

GREATER CAMBRIDGE  
SHARED PLANNING

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

# Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted Final February 2022



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Nine Wells Cambridge, Guy Belcher

# Foreword

**Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, yet has a relatively small amount of land managed for nature.**

It is vital that we protect, enhance and grow our biodiversity, both in terms of the amount of land managed specifically for nature, and the richness of biodiversity throughout our urban and rural environments.

This Supplementary Planning Document sets out guidance to assist applicants in meeting the policies of the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans as well as the relevant national legislation. It provides clear guidance on how developments should consider biodiversity from the outset of the planning process to ensure that biodiversity is properly integrated into projects and is increased and enhanced as an outcome of development. This will help to ensure improved quality of new developments while reducing environmental impact as we deliver the new homes and businesses we need.

We look forward to applicants and developers applying this guidance across all scales of development and helping us create a greener and more biodiverse Greater Cambridge for future generations.



**Councillor  
Katie Thornburrow**

Executive Councillor  
for Planning Policy,  
Cambridge City Council



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Lead Cabinet Member  
for Planning, South  
Cambridgeshire District  
Council



# Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Status of the Biodiversity Supplementary  
Planning Document

1.3. Purpose

# 1.1. Introduction

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**1.1.1.** Biodiversity, a term coined in 1985 as a contraction of “biological diversity”, describes the variety of life on Earth, in all its forms and all its interactions. It incorporates all species and habitats, both rare and common, and includes genetic diversity. Biodiversity at local, national and global levels is under pressure as never before from climate change, habitat loss, species decline, and the threat of invasive species. Much of the habitat loss is driven by urban development fuelled by the need for housing and infrastructure. Species once considered to be common in Greater Cambridge are facing increasing stresses upon their populations and the rate of species loss has never been higher. International initiatives exist to reduce the rate of species loss and at the national level lists of species and habitats that require particular measures to halt their decline have been produced.

**1.1.2.** Our goal in Greater Cambridge is to build *quality* places, rich in biodiversity and green infrastructure, good for people and good for nature. Both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have declared a biodiversity emergency, and strongly support a step change in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Greater Cambridge. The aim to better protect, restore and enhance our natural environment is clearly set out in the Environmental Principles, regionally agreed for the Oxford to Cambridge (OxCam) Arc development vision. These Environmental Principles seek to set ambitious goals, including the desire to realise Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) at 20% for all development types within the Arc. This approach is further supported in more local initiatives

like South Cambridgeshire’s Doubling Nature Strategy and Cambridge City’s upcoming Biodiversity Strategy. Together, these documents set the tone for greater aspiration and more robust biodiversity policies in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

**1.1.3.** As development forms one of the largest threats to biodiversity through the loss of natural habitats, it is incumbent on planning authorities and developers to recognise the importance of biodiversity protection and enhancement through provisions made in Local Plan policies, and through the enforcement of relevant national legislation. However, we can only do that if developments coming forward incorporate the correct elements from the beginning of the design process through to their build out.

**1.1.4.** Enhancing biodiversity through the planning and development process brings numerous benefits. These will include, but not be limited to, improved habitats for species, flood protection and carbon sequestration as well as the broader secondary benefits for people, like improved mental health from access to natural green spaces.

**1.1.5.** Going forward, biodiversity will not be peripheral to the planning process but will be fully integrated into the design stages. Consideration will be given, wherever possible, to the retention of biodiversity features within developments and to incorporating new habitats or specific biodiversity features into designs.

**1.1.6.** Biodiversity is a valuable addition to any development, often helping to create attractive natural green spaces which integrate development of a high-quality design into the local landscape or townscape.

## 1.2. Status of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

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**1.2.1.** When adopted, this draft Supplementary Planning Document will support existing policies for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council ahead of the adoption of a Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which is in preparation jointly by both authorities.

**1.2.2.** This Supplementary Planning Document provides practical advice and guidance on how to develop proposals that comply with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and the district-wide policies in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, adopted in September 2018, as well as those in the Cambridge Local Plan, adopted in October 2018. It also references policies in individual Area Action Plans for major developments, which may vary from the policies in the two adopted Local Plan documents.

**1.2.3.** The existing policies seek to ensure that biodiversity is adequately protected and enhanced throughout the development process. This Supplementary Planning Document provides additional details on how local policies will be implemented while also building on relevant legislation, national policy, central government advice, and the British Standard BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. Available information about the contents of the Environment Act 2021 has been referenced.

**1.2.4.** This Supplementary Planning Document will supersede the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document, adopted in 2009 to support adopted Development Control Policies. It will in time be updated to support the Greater Cambridge Local Plan when this is adopted.



Hobsons Park, Cambridge, Guy Belcher

## 1.3. Purpose

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**1.3.1.** The objective of this Supplementary Planning Document is to assist the delivery of the Local Plan policies for both Councils relating to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

**1.3.2.** The Supplementary Planning Document does not create policy, but explains how Local Plan policies should be interpreted and applied and provides guidance, setting out with clarity, the expectations that the Councils have for the treatment of biodiversity within the development management system and how those should be reflected by developers, their agents and their consultants in their submissions.

**1.3.3.** Reference is made throughout, with links where appropriate, to other available guidance that can help to direct and refine the design of development sites to ensure that opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity are incorporated from the very start of the development process.

**1.3.4.** Specific objectives for this document are:

- To explain terminology associated with biodiversity conservation to assist applicants' understanding of the importance of biodiversity within the wider environment of Greater Cambridge.
- To be clear on the ways in which development proposals in Greater Cambridge can be formulated in an appropriate manner to avoid harm to biodiversity and to provide a long-term, measurable net gain for biodiversity.
- To encourage applicants to protect, restore and enhance locally relevant natural habitats and ecological features on their sites and to create new habitats, as part of a high-quality design.
- To assist applicants to gain planning permission in Greater Cambridge more quickly by informing them of the level of information expected to accompany planning applications.







# UK legislation

2.1. Current legislation

2.2. UK Environment Act 2021

## 2.1. Current legislation

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**2.1.1.** In their planning submissions, applicants are expected to demonstrate that their proposals are compliant with all relevant legislation regarding the protection of wildlife and habitats and should ensure that they receive the necessary professional advice to be able to do so. This legislation applies equally to projects that do not require planning consent (see section 3.5).

**2.1.2.** The principal legislation relating to biodiversity conservation in the UK, as it interacts with the planning system, is summarised below.

### Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

**2.1.3.** These regulations, often referred to as the Habitats Regulations, were the mechanism through which the European Commission Habitats and Wild Birds Directives were incorporated into UK law. The Habitats Regulations have been amended to reflect the consequences of Brexit, but their substance has been retained to provide protection for sites, habitats and species considered to be of international importance, including the designation of Habitats Sites (see section 4.2).

**2.1.4.** Local Planning Authorities have the duty, by virtue of being defined as ‘competent authorities’ under the Habitats Regulations, to ensure that planning application decisions comply with the Habitats Regulations. If the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are not met and impacts on Habitats Sites are not mitigated, then development must not be permitted.

**2.1.5.** Where a Habitats Site could be affected by a plan, such as a Local Plan, or any project, such as a new development, then Habitats Regulations Assessment screening must be undertaken. If this cannot rule out any possible likely significant effect on a Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, prior to the consideration of mitigation measures, then an Appropriate Assessment must then be undertaken. The Appropriate Assessment identifies the interest features of the site (such as birds, plants or coastal habitats), how these could be harmed, assesses whether the proposed plan or project could have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Habitats Site (either alone or in combination), and finally how this could be mitigated to meet the Stage 2 Habitats Regulations Assessment “integrity” test.

**2.1.6.** The aim of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process is to “maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest” (The European Commission Habitats Directive, 92/43/EEC, Article 2(2)). The Habitats Regulations 2017 have transposed the European Union Habitats and Wild Birds Directives into UK law to make them operable from 1 January 2021. These remain unchanged until amended by Parliament so the requirements for Habitats Regulations Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have been retained.

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## **Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012**

**2.1.7.** These regulations set out the procedures for making Tree Preservation Orders and the activities that are prohibited in relation to trees protected by these orders. Tree Preservation Orders can be made for trees or groups of trees because of their nature conservation value, as well as for their amenity value.

## **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**

**2.1.8.** Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act places a duty on public bodies in England to conserve biodiversity. It requires local authorities and government departments to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their normal functions such as policy and decision making.

**2.1.9.** Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain lists of species and types of habitats which are regarded by Natural England to be of “principal importance” for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England, and these are known as Priority Species and Priority Habitats.

## **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

**2.1.10.** Amongst other things, this Act strengthens the protection afforded to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including greater powers for Natural England to be able to secure their appropriate management and a requirement for local authorities to further their conservation and enhancement.

## **Hedgerow Regulations 1997**

**2.1.11.** Although outside of the development management process, these regulations provide a convenient framework for the identification of hedgerows with importance for wildlife, landscape and heritage. For projects that do not require planning consent, the requirements of the regulations would need to be met to permit the removal of any hedgerow or hedgerow section, except if it forms a curtilage to a property.

## **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**

**2.1.12.** This Act refers specifically to badgers, and makes it an offence to kill, injure or take a badger, or to damage or interfere with a sett unless a licence is obtained from a statutory authority.

## **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**

**2.1.13.** The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the primary mechanism for the protection of all wildlife in the UK and includes schedules that set out those species with additional levels of protection. It also provides the basis for the identification of sites of national importance for nature conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

## 2.2. UK Environment Act 2021

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- 2.2.1.** The Environment Bill received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021, meaning it is now an Act of Parliament. [The Environment Act](#) provides legislation to protect and enhance the environment to deliver the [Government's 25-year environment plan](#).
- 2.2.2.** Part 6 of the Act relates to nature and biodiversity, including habitat and species protection and enhancement within the planning process.
- 2.2.3.** The Act has mandated a minimum measurable Biodiversity Net Gain for all developments covered by the Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA) and requires that the biodiversity value of the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the site by a minimum of 10%. Biodiversity value is measured using a metric produced by DEFRA and the baseline value is calculated from the condition of the site before any intervention has occurred.
- 2.2.4.** BNG habitats can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits, subject to BNG best practice guidelines, appropriate local delivery mechanisms and BNG providers being established. Habitats must be secured and managed for a minimum of 30 years via planning obligations or through Conservation Covenants, as described within part 7 of the Act.
- 2.2.5.** The Act specifies a two-year transition period before mandatory net gain become law. The timeline for secondary legislation and guidance for mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain are still unknown, but it is likely to apply to all TCPA developments and National Significant Infrastructure projects (NSIPs), by late 2023. The Councils' interim expectations in relation to biodiversity net gain for biodiversity and our approach to assessment within the planning process, pending further clarification from Government, is set out under Biodiversity Issue B7 (page 46).
- 2.2.6.** Net gain requirements do not undermine the existing mitigation hierarchy, or the range of protection in planning policy and legislation for irreplaceable habitats, designated sites and protected species.
- 2.2.7.** The Act introduces a statutory requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be produced by a responsible authority appointed by the Government. The responsible authority is likely to be either the Local Nature Partnership or Cambridgeshire County Council. These strategies will map important habitat areas where there is an opportunity to improve the local environment to guide biodiversity net gain and other policies.

# 3

## Planning Policy

- 3.1. Planning context
- 3.2. National policy and guidance
- 3.3. Existing local policies
- 3.4. Area Action Plans and Neighbourhood Plans
- 3.5. Other relevant adopted Supplementary Planning Documents
- 3.6. Local biodiversity strategies
- 3.7. Permitted development

## 3.1. Planning context

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**3.1.1.** As local planning authorities, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have a statutory duty to carry out certain planning functions for their administrative areas. These functions include the preparation of a Local Plan and the determination of planning applications. The way these functions are to be carried out is governed by legislation and specified within the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), with reference to further guidance, standards and best practice focused on different considerations that influence planning decisions.

**3.1.2.** The following sections summarise current planning policy, as relevant to the subject of conserving and enhancing biodiversity. It should be noted that the subject of biodiversity overlaps significantly with other policy and strategy areas, including landscape, arboriculture, green infrastructure, health and wellbeing, sustainability, and climate change.

## 3.2. National policy and guidance

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**3.2.1.** The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable, well-designed development. Within this aim, it seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment and ensure that biodiversity and appropriate landscaping are fully integrated into new developments in order to create accessible green spaces for wildlife and people, to contribute to a high quality natural and built environment, and to contribute to a better quality of life.

**3.2.2.** Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework covers the role of the planning system in conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Paragraph 174. Planning policies should contribute to, and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things:

a. protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner

commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).

d. minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

e. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.

f. remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

**3.2.3.** Paragraph 175. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a

## 3.2. National policy and guidance (continued)

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strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

**3.2.4.** Paragraph 179. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a. identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider 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 national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b. promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

**3.2.5.** Paragraph 180. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a. 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.
- b. 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 SSSI.

c. 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

d. 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.

**3.2.6.** Paragraph 181. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
- c) 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

Paragraph 182. 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 plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

## 3.3. Existing local policies

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**3.3.1.** The policies from the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the Cambridge Local Plan that include an aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and that this Supplementary Planning Document supports and expands upon, are set out below. Full wording of these policies is included in Appendix 1.

### South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

- NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
- NH/3: Protecting Agricultural Land
- NH/4 Biodiversity
- NH/5 Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance
- NH/6 Green Infrastructure
- NH/7 Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees
- CC/8 Sustainable Drainage Systems
- HQ/1 Design Principles

### Cambridge Local Plan

- 7 The River Cam
- 8 Setting of the city
- 31 Integrated water management
- 52 Protecting garden land and the subdivision of existing dwelling plots
- 57 Designing New Buildings (criteria h.)
- 58 Altering and extending existing buildings
- 59 Designing landscape and the public realm
- 66 Paving over front gardens
- 69 Protection of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance
- 70 Protection of Priority Species and Habitats
- 71 Trees





## 3.4. Area Action Plans and Neighbourhood Plans

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**3.4.1.** Area Action Plans are documents that are adopted as part of the Local Plan and that set out policies and guidance for specific areas within the Council's administrative area. Neighbourhood Plans provide a similar function but are prepared by local communities. Both kinds of documents usually include policies that refer to biodiversity features, adding to the planning policy context for development management.

**3.4.2.** Neighbourhood Plans are an opportunity for communities to improve their local environment, including protecting and enhancing existing assets, such as local parks, nature reserves and other green spaces. Making biodiversity an integral part of neighbourhood planning can

also help to manage environmental risk and improve resilience to climate change. For example, identifying a local biodiversity network and integrating with land use policies could help to manage the risk of flooding by protecting natural blue and green spaces from development as well as designate these as Local Green Spaces where they provide public benefits.

**3.4.3.** Information about existing Area Action Plans, the areas designated for Neighbourhood Plans and the status of the plans can be found on the [South Cambridgeshire District Council website](#) and the [Cambridge City Council website](#).



## 3.5. Other relevant adopted Supplementary Planning Documents

**3.5.1.** Other Supplementary Planning Documents have been produced individually or collaboratively by the Councils, and these should be read alongside this one to ensure cross compliance and integration. The following documents are of direct relevance to Biodiversity, but this does not represent a complete list of Supplementary Planning Documents.

**3.5.2.** South Cambridgeshire District Council has adopted the following Supplementary Planning Documents

- [Landscape in New Developments](#) (adopted March 2010)
- [Trees and Development Sites](#) (adopted January 2009)
- [Open Space in New Developments](#) (adopted January 2009)
- [District Design Guide SPD](#) (adopted March 2010) particularly Chapters 2 & 3
- [Bourn Airfield New Village](#) (adopted October 2019)
- [Waterbeach New Town](#) (adopted February 2019)
- [Cottenham Village Design Statement](#) (adopted November 2007)
- [Fen Drayton Former Land Settlement Association Estate](#) (adopted May 2011)

**3.5.3.** Both Councils adopted the [Cambridgeshire Flood and Water](#) Supplementary Planning Document in 2018, which includes a strong focus on design and management of Sustainable Drainage Systems to enhance biodiversity value.

