



Planning Appeal Re:APP/W0530/W/21/3280395
Land between Haverhill Road and Hinton Way,
Stapleford, Cambridge

Ecology & Biodiversity Proof of Evidence – November 2021

Dr Duncan Painter CEnv MCIEEM

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1.1 My name is Duncan Painter, I am a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management (CIEEM). I have been practising as a professional ecologist for over 31 years and have extensive experience in ecological survey/assessment and ecological mitigation and compensation planning to help enable development.
- 1.2 I have a doctorate in ecology and habitat management from the University of Cambridge, and I am the Managing Director and owner of an independent ecological consultancy that I founded in 2005 called Applied Ecology Ltd.
- 1.3 My proof of evidence confirms that the development proposal will facilitate a highly significant biodiversity enhancement in a location where local biodiversity and emerging green infrastructure planning policy has identified a strategic need for ecological enhancement of the type that is being proposed.
- 1.4 South Cambridgeshire District Council declared an ecological emergency within their administrative area in July 2019 recognising that Cambridgeshire had seen an unprecedented decline in biodiversity as a result of anthropogenic activity (see **Appendix A**). The proposed Countryside Park would make a significant contribution to reversing this trend by creating a new large area of calcareous grassland in a location strategically located to link together other chalk grassland wildlife sites in this part of Cambridge.



- 1.5 Calcareous grassland is a rare habitat type of high biodiversity value and, in Cambridgeshire, supports a very rich flora and fauna including many nationally rare and scarce species. Much of England's calcareous grassland was lost to the plough as a result of increasing food production following the advent of World War II. Nationally the cover of calcareous grassland has suffered a sharp decline in extent over the last 80 years, and Cambridgeshire has mirrored this trend over the same time period with only around 101 ha of chalk grassland thought to remain in the Gog Magog Hills area of the county as isolated fragments of land.
- 1.6 The new Countryside Park would be created on intensive arable land of low biodiversity value and would result in a 18.7% increase in the extent of the calcareous grassland resource within the local area (Gog Magog Hills). This, together with development specific landscaping, would result in a measured biodiversity net gain of +234%.
- 1.7 The Countryside Park delivers on a significant number of biodiversity objectives set out in local and national biodiversity planning and strategy documents that I go on to discuss in more detail including:
- Cambridge Nature Network Report;
 - Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping;
 - Greater Cambridge Local Plan;
 - Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy;
 - South Cambridgeshire district council Doubling Nature Strategy;
 - Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan;
 - National Planning Policy Framework; and
 - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.
- 1.8 Much of the science behind local biodiversity strategy planning is based on ecological principals set out by Sir John Lawton in 2010. The Lawton report (see CD5.17) aimed to review how England's wildlife and ecological network of wildlife sites could be improved to help nature thrive in the face of anthropogenic pressure such as climate change. The report recommended that England's wildlife sites needed to be bigger, better and more



joined up to allow their associated species to move to more suitable habitat conditions in the face of climate change (CD5.17, p70-72). Isolated nature reserves in landscapes fragmented by human activity such as intensive agriculture are susceptible to local species extinctions as their plant and animal species are effectively trapped with limited resources and no alternative habitat areas to colonise in response to unfavourable changing climatic conditions (CD5.17, section 2.2.1, p14 & section 5.3, p65-66).

- 1.9 Establishing a coherent and resilient ecological network will help wildlife cope with unfavourable anthropogenic change, and to do this England's existing network of wildlife sites need to be bigger, better and more joined up. This means:
- protecting and increasing the size of existing wildlife sites;
 - creating new wildlife sites; and
 - enhancing habitat connectivity between wildlife sites by creating new wildlife corridors or stepping-stones.
- 1.10 The proposed new Countryside Park will help deliver on the Lawton report recommendations by providing a significant new area (18.9 hectares) of chalk grassland habitat in a location of low biodiversity value where the prevailing geology and soils will facilitate chalk grassland establishment. The Countryside Park will increase the overall size of the chalk grassland resource in this part of Cambridge by 18.7% and will provide a stepping-stone habitat between other local chalk grassland wildlife sites, thereby helping to increase the resilience of the chalk grassland wildlife in this part of Cambridge. I also estimate, based on our counts of skylarks using the development site and Magog Down in June 2021, that the new Countryside Park will result in 60% more breeding skylarks over the site compared with current skylark breeding densities over the site as currently managed as arable land.
- 1.11 The new Countryside Park will be established and managed by the Magog Trust – the same organisation that established chalk grassland on former arable land at the nearby Magog Down site. The success of their work is reflected in the designation of Magog Down as a County Wildlife Site (CWS) because of its chalk grassland and other wildlife interest. A number of other statutory (SSSI) and non-statutory wildlife sites (CWS) that support



calcareous grassland also occur in the local area and will be better joined-up as a result of the Countryside Park proposal.

- 1.12 In my opinion, the Countryside Park proposal is of exceptional biodiversity value and far exceeds the “normal” biodiversity enhancement / net gain offering that would be required to support a development proposal. The biodiversity enhancement that would result from the Countryside Park is immense and highly relevant to planned biodiversity conservation objectives in the local area and should be given substantial planning weight.
- 1.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the South Cambridge Local Plan both state that development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported. The Countryside Park proposal is such a development given the significant and relevant biodiversity benefit it will provide to the local area.

STATEMENT OF DUTIES TO INQUIRY

- 1.14 The evidence which I am presenting for this appeal has been prepared in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.



BACKGROUND

- 1.15 The development Site is located within the Gog Magog Hills area of Cambridgeshire in a landscape that has an underlying calcareous geology which supports plant communities of high nature conservation and wildlife value. Much of England's calcareous grassland was lost to the plough as a result of increasing food production following the advent of World War II. Nationally the cover of calcareous grassland has suffered a sharp decline in extent over the last 80 years, and Cambridgeshire has mirrored this trend over the same time period with only around 101 ha of chalk grassland thought to remain in the Gog Magog Hills area of the county as isolated fragments of land.
- 1.16 A number of wildlife sites that support chalk grassland habitats occur within close proximity to the site including those with statutory and non-statutory wildlife protection. These include the **Gog Magog Golf Course Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** and the **Roman Road SSSI** located 1.0 and 2.2 km to the north-east respectively, and the **Magog Down and Stapleford Pit County Wildlife Site (CWS)** and **Wandlebury CWS** located 380 m and 1.1 km to the north-east respectively.
- 1.17 Calcareous grasslands in Cambridgeshire support a very rich flora including many nationally rare and scarce species such as lizard orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*, moon carrot *Seseli libanotis*, pasque flower *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, perennial flax *Linum perenne ssp anglicum*; spotted cat's-ear *Hypochaeris maculata*, and bryophytes such as *Tortula vahliana*, *Tortula inflexa*, *Aloina brevirostris* and *Lophozia perssonii*. The invertebrate fauna of calcareous grassland is also diverse and includes scarce species including stripe-winged grasshopper *Stenobothrus lineatus*, chalkhill blue *Lysandra coridon*, small blue *Cupido minimus* and marbled white *Melanargia galathea* butterflies. Calcareous grasslands can also provide feeding or breeding habitat for declining birds such as skylark and stone curlew, and may also be used by bats and reptiles.
- 1.18 The ecology assessment that supported the planning application for the development was completed in 2020 and confirmed that the site was comprised of intensively managed arable land of low habitat and wildlife value, and that the Countryside Park proposal would deliver a significant biodiversity net gain. The findings and conclusions of the 2020 report are not disputed by the planning authority.



