



## Press release

### Please sign our petition to save Bristol's green spaces

We're asking Bristol City Council to take its commitment to nature conservation seriously. To this end, we urge everyone to sign our petition to amend the local plan policies map so that it shows all the designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) in Bristol. SNCIs ensure the protection of green spaces for future generations.

We're proud to have been involved in the first new designation of a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) - at Yew Tree Farm - in over a decade. We hope it will ensure the protection of this rare and precious meadowland. However, other SNCIs are still under threat of being destroyed. This is because, in 2014, the Council in its wisdom decided to allocate seven SNCI sites for housing development.

However, these SNCIs - all but one of them in south Bristol - were never formally deselected. According to [government guidance](#) and the [Designated Sites Protocol](#) adopted by the Council, SNCIs can only be deselected by Local Sites Partnerships (LSPs) 'if their nature conservation interest deteriorates to such an extent that they no longer qualify as Local Sites'. This did not happen; the LSP has not deselected these SNCIs.

This means that the local development plan, DM19, which protects SNCIs, still applies. DM19 states that 'Development which would have a harmful impact on the nature conservation value of a Site of Nature Conservation Interest will not be permitted.'

When the 2014 Local Plan was adopted, the SNCI designations and boundaries of these seven sites were improperly altered. The [local plan policies map](#) shows that the Council unilaterally changed all or parts of the boundaries of these SNCIs, even though it didn't have the power to do so. These SNCI designations need to be restored and the local plan map amended.

In the decade since the Council's fateful decision, the Airport Road SNCI at Filwood New Park, off Hengrove Way, has been developed and is probably destroyed. This has also happened on the part of the Bonington Walk SNCI (the only site in North Bristol) that was allocated for development. The part of the Novers Common SNCI at Sidford Road has also been built on and the nature there destroyed.

Of the two remaining sites allocated for development on the Novers Common SNCI, the one at Kingswear Road has permission to build housing and the Homes England application to develop the northern part of the Brislington Meadows SNCI has just been approved on appeal. There is also a pending application to develop the northern part of the SNCI by Novers Hill on the Western Slopes.



In all these cases, the SNCIs there are still in place. Had this been known at the time of the applications to develop them, it's possible that these sites could have been protected or at least restored once developed.

Only the SNCIs at Malago Valley, St Anne's Valley and the two remaining sites on the Western Slopes - called the Pigeonhouse Stream and adjacent Meadows SNCI - are not yet subject to applications to develop them. In the current [Local Plan Consultation](#), the Council proposes to remove the sites designated for development on the Pigeonhouse Stream and adjacent Meadows SNCI. However, it has not said whether it will reinstate their SNCI designations on to the current local plan map.

This petition does not call for the SNCI sites allocated for development to have their allocation status removed (though they should be) as this can only be done as part of the local plan process. This is a first step to rectify the mistakes made under the previous 2014 local plan. The petition asks for the local plan map to be corrected to show the full extent of these SNCIs, whether or not they overlap a site allocated for development.

In this way we can at least ensure that, if and when these sites are developed, planners and developers know that they must give, at the very least, weight to their SNCI designations as set out in the development plan. We hope this will help protect these sites of nature conservation and remind planning decision-makers of their obligations.

Our petition is set out below.

### **About the Bristol Tree Forum**

We are a group of volunteers dedicated to protecting and increasing the tree canopy cover of Bristol's urban forest.

Our aims are to:

- Provide a forum to encourage community engagement in Bristol's urban tree management decisions.
- Promote the importance and value of Bristol's urban trees.
- Work to increase tree canopy cover in Bristol through better protection of existing trees and planting new ones.

See [About BTF](#)



## Petition

### SNCI sites and the Bristol Development Plan

We the undersigned ask that the Council take seriously its commitments to nature by correcting the local plan map (the Site Allocations and Development Policies Map) to show the correct designations and boundaries of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs).

Designations and boundaries were improperly altered at the time the 2014 Local Plan was adopted.

According to [government guidance](#) and the [Designated Sites Protocol](#) adopted by the Council, SNCIs can only be de-selected by Local Sites Partnerships (LSPs) “if their nature conservation interest deteriorates to such an extent that they no longer qualify as Local Sites”. This did not happen and the LSP has not de-selected these SNCIs since.

Instead, when the local plan documents were prepared, BCC allocated all or parts of these nature conservation sites for development, unilaterally removing their SNCI designation or altering boundaries without involving the LSP. As this was an error, these SNCI designations should now be restored so that the local plan map is accurate.

The designations and boundaries should be restored for the following SNCIs, which were all allocated for development:

1. BC1 - Airport Road.
2. BC16 - Brislington Meadows.
3. BC49 - Malago Valley.
4. BC54 - Novers Common.
5. BC64 - St Anne’s Valley.
6. BC80 - Pigeonhouse Stream and adjacent Meadows.
7. BC108 - Bonnington Walk.

Bristol Tree Forum has presented compelling evidence both to the Mayor’s office and to Council officers that the local plan map is incorrect, yet the administration declines to correct it, even though it has the power to do so by a simple resolution of Full Council. We have even drafted a resolution to enable this to happen. Here it is:

#### ***Draft Motion to Full Council 11 July 2023***

***This council notes that, when the Site Allocations and Development Policies was adopted in July 2014, the following designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI - code ‘BC’) had Site Allocations (BSA) placed on them:***

1. BC1 BSA1110 - The Hangar Site and Filwood Park, north of Hengrove Way.
2. BC16 BSA1201 - Land at Broom Hill, Brislington.



3. BC49 BSA1305 - Land to the north-west of Vale Lane, Bedminster Down.
4. BC54 BSA1124 - Kingswear Road, Torpoint Road and Haldon Close.
5. BC64 BSA1205 - Wicklea and adjacent land, St Anne's / Broom Hill, nr Brislington.
6. BC80 BSA1108 - Land at Novers Hill, east of Hartcliffe Way and west of Novers Lane / Novers Hill.
7. BC80 BSA1114 - Land at Novers Hill, adjacent to industrial units.
8. BC80 BSA1119 - Land to east of Hartcliffe Way, south of the Waste Depot.
9. BC108 BSA0402 - Bonnington Walk former allotments site, Lockleaze.

*The Site Allocations and Development Policies Map (the Map) was published at the same time. This unilaterally altered the boundaries of the SNCIs above so that the areas within them which were overlapped by these BSAs were excluded, even though their boundaries had not been changed by the Local Sites partnership, the only body authorised to alter or de-designate SNCIs.*

*This council believes that these changes to the Map were made in error and that the Map, which does not form part of the Bristol Development Plan, now needs to be corrected to show the true boundaries of the SNCIs affected.*

*This council resolves to correct the Map to show the correct boundaries of the SNCIs affected.*

All that the Council needs to do is pass this resolution and then instruct officers to correct the local plan map.

We call on Bristol City Council to take its commitments to nature conservation seriously and amend the local plan map.