**3.5.4.** Both Councils adopted a [Sustainable Design and Construction](#) Supplementary Planning Document in January 2020 and are currently developing a new local landscape character area study Supplementary Planning Document.



Biomedical Campus, Cambridge, Guy Belcher

## 3.6. Local biodiversity strategies

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- 3.6.1.** The following paragraphs summarise the range of strategies and projects of relevance to Greater Cambridge that are aimed at enhancing biodiversity or that provide technical support to focus measures that will achieve this. All of these have been endorsed or adopted by the Councils and should be used to guide decisions on habitat creation and species protection included within planning proposals. Reference to these initiatives would demonstrate the strategic basis of applicants' decision making around biodiversity matters.
- 3.6.2.** Natural Cambridgeshire is the Local Nature Partnership covering the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, providing strategic leadership for the recovery of nature under their [Doubling Nature vision](#). This vision seeks to achieve an increase in the amount of land managed for nature from 8% to 16%, by 2050. One of the main areas of focus to achieve this vision is securing high quality green and blue infrastructure within new residential and commercial developments.
- 3.6.3.** Natural Cambridgeshire has developed a [Development with Nature Toolkit](#) to provide developers with a means of demonstrating their commitment to achieving a net gain in biodiversity on major developments. The optional toolkit provides standard guidance that, if followed from the earliest stages of development planning, will determine whether nature is enhanced by the scheme or not. This best practice document is endorsed by both Councils.
- 3.6.4.** The [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Future Parks Accelerator Project](#) follows a collaborative approach, seeking to safeguard the future of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough parks and green spaces by finding new ways to deliver, manage and fund parks and open space, with a shared vision across a wide range of partners and stakeholders. This work may identify future design principles and models for ongoing management of new natural green space provision that will require consideration during the planning process.
- 3.6.5.** [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#), hosted by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire, and [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Group](#), have prepared habitat opportunity maps covering grassland, woodland and wetland, identifying locations where habitat creation would have the most ecological benefit by connecting existing habitats where environmental conditions are most appropriate.
- 3.6.6.** South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council combined to produce a [Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping report](#), which provides an evidence base of green infrastructure assets and networks across Greater Cambridge and identifies specific and deliverable opportunities to enhance and expand the network. This document has been prepared as part of the evidence base for the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

## 3.6. Local biodiversity strategies (continued)

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- 3.6.7.** [Cambridge City Council produced a Nature Conservation Strategy](#) that was adopted as part of the Local Plan in September 2006. The strategy is currently being reviewed but will continue to act as a guiding document for Cambridge City Council's general approach to biodiversity conservation across its range of functions. The Strategy will act in parallel to the new Supplementary Planning Document. It details the biodiversity resource within Cambridge, sets out strategic aims and principles to be implemented in order to further nature conservation, and includes action plans to address a wide range of identified key issues. Cambridge City Council passed a motion in May 2019 to declare a [biodiversity emergency](#) and their [biodiversity webpage](#) provides links to initiatives and projects implemented as part of their Nature Conservation Strategy.
- 3.6.8.** Cambridge Past, Present and Future is a charity focused on protecting and enhancing Cambridge's green landscape. In partnership with the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, it has prepared a [Cambridge Nature Network](#), covering an area within a ten-kilometre radius of Cambridge. It identifies five priority landscape areas and highlights the best opportunities for the creation of new habitats and large-scale natural greenspaces. It also sets out the mechanisms by which the Nature Network can be grown, which includes the development process.
- 3.6.9.** The [Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Project](#) seeks to protect and improve the chalk streams in and around Cambridge. The report (published in Dec 2020) provides an overview of the main problems affecting each chalk stream and the key opportunities to improve each one. It also identifies some potential projects for delivery in partnership with stakeholders and landowners.
- 3.6.10.** The [Wicken Fen Vision](#) is a 100 year plan to restore the Fenland landscape and habitats around Wicken Fen to an area of 53 square kilometres, linking to the Cambridge Nature Network.
- 3.6.11.** The importance of the landscape is reflected in national planning guidance with the National Planning Policy Framework stating that the planning system should contribute to, and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The South Cambridgeshire landscape has several distinctive and readily identified characters. These have been identified by Natural England as five distinct [National Character Areas](#):
- The Fens
  - South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands
  - East Anglian Chalk
  - Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
  - Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge.

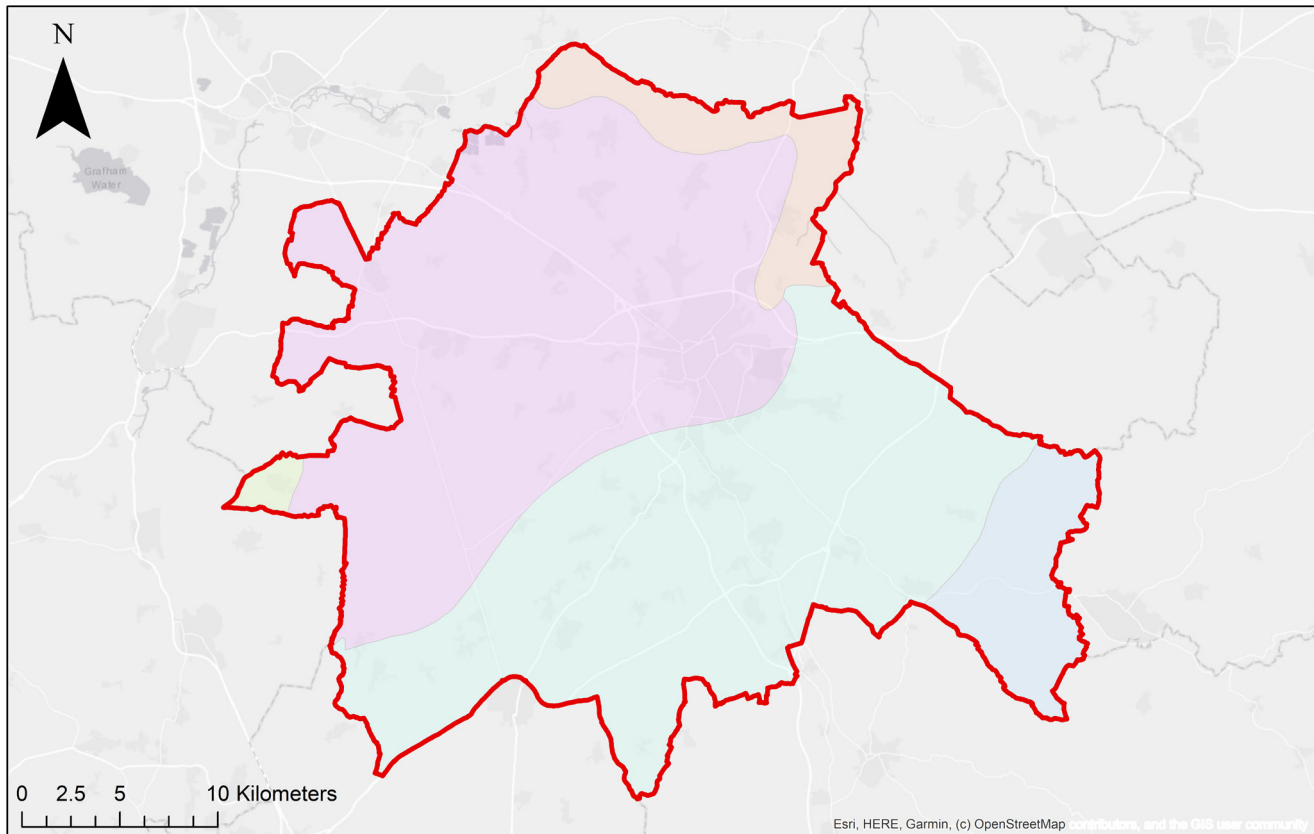


Figure 1 National Character Areas within Greater Cambridge

Legend

Greater Cambridge	Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands	South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland
Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge	East Anglian Chalk	The Fens

## 3.7. Permitted development

**3.7.1. Permitted development** rights derived from [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015 \(as amended\)](#) mean that certain types of development can be performed without the need to apply for planning permission. However, although this would be outside the normal planning process, there remains a need for the Councils to consider the effects that any development relying on permitted development rights might have on biodiversity. Legal protection for wildlife still applies and so any legally protected animals, plants or habitats that may be affected will need proper consideration for the development to be lawful.

**3.7.2.** Certain types of development are granted planning permission by national legislation without the need to submit a planning application. This is known as 'Permitted development'. To be eligible for these permitted development rights, each 'class' specified in the legislation has associated limitations and conditions that proposals must comply with.

## 3.7. Permitted development (continued)

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- 3.7.3.** One such condition on certain classes of permitted development is the need to submit an application to the Local Planning Authority for its 'Prior approval' or to determine if its 'Prior approval' will be required. This allows the Local Planning Authority to consider the proposals, their likely impacts regarding certain factors (such as transport and highways) and how these may be mitigated. Where natural habitats and wildlife are likely to be present, adequate information must be provided to the councils to support the assessment of the ecological implications of the development, the need for mitigation, and if necessary, the need for a licence from Natural England.
- 3.7.4.** Work must not commence on the development until the Local Planning Authority has issued its determination or it has received 'deemed consent' when the time period for a determination to be issued expires. By default, this is an eight week period from when the application is received, but this can vary depending on the type of proposal and may be extended if all parties are in agreement.
- 3.7.5.** Article 4 directions are made when the character of an area of acknowledged importance would be threatened, most commonly in Conservation Areas. Where properties are affected by such a direction, some of the permitted development rights can be removed by the Councils issuing an Article 4 direction, which then means planning consent will be needed for work that normally does not need it.
- 3.7.6.** Class Q applications are applications for Prior Approval for a change of use or conversion of a building, and any land within its curtilage, from a use as an agricultural building to that of a dwelling. Where the buildings are likely to support bats or other legally protected species, there is a risk that they may be affected by the proposals, and it is therefore essential that the Local Planning Authority has certainty of impacts prior to determination of any application. Sufficient information, including appropriate survey results, will be needed to support such an application.
- 3.7.7.** Permission in Principle applications do not include a consent as this is a separate step in the planning process. The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage. In addition, Local Authorities cannot list the information they require for applications for permission in principle in the same way they can for applications for planning permission.
- 3.7.8.** Change of use applications can bring benefits if properly planned and sensitively managed. The use of grassland sites by horses for equestrian purposes can sustain their botanical interest. However, there is also much potential to damage the interest of grassland sites through over-grazing. Over-grazing may lead to the proliferation of certain undesirable species, increased soil erosion, and diffuse pollution. Development proposals for stabling or for Change of Use to paddock land will be subject to ecological assessment based on the likelihood of protected and Priority species being present and affected, as well as impacts on the local landscape character.

# 4

## The biodiversity resource

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Statutory designated sites
- 4.3. Non statutory designated Local Sites
- 4.4. Protected species
- 4.5. Priority habitats
- 4.6. Priority species
- 4.7. Red List species

# 4.1. Introduction

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**4.1.1.** Biodiversity exists everywhere and includes the ubiquitous species as well as rarities, but the designation of species and sites has been used as a means of identifying relative value and for the prioritisation of nature conservation action. This chapter provides a summary of the sites designated for their nature conservation value across the Greater Cambridge area, and of the legally protected and Priority species present.

**4.1.2.** All such sites and species are material to planning decisions, and the sites provide the core of the local ecological network as well as being integral to developing Nature Recovery Networks. Detailed information about designated sites and existing records of protected and Priority species can be obtained through a data search from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#).

# 4.2. Statutory designated sites

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## Habitats (European) sites

**4.2.1.** Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation are sites of international importance protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) as a requirement of the UK's commitment to international commitments. These were formerly known as European or Natura 2000 sites. Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the criteria of the international Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Collectively, these sites are now known as Habitats Sites as defined by [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

**4.2.2.** The potential impact of planning proposals on Habitats Sites inside and outside of the Greater Cambridge area will need to be covered within supporting ecological information, as guided by defined Zones of Influence agreed with Natural England. These are likely to be based on a particular impact type and are shown as

Impact Risk Zones on [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) around the underpinning Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

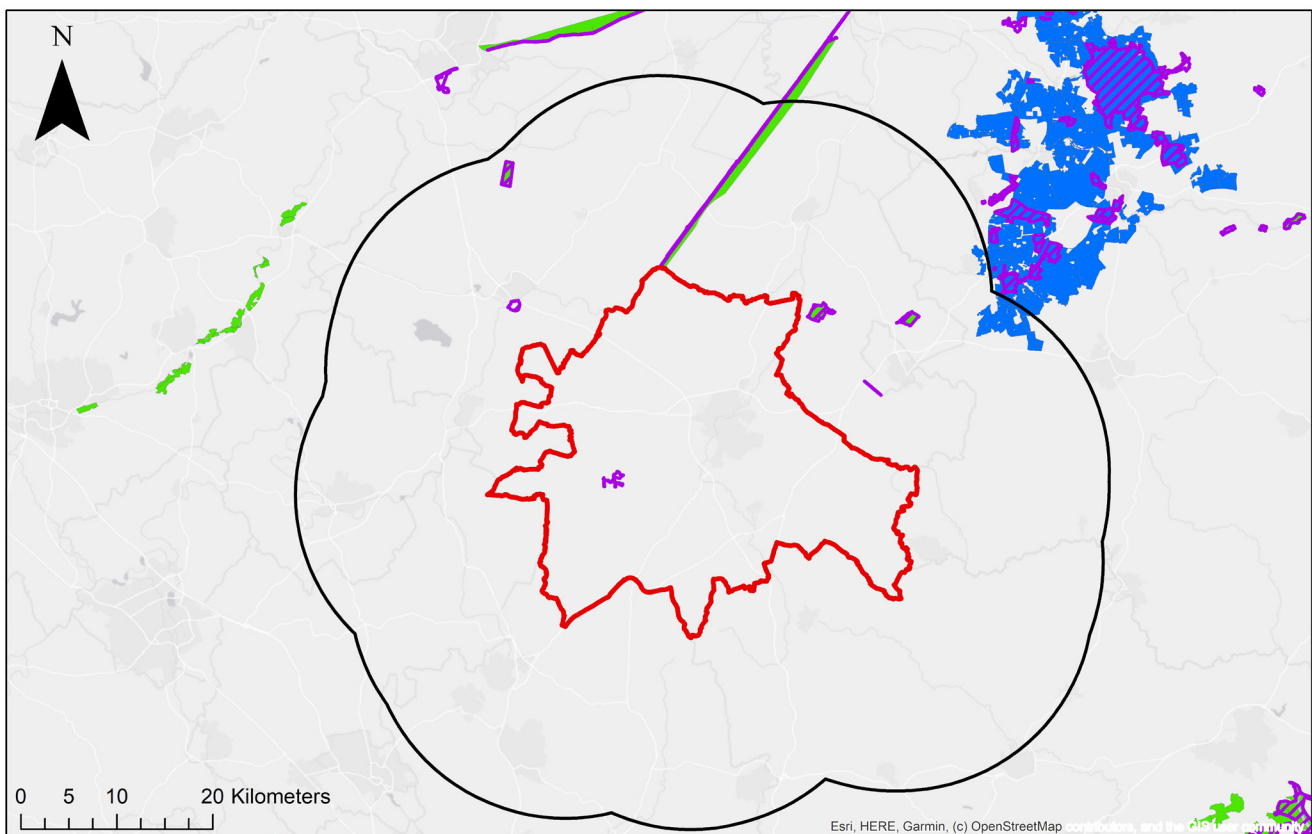
**4.2.3.** There is one Habitats Site - Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation - located within the Greater Cambridge area, and a further four within 20km of the Councils' administrative boundaries. The distribution of these sites is illustrated in Figure 2, but [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) should be consulted for boundaries and site information:

- Ouse Washes Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar - abutting the Local Plan area to the north at Earith, designated for its internationally important breeding and over-wintering assemblages of birds, for its population of Spined Loach and for the presence of other nationally rare plants and animals.
- Portholme Special Area of Conservation - 4 km to the northwest, designated for its lowland hay meadow habitat.



