

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS (& STEPPING STONES) IN WEST HORSLEY

1. BACKGROUND

In general recognition of the Natural Environment White Paper¹ recommendations, the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) requires local planning authorities to;

- (Para.114) “*set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure*”, and;
- (Para. 117) “*..plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale.. identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation*”.

2. COMPONENTS OF THE ‘LOCAL ECOLOGICAL NETWORK’ IN WEST HORSLEY

There are no internationally designated sites for biodiversity in West Horsley. The only nationally designated site for biodiversity is Sheepleas Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Locally designated sites include the following non-statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI); Lollesworth Wood, Hatchlands (Great Wix Wood), and Hollister Wood & Gravel Hill Wood. Further SNCI are adjacent or marginal to the parish, including; Hatchlands (Woodland Strip North of Estate), Furze Copse & Kingston Lane, Mountain Wood, and Dick Focks Common.

One further SSSI lies within the parish, Upper Common Pits, but this is designated for its geological interest only. There are a number of sites identified as Ancient woodlands within the parish further to those within SSSI and SNCI already listed, which alongside the historic parklands of Hatchlands and West Horsley Place should be considered as ‘stepping stones’ sites.

Areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation in Surrey are the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs), promoted by the Surrey Nature Partnership² for adoption in strategic planning as the basis for achieving a coherent and resilient ecological network in Surrey. Much of West Horsley parish lies within two Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. North of the A246 (Epsom) Road this is land within BOA TBL02 ‘Clandon to Bookham Parkland’; and south of the A246 is land within BOA ND02 ‘North Downs Scarp & Dip; Guildford to the Mole Gap’.

3. IDENTIFYING WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

A Wildlife Corridor is a chain or series of physically connected wildlife habitats, offering a potential conduit for dispersal and colonisation of new sites by species populations through an otherwise hostile landscape. Most wildlife corridors will vary considerably in their effectiveness for different groups of species, and must remain largely at a conceptual level as their actual functional value is often difficult or even impossible to prove. But as a general rule, the wider and more diverse the corridor (in terms of both habitat type and structure), the more effective it is likely to be.

¹ See: [The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature](#) (HM Government, 2011)

² See: [Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: the basis for realising Surrey’s ecological network](#) (Surrey Nature Partnership, December 2015)

To identify wildlife corridors within West Horsley parish all wildlife habitats extending beyond the designated and stepping stones sites mentioned in (2) above were considered, in order to establish any potential linkages between those sites. For the most part these habitats comprised small broadleaved copses and substantial hedgerows with a significant mature tree component. The largely contiguous woodland ridge within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (of which the designated sites Sheepleas; Hollister Wood & Gravel Hill Wood; Mountain Wood; and Dick Focks Common are integral), was viewed for the present purposes *en bloc*.

The built environment and its transport infrastructure can present obvious barriers to the continuity of wildlife corridors. The busy A246 Epsom Road presents the most significant infrastructure barrier to ground-bound wildlife, but not necessarily to arboreal species as a continuous tree canopy is more-or-less maintained across this road at several places along its length within the parish. In contrast, the Guildford-London railway line (including its embankment and/or cutting of varying width) in itself forms part of a wildlife corridor of at least borough significance extending beyond the parish to both east and west.

The following potential wildlife corridors have been recognised (see Figure 1):

WC01: Hatchlands Park to Shere Road at Upper Common (via Blakes Lane-Bridleway 539-Fullers Farm Wood and Hook Wood).

WC02: Chalkpit Lane to Sheepleas (via Footpath 88/Daws Dene-Tyrrells Wood-woodland to the rear of Chalk Barton).

WC03: Sheepleas to West Horsley Place and Lollesworth Wood (via woodland to the rear of Fearn Close & Fangate Manor Farm-parish boundary hedgerow-Frenchlands Copse-woodland to the rear of Oakwood Drive and Kingston Meadow; plus hedgerows to the north of Wet Horsley Place estate).

WC04: East Clandon Woods & Hatchlands Park to Lollesworth Wood (via the Guildford-London railway line).

WC05: Furze Copse to Even Wood (via Kingston Lane/Bridleway 73-Ripley Lane at Jury Farm-Green Lane West-woodland to the rear of Bachelor's Farm).

WC06: Roundtree Farm to Silkmore Lane (via Bridleway 538).

WC07: Lollesworth Wood to Green Lane (via East Lane nursery plantation-Manor Farm-Ben's Wood-Waterloo Farm camping & caravanning site).

