- ◀ Site of Nature Conservation Interest<sup>5</sup> (SNCI)



The diagram identifies the total areas of various key land designations within the borough, part of which are owned and managed by alternative landowners. Their relationship between the land designations is indicated by the overlapping portions which show where land has multiple designations. The "RBBC Greenspaces" circle represents the 740 hectares of the borough that is managed and maintained by the Council's Greenspaces team – this circle overlaps all the key designations to some degree. It also illustrates how a proportion of the RBBC-managed greenspace is not subject to any of these designations.







<sup>4</sup> Places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally

<sup>5</sup> Sites identified at a local level for their conservation value (non-statutory)

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

The following infographics highlight some of the facilities which we provide for residents:

		
<b>55 Children's play areas</b>	<b>8 Outdoor Gyms &amp; 14 Multi-Use Games Area</b>	<b>6 Cemeteries and 1 garden of remembrance</b>
		
<b>14 Tennis courts (across 7 sites)</b>	<b>24 Allotments sites / 1,210 plots</b>	<b>2 Skate Parks &amp; 2 BMX pump tracks</b>

### Part 2: Vision and themes

#### Vision:

**Our vision is for our greenspaces to enable local communities and the natural environment to thrive.**

Our fabulous greenspaces, which include parks, play areas, commons, cemeteries, and allotments, are one of the reasons why people love Reigate & Banstead. We are proud of this. Not only do we have a stewardship role to protect what is great about the borough, we also have opportunities to make Reigate & Banstead's greenspaces even better.

#### Themes:

To achieve our vision, we will focus on supporting the health and wellbeing of our communities, balancing recreational needs and local aspirations while enhancing biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

The key themes are:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Nature and Biodiversity
3. Thriving Communities

These themes are supported by the following priorities:

Health and Wellbeing	Nature and Biodiversity	Thriving Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage more active lifestyles within our greenspaces.</li><li>• Provide and develop appropriate facilities and opportunities for activities.</li><li>• Facilitate the role of parks and open spaces in hosting diverse and sustainable community events and fostering cultural engagement, enhancing the borough's social fabric.</li><li>• Continue to support allotment holders to effectively and sustainably manage their allocated plot.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen measures to protect and enhance local biodiversity, contributing to the broader ecological network.</li><li>• Enhance adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change.</li><li>• Implement and support delivery of key objectives within existing and emerging strategies, and incorporate policies to inform best practice.</li><li>• Increase the use of educational tools to inform and engage.</li><li>• Effectively and safely manage our tree stock.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enable access to our greenspaces, balancing recreational and biodiversity considerations.</li><li>• Actively participate with communities and partners to enhance local spaces.</li><li>• Work collaboratively to support community safety in our greenspaces to encourage appropriate behaviours that support everyone's enjoyment.</li><li>• Create calm and peaceful memorial spaces.</li></ul>

# **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

## **Draft Greenspaces Strategy**

### **Overarching principles:**

To achieve this, we will:

- Employ efficient, effective, adaptable, and high-quality management practices and processes.
- Ensure finite resources are appropriately prioritised and pursue external funding and income generating opportunities which enhance impact.
- Review and adapt maintenance regimes to support nature rich places.
- Continue to incorporate environmental sustainability practices that help us achieve our net zero targets; benefit biodiversity; and strengthen local climate adaptation and resilience.
- Carefully balance recreational and biodiversity priorities across our greenspaces.

Each of the actions detailed below are a proposal of how the Greenspaces team will deliver the priorities for each theme. We are keen to receive comments on these actions to help us refine and finalise these actions.

## Part 3: Strategic priorities and actions

### Theme 1: Health and Wellbeing



Many of the priorities and actions under this theme reflect Objective 1.2.2 (Leisure, sports and cultural services that support wellbeing) and Objective 1.2.3 (Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits) of our Corporate Plan. These highlight the need to provide facilities and activities that meet the needs and match the interests of residents. They also recognise the significant benefit greenspaces provide to the health and wellbeing of residents.

The proportion of people with excess weight/obesity levels and/or who are struggling with their mental wellbeing is a major health concern. Furthermore, the importance of site quality/features, connectivity, and the role of greenspaces in providing healthy lifestyles is highlighted throughout the community engagement. For example, in the community survey, exercise is cited as the most common reason for someone to visit a greenspace.

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
1.1 Encouraging more active lifestyles within our greenspaces.	<p>1.1.1 Work with key partners, private operators, and communities to nurture a joined-up events/activities programme at suitable sites, such as a social prescribing programme which utilises greenspaces and the opportunities they provide.</p> <p>1.1.2 Promote greenspaces and playgrounds as places to be active.</p> <p>1.1.3 Support 'activity' focused events to encourage active lifestyles.</p> <p>1.1.4 Encourage more active lifestyles via provision of appropriate features (e.g. waymarking, bike storage, etc) and promote active travel networks.</p>
1.2 Provide and develop appropriate facilities and opportunities for activities.	<p>1.2.1 Ensure that recreation sites are well presented and accessible, providing an environment to encourage physical activity.</p> <p>1.2.2 Utilise existing evidence base studies, including the Borough's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facilities Study and Open Space Study to inform deficiencies and future needs.</p> <p>1.2.3 Develop and/or enhance sites identified for informal or formal sports, or recreational needs of different users.</p>

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
1.3 Continue to support allotment holders to effectively and sustainably manage their allocated plot.	<p>1.3.1 Work with allotment stewards to regularly review demand for allotments and to better understand levels of plot availability.</p> <p>1.3.2 Improve the application and waiting list system.</p> <p>1.3.3 Encourage allotment holders to adopt sustainable practices such as rainwater harvesting and peat free compost use.</p> <p>1.3.4 Undertake regular inspections of allotments to ensure plot holders are maintaining their plots in line with agreements.</p> <p>1.3.5 Introduce regular training and information sessions for allotment site stewards</p>

#### Case study

A case study to provide an example of the work already being completed within this theme is the improvements made to the football pitches at Whitebushes and Pettridge Common. The improvements brought the pitches to a playable condition, allowing for the club based there to continuing to host matches. Full details are found in appendix 4.