## 4.2. Statutory designated sites (continued)

- Devils Dyke Special Area of Conservation - 5.8 km to the northeast, designated as an important orchid site on semi-natural dry grassland habitat.
- Fenland Special Areas of Conservation, which also covers the land designated as Wicken Fen Ramsar and Chippenham Fen Ramsar – approximately 1 km to the northeast, designated for its fen meadow and calcareous fen habitats.



### Legend

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Greater Cambridge            | Ramsar                  |
| 20km buffer                  | Special Protection Area |
| Special Area of Conservation |                         |

Figure 2 Internationally designated sites

## 4.2. Statutory designated sites (continued)

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- 4.2.4.** The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation comprises a mixture of ancient coppice woodland (Eversden Wood) and high forest woods likely to be of more recent origin (Wimpole Woods). Wimpole Woods holds the summer maternity roost of a population of Barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*). The bats also use suitable habitat within the Special Area of Conservation to forage and it provides commuting routes when they forage outside of the site's boundary, where they utilise wet meadows, woodland streams and rivers.
- 4.2.5.** Surveys to support development proposals have identified summer roosts of male Barbastelle bats in old and unmanaged woodland outside of the Special Area of Conservation, using loose bark on dead trees and crevice features caused by damage. Barbastelle bats can range 20 km per night, further for non-reproductive females, and they frequently switch tree roosts throughout the year within their territory. Barbastelle bats will remain in tree roosts over winter unless temperatures dip below freezing, when hibernation roosts have been found in features such as caves, old buildings and basements.

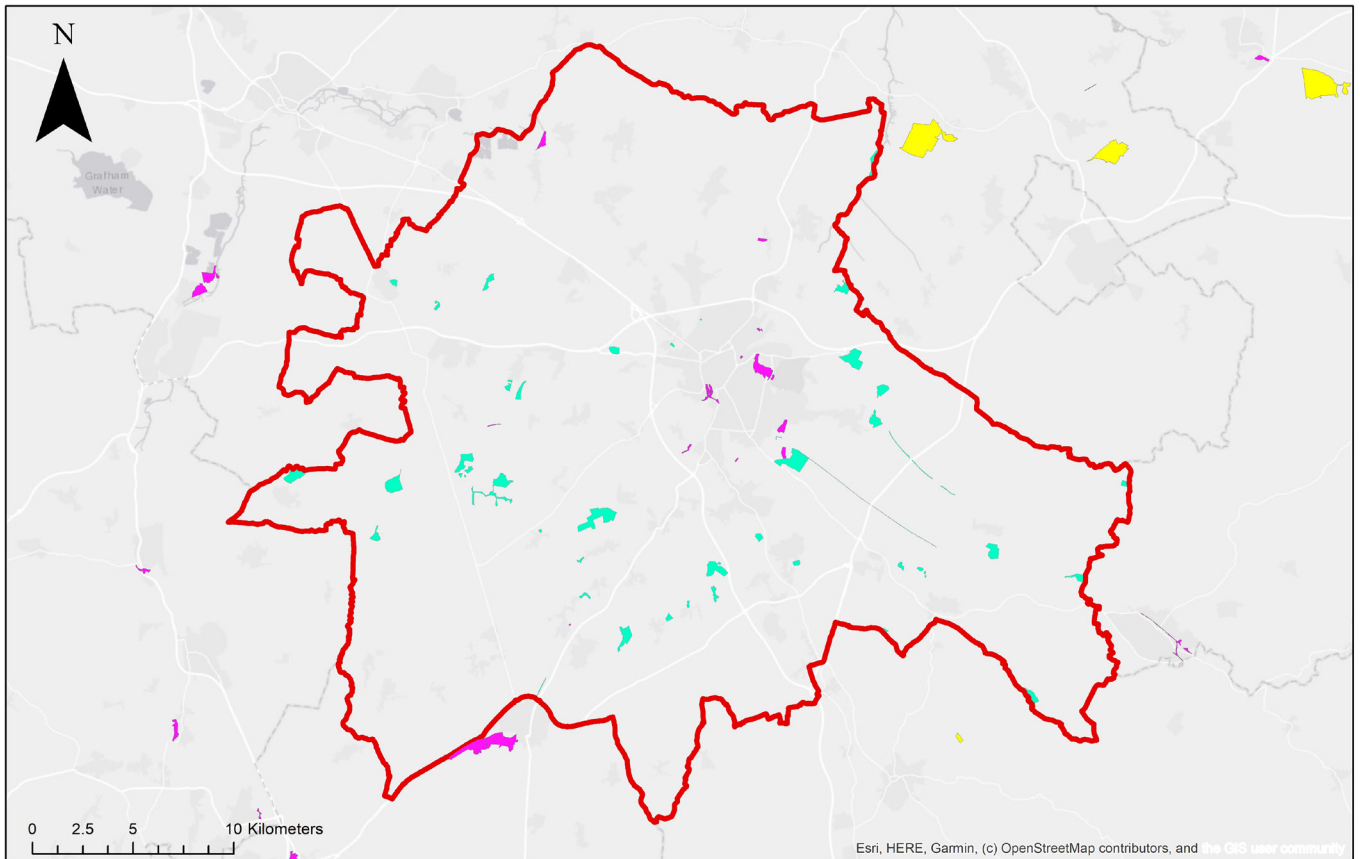
### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 4.2.6.** Sites of Special Scientific Interest are designated in accordance with the duties in law placed upon each of the country nature conservation bodies to notify as a Sites of Special Scientific Interest any area of land which, in its opinion, is of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, geological, geomorphological or physiographical features.
- 4.2.7.** There are 41 Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Greater Cambridge area, covering a range of habitats and geological formations, including chalk grassland, species-rich neutral grassland, reedbed and fen, Ancient Woodland, chalk pits, gravel pits and clay pits. Further information can be obtained through the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) including boundaries and links to site descriptions.

### Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

- 4.2.8.** Local Nature Reserves are statutorily protected sites of land designated by Local Authorities because of their special natural interest, educational value and access to nature. There are 13 statutory Local Nature Reserves within the Greater Cambridge area as illustrated on [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#). More information on individual Local Nature Reserves is available on the [Cambridge City Council](#) and [Cambridgeshire County Council websites](#).

## 4.2. Statutory designated sites (continued)



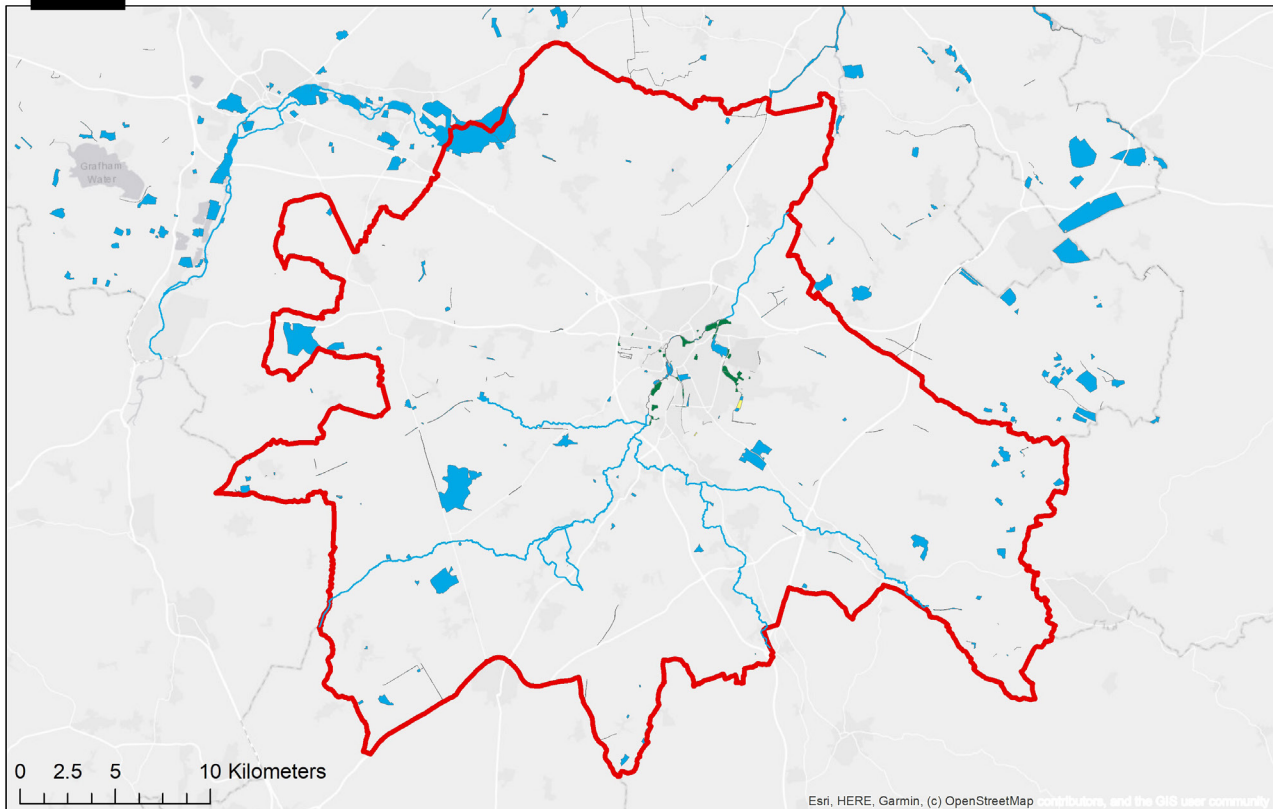
### Legend

- |   |                       |   |                                      |
|---|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
|  | Greater Cambridge     |  | National Nature Reserves             |
|  | Local Nature Reserves |  | Sites of Special Scientific Interest |

Figure 3 Nationally designated sites



## 4.3. Non statutory designated Local Sites



### Legend

 Greater Cambridge

 Local Geological Sites

 County Wildlife Sites

Figure 4 Locally designated sites

 City Wildlife Sites

**4.3.1.** Local Sites, as defined by the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), have been identified for all Councils in Cambridgeshire and are referred to as County Wildlife Sites. These are designated for their importance for nature conservation at a county level and are identified on the Councils' Local Plan Policies Maps. County Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites identified against a set of locally developed [criteria](#), produced by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough County Wildlife Site Panel and covering both habitat and species.

**4.3.2.** The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) requires these sites to be protected through the Local Plan system as part of a Local Ecological Network. As well as supporting the majority of Priority Habitat within a given area, County Wildlife Sites often present opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, by improving existing management.

**4.3.3.** Within Cambridge City, a second layer of non-statutory sites have been identified and are referred to as [City Wildlife Sites](#), recognizing the importance of natural green space and habitats within the urban context. These sites are identified under a separate set of criteria with a lower threshold than for County Wildlife Sites.

**4.3.4.** Cambridgeshire's [Protected Roadside Verges](#) represent the best examples of road verge grassland across the county, identified for special management by Cambridgeshire County Council against a defined set of criteria based upon the presence of rare species or those indicating quality grassland habitat. Road verges constitute the largest area of unimproved grassland within the Greater Cambridge area and will be protected from development impacts. Many Protected Roadside Verges are also designated as County Wildlife Sites.

## 4.4. Protected species

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- 4.4.1. The presence of any legally protected species is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. Populations of most species are dynamic and so existing records can only be used as a guide to likely presence and should be tested by appropriate field survey work.
- 4.4.2. European Protected Species with known populations within the Greater Cambridge area are Great Crested Newts, 12 species of bats (including the population of Barbastelle bats at Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation) and Otter, with a very few records of Dormouse.
- 4.4.3. A range of other UK species are protected by various pieces of legislation, primarily the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Those protected by their inclusion in the Schedules of the Act and known to be present in the Greater Cambridge area include White-clawed Crayfish, Water Vole, Badger, Common Lizard, Grass Snake and Barn Owl. The area also supports populations of Fairy Shrimp, including at the Whittlesford Thriplow Hummocky Fields Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 4.4.4. For advice on proposals that will require a protected species mitigation licence, developers can use [Natural England's Pre-submission screening service](#).

## 4.5. Priority habitats

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- 4.5.1. Priority Habitats are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. The distribution of Priority Habitats in South Cambridgeshire district and Cambridge City can be identified on the [Cambridgeshire Habitat Opportunity Map](#). Priority Habitats are largely represented by small, fragmented blocks, but there are clusters reflecting the varied environmental character of the area.
- 4.5.2. Lowland Calcareous Grassland is predominantly found to the south east of Cambridge, within the Gog Magog Hills. To the east and north east is the fenland, with concentrations of Lowland Fen, Reedbeds and Lowland Meadows. The corridor of the River Cam and its tributaries supports Floodplain Grassland Mosaic, Wet Woodland and Lowland Meadows, as well as the River habitat itself and Chalk Stream sections. To the west of Cambridge are Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Hedgerows, Lowland Meadows and Traditional Orchards on the boulder clay. To the north of Cambridge, the presence of Traditional Orchards on the fen edge reflects the significance of former land uses.
- 4.5.3. Natural England maintains inventories of Priority Habitats, which can be viewed on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) map. These inventories should only be viewed as provisional, with the presence or absence of Priority Habitats to be confirmed by field survey results, with reference to the published [UK Priority habitat descriptions](#).

## 4.6. Priority species

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- 4.6.1.** Priority Species are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. Over 200 UK Priority Species are found in Cambridgeshire as a whole, which includes previously common but declining species such as Common Toad, Brown Hare, House Sparrow and Hedgehog alongside a range of lesser known invertebrates, and plants such as Purple Milk-vetch.
- 4.6.2.** Given the largely agricultural character of the area, there is also good representation of farmland bird species such as Skylark, Turtle Dove, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Yellowhammer, whose populations could be affected by any development on arable land. The loss of breeding territories of such farmland birds is likely to require compensation by provision on nearby farmland. Overwintering birds such as Lapwing and Golden Plover are also important farmland species to be considered in ecology surveys.
- 4.6.3.** [The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Group](#) provides a full list of Priority Species known to be present in the county.
- 4.6.4.** Priority invertebrate species may be poorly recorded, but the identification of habitats and features of likely value to invertebrates should serve as a trigger to consider the need for specialist survey. The national invertebrate conservation charity Buglife has created a map of [B-Lines](#) as a strategic initiative to target habitat creation and connectivity for pollinators and has also mapped Important Invertebrate Areas, landscapes that are of particular significance for invertebrate populations, where a greater focus on impacts to favourable habitat may be required. The Fens [Important Invertebrate Area](#) lies within Greater Cambridge.



## 4.7. Red List species

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**4.7.1.** The nature conservation status of species has been determined by the assessment of populations against threat and rarity criteria, often at local, national and international levels. Species with higher rarity and threat status are generally known as Red List species. In the UK, information on national reviews and the status of species is available from the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#). As there is no centrally coordinated approach to these reviews, the coverage of species groups, the age of the information, and the criteria used vary.

**4.7.2.** There is no Cambridgeshire Red List, but there is a list of [Additional Species of Interest](#), which provides comparable information and includes the [Cambridgeshire Plant Species of Conservation Concern](#).



Corn Bunting, David C Wege

### Non-native invasive species

**4.7.3.** Vigorous or invasive non-native species can impact negatively upon biodiversity by out-competing native flora. This can then lead to a negative impact upon fauna by limiting the available feeding and cover areas. Species of particular concern include Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*), Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), Parrot's-feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) and Water Fern (*Azolla filiculoides*). More information is available on the webpages of the [GB Non-native Species Secretariat](#).

**4.7.4.** Where proposals at development sites are likely to result in the spread of non-native invasive plant species the development may not be permitted until suitable measures have been agreed and / or undertaken to control the invasive species. It should be noted that it is an offence to spread, or cause to grow, certain plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 as amended.