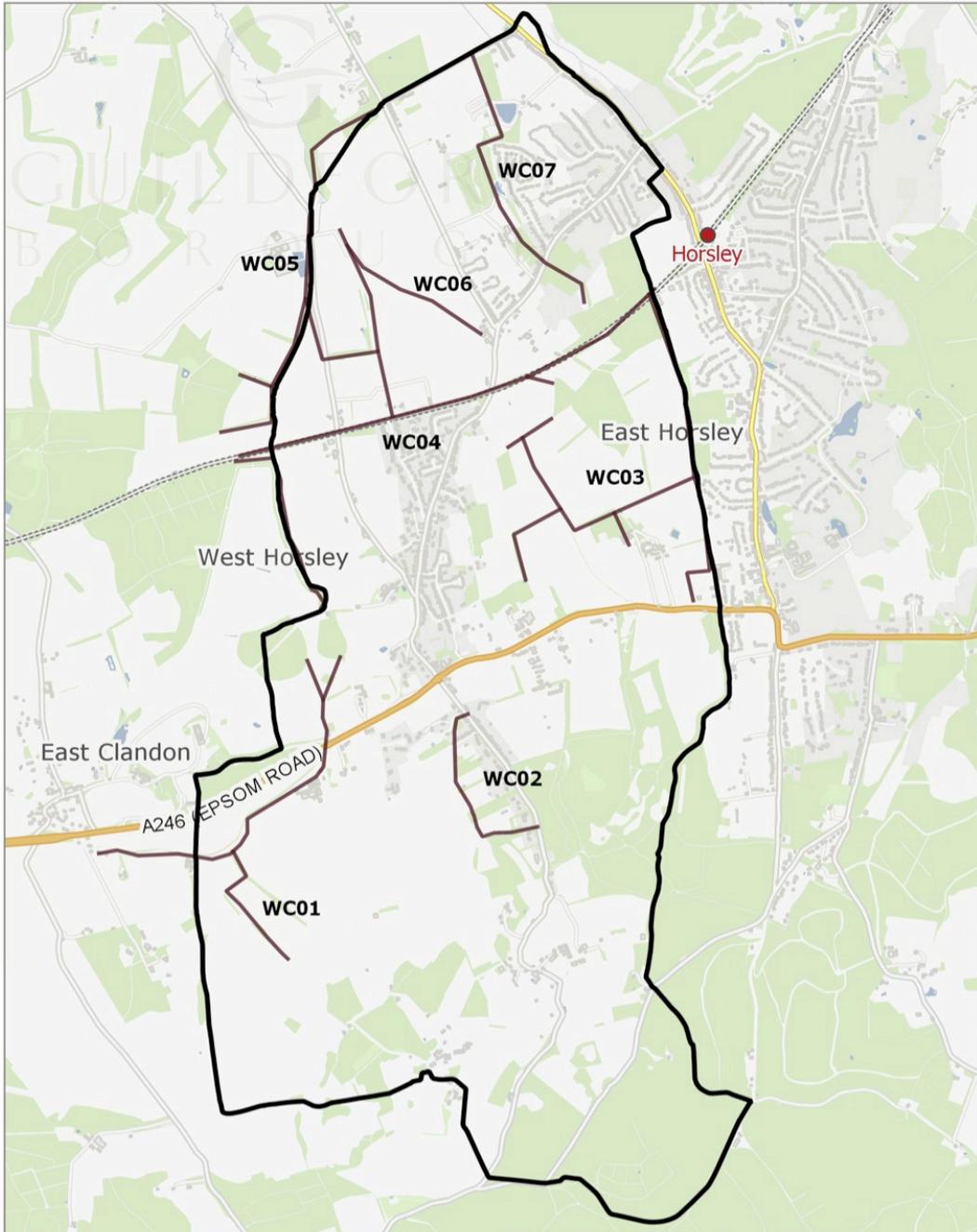
(See Map 4B: Wildlife Corridors)

4. RECOMMENDED POLICY FOR WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

The wildlife corridors identified above should be included on related mapping within the emerging West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan. It is recommended that they are recognised and protected through appropriate policy to preserve their function and purpose. This would essentially seek to prevent development that would cause their reduction or outright severance. Equally, policy should support every opportunity to widen, strengthen or otherwise consolidate these corridors via appropriate management.

Map 4B:

Wildlife Corridors - West Horsley



- Wildlife corridors
- Neighbourhood Area

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Scale at A4:
1:28,264

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