### Theme 2: Nature and Biodiversity

#### Corporate plan link

1.2.3: Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits

#### ***Being environmentally sustainable***

Preserving local natural environments and enhancing biodiversity,  
Strengthening climate adaptation and resilience

**Nature &  
Biodiversity**



This theme supports the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including creating nature rich habitats.

The significant benefits that greenspaces provide in supporting nature/biodiversity, absorbing carbon and helping to mitigate the impact of a changing climate are at the core of Objective 1.2.3 (Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits) of our Corporate Plan. This also highlights that offering a range of different types of greenspaces which support different activities and habitats can maximise the positive community impact of greenspaces.

It is also important to link and reflect the suite of associated strategies which relate to these topics. For example, ecological enhancement, environmental impact and pollution prevention are key priorities as part of our Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Emerging documents and requirements such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will also

## **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

### **Draft Greenspaces Strategy**

---

influence and shape our greenspaces moving forwards. As part of the community engagement sessions and survey, enhancing and placing more emphasis on biodiversity were highlighted as key themes.

Our existing approach to managing our greenspaces identifies locations where biodiversity and ecological considerations are at the forefront and heavy public access is discouraged (such as ancient woodland). Our management practices limit the use of pesticides to be only when it is absolutely necessary, when other methods would not be suitable or successful.

#### **Quick link to access Environmental Sustainability Strategy:**

<https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/Environmental-Sustainability-Strategy-2024>

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
2.1 Strengthen measures to protect and enhance local biodiversity, develop the size of wildlife populations, and contribute to the broader ecological network.	<p>2.1.1 Work with stakeholders to access, promote and encourage opportunities to enhance biodiversity and nature.</p> <p>2.1.2 Ensure individual management plans reflecting the need to conserve and enhance areas of high ecological value are available for designated sites.</p> <p>2.1.3 Explore options, where appropriate, for alternative grass cutting schemes/wilding, promotion of pollinators, planting of climate resilient species and other wildlife measures such as bat boxes, bug hotels and swift boxes.</p> <p>2.1.4 Incorporate sustainable practices in maintenance regimes such as the avoidance of using peat; how we use pesticides, minimise the environmental impact whilst maintaining waterways and hedgerows, and the electrification of tools and vehicles in line with net zero targets</p> <p>2.1.5 Actively avoid causing a negative impact on the wider environment i.e. pollution and habitat loss resulting from activities.</p> <p>2.1.6 Establish a biodiversity baseline and targets (alongside key partners) to inform benchmarking and ensure we maximise biodiversity benefits.</p>

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
2.2 Enhance adaptation and resilience of our greenspaces to the impacts of a changing climate.	<p>2.2.1 Regularly review operations in light of climate changes risks and impacts.</p> <p>2.2.2 Support our Environmental Sustainability Strategy by achieving the stated net-zero objectives, summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting nature-based carbon offsetting measures on our land.</li><li>• Reviewing measures to incorporate opportunities for tree planting, water retention, climate resilient species, shading.</li></ul>
2.3 Implement and support delivery of key objectives within existing and emerging strategies and incorporate policies to inform best practice.	<p>2.3.1 Work with partners to help address and deliver the relevant duties of the Council, currently including Green Infrastructure Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, and Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p> <p>2.3.2 Support the delivery of 'Surrey Adapt: The Surrey Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy'.</p>
2.4 Increase the use of educational tools to inform and engage.	<p>2.4.1 Identify opportunities to provide further educational material and insight.</p> <p>2.4.2 Support the Council's school holiday programme activities.</p>

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
2.5 Effectively and safely manage the tree stock.	<p>2.5.1 Develop a Tree Strategy.</p> <p>2.5.2 Review tree stock to ensure we understand existing provision and identify planting opportunities.</p> <p>2.5.3 Set a target for planting additional trees. This should support carbon capture and enhance local biodiversity (whilst being mindful of 'right tree, right place' principles).</p>

#### Case study

A case study to demonstrate the process already made under this theme is the tree planting initiatives. In response to issues such as ash die back, climate change, and habitat loss, a diverse mix of native trees were planted across the borough, utilising support from Surrey County Council in supplying the trees and volunteers to plant the trees. Full details are found in appendix 4.

### Theme 3: Thriving Communities

#### Corporate plan link

- 1.1.2: Safe communities and tackling antisocial behaviour
- 1.2.1: Strong, inclusive communities
- 1.2.2: Leisure, sports and cultural services that support wellbeing
- 1.2.3: Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits
- 3.4.2: The opportunity to shape and influence our services

#### Thriving Communities



This theme reflects the importance of adopting a whole systems approach, working across council departments and with stakeholders to deliver effective greenspaces.

Community engagement and communication are two of the common themes highlighted through the engagement exercises as part of this strategy. Participants emphasised the desire for opportunities to get more involved with greenspaces; whether through volunteering or understanding more the role/work of the Council. Linked to this are topics such as enforcement and the introduction of different grass management practices for example.

The priorities and actions also link to many of our Corporate Plan objectives relating to safety and anti-social behaviour (Objective 1.1.2), strong and inclusive communities (Objective 1.2.1), supporting wellbeing (Objective 1.2.2) and the opportunity to shape and influence our services (Objective 3.4.2). This also relates to Objective 1.2.3 (Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits) which recognises that maximising the positive impact of greenspaces can be achieved through offering a range of different types of provision which supports different activities. Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy also identifies community engagement as a key element.

Priorities	Actions
3.1 Enable access to our greenspaces, balancing recreational and biodiversity considerations.	<p>3.1.1 Deliver a maintenance programme to ensure high standards of maintenance across all greenspaces (including waterways)</p> <p>3.1.2 Benchmark existing processes against recognised industry and national best practices to inform improvement plans (e.g., explore utilising the Green Flag Award and other award schemes).</p> <p>3.1.3 Communicate and raise awareness about reasons for different practices adopted in relation to maintenance regimes (e.g. grass cutting, wild flowering etc.) and the benefits derived from this.</p> <p>3.1.4 Promote sites including their accessibility and inclusivity features through appropriate websites, social media, signage, and interpretation boards.</p> <p>3.1.5 Regularly review parking at sites, especially in respect of supporting and encouraging sustainable travel.</p>