- 1.19 Applied Ecology Ltd re-surveyed the Site, its adjoining arable land (site of the proposed Countryside Park) and grassland within the Magog Down in June 2021. This was completed to inform a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment using Natural England’s Biodiversity Metric 3.0 calculation tool and assess the breeding densities of skylark in the three land areas. Biodiversity Metric 3.0 is a habitat-based approach used to assess an area’s value to wildlife and can be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and/or intertidal habitats. The metric will underpin the Environment Bill’s provisions for mandatory biodiversity net gain in England.
- 1.20 The development will facilitate a highly significant positive biodiversity enhancement through new landscaping and the creation of a new Countryside Park. In Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) terms, the new landscape will result in a BNG of +234% in a location that has been identified specifically by local biodiversity planning initiatives and emerging biodiversity and green infrastructure planning policy as a strategic location for chalk habitat creation and management. See **Appendix B** for a summary of the BNG calculation.
- 1.21 The new Countryside Park will be established and managed by the Magog Trust – the same organisation that established chalk grassland on former arable land at the nearby Magog Down site¹. The Magog Trust has effectively balanced the needs of nature conservation and recreation within the Site and the success of this work is reflected in the designation of Magog Down as a County Wildlife Site (CWS) called the **Magog Down and Stapleford Pit CWS** – designated because of its chalk and other wildlife interest. The **Magog Down and Stapleford Pit CWS** is located 390 metres to the north-east of the proposed Countryside Park and supports species rich chalk grassland of high quality and a range of characteristic chalk species including rare and scarce plants and other wildlife. See **Appendix C** for example photographs of Magog Down.
- 1.22 It is likely that the Magog Trust will use green hay cut from **Magog Down and Stapleford Pit CWS** to help establish grassland within the new Countryside Park and, once established, there is likely to be a natural exchange of wildlife between the two areas given their close proximity, most notably flying insects and birds and the wind-blown seeds of plants.

¹ http://www.magogtrust.org.uk/about/magog_down/



LOCAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES & PLANNING POLICIES

- 1.23 The proposed Countryside Park will facilitate a highly significant biodiversity enhancement in a location where local biodiversity and emerging green infrastructure planning policy has identified a strategic need for ecological enhancement of the type that is being proposed.
- 1.24 Much of the science behind local biodiversity strategy planning is based on ecological principals set out by Sir John Lawton in 2010² (see CD5.17). The Lawton report aimed to review how England's ecological network of wildlife sites could be improved to help nature thrive in the face of climate change and other pressures. The report recommended that England's existing network of wildlife sites needed to be bigger, better and more joined up to enable species, and their genes, to move (CD5.17, p70-72). Isolated nature reserves in landscapes fragmented by human activity such as intensive agriculture are susceptible to local species extinctions as their plant and animal species are effectively trapped with limited resources and no alternative habitat areas to colonise in response to unfavourable changing climatic conditions (CD5.17, section 2.2.1, p14 & section 5.3, p65-66).
- 1.25 Establishing a coherent and resilient ecological network will help wildlife cope with anthropogenic change and to do this the existing network of wildlife sites need to be bigger, better and more joined up. This means:
- protecting and increasing the size of existing wildlife sites;
 - creating new wildlife sites; and
 - enhancing habitat connectivity between wildlife sites by creating new wildlife corridors or stepping-stones.
- 1.26 The proposed new Countryside Park will help deliver on the Lawton report objectives by providing a significant new area (18.9 hectares) of chalk grassland habitat in a location where the prevailing geology and soils will facilitate chalk grassland establishment thereby increasing the overall size of the chalk grassland resource in this part of Cambridge by 18.7% (see para 1.29 below). Like the **Magog Down and Stapleford Pit CWS** that was established on former arable land, the new Countryside Park is highly likely to develop significant wildlife interest over time and will provide a chalk grassland stepping-stone that

² Lawton, J. H. et al (2010) *Making Space for Nature a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological networks*. Report to Defra.



will help better connect the existing chalk grassland habitats of the **Magog Down and Stapleford Pit CWS, Wandlebury CWS** and the **Gog Magog Golf Course SSSI and Roman Road SSSI** thereby increasing the resilience of these sites. Currently the site of the Countryside Park is managed as intensive arable land and has low biodiversity and nature conservation value.

CAMBRIDGE NATURE NETWORK REPORT

- 1.27 The proposed Countryside Park is located within the Gog Magog Hills Priority Nature Network Area as identified by the Cambridge Nature Network report published in March 2021³ (see CD5.13).
- 1.28 The Gog Magog Hills Network Area is important for its chalk grassland habitat with a reported total area of 101 ha of chalk grassland habitat present within the 2,666 ha of land within the Network Area. The Cambridge Nature Network report concludes (CD5.13, p32) that chalk grassland creation within the Network Area is required to increase the resilience of existing chalk grassland habitat and states *“The conclusion is a significantly increased area of chalk grassland is required in larger patches to support the remaining fragments of calcareous grassland and the full range of associated habitats and species”*. This is based on the Lawton report principles that bigger and better-connected habitats help increase the resilience of existing habitats.
- 1.29 It is of note that the Countryside Park proposal represents the conversion of 18.9 hectares of arable land to permanent grassland and will result in a 18.7% increase in the extent of chalk grassland habitat across the entire Gog Magog Hills Priority Nature Network Area - a highly significant biodiversity benefit that will generate a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) uplift of +234% according to the current Biodiversity Metric 3.0 calculation tool. It is of note that the BNG calculation has included the loss of land that would result from the Cambridge South East Transport (CSET) project route within the site.
- 1.30 Not only will the new grassland increase the extent of chalk grassland locally and deliver a highly significant BNG uplift, but it will also provide strategic benefits that are not measured by the Metric, including providing connections between core chalk grassland areas of

³ The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire (March 2021) *The Cambridge Nature Network – A Nature Recovery Network for Cambridge and its Surrounds – Final Report*.



Magog Down and Stapleford Pit CWS, Wandlebury CWS and the Gog Magog Golf Course SSSI and Roman Road SSSI with Nine Wells Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Hobson's Park and Hobson's Brook to the north-west – helping to increase the resilience of a number of important local nature conservation sites.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

1.31 The Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping report, published in September 2021 (CD5.11), was produced to inform the forthcoming joint South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Greater Cambridge Local Plan and confirms that the proposed Countryside Park falls within a Strategic Initiative area 3: Gog Magog Hills and chalkland fringe (see CD5.11, p10). Within this area three objectives are identified (CD5.11, p64):

- *Conserve and enhance priority habitats, including chalk grassland and woodland;*
- *Provide a high quality, connected Green Infrastructure network to accommodate growing recreational need and enable residents to access, enjoy and learn about this part of Greater Cambridge's countryside;*
- *Ensure access to the countryside is managed in a way which avoids increasing recreational pressure on existing conservation sites at risk (e.g. SSSIs).*

1.32 The proposed Countryside Park will meet these three objectives by helping conserve and enhance chalk grassland habitats in the local area by providing 18.9 hectares of new chalk grassland habitat that will be managed in perpetuity as chalk grassland. The Countryside Park will provide an area for low key recreational activity for local residents and alternative recreational space to the Roman Road SSSI where the chalk grassland is susceptible to damage from users of the bridleway that runs through the centre of this SSSI. Make clear recreation not affect the benefit.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN

