

3.5 Biodiversity

- 3.5.1 Biodiversity is an essential part of sustainable development and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity should be considered as a key element of good design. Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest growing areas within England, with plans for significant additional development and major infrastructure to provide tens of thousands of new homes and significant new employment opportunities over the coming decades. It is important that, in planning for this growth, steps are taken to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, which plays a pivotal role in our economy and well-being, providing wide-ranging benefits such as clean water and air, food, timber, carbon capture, flood protection and recreation.
- 3.5.2 All scales of development offer opportunities to enhance biodiversity, from simple solutions such as the integration of nest boxes through to the opportunities that larger scale developments offer for the integration of green infrastructure with biodiversity enhancement at its heart. Recent changes to national planning policy have placed increasing importance on the role of new development in securing net gains in biodiversity. More widely, government has included this within the 25 Year Environment Plan, with the potential to change national planning policy to make these gains mandatory.

LOCATION:

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

POLICY:

- Cambridge Local Plan (2018) Policy 69: Protection of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance
- Cambridge Local Plan (2018) Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) Policy NH/4: Biodiversity
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) Policy NH5: Sites of biodiversity or geological importance.

RELATED POLICIES

Cambridge Local Plan (2018):

- Policy 7: The River Cam
- Policy 8: Setting of the City
- Section Three: City Centre, Areas of Major Change, Opportunity Areas and site specific proposals (various policies)
- Policy 31: Integrated water management and the water cycle
- Policy 52: Protecting garden land and the subdivision of existing dwelling plots
- Policy 57: Designing new buildings
- Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings
- Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm
- Policy 66: Paving over front gardens
- Policy 71: Trees

SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT:	<p>South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3: Strategic Sites (various policies) • Policy CC/7: Water Quality • Policy CC/8: Sustainable Drainage Systems • Policy HQ/1: Design Principles • Policy NH/3: Protecting Agricultural land • Policy NH/6: Green Infrastructure • Policy NH/7: Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees <p>All development proposals should seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity. See further detail below for specific submission requirements.</p>
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT:	Residential and Non-residential development
SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:	Preliminary Ecological Assessment and Protected Species Scoping Survey. Note that these surveys will also need the outline the approach to securing biodiversity net gain.
LINK TO THE SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST:	Bio.1, Bio.2, Bio.3, Bio.4, Bio.5, Bio.6, Bio.7, Bio.8, Bio.9

Policy overview

- 3.5.3 Both the 2018 Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans, alongside national planning policy in the NPPF, requires new development to protect and enhance biodiversity, giving consideration to the conservation status of species and habitats and recognising the role that a multifunctional approach to the design of developments has to play in helping to enhance biodiversity. The existing ecology of the site will need to be properly understood prior to submitting a planning application otherwise it is not possible to deliver effective species and habitat conservation.

Submission requirements

- 3.5.4 When undertaking development, the majority of sites, whether infill, greenfield or brownfield, will be considered as having potential to support biodiversity. For developments that will either directly or indirectly impact a designated site of biodiversity or geodiversity importance, or a protected species or a priority species or priority habitat, a **Preliminary Ecological Assessment** and **Protected Species Survey** will need to be submitted with the application. This includes refurbishment works which may impact species using the existing building such as bats and swifts. If the application involves any of the development proposals shown in table 3.6 (Column 1), a Protected Species Survey must be submitted with the application, while table 3.7 below lists the sites, habitats and features for which such a survey will be required.
- 3.5.5 Exceptions for when a Preliminary Ecological Assessment and Protected Species Surveys may not be required include:
- Following consultation by the applicant at the pre-application stage, the LPA has stated in writing that no Protected Species Surveys and Preliminary Ecological Assessments are required.