# 5

## Biodiversity in the development management process

- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.2. Overarching principles
- 5.3. Site selection stage
- 5.4. Pre-application stage
- 5.5. Design stage
- 5.6. Application stage
- 5.7. Construction stage
- 5.8. Post-construction stage



# 5.1. Introduction

**5.1.1.** As biodiversity is a material consideration for planning, this section covers the need to consider biodiversity at every stage in the planning application process and what form that consideration should take

to ensure that progress is not held up. It sets out the types and quality of information that applicants and their ecological advisers are expected to achieve when preparing an application for submission.

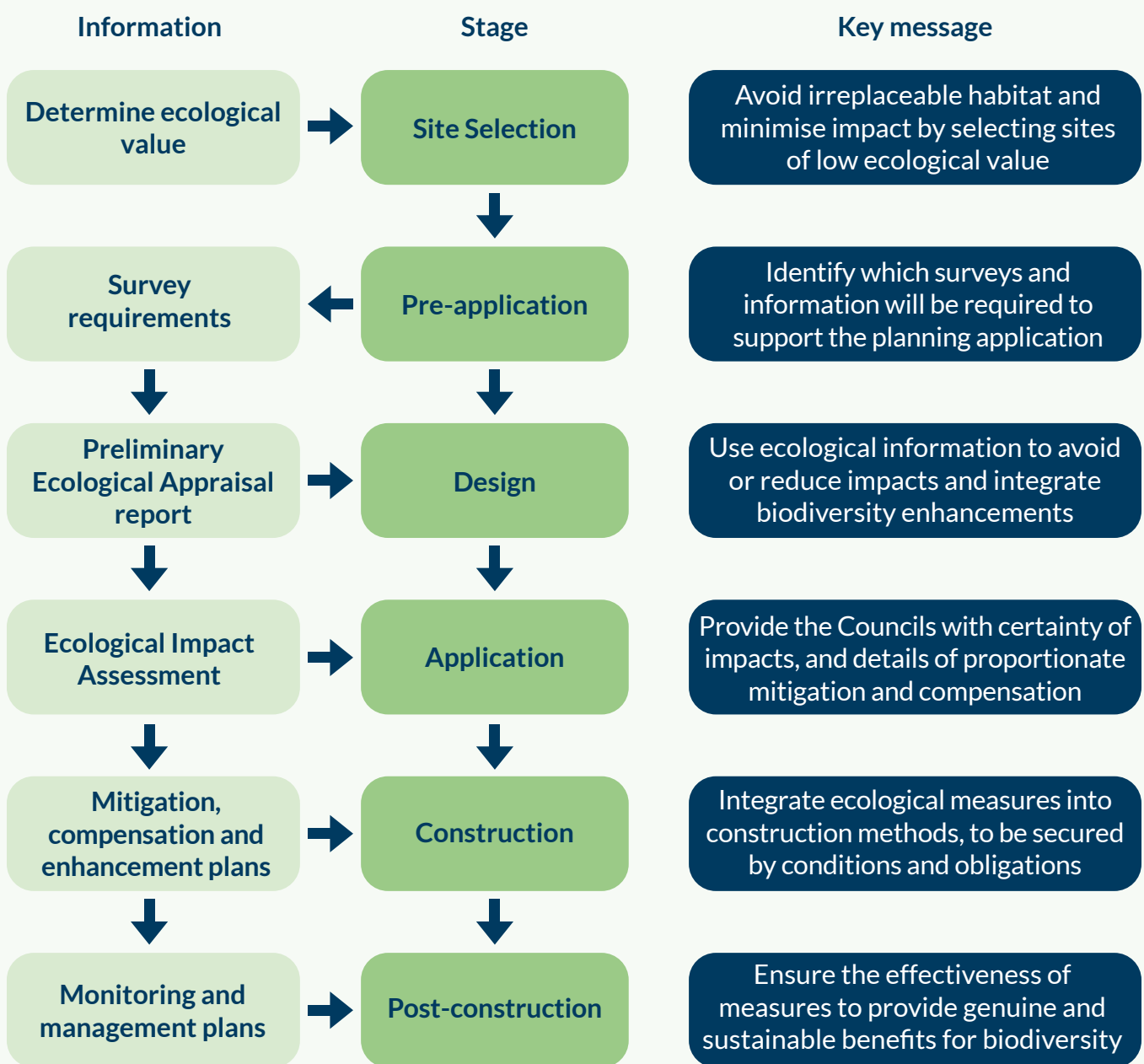


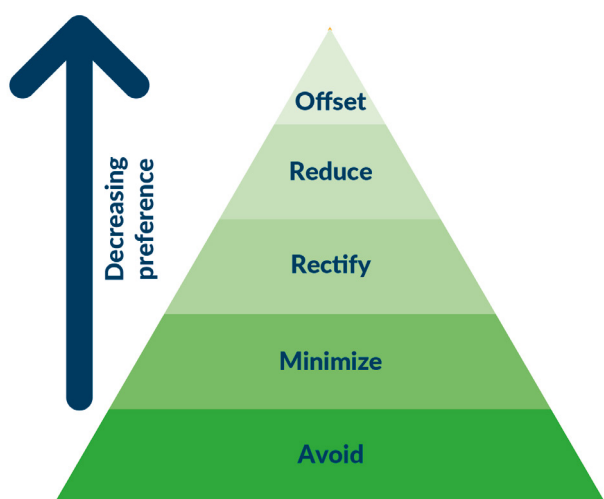
Figure 5 Stages within the development management process

## 5.2. Overarching principles

### Biodiversity Issue B1 – mitigation hierarchy

To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/4 Item 3 and Policy 70), submitted ecological reports are expected to explain how the hierarchy of mitigation measures (Avoid, Mitigate, Compensate) has been embedded into the design of the development. Where impacts on habitats and species cannot be avoided, a clear explanation of why alternative sites are not feasible, and what proposed mitigation, and compensation measures are necessary to address all likely significant adverse effects is needed.

Figure 6 Mitigation Hierarchy



**5.2.1.** The mitigation hierarchy aims to prevent net biodiversity loss and strict adherence to its principles is essential. This approach is included in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and also in ecological best practice guidelines. Definitions vary, but usually include the following steps that must be implemented in order:

- Avoid - Anticipated biodiversity losses should be avoided and reduced by using alternative sites and designs, retaining habitats of value for enhancement and management and retaining species in situ.

- Mitigate - Impacts considered unavoidable should be mitigated where the impact occurs, by replacing lost protected and priority habitats and accommodating displaced species within the site boundary.
- Compensate - If mitigation measures are insufficient then, as a last resort, off-site compensatory measures should also be implemented in proportion to the harm, by creating suitable habitat off-site and relocating species.

**5.2.2.** As required by the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and as a key principle of delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (see Biodiversity Issue B6), applicants must demonstrate that, in the design of their proposals, they have followed the mitigation hierarchy with respect to ecological impacts.

**5.2.3.** Ecological consultants can advise on avoiding negative impacts on the biodiversity of a development site by involvement throughout the planning application process, but most importantly at the site selection and design stages. Seeking advice early on in the planning process might help avoid costly delays later on.

**5.2.4.** Homeowners and developers will often require an ecologist to undertake ecological surveys and mitigation work in relation to a building project to meet the Councils' requirements for ecological information. Contracting a member of a professional institute such as the [Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management](#) means that you are engaging a professional who is working to high standards and there is a complaints procedure if anything goes wrong. Applicants needing to

## 5.2. Overarching principles (continued)

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[find a consultant](#) to support their planning application can use the tool on the [Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management](#) website. This also provides further information on [ecological surveys and their purpose](#), which describes the different types of reports that you may be asked for by the Councils, [what to expect from a bat survey](#) and a [householder's guide to engaging an ecologist](#).

- 5.2.5. The approach to following the hierarchy should be informed by the ecological value of the habitats and species to be affected. Impacts to Priority habitats and species should always be avoided, if possible, but mitigation or compensation for any species or habitats degraded or destroyed through the development process is also required.

### BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development

- 5.2.6. This British Standard gives guidance on how development might affect biodiversity, provides recommendations on how to integrate biodiversity into all stages of the planning, design and development process, and provides a rigorous framework for assessing impacts and for securing mitigation, compensation and appropriate biodiversity enhancements. Compliance with the standard in the ecological information submitted by applicants can be seen as an indication of its validity and relevance to the determination process and is encouraged. It is intended to assist those concerned with ecological issues as they arise through the planning process and in matters

relating to consented development that could have site-specific ecological implications.

- 5.2.7. BS42020 states that high quality ecological information is important for effective decision making as well as for compliance with legal obligations and policy requirements and successful implementation of the practical conservation and biodiversity enhancement measures identified in the ecological reports submitted with planning applications. The standard identifies the ecological data required and considerations for its assessment, and its use in the design of mitigation measures, to give certainty, clarity and confidence to those involved at all stages of the planning process.
- 5.2.8. Compliance with this standard is an important and credible way to demonstrate the validity of the ecological information you will bring forward in support of your planning application. Any deviations from this British Standard will need to be fully justified and they may be challenged by the Councils or external consultees, leading to delays in the decision process.



## 5.3. Site selection stage

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**5.3.1.** The easiest way to avoid a negative impact on species and habitats and to maximise the gain for biodiversity that can be achieved from a development is to select a site that has low existing ecological value and low strategic potential for habitat creation, buffering or connectivity. This could include sites that have been intensively managed or where land use has resulted in degraded habitats. In addition, brownfield sites can also contribute to wider strategic potential for habitat creation by providing links between green corridors or linking up wildlife corridors. It should be noted that ecological value should be measured by a suitably qualified professional and not judged on appearance, as sites that may appear to be degraded could include features of particular significance to certain species.

### **Biodiversity Issue B2 – Protection of irreplaceable habitats**

Developers will be expected to avoid direct and indirect impacts on irreplaceable habitats and embed measures to achieve this within the design of any development proposal.

To meet policy requirements (NH/4 item 6, NH/7 and Policy 71), the councils will refuse applications that would result in the loss, deterioration or fragmentation of irreplaceable habitats unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh the loss, and a suitable compensation strategy exists. In these situations, biodiversity net gain is not achievable. As per NPPF 2021, there would have to be wholly exceptional reasons for this to be the case with the burden of proof for these falling to developers to provide irrefutable evidence of these exceptional reasons.

**5.3.2.** Irreplaceable habitats are defined in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) as “habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity.” In addition to Ancient Woodland and veteran trees, other types of habitat such as unimproved grassland, lowland fen and ancient hedgerows are also considered to be irreplaceable. The loss of these habitats cannot be compensated for by gains elsewhere and so they are excluded from Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.

**5.3.3.** All development predicted to result in impacts on irreplaceable habitat will need to be accompanied by detailed survey information and evidence to support the exceptional reasons that justify such a loss. Compensation strategies should include contribution to the enhancement and management of the habitat. Compensation for damaging development to a site by way of its habitat enhancement and management should not substitute action that would be happening anyway.

**5.3.4.** Ancient woodland shall be identified by having regard to the presence and combination of Ancient Woodland Indicator Species, as presented in the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Wildlife Sites Selection Guidelines](#). The Woodland Trust’s [Planning for ancient woodland – planners manual for ancient woodland and veteran trees](#) should be used as a guide to avoiding and minimising impacts from development proposals.

## 5.4. Pre-application stage

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### Pre-application advice

- 5.4.1. There are many advantages to seeking pre-application advice from the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services at an early stage in the preparation of development proposals, particularly for ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain. This frontloads the process and avoids risks of delays and additional costs on submission, by providing the developers and their agents with clarity on the scope of information that will be expected to enable the application to be determined.
- 5.4.2. Where there is a predictable impact on biodiversity and insufficient ecological information is submitted to support determination, the Councils are likely to refuse an application.
- 5.4.3. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service offers a [pre-application service](#) that can save time and money for anyone considering submitting a planning application, and it also offers design workshops to applicants. This may be particularly valuable to householders and those who are not regularly involved in development, who may not routinely seek professional ecological support or be aware of all of the relevant issues.
- 5.4.4. Developers wishing to seek substantive advice on recreational pressure impacts and mitigation relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest should be directed to Natural England's [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

### Existing biodiversity information

- 5.4.5. Biodiversity baseline information from the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#) is needed within all ecological reports, to identify the presence of designated sites and existing records of habitats and species that could be affected by development. Data search requests should be for a minimum 1 km buffer from the red line boundary for protected and Priority species and 2 km for all designated sites. While older data may be less relevant in some cases, it may provide the only baseline available for a site and so should not be discounted.
- 5.4.6. An absence of records does not mean a record of absence and ecological consultants need to use their professional judgment to ensure that biodiversity features are not overlooked. Survey and assessment of all species likely to be present on and adjacent to the development site and any which could be affected indirectly should be covered.
- 5.4.7. Provision of this data within submitted ecological reports needs to be presented in accordance with the terms and conditions of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre and any sensitive records should only be shown at 10km resolution.
- 5.4.8. The consultant ecologist should also determine whether the development site falls within a Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone, as shown on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) map, which would indicate that the development could result in indirect impacts that require consultation with Natural England.

## 5.4. Pre-application stage (continued)

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### Biodiversity Issue B3 – Great Crested Newt district level licensing

To meet policy requirements (NH/4 and Policy 70) and support development which is likely to impact on Great Crested Newt, if a developer is accepted to join the Natural England Cambridgeshire Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing scheme, they do not need to carry out their own surveys for this European Protected Species or plan and carry out mitigation work.

If a consent for development is issued, developers do not need to meet the Government's [Standing Advice for Great Crested Newt](#). However, the Councils will still require survey and assessment for other protected and Priority species likely to be present and affected by development, together with delivery of any mitigation needing to be secured by a condition of any consent.

**5.4.9.** Natural England has now launched a District Level Licensing scheme for Great Crested Newt in Cambridgeshire that developers can pay to join for each of their sites, to better protect Great Crested Newt populations as an alternative to conventional site-based survey, licensing and mitigation methods. Full details are available on the relevant pages of the [Government District Level Licensing website](#).

**5.4.10.** As an alternative to Great Crested Newt surveys and assessment, the use of District Level Licensing provides a year-round option for developers to mitigate predicted impacts on Great Crested Newt and can provide certainty of costs and timescales.

**5.4.11.** With an agreement in place with Natural England to use District Level Licensing, the Councils only need an Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate countersigned by Natural England to be submitted with the planning application as evidence of site registration under this strategic mitigation scheme.

**5.4.12.** Participation in the District Level Licensing scheme does not negate the need for proposals to follow the mitigation hierarchy or deliver measurable net gain. The Councils will still require survey and assessment for other protected and Priority habitats and species likely to be present and affected by development, with any necessary mitigation secured by a condition of any consent.

**5.4.13.** A precautionary approach to site clearance, under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist, will be required for all development supported by Great Crested Newt District Level Licensing, or where protected and Priority species are predicted to be on site. To avoid reckless actions and wildlife crime, this will include supervision of any habitat works by an Ecological Clerk of Works, who will undertake a fingertip search, and implementation of a Construction Environment Management Plan (Biodiversity).

**5.4.14.** The Environment Act 2021 has indicated an intention to prepare other Strategic Mitigation Schemes in consultation with stakeholders to support delivery of sustainable development.

## 5.4. Pre-application stage (continued)

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### Ecological surveys and assessment

**5.4.15.** Applicants must ensure that planning applications are supported by adequate ecological information, using up to date desk studies and site assessment to inform survey methodologies sufficient in scope to allow the impact of a proposal to be appropriately assessed. This includes householders and developers of small sites, where there may be unexpected risks of impacts to habitats and species.

[CIEEM provide an advice note on the lifespan of ecological surveys here](#)

See Appendix 2.

**5.4.16.** A [Preliminary Ecological Appraisal](#) is often carried out by ecologists as an initial means of recording the habitats and condition of a development site and predicting the likely ecological constraints and impacts that might arise from its development.