1.33 The first proposals of the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Local Plan are currently out for consultation but include specific policies for green infrastructure and biodiversity. The green infrastructure policy specifically identifies the Gog Magog Hills and chalkland fringe area, within which the proposed Countryside Park is located, as a Strategic Initiative Area 3. This requires all development proposals – appropriate to its type, scale and location - to



include green infrastructure, providing the following varied benefits for people, wildlife and planet (see **Appendix D**):

- *Reinforcing and enhancing landscape and townscape, ensuring that proposed green infrastructure is appropriate to its local context;*
- *Supporting delivery of biodiversity net gain, including by providing links between habitats within and beyond the site boundary, and connecting where appropriate to the wider ecological network (see below), whilst carefully balancing the needs of wildlife and people;*
- *Promoting healthy living for all members of the community by providing spaces designed to be physically accessible and socially inclusive;*
- *Protecting and enhancing the water environment;*
- *Enhancing access and connectivity;*
- *Providing environmental enhancement;*
- *Supporting climate mitigation and adaptation.*

1.34 The Countryside Park will help to realise all of the above benefits by providing green infrastructure within the Gog Magog and chalkland fringe that should realise a biodiversity net gain of +234% (a significant biodiversity enhancement). As a secondary benefit, the Countryside Park will provide new socially inclusive recreational space for the local community that will have enhanced footpath connectivity to existing local recreation areas. The change of land use from intensive arable agriculture to a chalk grassland will also help protect and enhance the local water environment by completely removing the application of agrochemicals from the area that may otherwise pollute local ground and surface waters. Finally, and as highlighted previously, the creation of 18.9 hectares of new chalk grassland habitat located in close proximity to existing chalk grassland wildlife sites will help increase the resilience of the overall chalk grassland resource to anthropogenic changes, relating to recreational use and climate change, for instance.

1.35 To support successful delivery of green infrastructure, the policy will also require proposals to demonstrate that green infrastructure has been planned (see **Appendix D**):

- *as an integral part of the development, so that it informs the overall development design, and so that natural features are retained in situ;*



- *across all phases of development;*
- *to be successful for the lifetime of the development, including providing plans for management, maintenance and funding.*

1.36 As highlighted previously, the Countryside Park has been carefully planned and will be managed in perpetuity by an organisation that has a proven track record in the successful creation and management of a chalk grassland countryside park in the local area.

1.37 The biodiversity policy in the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Local Plan (see **Appendix E**) will control the biodiversity impacts from development, including the approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG). This requires developers to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were in before and will require development to achieve a minimum 20% BNG as measured by the current Defra (Natural England) biodiversity metric 3.0 calculation tool.

1.38 As outlined before, the development would result in a +234% increase in biodiversity as measured by the biodiversity metric 3.0 calculation tool and is a highly significant primary benefit.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

1.39 The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy report published by the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Forum⁴ in June 2011 (CD5.2) identifies a “strategic network” of green infrastructure priorities for Cambridgeshire upon which green infrastructure can be provided or enhanced up to and beyond 2031. It sets out how green infrastructure can achieve four objectives (CD5.2, p29-30):

- *to reverse the decline in biodiversity;*
- *to mitigate and adapt to climate change;*
- *to promote sustainable growth and economic development; and*
- *to support healthy living and well-being.*

⁴ Made up of 25 statutory and non-statutory organisations including: Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, East Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council; Huntingdonshire District Council; and Fenland District Council.



- 1.40 It identifies Cambridge city and surrounding accessible green spaces as a target area and specifically refers to opportunities for enhanced management of and linkages on the city fringes including the Gog Magog Downs. The report goes onto state that “*Areas of calcareous grassland have become fragmented and need to be expanded and linked together in order to produce sustainable blocks of habitat*” (CD5.2, p140).
- 1.41 The proposed Countryside Park would result in the conversion of 18.9 hectares of arable land to permanent grassland that will represents a 18.7% increase in the existing chalk grassland habitat resource across the entire Gog Magog Hills Priority Nature Network Area - a highly significant biodiversity benefit that meets the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy target for chalk grassland.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL DOUBLING NATURE STRATEGY

- 1.42 South Cambridgeshire District Council’s (SCDC) Doubling Nature Strategy report was published in February 2021 (CD5.1) and sets out a vision to double nature in South Cambridgeshire by 2050 and specifically to provide “*more wildlife-rich habitats; an increase in tree canopy cover; and better accessibility to green space*”. It specifically recognises the decline of “*key habitats such as semi-natural grassland in Cambridgeshire*” (CD5.1, p4), and specifically chalk grassland (CD5.1, p8).
- 1.43 The Doubling Nature Strategy was published in part response to a motion put forward and carried in a SCDC council meeting (18 July 2019 – see **Appendix A**) that declared an ecological emergency within the SCDC administrative area, recognising that Cambridgeshire has seen an unprecedented decline in biodiversity as a result of anthropogenic activity.
- 1.44 The Countryside Park will represent a significant increase in wildlife-rich habitats, increase tree canopy cover and will increase access to green space in the local area.
- 1.45 I am unaware of any specific large scale chalk grassland projects that have been delivered under the Doubling Nature Strategy, but from my own experience as an ecological consultant it is clear that the Countryside Park will not only deliver a highly significant positive biodiversity net gain in metric assessment terms, but will provide a significant area of a habitat type that has suffered significant historic loss and fragmentation in a location where ecological planning strategy reports have identified a specific need for chalk grassland creation.



CAMBRIDGE SOUTHERN FRINGE AREA ACTION PLAN

1.46 The site is located within the Land south of Addenbrokes Countryside Enhancement Strategy area as identified by the Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan that was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council in February 2008 (CD4.2). The strategy is reported to comprise new landscape creation and planting as follows (CD4.2, p21-22):

- f. New copses on suitable knolls, hilltops and scarp tops;*
- g. Management and creation of chalk grassland;*
- h. Management of existing shelter belts;*
- i. New mixed woodland and shelter belts;*
- j. Creation of a landscape corridor along Hobson's Brook;*
- k. Reinforcement and planting of new hedgerows;*
- l. Roadside planting; and*
- m. New footpaths, cyclepaths and bridleways creating routes through the area and lining Wandlebury Country Park / The Magog Down.*

1.47 The proposed Countryside Park will provide a new landscape that will contribute to seven of eight deliverables listed above. I am unaware of any project that has delivered chalk grassland in the Addenbrokes Countryside Enhancement Strategy area, and the creation of 18.9 hectares of this habitat type will provide a significant boost to this objective.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

1.48 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 (CD5.14) and replaced previous planning policy guidance (PPS 9) on biodiversity. The NPPF was updated in July 2018, February 2019, and in July 2021, and states the following in relation to biodiversity and planning at paragraph 180 (CD5.14, p52):

“When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*



- *development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.*

The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- *potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*
- *listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and*
- *sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.*

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”

1.49 The primary objective and outcome of the proposed Countryside Park is to deliver a significant biodiversity enhancement and, in line with the NPPF guidance on biodiversity, it is a “*development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity*”. On this basis, and reflecting the highly significant biodiversity outcome that would result from the Countryside Park the development should be supported in my opinion.