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
3.2 Actively participate with communities and partners to enhance local spaces.	<p>3.2.1 Support and encourage existing and new community participation to design and maintain local greenspaces.</p> <p>3.2.2 Signpost to outdoor volunteering opportunities</p> <p>3.2.3 Work with stakeholder organisations to support bids for investment in greenspace related activities and projects.</p> <p>3.2.4 Promote successes in the shared delivery, management and enhancement of the borough's greenspaces.</p>
3.3 Work collaboratively to support community safety in our greenspaces to encourage appropriate behaviours that support everyone's enjoyment.	<p>3.3.1 Regularly review measures, alongside our partners, to address community concerns such as litter bin and bench provisions, fly tipping, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour across our greenspaces.</p> <p>3.3.2 Promote existing methods of reporting antisocial behaviour and fly tipping, to ensure ease of use and community confidence.</p>

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Priorities	Actions
3.4 Create calm and peaceful memorial spaces.	<p>3.4.1 Provide dedicated areas to promote wellness and time for reflection.</p> <p>3.4.2 Introduce management plans for cemeteries and The Garden of Remembrance which promote sensitivity and calmness.</p> <p>3.4.3 Explore potential sites to increase capacity.</p>
3.5 Facilitate the role of parks and open spaces in hosting diverse and sustainable community events and fostering cultural engagement, enhancing the Borough's social fabric.	<p>3.5.1 Work with community groups to understand the breadth of events/activities that could be delivered to enrich the community social fabric.</p> <p>3.5.2 Balance opportunities for commercial activities, whilst recognising the potential impact on other users.</p> <p>3.5.3 Promote events through appropriate websites, social media, and signage.</p> <p>3.5.4 Ensure third party events on Council owned land embrace environmentally sustainable principles.</p>

#### Case Study

A case study to demonstrate this theme is the redevelopment of Merstham Recreation ground to increase the community and biodiversity value. Full details are found in appendix 4.

### Part 4: Monitoring and review

Delivering the vision for our greenspaces is a long-term objective. For example, the collective improvement of our sites for climate change or environmental improvement, requires a range of coordinated approaches. Although action is required immediately, the realisation of many outcomes will remain a much longer-term objective.

Our staff and volunteers are already thinking about how our services can be delivered in the future. While there are significant challenges, we remain ambitious about achieving our vision and exploring opportunities to support health and wellbeing, balancing different needs and enhancing nature and biodiversity across our greenspaces.

### Implementation and Monitoring

Turning aspiration into reality is a normal part of the process of strategy review and development. This is why regular reviews are important. Although this strategy is our 10-year plan, we will review it annually to ensure that it is still relevant, that our priorities haven't changed and that the impact we anticipated is being achieved.

To ensure we are effectively implementing the strategy, and in line with our usual reporting processes, we will:

- Set and monitor service level performance indicators
- Discuss and review implementation as part of our monthly Portfolio Holder meetings
- Provide an annual presentation (as part of the Greenspaces Team update) of the performance to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Alongside this, we will ensure that any existing management plans are included in this review process.

### Appendix one: Policy review

This appendix provides an overview of national and local policies which are relevant to, and have informed, our Greenspaces Strategy.

#### National Context

##### National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the planning policies for England. It details how these are expected to be applied to the planning system and provides a framework to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It establishes that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

##### A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)

This sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats.

Chapter 3 focuses on connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing. This outlines a vision to 'green our towns and cities by creating green infrastructure (GI) and planting one million urban trees'.

The document supports the promotion of access to the natural environment and extension of wildlife corridors into towns and cities using GI networks, improved

provision of GI in new developments, upgrading existing GI and retrofitting new GI into areas of poor provision.

As part of a commitment to refresh the plan every five years, the Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) reinforces the intent of the 2018 plan. It uses the goals originally set out to detail progress to date and the work needed to continue delivering them.

### **Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)**

Launched by Natural England, the Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF) provides a structure to analyse where greenspace in urban environments is needed most. It aims to support equitable access to greenspace across the country, with an overarching target of everyone being able to reach good quality greenspace in their local area.

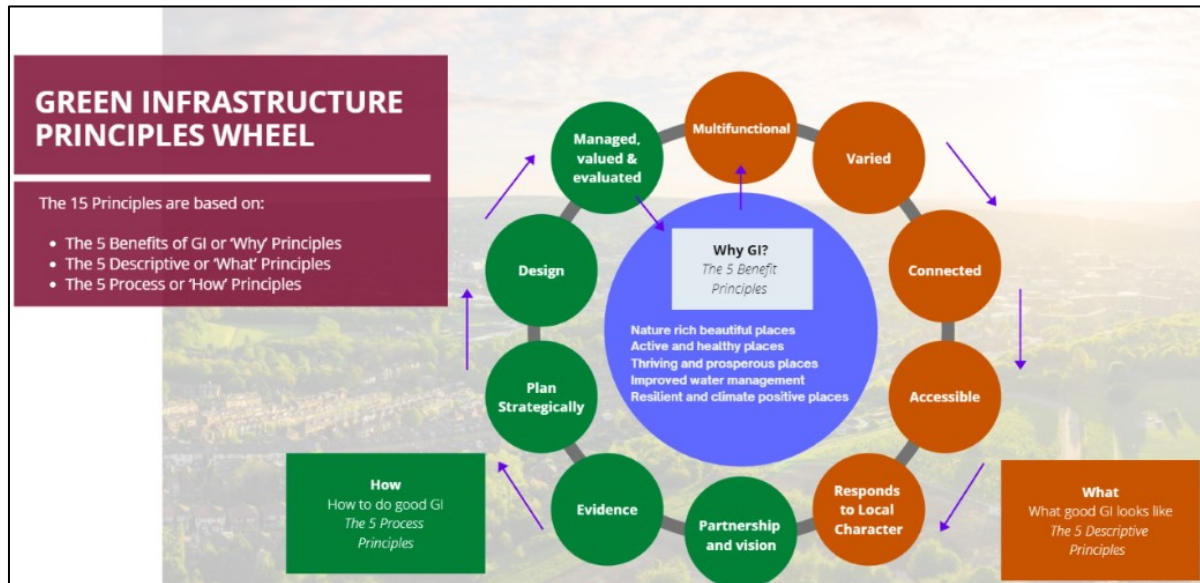
The GIF comprises principles, standards, mapping tools, planning and design guides.