**5.4.17.** Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Reports are valuable documents that should be commissioned at the earliest stages of design, and their results should influence the layout and form of the proposals. Identifying important ecological resources at the outset and avoiding impacts on them will limit the loss of biodiversity and reduce the need for mitigation and compensation measures. In many cases these reports will include recommendations for further survey, particularly in relation to protected and priority species.

**5.4.18.** All surveys must be carried out in accordance with published standards and best practice guidance, as appropriate to the information they are expected to generate. To ensure the acceptability of impact assessment, any deviations from best practice should be explained and justified.

**5.4.19.** Pre-development biodiversity value must be calculated before any site clearance or other habitat management work has been undertaken, by the applicants or anybody else. **However, if this is known to have happened, on or after 30th January 2020 the condition of the site will be taken as the habitat baseline stated in Schedule 14 Part 1 paragraph 6 of [the Environment Act 2021](#).** This is consistent with existing good practice guidelines for ecological assessment, including [CIEEM](#) and [BREEAM](#) guidelines. Where previous surveys are not available, this will be established through [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#) records and habitat areas identified through aerial photographs. Where habitat conditions are not known, then a precautionary approach will be applied.

**5.4.20.** Habitat mapping methodologies need to be appropriate to their purpose, which for biodiversity net gain calculations means UK Habitats Classification, as required for the Defra Biodiversity Metric calculation. Phase 1 habitat mapping can still be used for PEA reports, or in circumstances where Biodiversity Net Gain calculation is not required.

## 5.4. Pre-application stage (continued)

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**5.4.21.** Where the applicant's commissioned ecology report indicates that further surveys are required to support a planning application, the results of all such surveys and associated details of necessary mitigation measures will need to be submitted prior to determination. This is necessary to provide the Councils with certainty of likely impacts and that effective and deliverable mitigation can be secured either by a condition of any consent or with a mitigation licence from Natural England. Where recommended protected species surveys have not been completed, the ecology report will not be sufficient to support a planning application.

**5.4.22.** The Council expects that all biodiversity records obtained during surveys to inform development will be submitted to [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre](#), as required by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management's code of professional conduct. Applicants must not seek to restrict their ecological consultants from submitting biodiversity records.

## 5.5. Design stage

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### Biodiversity Issue B4 – Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity

To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/4, NH/5, NH/6, Policy 69 and Policy 70), development should:

1. Secure the conservation management and enhancement of natural and semi-natural habitats in the landscape together with the biodiversity that they contain and seek to restore and/or create new wildlife habitats.
2. Secure the provision of appropriate public access to natural green spaces, particularly within or close to the villages.

Habitats will be considered important for biodiversity where they:

1. Are part of the UK national network of sites (Habitats sites) or are proposed for designation.

2. Are nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves or Local Nature Reserves) or are proposed for designation.
3. Are non-statutory designated sites of at least County or City importance or are proposed for designation.
4. Are likely to support the presence of a Priority species or habitat, or significant populations of a national or local Red list species.
5. Have the potential to assist in the delivery of National, County or District Nature Recovery Networks and clearly act as a stepping-stone, wildlife corridor or refuge area.
6. Provide for the quiet enjoyment of biodiversity within semi-natural areas or act as an educational resource, such as Local Nature Reserves.



## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

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**5.5.1.** Proposals that contain or that will affect a habitat of importance for biodiversity will be expected to include measures to protect any existing value and to improve their condition by appropriate enhancement or management measures. Retaining existing biodiversity features on sites might make it easier to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain. Management should be sustainable for the long-term, with clear objectives guided by the site's existing habitat features and species, as appropriate to location and environmental conditions.

**5.5.2.** While it can be possible to combine positive nature conservation management with public access, it should be noted that the potential impact of public access must be fully considered in determining the likely target condition of the biodiversity habitat and its value to any existing species populations. Measures to manage the existing impact of recreation on an area of semi-natural public open space will be welcomed.



Back Garden, Place Services

*Figure 7 An example of a small site*

Even small sites can support protected and priority species; although this house and garden appear unremarkable, there are two bat species using the loft, nesting birds in the dense common ivy, and great crested newts in a small pond.

**5.5.3.** Small sites, including gardens and other urban green space, can also support habitats and species of nature conservation value and provide opportunities for enhancement and improved management.

**5.5.4.** Where appropriate, the Councils will secure measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying a planning condition requiring the submission and approval of an Ecological Design Strategy or a species-specific Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy, which will include:

- a) The purpose and conservation objectives of the proposed works.
- b) A review of baseline conditions, site potential and constraints.
- c) Detailed designs and/or working methods to achieve stated objectives.
- d) The specific extent and location of proposed works shown on maps and plans at an appropriate scale.
- e) The type and source of materials to be used, where appropriate, such as specifying native species of local provenance or the type of bird box to be used.
- f) A timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with any proposed phasing of development.
- g) The persons responsible for implementing the works.
- h) Details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance.
- i) Details for monitoring and remedial measures.
- j) Details for disposal of any wastes arising from works.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

### Biodiversity Issue B5 – Biodiversity provision in the design of new buildings and open spaces

To meet policy requirements (HQ/1, NH/4, Policy 57 and Policy 59), the Councils will expect:

1. That development proposals will have regard to the biodiversity already present within a development site and to identify opportunities to maximise the provision for biodiversity within new development sites with strategic nature conservation priorities.
2. That on all residential housing developments, there should be an equal number of integrated bird box features as dwellings for building-dependent birds (breeding Swifts, House Sparrows, Starlings and House Martins) provided individually or clustered in appropriate locations within the development. On constrained sites, particularly those with a large number of apartments, practical consideration should be given to prioritising bird, bat or insect boxes in optimum areas of the site.
3. That all suitable commercial and community building applications will include integrated bird box features for building dependent birds (breeding Swifts, House Sparrows, Starlings and House Martins) in keeping with the scale of development, i.e. minimum of 10 boxes for the first 1000 sqm footprint and one additional box for every 100 sqm.
4. That on all residential housing developments 25% of the dwellings/units will have integrated bat box features; provision to be clustered next to appropriate foraging habitats.
5. That new wildlife habitats and features, including predominantly native trees and shrubs and durable tree mounted nest boxes, bat boxes and insect boxes, will be incorporated into landscaping schemes and the general layout of the built environment. All fencing will be expected to be hedgehog friendly and hedgehog highways should be incorporated throughout the development.

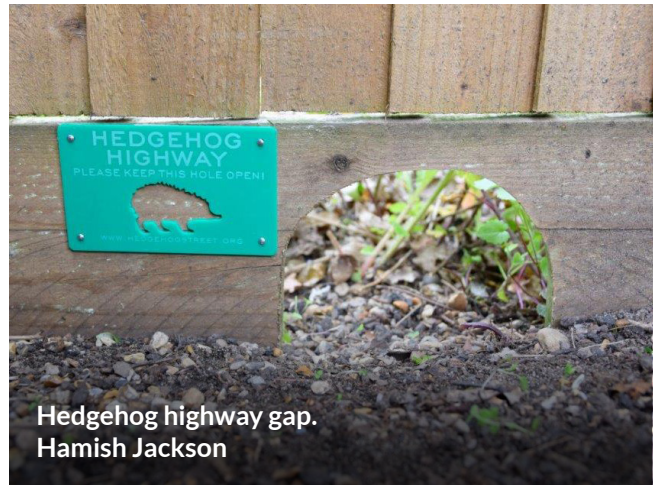


Figure 8 Hedgehog Highway gaps in boundary fence.

Incorporating Hedgehog Highway gaps into boundary fences ensures connectivity between gardens for Hedgehogs and other wildlife, increasing the extent of habitat available in a secure way.

- 5.5.5. Design of new developments should retain habitats of value to biodiversity wherever possible. Even for small scale developments, this would include boundary hedgerows, trees and any pond on site and these can provide the framework for the setting of the scheme layout as well as contributing to the post development network for nature and people.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

**5.5.6.** Landscape design will be required to enhance existing habitats and link them to new habitats created within the development site that are suited to the landscape character (see section 3.6.10). Further information can be found on the [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method](#) webpage for a Green Guide Calculator and [Building with Nature](#).



Figure 9 Landscaping and soils

A bank and low nutrient substrate with sparse vegetation, incorporated into landscaping to benefit solitary mining bees and other invertebrates.



Figure 10 Integrated nesting habitat for birds or bats

Integrated boxes primarily designed for swifts will also be used by other species such as house sparrow and are easily built into new buildings.

**5.5.7.** The use of low nutrient status soils to support diverse habitat mosaics with low maintenance requirements is encouraged and applications within the [B-Lines](#) identified by Buglife will be expected to include sustainable landscaping features of value to invertebrates, especially pollinators, including flowering lawns.

**5.5.8.** Natural timber and aggregate waste from site should be retained and repurposed for habitat creation such as hibernacula and low nutrient banks wherever possible.

**5.5.9.** The impact of garden extensions into the open countryside needs to be considered as; although these provide an opportunity to diversify arable landscapes, species and features associated with a farmland landscape may not be replicable within the garden environment. Applicants, where appropriate, will be required to plant mixed native species hedges with trees to define boundaries in open countryside as opposed to the erection of fences that may hinder the natural movement of animals. In the above image, a bank and low nutrient substrate with sparse vegetation are incorporated into landscaping to benefit solitary mining bees and other invertebrates.

**5.5.10.** In addition, the provision of integrated boxes (a combination of bird, bat & insect boxes) will be required in new buildings for all types of development and should target protected, Priority and other species associated with the built environment, such as Swift, as promoted by [Action for Swifts](#), house sparrow, starling and pipistrelle bats. Where appropriate, high quality, durable boxes can also be provided on retained trees within the public realm.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

**5.5.11.** Artificial lighting has the potential to negatively impact on nocturnal species and should be minimised, particularly in areas of natural habitat, woodland edges, hedgerows, and wetlands. Ecological sensitive lighting conditions may be imposed in some cases. The Bat Conservation Trust provide the following [Guidance Note on Bats and Artificial Lighting](#).

### Biodiversity Issue B6 – Provision of biodiverse and living roofs

To meet policy requirements (HQ/1, NH/4 and Policy 31), the provision of biodiverse roofs and walls will be encouraged as a means to maximise biodiversity, particularly where the opportunities for ecological enhancement on a site area are limited, and where such measures will deliver enhancement at a landscape scale where appropriate, as part of a wider strategy of biodiversity enhancements.

**5.5.12.** Although buildings can be screened using native species planting, they can also be made attractive to biodiversity by using climbing plants on walls, fitting window boxes or installing biodiverse roofs and walls. Green roofs should support diverse habitats of local relevance rather than sedum monocultures, which have aesthetic appeal, but limited value to biodiversity. Brown roofs, landscaped with exposed substrates and a varied topography, and supporting nectar and pollen rich flowering plants, are a good alternative. Further information can be found on the [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method](#) webpage for a Green Guide Calculator and [Building with Nature](#).



Living Roof, Cambridge, Dinah Foley Norman

Figure 11 A biodiverse roof

A biodiverse roof, showing a diversity of flowering plants in an open grassland structure. Habitat design and species mixes should reflect local conditions and stated conservation objectives

**5.5.13.** Biodiverse roofs can provide valuable habitat on sites where space for new habitat creation is constrained. In the image above, the living roof shows a diversity of flowering plants in an open grassland structure within an otherwise dense, urban setting. Habitat design and species mixes should reflect local conditions and stated conservation objectives.

**5.5.14.** They could also have an especially important role to play in providing new habitat for the species, often ecological specialists, displaced by the development of brownfield sites, and for invertebrates that already live in towns and gardens. Guidance on constructing biodiverse roofs is available from Buglife and applicants are encouraged to follow the Green Roof Organisation's [Green Roof Code](#).

**5.5.15.** Thin substrate sedum systems do not maximize the biodiversity potential of green roofs and would not merit Good condition within the Defra Biodiversity Metric.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

### Sustainable drainage systems

**5.5.16.** The [Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document](#) was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council in November 2018 and Cambridge City Council in December 2018 following adoption of the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans and is accompanied by the [Cambridge Sustainable Drainage Design and Adoption Guide](#).

**5.5.17.** Inclusion of sustainable drainage systems within a development site are the preferred approach to managing rainfall from hard surfaces and can be used on any site (CC/8, Policy 31). They provide an opportunity to reduce the effects of development on the water environment. Good design and management of multi-functional open spaces can mitigate drainage impacts on wetlands via drains and ordinary watercourses as well as delivering biodiversity enhancements and attractive greenspaces that can support Biodiversity Net Gain on site. SUDs (like the one pictured in Figure 11) should be designed to provide natural habitats appropriate to the surrounding landscape, using locally native species and managed to combine functionality and opportunities for biodiversity.

**5.5.18.** The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust have produced a guide to maximising the benefit to [biodiversity from Sustainable Drainage Systems](#) alongside other functions. The [ARGUK Toads – Advice for Planners](#) provides guidance on road, kerb and gully designs to limit impacts on amphibian populations.



Nine Wells, Cambridge, Guy Belcher

Figure 12 A SuDS feature in a new development

SuDS features should be designed to provide natural habitats appropriate to the surrounding landscape, using locally native species and managed to combine functionality and opportunities for biodiversity

**5.5.19.** Developers should check details of [Registered Toad crossings](#) listed by Froglife, the national amphibian & reptile charity, (which includes one in the centre of Cambridge) in relation to the development site location and layout. This will help avoid direct impacts on known toad breeding populations from the discharge of the sustainable drainage systems constructed for the development. Similarly, well designed sustainable drainage systems features are likely to attract breeding amphibians and future migration routes should be considered to avoid creating new road or drain fatality hotspots.

**5.5.20.** Paving of surfaces is likely to contribute to surface water flooding and the Councils will seek to avoid unnecessary paving of gardens by householders (CC/8, Policy 66) and encourage good design to ensure permeable surfaces remain and that there is no net loss in biodiversity. Any trees should be retained within paving and permeable surfaces used, potentially including planting within the design.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

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### Biodiversity issue B7 – Biodiversity net gain

This SPD is underpinned by national and Local Planning Policies. In keeping with these, and the SPD, development proposals will be required to demonstrate measurable net gain for biodiversity (NH/4, NH/6, Policy 69, Policy 70). Biodiversity Net Gain should be achieved on site where possible and in accordance with BS8683:2021 [Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain](#).

**5.5.21.** Previous paragraphs have explained the process of how developers will calculate a pre-development baseline for an application site using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.0 tool (or its successor). They explain how a calculation should also be made of the post development baseline seeking to identify a net gain in biodiversity on that site. Achieving a Net Gain of 10% would be consistent with levels in the Environment Act 2021 by Winter 2023, after a two year interim period. However, in keeping with the Councils' desire to ensure that biodiversity is both protected, and enhanced, we advise that should new Local Plan policies instruct a higher percentage of Biodiversity Net Gain than that nationally mandated, that the higher of the two amounts (of Biodiversity Net Gain) shall be the minimum requirement for development.

**5.5.22.** The Councils encourage the achievement of further Biodiversity Net Gain by development proposals. This aspiration is supported by the recently formulated Doubling Nature Vision, adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council (Feb 2021). This vision reflects the growing awareness of biodiversity loss and increasing concerns to protect the natural environment, habitats and species.

The vision seeks a 20% level of Biodiversity Net Gain above pre-development baseline conditions. Whilst this Supplementary Planning Document does not set this as a figure or target, this aspiration may have further support with future amendments to the Environment Act 2021.

**5.5.23.** Where onsite options for Biodiversity Net Gain have been exhausted, compensatory arrangements to provide shortfalls required and agreed with applicants under the vision can be provided offsite. Where off-site habitat measures are required, they must be consistent with the strategic aims of the [Cambridge Nature Network](#) and [Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping](#) and conform to [Biodiversity Net Gain - Good Practice Principles for Development](#).

**5.5.24.** To ensure the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain measures, the Councils will seek to use planning conditions to secure on site habitat creation and its long-term management, and obligations, such as Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, where BNG is on land outside the applicant's control.