POLICY NH/4: BIODIVERSITY

1.50 The South Cambridge Local Plan (CD4.1) has a specific policy for biodiversity (Policy NH/4) that states the following (CD4.1, p115-116):

1. *Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity will be permitted.*
2. *New development must aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. Opportunities should be taken to achieve positive gain through the form and design of development. Measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitats and networks, and natural landscape. The built environment should be viewed as an opportunity to fully integrate biodiversity within new development through innovation. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in the achievement of targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and aid delivery of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.*
3. *If significant harm to the population or conservation status of a Protected Species, Priority Species or Priority Habitat⁵ resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.*
4. *Where there are grounds to believe that a proposal may affect a Protected Species, Priority Species or Priority Habitat, applicants will be expected to provide an adequate level of survey information and site assessment to establish the extent of a potential impact. This survey information and site assessment shall be provided prior to the determination of an application.*
5. *Previously developed land (brownfield sites) will not be considered to be devoid of biodiversity. The reuse of such sites must be undertaken carefully with regard to*

⁵ Priority Species and Habitats are those that are identified within a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and / or the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, Section 41.



existing features of biodiversity interest. Development proposals on such sites will be expected to include measures that maintain and enhance important features and appropriately incorporate them within any development of the site.

6. *Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.*
7. *Climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity and initiatives to reduce its impact need to be considered.*

1.51 The primary objective and outcome of the proposed Countryside Park is to deliver a significant biodiversity enhancement and, in line with the South Cambridge Local Plan policy on biodiversity, it is a “*development proposal where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity*”. Reflecting the highly significant biodiversity outcome that would result from the Countryside Park, the development would be in accordance with the development plan.



Appendix A



SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 18 July 2019 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Dr. Douglas de Lacey – Chairman
Councillor Anna Bradnam – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya, Tom Bygott, Grenville Chamberlain, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Gavin Clayton, Graham Cone, Dr. Claire Daunton, Clare Delderfield, Sue Ellington, Peter Fane, Neil Gough, Bill Handley, Philippa Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Mark Howell, Steve Hunt, Alex Malyon, Tony Mason, Brian Milnes, Judith Rippeth, Deborah Roberts, Nick Sample, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Dr. Ian Sollom, Peter Topping, Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams, John Williams, Eileen Wilson and Nick Wright

Officers:	Rory McKenna	Deputy Head of Legal Practice
	Peter Maddock	Deputy Head of Finance
	Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Susan Gardner Craig	Interim Director of Corporate Services
	Mike Hill	Interim Chief Executive
	Kathrin John	Democratic Services Team Leader

1. FORMER COUNCILLOR ALAN WYATT MBE

Members stood in silence in memory of former Councillor Alan Wyatt MBE who had passed away on 7 July 2019. Former Councillor Wyatt had been the District Councillor for the Waterbeach ward from 1988 to 2004 and had been Chairman of the Council from 1998 – 2000.

2. RECORDING OF MEETING

The Chairman of the Council reported that, as a pilot, the Council meeting was being filmed and that those in attendance were deemed, by their continuing presence, to have consented to being filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings for a webcast and training purposes. However, the public gallery would not be filmed.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Philip Allen, Ruth Betson, Nigel Cathcart, Dr Martin Cahn, Jose Hales, Peter McDonald and Dawn Percival.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they needed to update their Register of Interests whenever their circumstances changed.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, votes were cast as follows:

In favour (12):

Councillors Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya, Tom Bygott, Grenville Chamberlain, Graham Cone, Dr. Douglas de Lacey, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell, Deborah Roberts, Peter Topping, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams and Nick Wright.

Against (26):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Anna Bradnam, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Gavin Clayton, Dr. Claire Daunton, Clare Delderfield, Peter Fane, Neil Gough, Bill Handley, Philippa Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Steve Hunt, Alex Malyon, Tony Mason, Brian Milnes, Judith Rippeth, Nick Sample, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Dr. Ian Sollom, Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, John Williams and Eileen Wilson.

Abstain (0)

The Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

13 (j) Motion from Councillor Pippa Heylings

Councillor Pippa Heylings had submitted a motion, as set out in the agenda. The Chairman moved that, in order to enable the full implications of the motion to be investigated, it be referred to the Cabinet in accordance with Standing Order 13 (d).

The motion was not seconded.

Accordingly, Councillor Pippa Heylings moved the following motion as set out in the agenda:

“This Council recognises that:

- we are facing an ecological emergency as well as a climate emergency;
- the challenge to balance economic growth with measures to protect and enhance nature has never been more urgent, given the unprecedented investment in infrastructure in the district alongside the increasing decline in biodiversity;
- opportunities are available through the planning system for improving nature by embedding the “environmental net gain” principle into development, including housing and infrastructure, in order to deliver environmental improvements;
- the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment play a pivotal role in our economy and wellbeing, providing wide-ranging benefits such as clean water and air, food, timber, carbon capture, flood protection and recreation.

Therefore, this Council aims to double the area of rich wildlife habitats, tree cover and accessible green space in order for nature and people to thrive, and businesses to prosper. In order to do so, the Council will:

- Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by providing high-level guidance to support existing biodiversity policies as part of the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD and more detailed guidance for developers through the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD.
- Enable the development of a mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for South

Cambridgeshire and Cambridge through the new Joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan, ensuring that this is a core principle for all future development across the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.

- Identify areas for tree planting for carbon sequestration, flood management, air quality improvement and other environmental services.
- Adopt the Developing Nature Toolkit and direct developers to use the toolkit to assist them in demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity, to be used from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development.
- Collaborate with our communities, Parish Councils and schools to encourage the planting of trees and the management of wildflower verges alongside roads.
- Continue to support Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), to deliver the Doubling Nature Vision for 'Cambridgeshire to be an exemplar for the landscape scale restoration of the natural environment.'

In moving her motion, Councillor Heylings commented that the planet was facing both a climate and an ecological emergency. She referred to a study that had indicated an unprecedented decline in species and to a recently published habitat mapping exercise which had indicated that Cambridge and Peterborough was one of the poorest areas in the UK for biodiversity, tree cover and habitat and that South Cambridgeshire had the lowest amount of area under management for nature. Councillor Heylings contended that it had never been more important to balance economic growth with the enhancement and protection of nature. She reported that the Histon and Impington Youth Eco Council had attended the Climate Change and Environment Advisory Committee and had shared their concerns regarding climate change and environmental protection. Councillor Heylings proposed that the Council should use the planning system to protect and enhance nature by embedding bio diversity net gain into the next Joint Local Plan. In terms of the implications in the motion, Councillor Heylings noted that she had spoken with officers who had confirmed that all the proposed policies were feasible and were already under consideration.

Councillor Bridget Smith, the Leader of the Council, seconded the motion, expressing the view that the Council was leading the way on environmental initiatives and that her appointment as political lead for environment on the Ox-Cam project was a reflection of the Council's environmental ambition and leadership. She referred to the threats presented by climate change and to the need for the Council to continue to show leadership as promoted through the motion now presented.

During discussion upon the motion:-

- Councillor Deborah Roberts argued that the environmental protection aspirations as promoted by the motion were incompatible with the extent of development facing South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. She also believed that the motion was not consistent with the earlier decision on the motion on transport construction projects and felt that the Council should be challenging further development in the District if it was serious about environmental protection.
- Councillor Nick Wright, spoke in support of the motion but noted that a lot of the countryside in South Cambridgeshire was given over to agriculture which might explain the earlier reference to poor tree cover in the District. Whilst there was a need for tree planting as part of new developments, there was also a need for food production and the importance of agriculture in the District should be acknowledged.
- Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins reported that officers were already working on the

“Developing Nature Toolkit” as part of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. She noted the earlier comments about the conflict in balancing the extent of new development with the environmental aspirations but felt that there was scope to manage growth in a positive way. Cllr Dr. Hawkins also referred to a workshop held with developers who had engaged positively on discussions around environmental and biodiversity aspirations and potential future requirements.