A wide range and extensive series of national and local policies frame the work and delivery of greenspaces. Some of the most relevant are listed in the appendices.

# Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

## Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Figure 1: Green infrastructure principles



## Local context

### Corporate Plan 2030

Our corporate plan sets out our vision and priorities for the council from 2025 and 2030 and explains how we will focus our resources and deliver services to those living, working and spending time in the borough.

### Quick link to access the Corporate Plan 2030:

<https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/RBBC2030>

### Current Local Plan (2012-2027)

For Reigate & Banstead, the local plan (development plan) comprises the following:

- ◀ Core strategy (adopted 2014 and reviewed 2019).
- ◀ Development management plan (adopted 2019).
- ◀ Policies map.

It establishes the vision and objectives for the Council until 2027 and key delivery policies to achieve this. The vision and objectives for the Council are:

**Vision:** Reigate & Banstead will be one of the most desirable and attractive areas in the region.

To achieve this, the **objectives** are that:

- ◀ People who live in, work in and visit the borough enjoy the benefits of a prosperous economy.
- ◀ Neighbourhoods are renewed, improved and supported by effective services, infrastructure and transport options.
- ◀ The wellbeing of communities is supported by accessible health, leisure, education and information services.
- ◀ People take personal responsibility, and enjoy active, healthy and diverse lifestyles.
- ◀ The environment, and greenspace, is maintained and enhanced for the future.

To ensure the Authority's greenspace and the environment is well maintained and enhanced, the key policies are to:

- ◀ Create an easily accessible greenspace network which links existing and planned communities, while respecting the ecological and cultural heritage of the Borough.
- ◀ Increase opportunity to pursue a healthy lifestyle, by maintaining and enhancing recreation facilities which encourage walking and cycling.
- ◀ Maintain and enhance the borough's valued landscapes, historic, built and natural environment including habitats and species and heritage assets.
- ◀ Retain and enhance the identified character and separate identities of the borough's towns and other urban areas.

- ◀ Safeguard and promote biodiversity and wildlife corridors at a local level, as well as on designated sites, through responsible and positive design and management.
- ◀ Ensure that the design of new development makes best use of the site, integrates effectively with its setting, promotes local distinctiveness, maximises accessibility and minimises the opportunities for crime.
- ◀ Require that developments conserve natural resources, minimise greenhouse gas emissions and help to reduce waste, and are adaptable to climate change (including the risk from flooding)

### Healthy Surrey: Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019-2030)

Surrey's Health and Wellbeing Board latest strategy, sets out its commitment to the County being a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community and no one is left behind.

- ◀ Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident.
- ◀ Everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life.
- ◀ Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their well-being.
- ◀ Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place.
- ◀ Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life.

## Appendix two: Consultation findings

Consultation has been a valuable source of opinion and intelligence on greenspaces in the borough. Key themes raised through the engagement are set out below.

### Focus groups and in-person meetings

The aim of the community stakeholder engagement was to interrogate and better understand the key thoughts, strengths and challenges faced by those with an active interest in greenspaces in Reigate and Banstead. As part of the stakeholder engagement 57 representatives were met with from a variety of organisations encompassing both paid staff and volunteers.

There was strong support for the Greenspace Strategy reflecting the pivotal role and contribution provision it plays in enhancing the quality of life for residents, environmental sustainability, and supporting wider Council objectives. Responses confirmed the passionate interest in and regard for the natural environment that many people and agencies have. A wide range of key themes was evident from the responses, with the need for co-operative engagement and working across stakeholders a notable priority.

A summary of the key headlines from the community engagement and in-person meetings are as follows:

- ◀ *Provision* - there is widespread recognition of, and appreciation for, the level of (and access to) greenspace provision across the borough. Although there is good provision, certain groups felt that the wider benefit of greenspaces are not being fully exploited, especially to support mental and social health.
- ◀ *Staffing* - the ranger service in parks is considered to be under-resourced and could be enhanced to support a range of objectives, including education and maintenance.

- ◀ *Enhancing biodiversity* - certain groups feel that there is too much emphasis on sport/ leisure across all greenspaces and that more limited priority is attached to environmental development. The view of these respondents is that more diversification, pollinators, habitat enhancements are required and that these should be linked to maintenance regimes such as grass cutting. In this category, it was also felt that there is greater need to promote biodiversity net gain across the Authority through schemes and initiatives.
- ◀ *Communication* – the consensus was that there is a need to develop better communication channels between RBBC and external user groups/the general public in respect of opportunities to get involved with greenspaces (e.g., volunteering) and with regard to the role and responsibilities that RBBC departments/external organisations (e.g. the County Council) have for green spaces.
- ◀ *Community engagement* – there is an expressed interest in creating more opportunities for voluntary groups to get involved in the development of greenspaces as well providing better access to funding for such groups.
- ◀ *Income generation* – all parties would like to see an increase in the number and scale of (carefully *implemented*) opportunities for commercial groups and individuals to use parks, resulting in increased income generation (i.e. licensing of commercial dog walkers, gym sessions and fun fayres).
- ◀ *Enforcement* – there is a universal desire to see better enforcement in respect of dog fouling/misuse, antisocial behaviour and fly tipping.

### Community survey

The questionnaire used for this consisted of a series of multiple choice and open-ended questions designed to secure respondents views on topics including types of provision visited, frequency and quality etc. A total of 590 responses was received. Key facts and findings are as follows. A series of graphs and charts detailing the main findings are also presented:

- ◀ The average age of *respondents* was between 55-74.
- ◀ More than 65% of respondents consider the borough's parks and green spaces to be good or very good. Fewer than 5% thought all sites were very poor.
- ◀ The main reasons given for people visiting sites were to exercise (331 respondents) followed by a need to peace and quiet (256 respondents).
- ◀ Priory Park and Earlswood Common are the most popular sites to visit, however, Merstham Recreational Ground was the site most visited. (Nearly 50% of respondents reported visiting this site at least once per week).
- ◀ The second most popular site (in terms of visit frequency) is Priory Park; 45% of respondents visit this site on a weekly basis.
- ◀ In terms of rating the features of all sites, toilets were the most commonly cited issue. More than 40% of respondents stated that lavatories were either poor or very poor.
- ◀ Elements about which people were impressed with (across all sites) include signage and access; 70% of people rated this aspect of provision as either good or very good.
- ◀ The main factor considered likely to encourage more people to visit (all sites) was better facilities (toilet, cafes, etc...) followed by reduction in the level of dog fouling.