**5.5.25.** All Biodiversity Net Gain calculations should be submitted using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.0 or its successor. Other "bespoke" calculators will not be accepted without clear justification.

**5.5.26.** There will always be some opportunity within development proposals to create and manage habitats for biodiversity. Development proposals that deliver public open space that also provides new wildlife habitats, with clear management objectives, will be encouraged.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

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- 5.5.27.** Biodiversity Net Gain has been identified as one of the primary mechanisms for the restoration of biodiversity across the UK and the local need is recognised within the Natural Cambridgeshire Doubling Nature vision. To achieve the vision, a strategic approach to habitat creation and enhancement will be required in line with the [Lawton principles](#) of more, bigger, better and more joined up.
- 5.5.28.** This will require focus on improving the condition of existing Biodiversity Sites, increasing their size, and improving connections between them by creating stepping-stones and corridors of biodiversity rich habitats. The existing [Cambridge Nature Network](#) lays the foundations for this approach and will be supported and clarified by forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- 5.5.29.** All development must already demonstrate measurable net gain for biodiversity, in line with the requirements of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). Although a mandatory requirement for 10% net gain in biodiversity value is mandated by the Environment Act 2021, a value of 20% is likely to be encouraged as best practice in order to meet the Natural Cambridgeshire target of doubling the amount of land managed for nature from 8% to 16% of the county's area.
- 5.5.30.** It should be noted that the inclusion of street trees within developments can make a contribution to Biodiversity Net Gain as well as providing a range of other benefits, including to air quality and urban cooling, and as mitigation for the effects of climate change. The selection of the right tree species in the right place, where there is enough space to achieve maturity - in terms of height, canopy spread and rooting area - is essential to maximise benefits. Cambridge City Council has a policy to ensure that adequate provision is made for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning permission (Policy 71).
- 5.5.31.** For minor developments (fewer than 10 residential units or an area of less than 0.5 hectares) and householder applications, biodiversity net gain measures should be clearly identified in supporting information and illustrated on the relevant plans. Measures should be appropriate to the site's location and surroundings and should be focussed on supporting recognised nature conservation priorities. The [Defra "small sites" Biodiversity Metric](#) should be used to demonstrate net gain in these circumstances. Small sites should also include integrated bird, bat or insect box provision, hedgehog friendly fencing and habitats as listed in 5.5.10 above.

## 5.5. Design stage (continued)

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- 5.5.32.** In support of major applications, a Biodiversity Gain Plan will be expected, which should include:
- Steps taken to avoid adverse impacts to biodiversity.
  - Pre-development and post-development biodiversity value (including a completed Defra Biodiversity Metric calculation spreadsheet v3.0 or its successor).
  - Additional information to explain and justify the approach to delivering net gain, including notes on the existing and target habitat condition and any assumptions made.

**5.5.33.** The Local Planning Authority will verify the accuracy of the biodiversity value calculations and consider the merits of any off-site net gain measures with reference to the Biodiversity Opportunity Maps produced by Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre, the Cambridge Nature Network and any other published biodiversity strategies. Any scheme

of Biodiversity Net Gain must include a mechanism for delivery of the target habitats, management, and monitoring of their condition, and an approach to remediation in the event of targets not being met.

**5.5.34.** Pre-development biodiversity value must be calculated before any site clearance or other habitat management work has been undertaken, by the applicants or anybody else. It should be noted that the baseline for habitats on any site proposed for development will be taken as 30 January 2020, (as set out in the UK Environment Act 2021), or the nearest (in time) prior aerial photographic evidence or survey.

**5.5.35.** Applicants should refer to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and Construction Industry Research and Information Association [Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles](#) documents for information on the standards that will be expected.



Hedgehog, Alexas Photos



## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information

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- 5.6.1.** The [Cambridge City Council validation checklists](#) and draft [South Cambridgeshire District Council validation checklist](#) are available to ensure that applicants know which documents need to be submitted with a planning application for it to be deemed valid by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.
- 5.6.2.** The Local validation checklist for the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service will include guidance under Local Validation Requirement 2 ‘Biodiversity - Ecological Impact Assessment’ about when an Ecological Impact Assessment is necessary, based on what the development involves and where it is. Guidance is also provided on what an Ecological Impact Assessment should cover for an application to be considered valid, including the need to demonstrate measurable Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 5.6.3.** It should be noted that validation does not necessarily mean there is sufficient information to allow for determination. The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment still has to provide the Councils with certainty of all likely ecological impacts on designated sites and protected or priority species and to demonstrate that effective and deliverable mitigation can be secured either by a condition of any consent or a mitigation licence from Natural England.

### Ecological Impact Assessment

- 5.6.4.** In addition to the information within BS42020, the [Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management](#) provides detailed [guidance](#) about expectations in the reporting of biodiversity information

in support of planning applications. In selecting their project team, applicants are encouraged to choose professional ecologists that will comply with these expectations and can demonstrate their suitability for the role. Full details of those involved in survey work and reporting should be included in all reports with a summary of their experience and competence.

- 5.6.5.** The appropriate document type to provide ecological information in support of a planning application is an Ecological Impact Assessment. CIEEM have produced a note on report writing here: [Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing | CIEEM](#). This type of ecological report needs to contain all necessary survey results and a full assessment of ecological impacts, with proportionate and fully detailed mitigation and compensation measures that can be secured by condition or obligation, or by appropriate species licensing.
- 5.6.6.** Surveys and reports have a finite lifespan due to the dynamic nature of species populations and the response of habitats to environmental factors and changes in management. CIEEM have produced [guidance](#) to highlight the issues with lifespan and the validity of reports in different circumstances. Applications supported by reports that are no longer considered valid are likely to be refused and outline or phased developments are likely to require conditions for further surveys to keep the survey information up to date.

## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information (continued)

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### Biodiversity Issue B8 – Habitats Regulations Assessments

To support the Councils in meeting policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and their legal duties as Competent Authorities under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) – known as the Habitats Regulations - where development is likely to result in a significant effect on a Habitats site, proposals need to be supported by information to support the preparation of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) by the Local Planning Authority. This needs to include the results of any necessary surveys and details of any mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the site(s) embedded into design of the development.

All the Councils' Habitats Regulations Assessment Appropriate Assessments will be sent to Natural England for their formal consultation response on their conclusions before any decision can be issued.

**5.6.7.** The aim of the [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) process is to 'maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest'. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have transposed the European Union Habitats and Wild Birds Directives into UK law to make them operable from 1 January 2021. These remain unchanged until amended by Parliament so the requirements for [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

(as amended) have been retained.

- 5.6.8.** The Greater Cambridge Local Plan may impact on several Habitats sites and Government advice to Local Planning Authorities on [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) requires assessment of any plan or projects which could adversely affect these internationally important Biodiversity Sites.
- 5.6.9.** Where a Habitats site could be affected by a plan, such as a Local Plan, or any project, such as a new development, then [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) screening must be undertaken. If this cannot rule out any possible likely significant effect on a Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, prior to the consideration of mitigation measures, then an Appropriate Assessment must then be undertaken. This is an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives. Consent can only be granted when it can be ascertained by an Appropriate Assessment that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity of a European Site unless, in the absence of alternative solutions, there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest and the necessary compensatory measures can be secured.

## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information (continued)

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**5.6.10.** Various Court rulings need to be considered when preparing Habitats Regulations Assessment screening reports and developers are requested to provide sufficient information to support this process. Some key rulings from the Court of Justice for the European Union, which remain relevant to [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) in the UK, post-Brexit, are:

- CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17)

In line with the Court judgement mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.

- CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage. These relate to habitats and species for which the site has not been listed and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site. The Appropriate Assessment conclusion must be beyond all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

- CJEU Joined Cases C-293/17 and C-294/17 Coöperatie Mobilisation for the Environment and Vereniging Leefmilieu (Dutch nitrogen court ruling)

These Dutch cases concerned authorisations schemes for agricultural activities in Habitats sites which cause nitrogen deposition and where levels already exceeded the critical load. These are not directly connected with, or necessary for the management of a Habitats site. This ruling is relevant to projects which trigger Appropriate Assessment before any consents are issued so should be considered when identifying other plans and projects for an in- combination assessment.

**5.6.11.** The following case from the UK High Court is also of key relevance:

- R (on the Application of Preston) v Cumbria County Council [2019] EWCA 1362

This case relates to a High Court verdict which quashed a County Council's decision to vary a planning permission for a water company to construct a sewage outfall on a Special Area of Conservation. Therefore, planning authorities and other competent authorities cannot, in Appropriate Assessments, simply rely on the competence of other regulators such as the Environment Agency, to avoid conducting their own assessments. They must instead themselves satisfy their own Habitats Regulations duties.

## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information (continued)

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### Biodiversity Issue B9 – Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation Bat Protocol

To support the Councils in meeting policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and their legal duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), appropriate levels of survey, assessment and mitigation will be expected for any development that could have an impact on the population of Barbastelle Bats within and around the Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation.

**5.6.12.** The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation supports maternity colonies of Barbastelle bats. In addition to these Special Area of Conservation woodlands containing roosting sites, the bats also require access to habitats outside the boundary of Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation. The Habitats Regulation Assessment screening report for Bourn Airfield identified that male Barbastelle bats roosted in woodlands to the north of the Special Area of Conservation and commuted into the woodlands for mating.

**5.6.13.** Habitat that is integral to supporting the functioning of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation is referred to as functionally linked land. In the case of this internationally important designated site, the woodlands that the male Barbastelle bats roost in, and any commuting routes between the two, are classed as functionally linked land. The Bat Conservation Trust also defines “Core Sustenance Zones” which refer to the area surrounding

a communal bat roost within which habitat availability and quality will have a significant influence on the resilience and conservation status of the colony using the roost.

**5.6.14.** Bats also typically forage and commute along linear features, such as hedgerows, rivers and woodland edges. Flight-lines for Barbastelle Bats are known to extend beyond the designated Special Area of Conservation boundary into the wider local landscape. A narrow strip of woodland and hedge that link Wimpole and Eversden Woods together is known to be a very important flight-line for Barbastelle Bats and other bat species, and Natural England has highlighted the importance of managing this feature carefully including the need to thicken hedges affected with additional planting.

**5.6.15.** A draft protocol has been prepared by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service to facilitate sustainable development and secure a diverse and healthy landscape for bats, people and other wildlife.

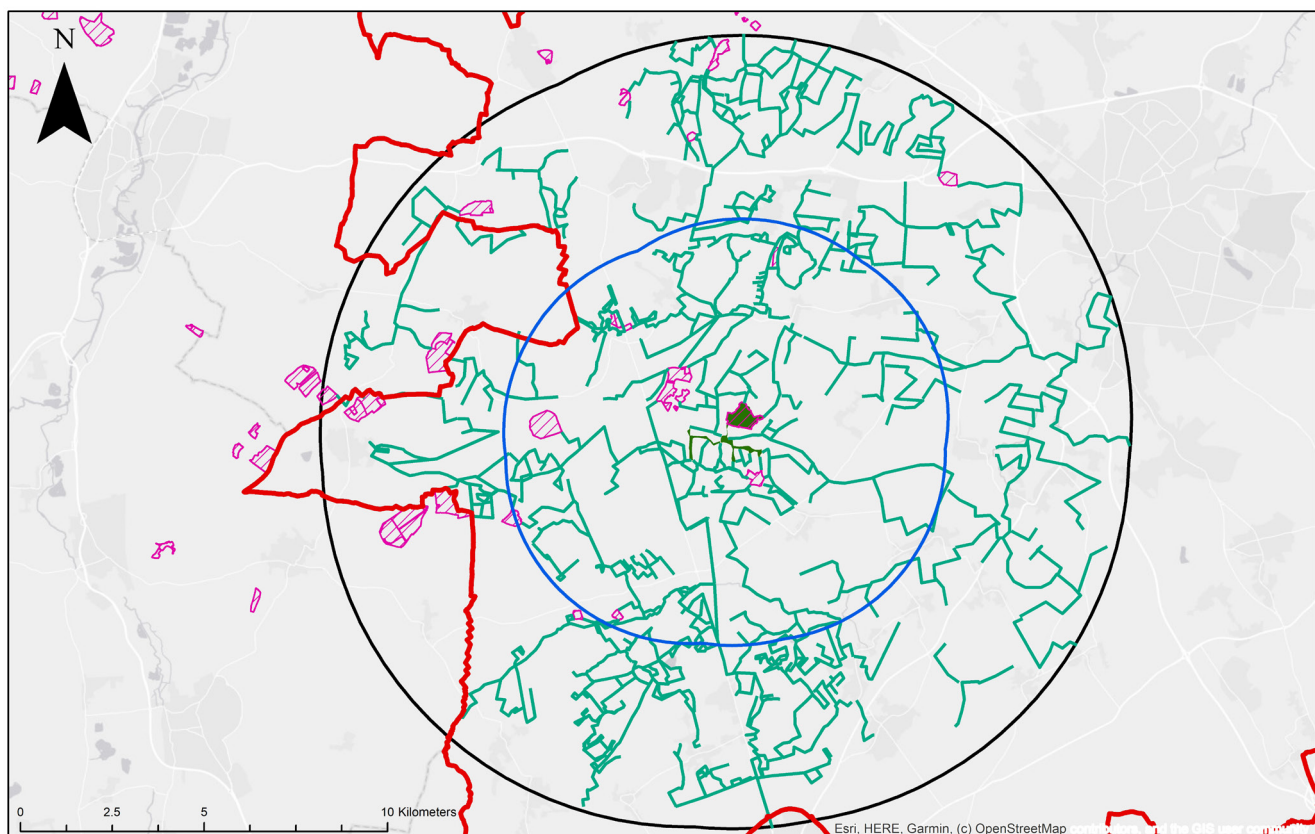
**5.6.16.** By following the guidance in the draft Eversden & Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation protocol, the Councils can ensure that the Special Area of Conservation bat populations thrive and that developments around the designated site avoid impacts on them, thereby preventing delays during their consideration at the planning stage.

## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information (continued)

**5.6.17.** The draft bat protocol uses the Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones identified on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) map for Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation which are integral to the long-term survival of the population of Barbastelle Bats. All development proposals within this area, with the exception of householder applications, should aim to retain mature trees, woods and copses, and to provide new habitat linkages through new tree planting and the integration of existing hedgerow networks with new ones. All development within 5 km

of the Special Area of Conservation designated site is considered by Natural England as a key conservation area with a 10 km sustenance or wider conservation area. Please note that at time of writing, Natural England are reviewing the IRZ distances for this site, possibly extending out to 20km.

**5.6.18.** The Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation map below shows the relative Impact Risk Zones and indicative functionally linked habitat (please note this is for illustrative purposes only, so some hedgerows, and smaller woods are not shown).



### Legend

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 5km Impact Risk Zone | Ancient Woodland      |
| Greater Cambridge    | 10km Impact Risk Zone |
| Hedgerows            |                       |

Figure 13 Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC

## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information (continued)

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### Biodiversity Issue B10 – Recreational pressure on sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest

To meet national and local policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) for protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value, applications will not normally be permitted where there is likely to be an adverse impact on land within or adjoining such sites. With specific reference to sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest, advice issued by Natural England suggests developers of residential schemes of 50 or more units should seek to provide sufficient Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, (SANG) to avoid and mitigate recreational pressure within and around the SSSI. SSSIs currently known to be at risk from recreational pressure within the Greater Cambridge area are listed in Annex B of Natural England's advice.

**5.6.19.** Impact Risk Zones are an online mapping tool developed by Natural England to make an initial assessment of the potential risks to Sites of Special Scientific Interest posed by development proposals. They define zones around each Site of Special Scientific Interest which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal that could potentially have adverse impacts. Impact Risk Zones can be viewed via the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#).