- Councillor Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer noted that the aspirations in the motion were consistent with similar proposals already adopted by Cambridge City Council, with which the Council was preparing the Joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- Councillor Peter Topping commented that the motion would be helpful to any parishes developing neighbourhood plans if they wished to include aspirations around sustainability.
- Councillor Tom Bygott spoke in support of the motion noting that everyone had a vested interest in protecting the environment.
- Councillor Philippa Hart disagreed with the views expressed by Councillor Deborah Roberts and made a comment with regard to her apparent role in opposing an application in the Foxton ward. Councillor Hart argued that there was a need to balance competing interests and welcomed the opportunity to drive forward biodiversity and environmental enhancements as proposed in the motion. She also felt that it was important that the farming industry was challenged to review its biodiversity practices.
- Councillor Heather Williams commented that she would have liked to have seen consistency in terms of the treatment of this motion and the previous motion on the agenda. She felt that it was important that everyone recognised their role as custodians of the planet.
- Councillor Steve Hunt did not agree that there was a conflict with the decision taken on the earlier motion and explained his reasoning.
- Councillor Brian Milnes challenged the notion that economic growth and biodiversity gains were incompatible and cited the Huawei development in his ward as a positive example of where land not needed for the business would be used to include biodiversity gain.
- Councillor Deborah Roberts responded to comments made with reference to her earlier in the discussion and strongly disputed the nature of those comments.

Exercising her right to reply at the end of the debate, Councillor Pippa Heylings welcomed the cross party support for her motion and argued that adopting the aspiration to double the area of wildlife habitats, tree cover and accessible green space would be a tangible way of moving biodiversity up the planning agenda.

Upon being put to the vote, votes on the motion were cast as follows:

In favour (37):

Councillors Henry Batchelor, John Batchelor, Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya, Anna Bradnam, Tom Bygott, Grenville Chamberlain, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Gavin Clayton,

Graham Cone, Dr. Claire Daunton, Dr. Douglas de Lacey, Clare Delderfield, Sue Ellington, Peter Fane, Neil Gough, Bill Handley, Philippa Hart, Geoff Harvey, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Pippa Heylings, Mark Howell, Steve Hunt, Alex Malyon, Tony Mason, Brian Milnes, Judith Rippeth, Nick Sample, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Dr. Ian Sollom, Peter Topping, Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams, John Williams, Eileen Wilson and Nick Wright.

Against (0)

Abstain (1)

Councillor Deborah Roberts.

The Chairman declared the motion to be carried.

RESOLVED:

This Council recognises that:

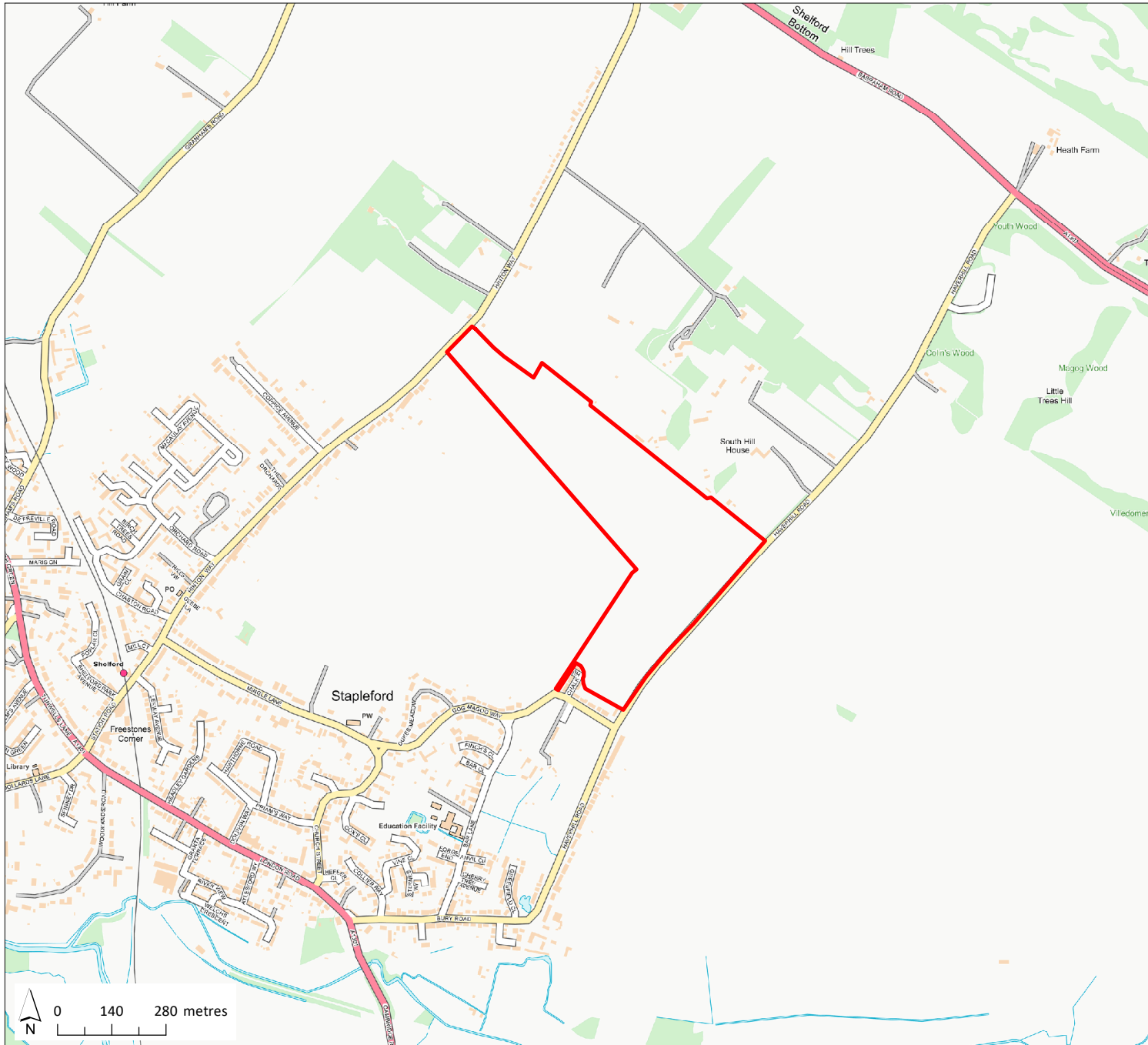
- we are facing an ecological emergency as well as a climate emergency;
- the challenge to balance economic growth with measures to protect and enhance nature has never been more urgent, given the unprecedented investment in infrastructure in the district alongside the increasing decline in biodiversity;
- opportunities are available through the planning system for improving nature by embedding the “environmental net gain” principle into development, including housing and infrastructure, in order to deliver environmental improvements;
- the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment play a pivotal role in our economy and wellbeing, providing wide-ranging benefits such as clean water and air, food, timber, carbon capture, flood protection and recreation.

Therefore, this Council aims to double the area of rich wildlife habitats, tree cover and accessible green space in order for nature and people to thrive, and businesses to prosper. In order to do so, the Council will:

- Ensure the delivery of biodiversity and environmental enhancements through our planning policy and development control functions by providing high-level guidance to support existing biodiversity policies as part of the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD and more detailed guidance for developers through the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD.
- Enable the development of a mandatory biodiversity net gain policy for South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge through the new Joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan, ensuring that this is a core principle for all future development across the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
- Identifying areas for tree planting for carbon sequestration, flood management, air quality improvement and other environmental services.
- Adopt the Developing Nature Toolkit and direct developers to use the toolkit to assist them in demonstrating a net gain in biodiversity, to be used from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development.
- Collaborate with our communities, Parish Councils and schools to encourage the planting of trees and the management of wildflower verges alongside roads.
- Continue to support Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), to deliver the Doubling Nature Vision for ‘Cambridgeshire to be an exemplar for the landscape scale restoration of the natural environment.