Respondents were also asked if there was anything else people would like to add with regard to local greenspaces. Key themes were:

- ◀ *Facilities* – improving key facilities such as toilets, lighting and cafes at all key sites. One request was made for improved open water swimming opportunities.
- ◀ *Connectivity* - improved connectivity *for* cyclists/walkers between key sites via development of nature corridors/greenways.

- ◀ *Improved information* – in respect of all sites; to include better information boards at sites, promoting the benefits (and *things* to do) at those sites and regular updates about grass cutting and other site maintenance regimes.
- ◀ *Improved consultation/community engagement* - keeping local residents informed about/involved in local greenspace provision, and offering opportunities to get involved in improving local sites through, for example, ‘friends of’ group involvement and other volunteering roles.
- ◀ *More emphasis on (developing and enhancing) biodiversity* – for example a reduction in grass cutting and more emphasis on re-wilding/nature areas across the borough. This encompasses the desire to plant more trees.
- ◀ *Better play provision* – ensuring that play areas accommodate boys and girls, making better provision for older teenage girls and children/young people with disabilities. It was also noted that regular *maintenance* of play equipment is required to ensure that play areas are of a universally high standard. Colesmead Play Area and Woodmansterne Recreational Ground were two sites specifically cited as being in need of an upgrade.
- ◀ *Improved equipment* – including gym equipment at several sites. Respondents indicated that the outdoor exercise equipment at Memorial Park is very poor and does not seem to have been maintained.
- ◀ *Improved communication about allotments* – this has a particular focus on waiting lists and letting people know when a vacant allotment comes available.

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Figure A2.1: Respondents age range

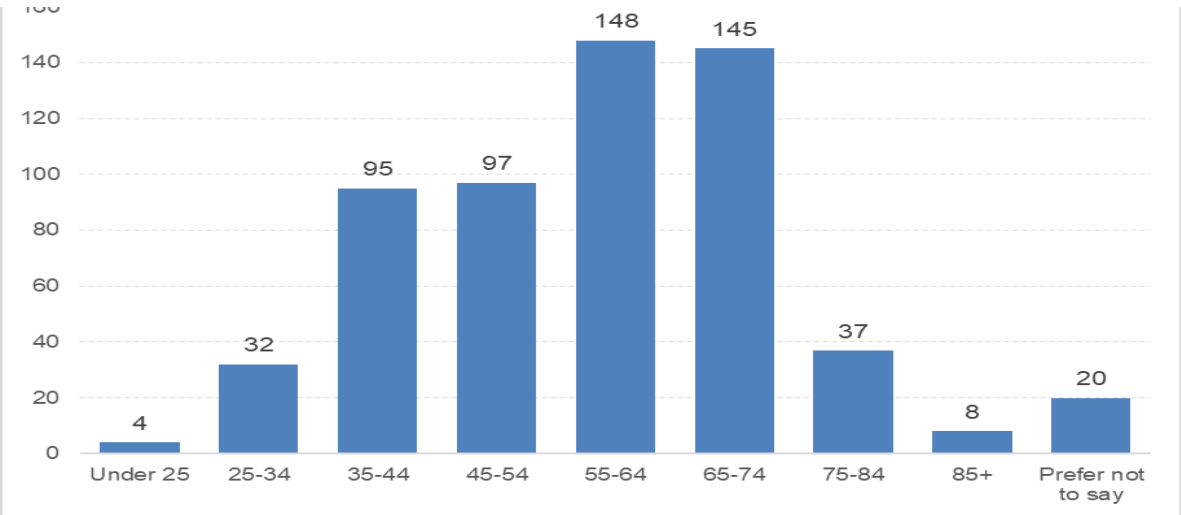
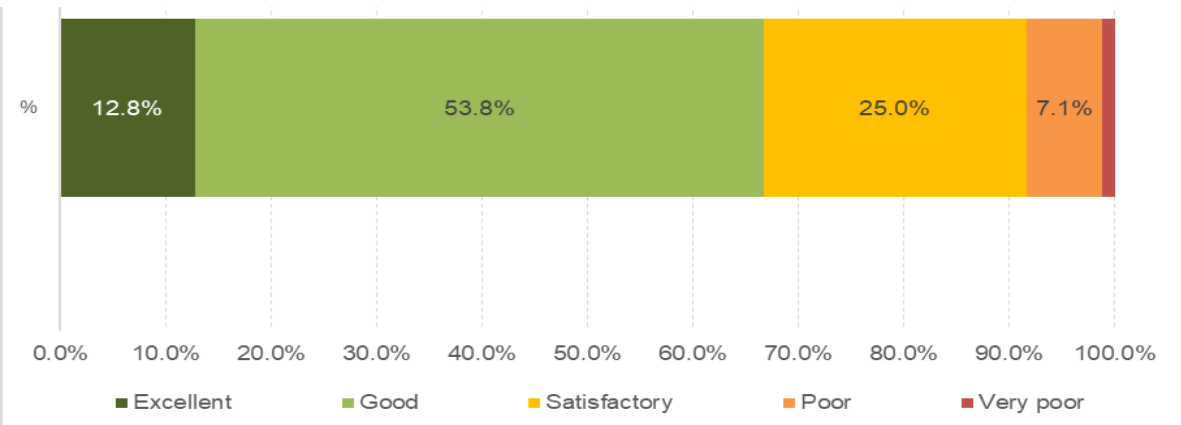


