

CONGLETON GREEN SPACES

Site-specific biodiversity plans



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INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity is the variety of life, which includes people. The plans for bringing more biodiversity into Congleton's green spaces therefore also try to take the people that use them into account.

The 30 plans below are a starting point for discussion with the overall aim of making public green spaces more welcoming to both wildlife and people than they are at present. They are listed below with a location plan overleaf:

Area	No	Location
West Heath	1	Padgbury Lane/Langdale Close/Rydal Close *
	2	Thirlmere Close
	3	Newcastle Road linear green space
	4	Quinta Park Play Area
	5	Sycamore Avenue-Chestnut Drive
	6	Longdown Road-Chestnut Ave*
	7	Bowness Court
	8	Newcastle Road-Solly Crescent
	9	Back Lane/Hawthorne Close group of small green spaces
Central	10	Hankinson's Field*
	11	Banky Fields*
	12	Thames Close-Townsend Road
	13	Quayside-Goldfinch Road
	14	West Road (former Danesford frontage)
	15	Stirling Close *
Lower Heath	16	Land off Hillfields Close*
	17	Lower Heath Play Area
	18	Hertford Close-Riverdane Road
	19	Lady Warburton's Walk*
Buglawton	20	Mardale Close
	21	Havannah Lane/St John's Road
	22	St John's Recreation Ground, Play Area and River Dane floodplain
	23	Redfern Avenue-Buxton Road*
Bromley Farm	24	Bromley Farm Woods
	25	Bromley Farm Play Area
	26	Windsor Place
Mossley	27	Derwent Drive*
	28	Isis Close-Tamar Close*
	29	Bridgewater Close-Telford Close*
	30	Blackshaw Close

* Congleton Town Council re-wilding site.



Location plan

Habitat survey

The location, land use history and existing state of each green space influences what potential it may have for biodiversity enhancement. Habitat surveys were carried out in April 2022 (following standard guidance as far as possible though not carried out by a professional ecologist) to identify broad habitats and assess context. The initial habitat plans and notes are included in an **Appendix**, together with further information on stakeholders, landscape context, land use history, soils, topography, access and other factors influencing biodiversity. Some green spaces already include UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) priority habitats and species.

It is just a beginning - future input is needed from others with more knowledge of individual sites over the whole year, and of the birds, mammals, bats, amphibians, reptiles, insects, ferns, mosses, soil biodiversity, fungi etc that might be present, or perhaps were present in the past and could be brought back.

Green infrastructure and ecological corridors

Congleton is fortunate to be located on the River Dane and its tributaries, and to be an area rich in ancient semi-natural woodland with small valleys, steep slopes, canal and railway corridors linking the town with the countryside. Many green spaces benefit from being in or near these 'green infrastructure' corridors, and their value could be increased further. However other green spaces are isolated and relatively sterile, separated even from gardens by impermeable fencing. Gardens form the largest area of green infrastructure, providing a matrix for public green spaces and helping to support their biodiversity, so integrating them better with the public spaces is a key aim. The recommended actions in the **Actions and References** section include simple and often inexpensive ways to help to slow or reverse the decline of biodiversity, some of which apply as much to private gardens as to public open space.

Policy support

National planning policy, and Cheshire East Council (CEC) local planning policy, both adopted and draft, supports biodiversity enhancement. Recent CEC policies are related to a wider ecological network which includes core areas, buffers, restoration areas and stepping stones. The draft Congleton Neighbourhood

Plan also includes key environmental policies supporting biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancement. It is supported by *Protecting and Enhancing Congleton's Natural Environment (CWT)* and the draft *Congleton Landscape Character Assessment*, both of which have contributed to the current plans for green spaces.

Public perception



















While the natural world is complex and dynamic, urban green spaces have tended to be tidy and relatively unchanging. These qualities have been prized, as they denote care, familiarity and safety. However, accelerating climate change and biodiversity loss mean it is no longer acceptable to wage war on the natural world with herbicides, pesticides and wall-to-wall mowing. The challenge is to find a compromise in which people and wildlife all benefit. The biodiversity-friendly approach to managing open space is being taken up on a national basis. It's a process, rather than an overnight change, and with the Town Council's rewilding initiative, it has already started in Congleton.

The site-specific biodiversity plans

A plan has been prepared for each green space which takes the existing natural framework into account, and suggests ways in which biodiversity value can be increased or strengthened. At this stage the proposals are for consultation and discussion, so are subject to change, particularly if more information, such as on a particular species and its needs, becomes available. Further discussion is needed on how information can be collected, stored, made available to anyone interested, and used. Changes to green spaces will not take place without any consultation, but some change is necessary to help arrest biodiversity decline.

Symbols used on plans

The proposals on each site plan are marked with recognisable symbols denoting different types of action. See the **Actions and References section** for recommended actions relating to each symbol.

 Water/wetland	 Hedgerows	 Orchards	 Native tree & shrub planting	 Existing trees & woodland	 Sown wild flowers/grass
 Planted wild flowers	 Support for pollinators	 Amenity grass	 Food plants for wildlife	 Bat roost boxes	 Hedgehog homes & highways
 Bird boxes	 Footpaths for people/wildlife	 Log piles & dead wood	 Other habitat piles, dead hedges	 Sharing information	 Rivers and streams (not on plans)