**5.6.20.** Natural England has issued advice to Cambridgeshire Local Planning Authorities in relation to Recreational Pressure Impact Risk Zones relating to sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Cambridgeshire and the need for green infrastructure within large scale residential developments. Annex B of this advice lists the component Sites of Special Scientific Interest included within the Cambridgeshire Recreational Pressure Impact Risk Zone, of which there are 16 in Greater Cambridge, with a risk category assigned to each Site of Special Scientific Interest. This list could be subject to change, following any new evidence obtained through a specialist visitor survey, for example.

**5.6.21.** Applicants of developments within the Impact Risk Zone of Wicken Fen Special Area of Conservation should seek advice from the National Trust regarding potential recreational pressure impacts and mitigation measures.

**5.6.22.** Where a development location triggers a recreational pressure Impact Risk Zone on the [Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside](#) plan, a pop-up note will appear advising developers of residential proposals of the need for an assessment of recreational pressure effects on the relevant SSSI and the provision of measures to mitigate potential adverse impact. Whilst current Local Plan policies do not set

## 5.6. Application stage – validation requirements for biodiversity information (continued)

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requirements in respect of SANG, developers need to consider how to implement this detailed advice from Natural England, in conjunction with the Councils' Open Space standards to provide access to sufficient greenspace to meet daily recreational needs of new residents. It is expected developers will seek further advice on this issue from Natural England's [Discretionary Advice Service](#).

- 5.6.23.** Non statutory Local Wildlife Sites can also be impacted by increased recreational pressure. Negative impacts will need to be recognised and addressed as a material consideration of any nearby development proposals.

### Determination of planning applications

- 5.6.24.** The Councils need certainty of likely impacts on a Biodiversity Site or protected or Priority species prior to determination to ensure that appropriate and effective mitigation measures can be secured either by a condition of any consent or under a mitigation licence from Natural England.
- 5.6.25.** To support determination of planning applications, the Councils therefore expect adequate ecological information to be provided. Where no ecological report has been submitted and there is a likelihood of biodiversity being present and affected by a proposal, applicants will be requested to provide reasonable information in line with [Government Standing Advice](#) which could cause delays, for example, waiting for surveys to be carried out in the appropriate season.

If, despite any request from the Councils, this is not provided to give certainty of likely impacts and details of effective and deliverable mitigation measures, the Councils may refuse an application rather than requiring amendments to avoid impacts.

- 5.6.26.** Where ecology reports include recommendations for further surveys, these will be needed prior to determination. The Councils encourage applicants to ensure that recommendations for mitigation and compensation measures have been embedded into the design of a proposal and that they confirm delivery at the appropriate stage to support determination of a planning application. The above is relevant to Outline Planning Applications too.
- 5.6.27.** Where impacts on biodiversity will be minimised such that the proposal is acceptable, all ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancements to deliver measurable net gain for biodiversity will either be a condition of the consent or included in a legal agreement. This will not include protected species surveys as this information is needed prior to determination.
- 5.6.28.** Updated protected species surveys and mitigation strategies will need to be submitted at reserved matters stage for any measures not fully detailed in the information provided to support determination of outline or phased applications.

## 5.7. Construction stage

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### Construction and the need for protection of features and ecological supervision

**5.7.1.** The construction process often involves clearance of vegetation on site which has the potential for impacts on biodiversity and there is therefore a need to manage the risks to wildlife. A process is also needed to ensure that all of the essential mitigation measures identified within the Ecological Impact Assessment are put in place in the right way and at the right time.

**5.7.2.** A Construction Environment Management Plan: Biodiversity will be required by condition for many developments. The requirement for and timing of this will be decided on a case-by-case basis and include details of all necessary ecological mitigation measures, including protection of retained habitats and requirements for ecological supervision during works on site using a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works. The details required are specified in model condition D.4.1 of BS42020:2013.

## 5.8. Post-construction stage

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### Management plans, monitoring and enforcement

**5.8.1.** Where habitats are retained and created within a development site boundary, the Councils will seek to secure their protection during the construction process and their long-term management via conditions of any consent. The Councils will require relevant details to be provided within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, either at submission or secured by condition. This type of planning condition will need details of all ecological mitigation measures and should be illustrated together with other landscape measures and there should be no conflict between objectives.

**5.8.2.** Where species are predicted to be affected by development proposals and habitat to support their population is retained or created on site, such as receptor sites for translocated animals, the Councils will seek to include monitoring of the effectiveness

of mitigation secured. This will be separate from any legal requirement attached to a licence approved by Natural England and will be secured by a condition of any consent. Additional monitoring may be required for novel mitigation solutions, the outcomes of which should be made available to the wider ecological consultancy industry where appropriate.

**5.8.3.** All management plans should include appropriate monitoring to ensure effectiveness and should include a process for remediation and review for any measures that have not been effective. The results of such monitoring should be reported to the Councils for review of management.

**5.8.4.** To deliver Biodiversity Net Gain, sites will require careful design, zoning and management to ensure there are no recreational conflicts with the proposed areas for habitat creation. The Environment Act 2021 will require an audit trail for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain commitments for a period of up to 30 years.



# 6. Appendices

- Appendix 1 Local Plan policies to be supported by this Supplementary Planning Document
- Appendix 2 Protected species and ecological survey seasons

## Appendix 1 Local Plan policies to be supported by this Supplementary Planning Document

### Chapter 4, Climate Change.

#### Policy CC/8, Sustainable Drainage Systems

Development proposals must incorporate appropriate sustainable surface water drainage systems (SuDS) appropriate to the nature of the site. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that:

- b) Opportunities have been taken to integrate sustainable drainage with the development, create amenity, enhance biodiversity, and contribute to a network of green (and blue) open space.
- d) Maximum use has been made of low land take drainage measures, such as rainwater recycling, green roofs, permeable surfaces, and water butts.

### Chapter 5, Delivering High Quality Places.

#### Policy HQ/1, Design Principles

“All new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:

...

Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support for healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation.”

### Chapter 6, Built and Natural Environment.

#### Policy NH/3, Protecting Agricultural Land

1. “Planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless:
  - a) Land is allocated for development in the Local Plan.
  - b) Sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.
2. Uses not involving substantial built development, but which take agricultural land will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.

When considering proposals for the change of use or diversification of farmland, particular consideration shall be given to the potential for impact upon Priority Species and Habitats.”

## Chapter 6, Built and Natural Environment.

### Policy NH/4, Biodiversity

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<sup>1</sup> or Priority Habitat 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 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.

Climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity and initiatives to reduce its impact need to be considered.”

## Chapter 6, Built and Natural Environment.

### Policy NH/5, Site of Biodiversity or Geological Importance

1. “Proposed development likely to have an adverse effect on land within or adjoining a Site of Biodiversity or Geological Importance, as shown on the Policies Map (either individually or in combination with other developments), will not normally be permitted. Exceptions will only be made where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh any adverse impact.
2. In determining any planning application affecting Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance the Council will ensure that the intrinsic natural features of particular interest are safeguarded or enhanced having regard to:
  - a) The international, national or local status and designation of the site;
  - b) The nature and quality of the site’s features, including its rarity value;
  - c) The extent of any adverse impacts on the notified features;

- d) The likely effectiveness of any proposed mitigation with respect to the protection of the features of interest;
- e) The need for compensatory measures in order to re-create on or off the site features or habitats that would be lost to development.

Where appropriate the Council will ensure the effective management of designated sites through the imposition of planning conditions or Section 106 agreements as appropriate.”

## **Chapter 6, Built and Natural Environment.**

### **Policy NH6, Green Infrastructure**

1. The Council will aim to conserve and enhance green infrastructure within the district. Proposals that cause loss or harm to this network will not be permitted unless the need for, and benefits of the development demonstrably, and substantially outweigh any adverse impacts on the district’s green infrastructure network.
2. The Council will encourage proposals which: a. Reinforce, link, buffer and create new green infrastructure; and b. Promote, manage, and interpret green infrastructure and enhance public enjoyment of it.
3. The Council will support proposals which deliver the strategic green infrastructure network and priorities set out in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, and which deliver local green infrastructure.

All new developments will be required to contribute towards the enhancement of the green infrastructure network within the district. These contributions will include the establishment, enhancement and the on-going management costs.”

## **Chapter 6, Built and Natural Environment.**

### **Policy NH/7, Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees**

1. “Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland (as shown on the Policies Map) or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

### **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

#### **Policy NS/2 Development Principles**

Development proposals affecting ancient woodland or veteran trees will be expected to mitigate any adverse impacts, and to contribute to the woodland’s or veteran trees management and further enhancement via planning conditions or planning obligations.”

“Plans to be Approved:

...

The town of Northstowe will be developed:  
 h. Making drainage water features an integral part of the design of the town and its open spaces, so that they also provide for amenity, landscape, biodiversity and recreation.”

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/12 Landscape Principles**

“The Landscape Strategy will:

...

b) Ensure a high degree of connectivity between the new town and wider countryside for wildlife and people, including extending the rights of way network (public footpaths and bridleways);

...

f) Create a network of green spaces which contribute to legibility, are pleasant, attractive, and beneficial to wildlife, and integrate well with the wider countryside;

g) Enable landscaped areas to provide an environment suitable to mitigate any adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise the benefits to wildlife thus increasing biodiversity.

2. Construction spoil retained on site must be distributed in a manner appropriate to the local topography and landscape character, and can be used for noise mitigation, flood risk management or biodiversity enhancement.”

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/13 Landscape Treatment of the Edges of Northstowe**

“The Eastern Water Park:

A landscaped water park with appropriate planting and footpaths will be provided on the other edge of Northstowe to the east along the St Ives railway. The water park will provide an attractive amenity for the town and a landscape buffer to the open countryside. It will also provide opportunities to create wildlife habitats and thus increase biodiversity.”

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/14 Landscaping within Northstowe**

“Green Corridors

...

3. They will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children’s play. Public access will include provision for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Road and bus crossings through the Green Corridors will be designed to limit any adverse safety implications for people and be low key in character to limit adverse effects on the landscape. Safe and appropriate crossing facilities for wildlife will also be provided, such as tunnels under roads and ditches alongside roads where appropriate.”

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/16 Existing Biodiversity Features**

“Biodiversity Surveys:

1. Developers will be required to undertake a full programme of ecological survey and monitoring prior to the commencement of construction. This work should conclude by proposing a strategy for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and Biodiversity Management Plans, to establish:

a. Which areas of biodiversity will be protected and enhanced;

b. Appropriate mitigation measures;

c. Which specific impacts of development will need to be monitored during and after construction.

Further ecological surveys will be required during and after construction, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Management Plans will be reviewed in the light of surveys and monitoring.

Management Strategy:

2. The developer will be required to develop a Management Strategy to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption, and maintenance of the biodiversity areas.

Retention of Existing Features:

Existing features including trees, tree plantations and the lake in the southern section of the airfield and the existing ponds in the golf course will be retained as biodiversity and landscape features where such features can make a significant contribution to the urban environment or to the biodiversity of the site.”

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/17 New Biodiversity Features**

“Eastern Water Park:

1. The water park along the eastern boundary of the town and west of the disused railway, which will be created to provide for the attenuation of surface water flows, will be managed to enhance the biodiversity of Northstowe by providing an extensive wetland habitat and to maximise its value to key species.

Southern Parkland Country Park:

2. A parkland landscape will be created between Northstowe and Oakington to provide a substantial resource of trees, grassland, and other areas of semi-natural vegetation. This area will be designed and managed for its wildlife value.

Green Corridors Through and Beyond the Town:

3. Green corridors will be established through the town to connect where possible to biodiversity features and corridors beyond the town.

Creating Habitats Within the Urban Area:

Every opportunity will be taken to incorporate features within the urban fabric, through urban design and through the use of sympathetic materials to create wildlife habitats.”

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/24 Construction Strategy**

Site Access and Haul Roads:

2. A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction vehicles travelling through villages in the locality and to ensure that any haul roads are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Northstowe. They should also avoid adverse effects on the environmental amenities of biodiversity, rights of way and green spaces. Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.

Construction Activities:

Planning conditions will be imposed to minimise the adverse effects of construction activity on residential amenity and the environment”.

## **Development Plan Document. Local Development Framework, Northstowe Area Action Plan. July 2007.**

### **Policy NS/27 Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure**

“Management strategies for services, facilities, landscape and infrastructure will be submitted to the local planning authority for adoption prior to the granting of outline planning permission to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance. Landownership for these uses should be as simple as possible, preferably in a single ownership to avoid fragmentation. In particular, there should be a single agreed Management Strategy covering recreation, landscape, and biodiversity. The inclusion of water and drainage features within open spaces would have significant advantages and should therefore be investigated.”

## **Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).**

### **Policy CE/4, The Setting of Cambridge East**

Green Corridor:

1. “A green corridor will be retained through the new urban quarter connecting the green spaces of Cambridge to the surrounding countryside, linking from Coldham’s Common to a new country park located to the east of Airport Way and south of Newmarket Road, and also to the National Trust’s Wicken Fen Vision. The green corridor will have width of about 300m and be significantly narrower only where particular justification is provided and the green corridor function is not inhibited. It will open up to a greater width at the Teversham end of the corridor, where an informal countryside character will be provided to help to maintain the individual identity of the village.

It will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children’s play.”

## **Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).**

### **Policy CE/4, The Setting of Cambridge East. Policy CE/13 Landscape Principles**

Landscape Strategy:

1. “The Strategy will:
  - a. To ensure a high degree of connectivity between the new urban quarter and the wider countryside for wildlife and people;

...

Enable the landscaped areas within the urban quarter to provide an environment suitable to mitigate against any adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise the benefits to wildlife thus increasing biodiversity”

## **Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).**

### **Policy CE/14, Landscaping within Cambridge East**

Green Fingers:

3. “They will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children’s play. Public access will include provision for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Road and bus crossings through the green fingers will be designed to limit any adverse safety implication for people and be low key in character to limit adverse effects on the landscape. Safe and appropriate crossing facilities for wildlife will also be provided, such as tunnels under roads and ditches alongside roads where appropriate”.

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).

### Policy CE/16, Biodiversity

1. “The development of Cambridge East will have regard to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, and every opportunity should be taken to achieve positive gain to biodiversity through the form and design of development. As appropriate, measures will include creating, enhancing, and managing wildlife habitats and natural landscape. Priority for habitat creation should be given to sites which assist in achieving targets in the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).
2. Development will not be permitted if it would have an adverse impact on the population or conservation status of protected species or priority species or habitat unless the impact can be adequately mitigated by measures required by Section 106 agreements or planning conditions.
3. Where there are grounds to believe that development proposals may affect a protected species or priority species or habitat, applicants will be expected to provide an adequate level of survey information to establish the extent of the potential impact together with possible alternatives to the development, mitigation schemes and / or compensation measures.
4. Development proposals will take account of the impact, either direct or indirect, on people’s opportunity to enjoy and experience nature on a site together with opportunities to improve public access to nature.

Exceptionally, where the economic or social benefits of a proposal outweigh harm to an important site or species, the approach will be first to avoid or minimise the harm, then to seek mitigation of the impact, and finally to secure appropriate compensation for any residual impact in order to ensure no net loss of biodiversity. Planning conditions and obligations will be used as appropriate to secure this.”

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).

### Policy CE/17, Existing Biodiversity Features

#### Biodiversity Surveys:

1. “Developers will be required to undertake a full programme of ecological survey and monitoring prior to the commencement of construction. This work should conclude by proposing a strategy for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, and Biodiversity Management Plans, to establish:
  - a. Which areas of biodiversity will be protected and enhanced;
  - b. Appropriate mitigation measures;
  - c. Which specific impacts of development will need to be monitored during and after construction.

Further ecological surveys will be required during and after construction, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Management Plans will be reviewed in the light of surveys and monitoring.

#### Management Strategy:

2. The developer will be required to develop a Management Strategy to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption, and maintenance of the biodiversity areas.