Figure A2.2: Rating of the quality of parks and green spaces



Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Draft Greenspaces Strategy

Figure A2.3: Popular (top 10) greenspace sites visited

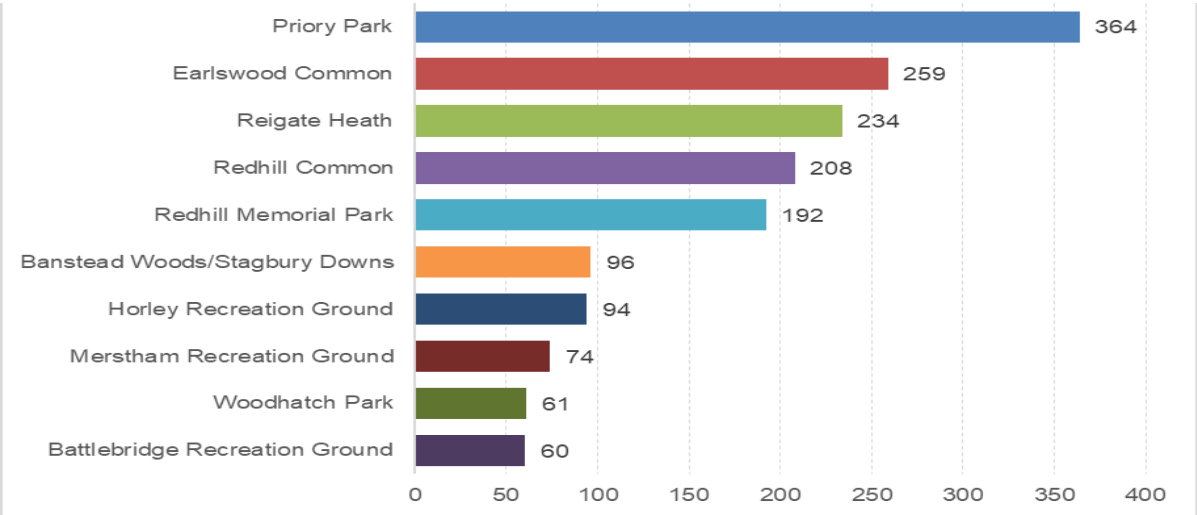
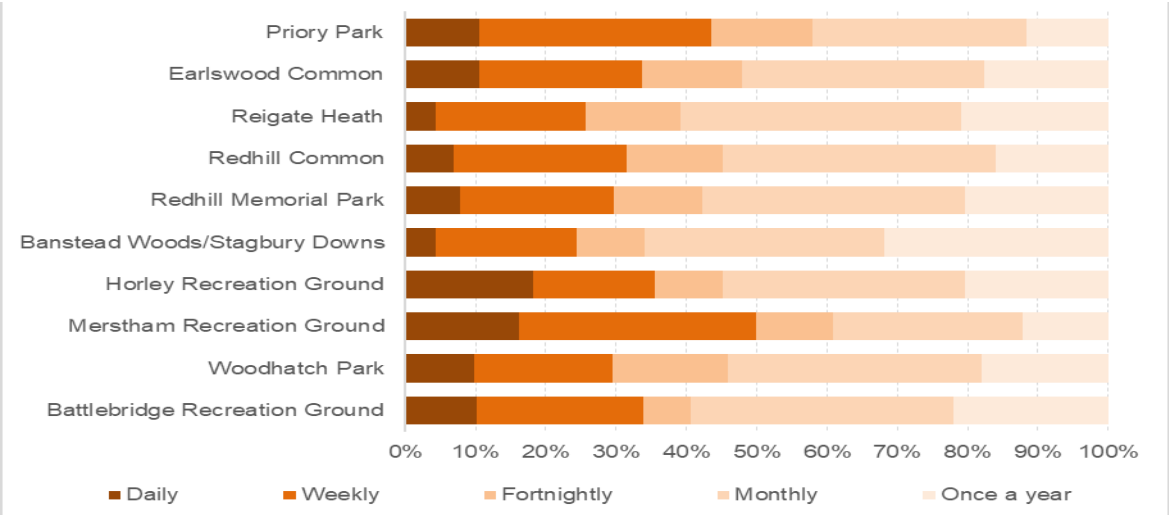
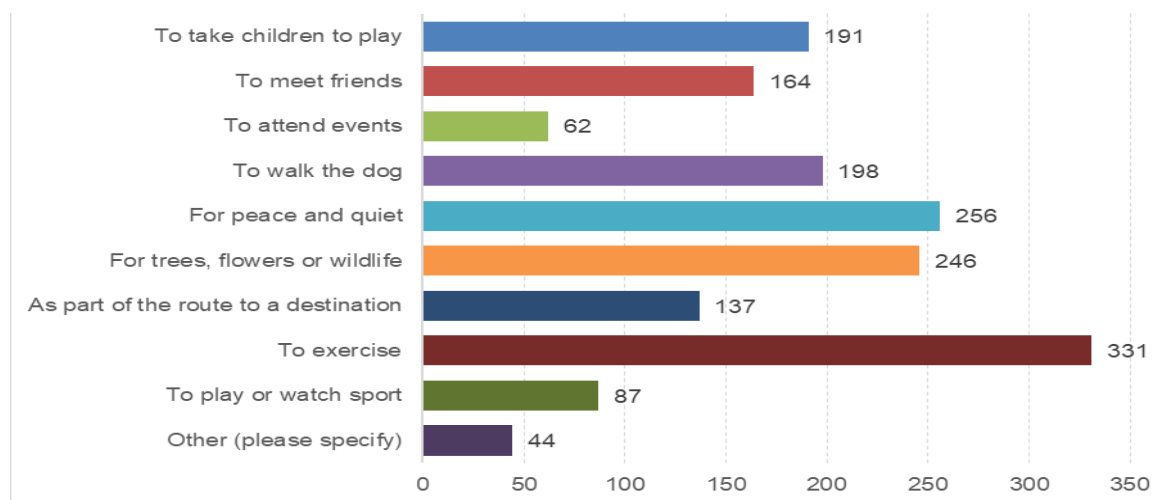