Appendix B






Hill Farm, Stapleford

Site location

 Site boundary

Figure 1

Map Scale @ A4: 1:15,000

Surveyed by: n/a	
Survey date: n/a	
Drawn by: RD	
Checked by: DP	
Status: Final	

Hill Farm, Stapleford

Pre-development habitats






-  Site boundary
-  Cereal crops, condition N/A
-  Other woodland, broadleaved in moderate condition
-  Modified grassland in moderate condition
-  Vacant, derelict land, bare ground in moderate condition

Figure 2

Map Scale @ A4: 1:6,000

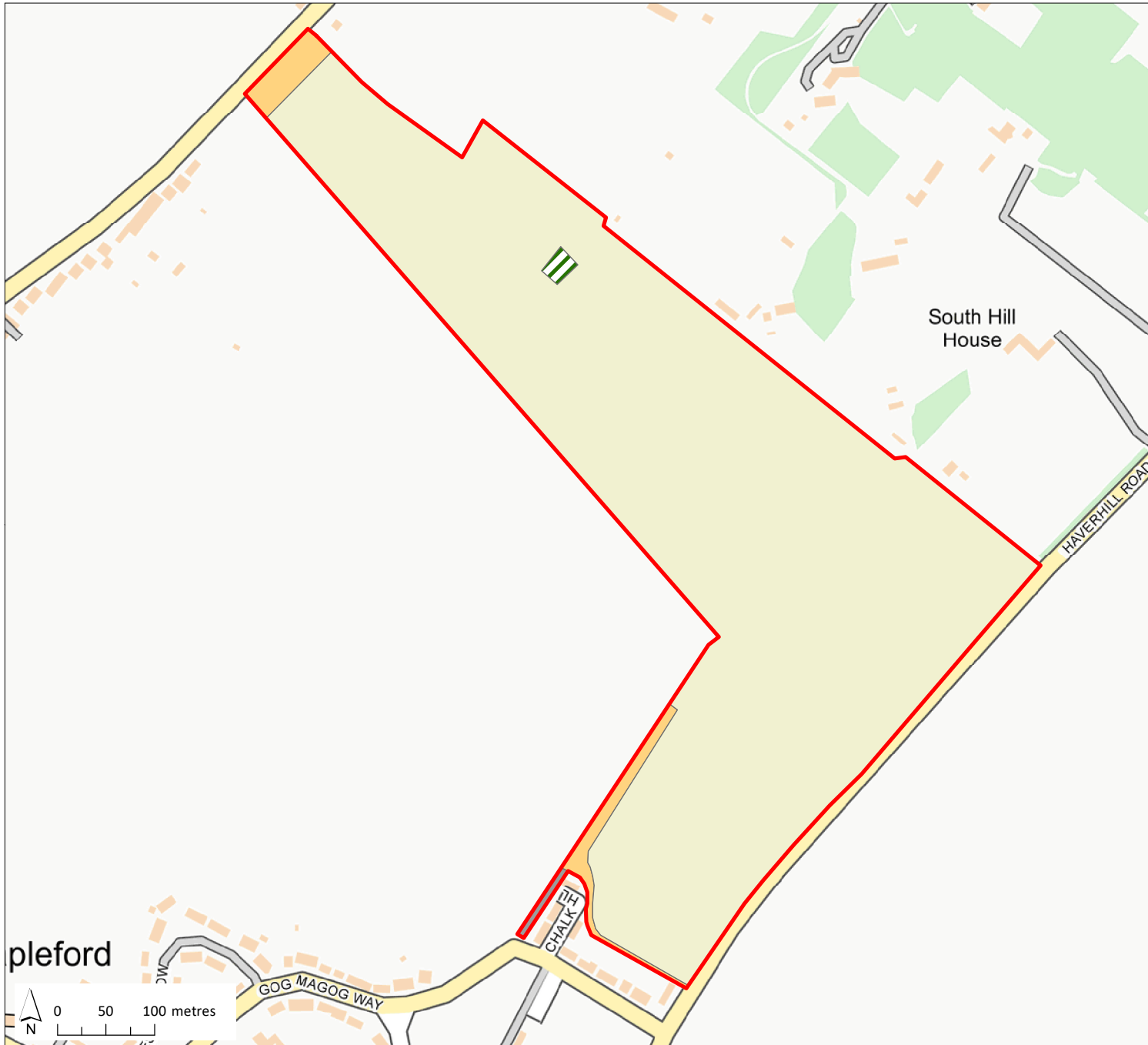
Surveyed by: RD

Survey date: 21 June 2021

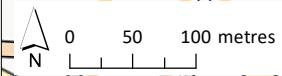
Drawn by: RD

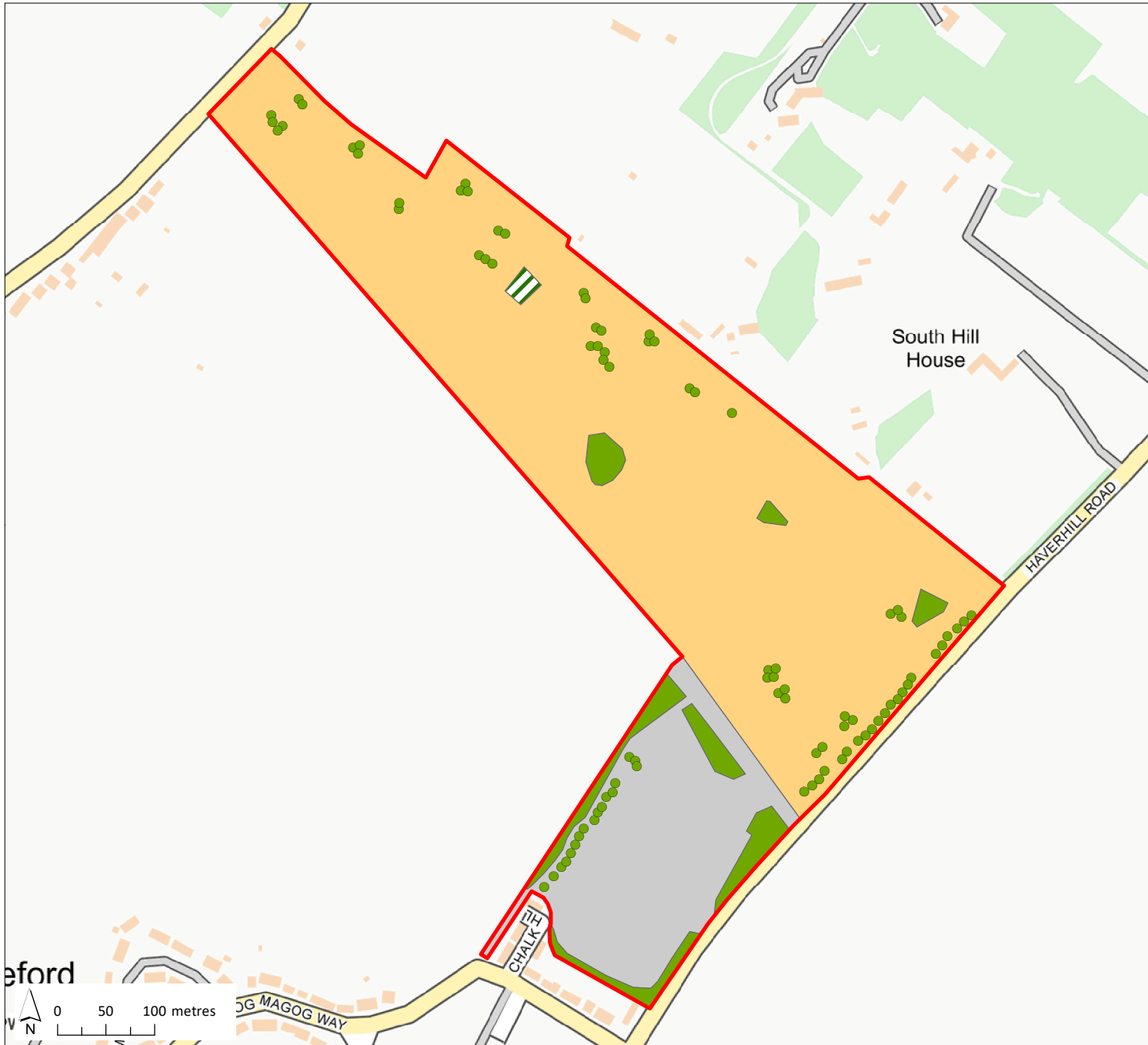
Checked by: DP

Status: Final



Stapleford





Hill Farm, Stapleford


Pre-development habitats

- Site boundary
- development area:
 - 60% Developed land, sealed surface
 - 40% Vegetated gardens (or other low value amenity or ornamental habitat)
- grassland:
 - Other neutral grassland, good condition
- new woodland:
 - Other woodland, broadleaved, moderate condition
- retained woodland:
 - Other woodland, broadleaved, moderate condition
- new individual trees:
 - Urban trees, moderate condition (also 75 small Urban trees included within development area but not shown on figure)

An overall biodiversity net gain of +234.06% with the above habitat assumptions.

Figure 3

Map Scale @ A4: 1:6,000

Surveyed by: n/a	 Applied Ecology Ltd
Survey date: n/a	
Drawn by: RD	
Checked by: DP	
Status: Final	

Appendix C





Magog Down chalk grassland



Magog Down chalk grassland



Magog Down chalk grassland - mid summer display of oxeye daisies and pyramidal orchids



Magog Down chalk grassland late spring display of cowslips and pasque flowers

Appendix D



Policy BG/GI: Green infrastructure

Show document contents

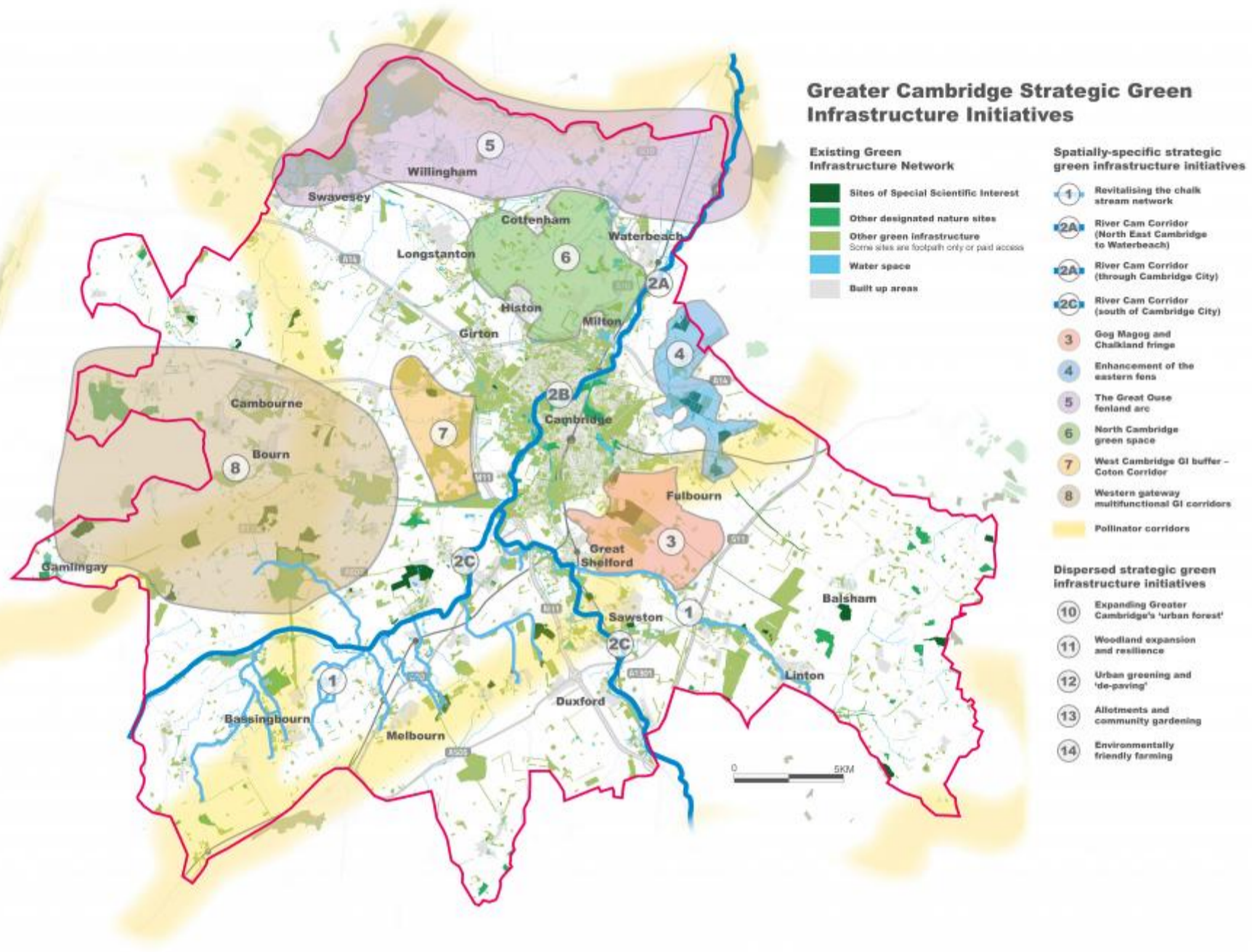


Figure 54: Map of proposed strategic green infrastructure initiatives

What will this policy do?

This policy identifies the existing green infrastructure network and the strategic initiatives intended to enhance it and addresses how development proposals should relate to green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is the network of green spaces and routes, landscapes, biodiversity, water bodies and heritage, which provide a range of benefits for people, wildlife and the planet.

Proposed policy direction

The policy will require all development proposals – appropriate to its type, scale and location - to include green infrastructure, providing the following varied benefits for people, wildlife and planet:

- Reinforcing and enhancing landscape and townscape, ensuring that proposed green infrastructure is appropriate to its local context
- Supporting delivery of biodiversity net gain, including by providing links between habitats within and beyond the site boundary, and connecting where appropriate to the wider ecological network (see below), whilst carefully balancing the needs of wildlife and people
- Promoting healthy living for all members of the community by providing spaces designed to be physically accessible and socially inclusive.
- Protecting and enhancing the water environment

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- Supporting climate mitigation and adaptation

To support successful delivery of green infrastructure, the policy will require proposals to demonstrate that green infrastructure has been planned:

- As an integral part of the development, so that it informs the overall development design. This should include identifying, retaining and enhancing existing natural feature of value.
- Across all phases of development
- To be successful for the lifetime of the development, including providing plans for management, maintenance and funding.