#### Retention of Existing Features:

3. Existing features, including trees in the Park and Ride site will be retained as biodiversity, and landscape features.
4. Development will not be permitted if it will have an adverse impact on a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), a Country Wildlife Site (CWS), or a City Wildlife Site (CiWS) unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal, which outweigh the need to safeguard

the substantive nature conservation of the site. Where development is permitted, proposals should include measures to minimise harm, to secure suitable mitigation and / or compensatory measures, and where possible enhance the nature conservation value of the site affected through habitat creation and management.

New Biodiversity Features:

5. As part of the development of the urban quarter, new biodiversity features will be provided in the green corridor and green fingers, together with, in the country park, a substantial resource of trees, grassland and other areas of semi-natural vegetation which is sympathetic to local landscape character.

Creating Habitats within the Urban Area:

Every opportunity will be taken to incorporate features within the urban fabric, through urban design and through the use of sympathetic materials to create wildlife habitats.”

## **Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).**

### **Policy CE/29, Construction Strategy**

Site Access and Haul Roads:

2. “A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction traffic travelling through residential areas in the city and villages in the locality and ensure that any haul roads are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Cambridge East. They should also avoid adverse effects on the environmental amenities of biodiversity, rights of way and green spaces. Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.

Construction Activities:

Planning conditions will be imposed to minimise the adverse effects of construction activity on residential amenity and the environment”.

## **Local Development Framework:**

### **Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).**

#### **Policy CE/31, Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure**

“Management strategies for services, facilities, landscape and infrastructure will be submitted to the local planning authority for adoption prior to the granting of outline planning permission to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance. Landownership for these uses should be as simple as possible, preferably in a single ownership to avoid fragmentation. In particular, there should be a single agreed Management Strategy covering recreation, landscape, and biodiversity. The inclusion of water and drainage features within open spaces would have significant advantages and should therefore be investigated.”

## **Local Development Framework: Cambridge East Area Action Plan (Feb 2008).**

### **Policy CE/33, Infrastructure Provision**

1. “Planning permission will only be granted at Cambridge East where there are suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. Contributions will be necessary for some or all of the following:

...

Landscaping and biodiversity”



## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/2 Development and Countryside Improvement Principles

“Trumpington West will be developed:

...

9. To achieve a net increase in biodiversity across the site;

10. Making drainage water features an integral part of the design of the urban extension and its open spaces, so they also provide for amenity, landscape, biodiversity, and recreation.

...

Trumpington West will connect the green spaces of Cambridge to the surrounding countryside, maintain a Green Corridor along the River Cam, and provide landscape, biodiversity and public access enhancements in the surrounding countryside.”

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/5 Countryside Enhancements Strategy

“1. Planning permission for development at Trumpington West will include a planning obligation requirement for contributions to the implementation of a Countryside Enhancement Strategy which will create an enhanced gateway into the City between Hauxton Road and the River Cam and which will comprise:

- a. The creation of a country park, comprising new meadow grassland, to the east of the River Cam, both north and south of the M11, from Grantchester Road to Hauxton Mill;

- b. Hedgerow planting on field boundaries in the agricultural land between Hauxton Road and the Trumpington Meadows Country Park;

...

- d. Measures to protect and enhance wildlife habitats, including managing public access to the riverbanks;
- e. Noise attenuation on the northern side of the M11 through the creation of new landscape features which are compatible with the river valley character.

2. A Countryside Enhancement Strategy will be prepared for the area bounded by the Cambridge City boundary, Babraham Road, Haverhill Road, and the edge of the built area of Great Shelford and Stapleford. The Strategy will comprise:

- 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.

3. The Countryside Strategies will include integrated proposals for landscape, biodiversity, recreation, and public access improvements, which will be compatible with long-term agricultural production to create enhanced gateways into the City. Provision will be made for maintenance of landscaping and replacement of diseased, dying, and dead stock for a period of 10 years, and details of long-term management thereafter.”

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/12 Landscape Principles

1. "A Landscape Strategy for Trumpington West must be submitted and approved prior to the granting of planning permission, of a level of detail appropriate to the type of application. It will be implemented as part of the conditions / planning obligations for the development of the urban extension. The strategy will:
  - f. Enable the landscaped areas within the urban extension to provision an environment suitable to mitigate any adverse wildlife impacts and to maximise the benefits to wildlife thus increasing biodiversity;
  - h. Make best use of and enhance existing tree and hedge resources as a setting for the development."

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/13 Landscaping within Trumpington West

#### Green Fingers:

1. "They will have landscaping and biodiversity value and also perform a recreational function for both informal recreation and children's play. Public access will include provision for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Road and bus crossings through the green fingers will be designed to limit any adverse safety implication for people and be low key in character to limit adverse effects on the landscape. Safe and appropriate crossing facilities for wildlife will also be provided, such as tunnels under roads and ditches alongside roads where appropriate"

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/15 Enhancing Biodiversity

1. "Outline planning applications for development at Trumpington West will be accompanied by a comprehensive ecological survey of flora and fauna. This will include land bounded by the River Cam and Hauxton Road as far south as Hauxton Mill.

#### Managing Enhancing Biodiversity:

2. All open areas will be managed and landscaped to encourage wildlife in locally distinctive habitats. Sensitive habitats will be protected by limiting public access to specified areas.
3. A Biodiversity Management Strategy will demonstrate how biodiversity will be enhanced and how local communities will be involved. A project officer will be funded to implement the strategy through a planning obligation.

#### Green Fingers and the Countryside:

Connections will be provided for Green Fingers within the urban extensions to the surrounding countryside by enhanced landscaping, planting and the creation of wildlife habitats to provide links to larger scale wildlife habitats to provide links to larger scale wildlife habitats further afield including Nine Wells, the Magog Down, Wandlebury Country Park, the River Cam corridor, Coton Country Park, Wimpole Hall and Wicken Fen."

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/22 Construction Strategy

#### Site Access and Haul Roads:

1. "A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction traffic travelling through Trumpington and villages in the locality and ensure that any haul roads are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Trumpington West. They should also avoid adverse effects on the environmental amenities of biodiversity, rights of way and green spaces. Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.

...

#### Construction Activities:

Planning conditions will be imposed to minimise the adverse effects of construction activity on residential amenity and the environment"

## Local Development Framework: Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan, February 2008.

### Policy CSF/24 Management of Services, Facilities, Landscape and Infrastructure

- "1. Management strategies for services, facilities, landscape, and infrastructure will be submitted to the local planning authority for adoption prior to the granting of outline planning permission to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption, and maintenance. Landownership for these uses should be as simple as possible, preferably in a single ownership to avoid fragmentation. In particular, there should be a single agreed Management Strategy

covering recreation, landscape, and biodiversity. The inclusion of water and drainage features within open spaces would have significant.

## Local Development Framework: North West Cambridge Area Action Plan, October 2009.

### Policy NW2: Development Principles

- "2. Development proposals should, as appropriate to their nature, location, scale, and economic viability: f) Protect and enhance the geodiversity and biodiversity of the site and incorporate historic landscape and geological features;
3. Planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development or associated mitigation measures would have an unacceptable adverse impact:
  - n) On biodiversity, archaeological, historic landscape, and geological interests;
  - s) On protected trees and trees of significance".

## Local Development Framework: North West Cambridge Area Action Plan, October 2009.

### Policy NW4: Site and Setting

"Land between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road, comprising two areas totalling approximately 91ha, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated for predominantly University-related uses. A strategic gap is retained between the two parts of the site to ensure separation is maintained between Cambridge and Girton village and to provide a central open space for reasons of biodiversity, landscape, recreation and amenity, whilst ensuring a cohesive and sustainable for of development."

## Local Development Framework: North West Cambridge Area Action Plan, October 2009.

### Policy NW24: Climate Change & Sustainable Design and Construction

- “1. Development will be required to demonstrate that it has been designed to adapt to the predicted effects of climate change;
2. Residential development will be required to demonstrate that:
- b) All dwellings approved on or after 1 April 2013 will meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 or higher;
- c) There is no adverse impact on the water environment and biodiversity as a result of the implementation and management of water conservation measures.
3. Non-residential development and student housing will be required to demonstrate that:
- d) it will achieve a high degree of sustainable design and construction in line with BREEAM “excellent” standards or the equivalent if this is replaced;
- e) It will incorporate water conservation measures including water saving devices, greywater and/or rainwater recycling in all buildings to significantly reduce potable water consumption; and
- g) There is no adverse impact on the water environment and biodiversity as a result of the implementation and management of water conservation measures.”

## Local Development Framework: North West Cambridge Area Action Plan, October 2009.

### Policy NW25: Surface Water Drainage

1. “Surface water drainage for the site should be designed as far as possible as a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) to reduce overall run-off volumes leaving the site, control the rate of flow and improve

water quality before it joins any water course or other receiving body;

2. The surface water drainage system will seek to hold water on the site, ensuring that it is released to surrounding water courses at an equal, or slower, rate that was the case prior to development;
3. Water storage areas should be designed and integrated into the development with drainage, recreation, biodiversity, and amenity value; and

Any surface water drainage scheme will need to be capable of reducing the downstream flood risk associated with storm events as well as normal rainfall events. All flood mitigation measures must make allowance for the forecast effects of climate change.”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 7: The River Cam

Development proposals along the River Cam corridor should:

- a. include an assessment of views of the river and a demonstration that the proposed design of the development has taken account of the assessment in enhancing views to and from the river;
- b. preserve and enhance the unique physical, natural, historically, and culturally distinctive landscape of the River Cam;
- c. raise, where possible, the quality of the river, adjacent open spaces, and the integrity of the built environment in terms of its impact, location, scale, design, and form;
- d. propose, where possible and appropriate to context, enhancement of the natural resources of the River Cam and offer opportunities for re-naturalisation of the river;
- e. enable, where possible, opportunities for greater public access to the River Cam; and
- f. take account of and support, as appropriate, the tourism and recreational facilities associated with the river.

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 8: Setting of the city

“Development on the urban edge, including sites within and abutting green infrastructure corridors and the Cambridge Green Belt, open spaces and the River Cam corridor, will only be supported where it:

includes landscape improvement proposals that strengthen or recreate the well-defined and vegetated urban edge, improve visual amenity, and enhance biodiversity.

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 31: Integrated water management

Development will be permitted provided that:

f) any flat roof is a green or brown roof, providing that it is acceptable in terms of its context in the historic environment of Cambridge and the structural capacity of the roof if it is a refurbishment. Green or brown roofs should be widely used in large-scale new communities;

...

development adjacent to a water body actively seeks to enhance the water body in terms of its hydro morphology, biodiversity potential and setting.”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 52: Protecting garden land and the subdivision of existing dwelling plots

“Proposals for development on sites that form part of a garden or group of gardens or that subdivide an existing residential plot will only be permitted where: b. sufficient garden space and space around existing dwellings is

retained, especially where these spaces and any trees are worthy of retention due to their contribution to the character of the area and their importance for biodiversity.”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 57: Designing new buildings

“High quality new buildings will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they include an appropriate scale of features and facilities to maintain and increase levels of biodiversity in the built environment”.

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings

“Alterations and extensions to existing buildings will be permitted where they: do not adversely impact on the setting, character or appearance of listed buildings or the appearance of conservation areas, local heritage assets, open spaces, trees or important wildlife features;”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm

“External spaces, landscape, public realm, and boundary treatments must be designed as an integral part of new development proposals and coordinated with adjacent sites and phases. High quality development will be supported where it is demonstrated that: species are selected to enhance biodiversity through the use of native planting and/or species capable of adapting to our changing climate”.

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 66: Paving over front gardens

“Proposals for the paving over of front gardens will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

...

c. it will not result in a net loss of biodiversity”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 69: Protection of sites of local nature conservation importance

“In determining any planning application affecting a site of biodiversity or geodiversity importance, development will be permitted if it will not have an adverse impact on, or lead to the loss of, part of all of a site identified on the Policies Map. Regard must be had to the international, national, or local status and designation of the site and the nature quality of the site’s intrinsic features, including its rarity.

Where development is permitted, proposals must include measures:

- a. to minimise harm;
- b. to secure achievable mitigation and/or compensatory measures; and
- c. where possible enhance the nature conservation value of the site affected through habitat creation, linkage, and management.

In exceptional circumstances, where the importance of the development outweighs the need to retain the site, adequate replacement habitat must be provided.

Any replacement habitat must be provided before development commences on any proposed area of habitat to be lost.”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats

“Development will be permitted which:

- a. protects priority species and habitats; and
- b. enhances habitats and populations of priority species.

Proposals that harm or disturb populations and habitats should:

- c. minimise any ecological harm; and d. secure achievable mitigation and/or compensatory measures, resulting in either no net loss or net gain of priority habitat and local populations of priority species.

Where development is proposed within or adjoining a site hosting priority species and habitats, or which will otherwise affect a national priority species or a species listed in the national and Cambridgeshire-specific biodiversity action plans (BAPs), an assessment of the following will be required:

- e. current status of the species population;
- f. the species’ use of the site and other adjacent habitats;
- g. the impact of the proposed development on legally protected species, national and Cambridgeshire-specific BAP species, and their habitats; and
- h. details of measures to fully protect the species and habitats identified.

If significant harm to the population or conservation status of protected species, priority species or priority habitat resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.”

## Cambridge Local Plan 2018

### Policy 71: Trees

“Development will not be permitted which involves felling, significant survey (either now or in the foreseeable future) and potential root damage to trees of amenity or other value, unless there are demonstrable public benefits accruing from the proposal which clearly outweigh the current and future amenity value of the trees.

Development proposals should:

- a. preserve, protect, and enhance existing trees and hedges that have amenity value as perceived from the public realm;
- b. provide appropriate replacement planting, where felling is proved necessary; and
- c. provide sufficient space for trees and other vegetation to mature.

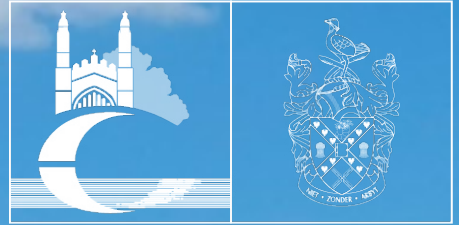
Particular consideration should be given to veteran or ancient trees, as defined by Natural England, in order to preserve their historic, ecological and amenity value.”

# Appendix 2 Guidance on protected species and ecological survey seasons


This provides a rough guide to the seasonality of ecological survey to illustrate the potential impact on the submission of information in support of a planning application. A suitably qualified ecologist should always be consulted to provide site specific advice on appropriate methodologies and timing, which may depend on weather conditions.


Table 1 Ecological survey seasons


Ecological Area	Survey Season
Preliminary Ecological Appraisals	Surveys are possible year-round.
Botanical Surveys	As appropriate to plant community from June to August. Marginal opportunities from April to May, and September.
Breeding Birds	Six survey visits across the season from March to June. Marginal opportunity in July.
Wintering Birds	At least monthly from January to February and November to December.
Badgers	Surveys for evidence can be undertaken year-round. Bait marking and sett surveys from February to April and September to November. Breeding season, limited surveying from May to August and December to January. Licensable season for disturbance from July to November.
Bats	Potential Roost Assessment Surveys are possible year-round. Emergence and Activity Surveys from May to September. Marginal opportunities in April and October, depending on temperature.
Hazel Dormice	Nest tube survey with monthly checks throughout season, to achieve minimum level of effort from April to November.
Invertebrates	Optimal survey time April to September.
Reptiles	Weather conditions are important from April to July and September. Marginal opportunities in March, August, and October to November.
Water Voles	Habitat assessment possible year-round. Two surveys required. The first survey from April to June. The second survey from July to September. This identifies breeding territories and latrines. Marginal opportunities for the two surveys from October to November.
Otters	Surveys are possible all year-round.
Great Crested Newts	Habitat assessment possible year-round. Four aquatic surveys which must include two surveys from mid-April to May. eDNA survey season from mid-March to end of June. Marginal opportunities in March, and from July to August.
White Clawed Crayfish	Habitat assessment possible year-round. Netting survey from July to November.





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Front Cover photo: Cambourne, Cambridgeshire: John Cornell