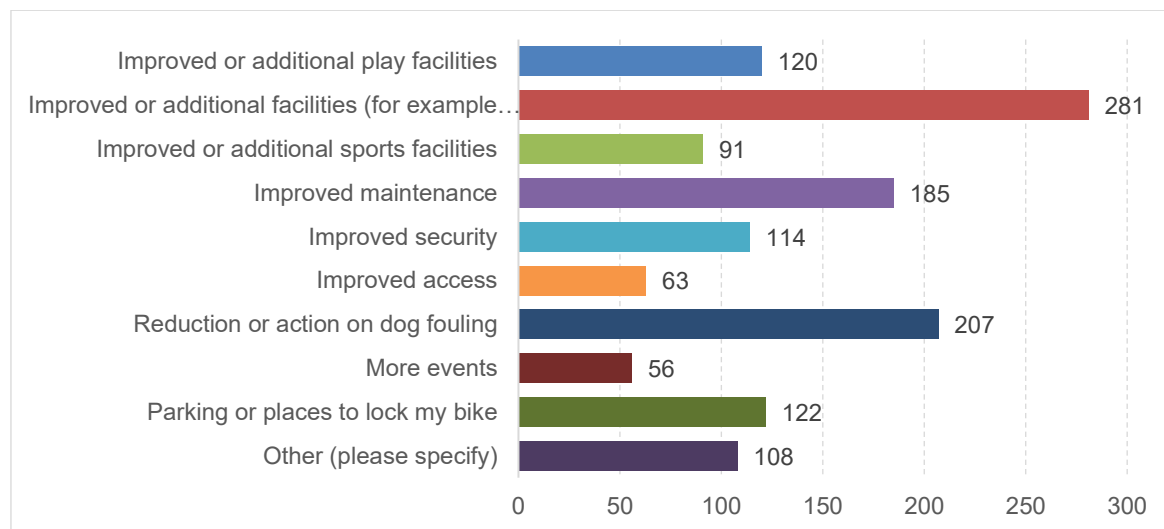
Figure A2.4: How often people visit key greenspace sites



**Figure A2.5: The main key reasons for repeated visits to greenspace sites**



**Figure A2.6: What would enhance enjoyment of greenspaces in the borough?**



## **Appendix three: List of consultees**

Active Surrey  
Banstead Common Conservators  
Earlswood & Redhill Common Steering Group  
Friends of Merstham Parks & Greens  
Growing Health Together  
Highlands Allotment Steward  
Holly Lane Allotment Steward  
Ilford Road Park Community Group  
Jubilee Wood Committee  
Lakers Rise Allotment Steward  
Lambert Road Allotment Steward  
Maple Road Allotment Steward  
Merland rise Allotment Steward  
Merland rise Allotment Steward  
Merstham Allotment Steward  
Merstham Allotment Steward  
Merstham Cricket Club  
New Pond Farm Allotment Steward  
Nork Park Volunteers:  
Park Lane Allotment Steward  
Park Lane East Allotment Steward  
Partridge Mead Allotment Steward  
Princes Road Allotment Steward  
Raven Housing Trust  
RBBC - Countryside Officer  
RBBC - Data & Insight Manager  
RBBC - Greenspaces Operations Manager  
RBBC - Head of Corporate Policy  
RBBC - Head of Service (Greenspaces)

## **Reigate & Banstead Borough Council**

### **Draft Greenspaces Strategy**

---

RBBC - Interim Greenspaces Business Manager

RBBC - Play & Projects Officer

RBBC - Senior Manager for Greenspaces

RBBC - Sustainability Officer

RBBC - Sustainability Project Officer

RBBC - Tree Officer

Reigate Area Conservation Volunteers

Reigate Area Volunteers:

Reigate Area Volunteers:

Reigate Heath Golf Club

Reigate Heath RA

Reigate Heath Steering Group

Reigate Horse Riders

Reigate Society/ Friends of Reigate Heath

Reigate Steering Group

Riding School Allotment Steward

Smithy Lane Allotment Steward

St Johns School

Surrey Police

Tattenham Way Allotment Steward

The Paddock Allotment Steward

The Park Allotment Steward

Wiggie Lane Allotment Steward

Woodchip Conservation Volunteers

Woodhatch greenspaces preservation volunteers

## **Appendix four: Case studies**

### **Case Study: Addressing Lack of Football Pitches for a Local needs.**

#### **Before**



#### **After**



### Issue

A local football club was struggling to facilitate games for one of their teams due to a shortage of available Reigate & Banstead Council run football pitches. The pitches that were available required substantial travel, making it inconvenient for the team and its supporters. The club identified two areas of nearby open common land, both siting informal pitches that did not meet Football Association (FA) size guidelines, both pitches were mainly used for recreational purposes. The land that was identified was Whitebushes and Pettridge Common. However, both pieces of land presented several challenges:

- The pitches were in wet areas, becoming unusable in the winter.
- The land was designated as common land, requiring Section 38 consent for any drainage works, which can take a long time to secure.
- Parking in the vicinity was limited and identified as a potential problem.

### Solution

The proposed short-term solution was to assess the existing informal pitches and identify the essential upgrades to bring them into a playable condition that met the minimum FA guidelines, on a trial basis, as a means of assessing impact and allowing further consideration of potential longer-term solutions.

### Approach

#### Assessment and planning:

- The pitch was measured to ensure it could be adjusted to fall within the minimal requirements for FA guidelines.
- An initial survey of the pitch identified existing issues such as holes, divots, and worn goalmouths.

#### Pitch preparation:

- Holes and divots were filled to create a more even playing surface.
- Verti-draining and slitting were undertaken to improve the drainage as part of regular maintenance, reducing the need for extensive and costly drainage works at this time.

- The goalmouths were repaired to ensure safe use.
- New goals and nets were purchased to upgrade the pitch while maintaining its suitability for informal use.
- The pitch was marked out to meet FA standards.

#### **Community and Club agreement:**

- An agreement will be made with the club to ensure that informal nets would be reinstalled after formal use to maintain the pitch's availability for recreational users.
- The pitch was added to the Councils' booking system, allowing the team to schedule games formally.

#### **Conclusion:**

The pitch was handed over for the team's use, with ongoing monitoring to assess the impact on parking and the effectiveness of the drainage improvements through maintenance. By taking this approach, we were able to provide a short-term solution to the club's immediate need while minimising costs and maintaining community access to the land.

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

### Draft Greenspaces Strategy

---

**Case Study: Actively participate with communities and partners to enhance local spaces, through tree planting initiatives.**



### Issue

Ash Die Back, climate change, the steady ecological decline of species and habitat loss requires action locally, nationally and globally. Protection and improvement of our existing green assets can play a key role in this. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring a diverse mix of native planting to provide greater resilience to the effects of climate change, ensure food source for insects and mammals, create shelter near urban areas, provide nesting material for birds, and ultimately contribute to the enjoyment of high-quality greenspaces for local communities to use for years to come.

Appropriate tree planting plays an important role in enhancing local spaces for local communities and local ecology. It is critical that tree planting plans are informed by land designations, for example to avoid planting trees in areas where grassland habitats are the priority, to avoid changing or impacting existing ecological habitats.