Beyond setting out green infrastructure design principles as above, we are exploring whether this policy should require development to meet a green infrastructure standard such as [Building with Nature](#). We would welcome your views on this topic, and will confirm the preferred approach at draft plan stage.

The policy will also require development proposals to protect and enhance the wider green infrastructure network as follows:

- Require all new development to protect the existing green infrastructure assets, which will be identified on the policies map which will accompany the local plan
- Our Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping has identified a number of strategic green infrastructure initiatives which have the potential to enhance the existing network. This policy will require all new development to help deliver or contribute to support delivery of the green infrastructure strategic initiative objectives. Contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.

The list of strategic green infrastructure initiatives includes the following:

- 1: Revitalising the chalk stream network
- 2: River Cam Corridor
 - 2A: River Cam Corridor (North East Cambridge to Waterbeach)
 - 2B: River Cam Corridor (through Cambridge City)
 - 2C: River Cam Corridor (south of Cambridge City)
- 3: Gog Magog Hills and chalkland fringe
- 4: Enhancement of the eastern fens
- 5: The Great Ouse fenland arc
- 6: North Cambridge green space
- 7: West Cambridge Green Infrastructure buffer - Coton Corridor
- 8: Western gateway multifunctional Green Infrastructure corridor
- 9: Pollinator corridors
- Dispersed initiatives:
 - 10: Expanding Greater Cambridge's 'urban forest'
 - 11: Woodland expansion and resilience
 - 12: Urban greening and 'de-paving'
 - 13: Allotments and community gardening
 - 14: Environmentally friendly farming

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Why is this policy needed?



What consultation have we done on this issue?



What alternatives did we consider?



Supporting evidence studies and topic papers



Existing policies in adopted 2018 Local Plans



Tell us what you think



[Policy BG/BG: Biodiversity and geodiversity](#)

[Up](#)

[Policy BG/TC: Improving Tree Canopy Cover and the Tree Population](#)

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Appendix E



Policy BG/BG: Biodiversity and geodiversity

Show document contents

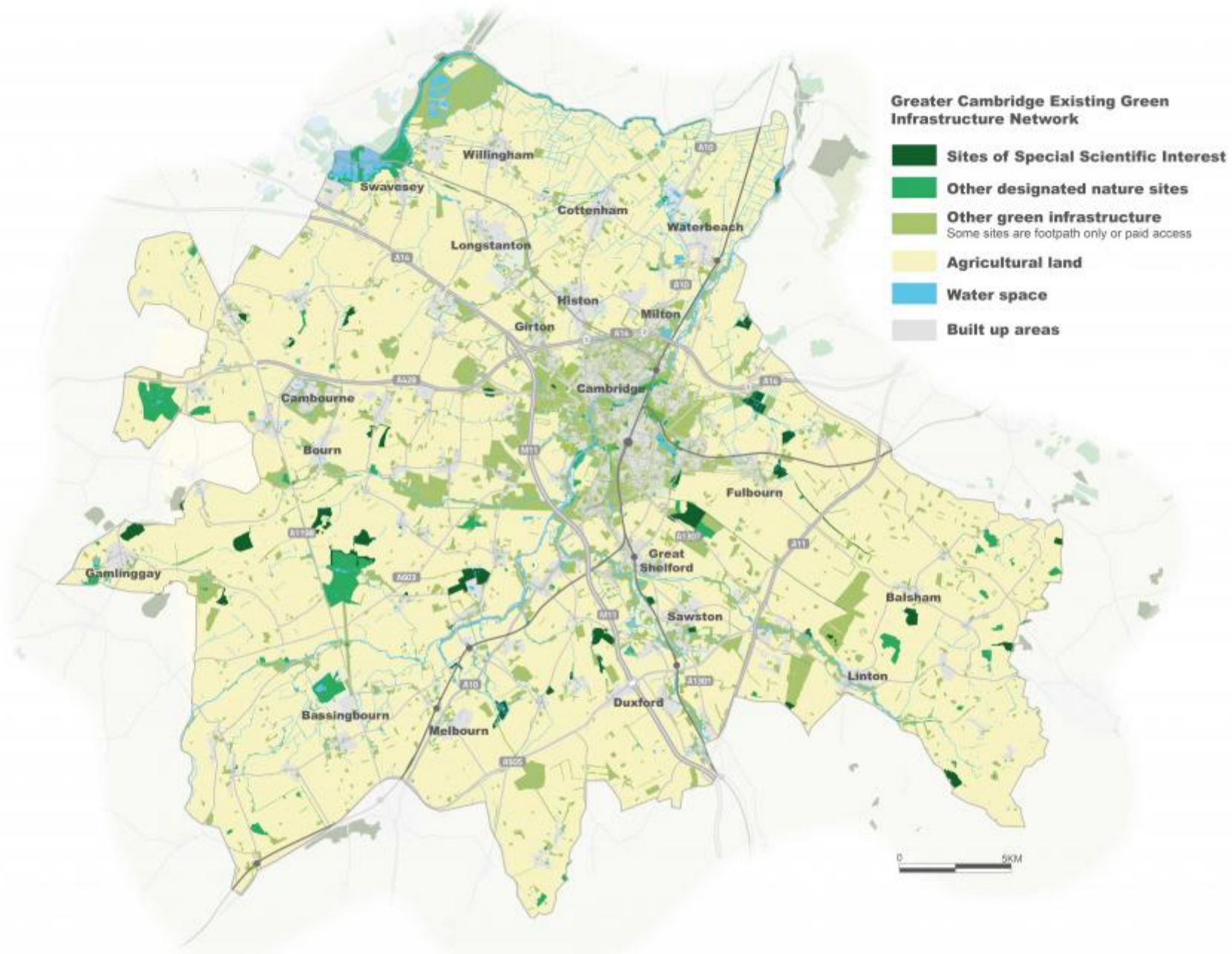


Figure 53: Map of existing nature sites and undesignated green infrastructure

What will this policy do?

This policy will control the biodiversity impacts from development, including the approach to biodiversity net gain (which requires developers to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were in before development, and is expressed as a percentage). It will also control development affecting sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance.

Proposed policy direction

The policy will require development to achieve a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain, noting that:

- Biodiversity net gain calculations should be submitted using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.0 or its successor
- Biodiversity net gain should be delivered on-site where possible, recognising that for smaller developments in particular, more significant and long-lasting biodiversity enhancements may be achieved via contributions towards off-site, larger scale projects.
- Where it is agreed that off-site habitat measures would bring greater biodiversity benefits than on-site measures, these must be consistent with the strategic aims of the Greater Cambridge green infrastructure network strategic initiatives (see [BG/GI](#))
- The Councils will seek to use planning conditions to secure on site habitat creation and its long-term management, and obligations where BNG is on land outside the applicant's control

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The policy will state that development proposals adversely affecting sites of biodiversity or geological importance will not normally be permitted. Exceptions will only be made where the public benefits significantly outweigh any adverse impacts. In such cases where development is permitted, we will require that the intrinsic natural features of particular interest are safeguarded or enhanced.

The policy will require development to mitigate evidenced recreational impacts on designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites, including applying Natural England's *Impact Risk Zones* for Sites of Special Scientific importance.

Why is this policy needed? +

What consultation have we done on this issue? +

What alternatives did we consider? +

Supporting evidence studies and topic papers +

Existing policies in adopted 2018 Local Plans +

Tell us what you think +

[← Biodiversity and green spaces](#)

[Up](#)

[Policy BG/GI: Green infrastructure ›](#)

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