### Remedial action

Planting and establishing thousands of trees annually is not something most local authorities can resource.

Working in partnership with other authorities and local groups/communities is a great and efficient way to maximise tree planting within existing resource constraints. Surrey County Council offer partnerships to those authorities that have resource to not only research and provide locations but also have access to local communities to help plant these much-needed native trees. The trees being offered by Surrey CC are funded through the Forestry Commission Urban Tree Challenge. These are in the form of whips<sup>6</sup> and feathers<sup>7</sup>, which are small enough to allow hundreds to be planted on single sites to achieve the diverse mix needed.

Additionally, local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding also allows for tree planting to be applied for. This fund allows for the purchase of standard<sup>8</sup> trees, these are taller more instant impact trees that can be used in park settings for successional planting. This means as the mature established trees go into decline these standard trees will naturally replace the old trees allowing for continued park enjoyment and retained local character. Thirteen locations were assessed, chosen

---

<sup>6</sup> “Whips” are slender, unbranched bare root trees or hedging plants grown from seed in bulk in open fields, typically used in forestry, farm hedgerows and amenity schemes.

<sup>7</sup> A feathered tree is one with a single main stem, having side branches emerging right down, almost to the ground in some cases.

<sup>8</sup> Standard trees are grown with a clear stem, having branches higher up. These are useful in order to keep the view open and allow easy access alongside the tree.

and planted throughout the Borough during 2024/25 tree planting season, through these two different funding options.

### Approach

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's Greenspaces service applied for both funding streams, providing detailed planting maps and pre-planting site preparation plans. The applications were accepted, and 2550 trees were allocated. In partnership with Surrey County Council, RBBC Sustainability Team and RBBC Greenspaces, the community planting days were advertised to request the assistance of the local communities in this endeavour. This resulted in thirteen days of planting utilising dozens of local volunteers, including one school where local children in Merstham planted several hundred trees.

In addition, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council is supporting local communities to organise ongoing and regular watering of these newly planted trees to bolster the watering undertaken by SCC and RBBC, ensuring better survival rates especially in drier summer months. It is also arranging mulching around the newly planted trees, reducing the need for herbicide spraying to stop weed competition, this also improves soil moisture content. Again, much of the mulching has taken place with local community involvement.

### Conclusion:

The dozens of people who volunteered managed to plant the 2550 trees across the borough in only a couple of months. Friends were made, residents brought out coffee and tea to the volunteers and staff met many inspired local people of all age groups. This resulted in new relationships and contacts being made with new lines of communication between staff and residents.

Some lessons have been learnt as to broadening the advertisement of these planting days and utilising of local knowledge in future locations for planting. The planting days created a real sense of achievement, wellbeing and of ownership within the communities and all are excited to see the results of their hard work.

Whilst it will take a few years for these plants to grow, the communities and partnerships that are actively involved already have a legacy that future generations will also enjoy and benefit.

# Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

## Draft Greenspaces Strategy

---

### Case Study: Redevelopment of Merstham Recreation ground

#### Before



#### During Construction



#### Design illustration



#### Issue

Merstham recreation ground mainly consisted of large, grassed areas with very little community and biodiversity value which suffered from several significant issues, including: a long thin outdated play area needing replacement that did not offer much play value, a tennis court that did not meet the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) standards, and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) which was in poor condition. The recreation ground had a path network only on one side, limiting access and connectivity. The football pitches were poorly maintained and spread across the entire site, making it impossible for others to use the park during the football season. The changing rooms were not fit for purpose and were covered in graffiti. The recreation ground lacked biodiversity enhancement opportunities, with minimal tree coverage and the planting areas were non-existent. The water course to the rear of the park was overgrown and fenced off and required significant work. The entire site felt rundown, discouraging community use and contributing to a sense of neglect.

#### Solution

To address the issues, a project group was formed. The group developed a comprehensive plan to conduct a thorough assessment of the recreation ground's current state and to engage with the local community to understand their needs and desires for the space.

Engagement with residents, local groups, organisations and sports clubs was undertaken, through surveys and discussion groups, which really helped to understand what users liked and disliked about Merstham Rec and what they would like to see in the future. As the recreation ground is located in a community with a Community Development Worker, they were able to help other Reigate & Banstead Borough Council colleagues to engage effectively with local stakeholders.

Informed by the feedback from the public engagement, the aims for the refurbishment were determined to be to encourage:

- play and fun
- access for all
- an asset for the community
- access to nature
- improved wellbeing
- ways to help people be active

Works identified were to include:

- a new pavilion with a café kiosk, toilets and changing rooms with solar panels and a green roof
- a new play area with equipment for children of all ages and abilities
- a parkour course for over 12s
- an outdoor gym
- an improved network of footpaths with better accessibility for wheelchairs and buggies
- a picnic area and community orchard
- new trees, landscaping and swales to improve drainage.

### Approach

The playground was relocated to a central position, and new youth areas, including parkour zones and an outdoor gym, were introduced to encourage active use by various age groups. The tennis courts were upgraded to meet LTA standards, and the MUGA was refurbished to support multiple sports activities. Football pitches were realigned and improved for better usage. A modern pavilion with a café operator, public facilities and changing rooms were built which included solar panels and a green roof, reducing the area's carbon footprint. A new network of footpaths was constructed to encircle the entire recreation ground, improving access and

connectivity for all users, incorporating new benches and solar compacting bins to prevent the overflow of litter.

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), including swales with native planting, were introduced, supporting healthier ecosystems, providing habitats for a wide variety of species safe passageways for wildlife to move between different habitats in urban landscapes. The fenced-off water course was opened, widened and the gradient of the banks reduced to develop into a wetland area. This is fostering a healthier, more diverse, and resilient ecosystem that supports a broad array of wildlife and reduces the risk of flooding in the area. An increased number of trees and planting areas were established throughout the whole site to promote biodiversity and provide aesthetic value.

## **Conclusion**

The redevelopment of the recreation ground transformed it from a neglected area into a vibrant community hub. Through strategic planning, community engagement, and sustainable practices, the project successfully addressed the initial problems. The new facilities, improved access, and environmental enhancements fostered greater community use, improved the quality of life for users, and supported biodiversity in the area.