- b. If it is clear that no Priority Species are present, despite the guidance in the above table indicating that they are likely, the applicant should provide evidence with the planning application to demonstrate that such species are absent (*e.g.* this might be in the form of a letter or brief report from a suitably qualified and experienced person, or a relevant local nature conservation organisation).
- c. If it is clear that the development proposal will not affect any Priority Species present, then only limited information needs to be submitted. This information should, however, (i) demonstrate that there will be no significant effect on any Priority Species present and (ii) include a statement acknowledging that the applicant is aware that it is a criminal offence to disturb or harm protected species should they subsequently be found or disturbed.
- d. *International and National Sites:* A survey and assessment will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with Natural England, where the latter confirms in writing that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any statutory sites designated for their national or international importance.
- e. *Regional and Local Sites and Priority Habitats:* A survey and assessment will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with the District Council's Ecology Officer, confirming that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any regional or local sites designated for their local nature conservation importance or any other Priority Habitats or listed features.

3.5.6 In some situations, it may be appropriate for an applicant to provide a Protected Species survey and report for only one or a few of the species shown in the table above *e.g.* those that are likely to be affected by a particular activity. Applicants should make clear which species are included in the report and which are not because exceptions apply.

3.5.7 All surveys and assessments should be carried out:

- By suitably experienced, trained and qualified ecologists;
- At appropriate times of year, in suitable weather conditions – surveys conducted outside optimal times may be unreliable
- To published guidelines and methodologies
- To an appropriate level of scope and detail

Appointing an ecologist to survey a site early in the design process will be important in order to avoid costly delays later. They will also be able to advise on enhancement options, working in collaboration with other disciplines including architects, landscape architects and drainage consultants.

3.5.8 Assessment should detail the possible impacts upon the application site's wildlife and how the applicant has taken account of such impacts. Where proposals are being made for mitigation and/or compensation measures, full details of how such measures will be effective need to be proved with the application.

3.5.9 Where appropriate, accompanying plans should indicate any significant wildlife habitats or features and the location of habitats or any species protected under the Wildlife and

Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, or The Protection of Badgers Act 1982.

- 3.5.10 Applications for development that affects areas designated for their biodiversity interest will require special consideration to ensure any impact is not considered significant or detrimental to the sites special interest.

Securing biodiversity net gain

- 3.5.11 National policy now requires a measurable net gain in biodiversity to be provided by development. Net gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. Development that adopts a biodiversity net gain approach seeks to make its impact on the environment positive, delivering improvements through habitat creation or enhancement after avoiding or mitigating harm as far as possible.
- 3.5.12 Net gain can be secured at a variety of different scales, from householder applications right up to new settlements, albeit the scale of improvement will differ. At a householder scale options can include the integration of nest boxes for birds and bats, integration of sustainable drainage systems such as rain gardens and the use of green and biodiverse roofs (see paragraphs 3.4.29 – 3.4.33).
- 3.5.13 The Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning have developed guidance aimed at householders and small scale developers called the Wildlife Assessment Checklist. This free tool enables users to undertake a simple check at the pre-planning application stage to ascertain whether there are any protected and priority wildlife species and statutory designated sites that might be impacted by a development project. This helps to provide clarification for applicants as to whether a proposed site needs professional ecological advice and further assessment. While the tool does not replace the need to use a qualified professional ecologist, and it does not always pick up local designations and species data, it is a useful tool to ensure early consideration of ecology. The tool can be accessed via the following weblink:
<https://www.biodiversityinplanning.org/wildlife-assessment-check/>
- 3.5.14 Major development offers greater opportunities for delivering biodiversity net gain with options ranging from building scale approaches (nest boxes, green and biodiverse roofs) through to the integration of opportunities for biodiversity into green and blue infrastructure and habitat creation, both on and offsite. The approach to securing net gain in biodiversity should be outlined using the DEFRA Biodiversity Offsetting metric.
- 3.5.15 In addition to the DEFRA Biodiversity Offsetting metric, the Natural Cambridgeshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has developed the Developing with Nature Toolkit. Launched in October 2018, the toolkit comprises a simple list of 10 Things to do for Nature, a scoring matrix, guidance notes and links to background information, including a summary map of Greater Cambridgeshire strategic GI and ecological network priorities, plus links to reference materials and publications. Primarily aimed at major developments requiring an EIA, the toolkit is intended for use from the very outset of planning new developments, and ideally at the time of selecting sites to acquire for development. The

toolkit, which the Councils' would encourage all promoters of major developments to use, is available online at:

<https://naturalcambridgeshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/nc-developing-with-nature-toolkit.pdf>

Table 3.6: Local Requirement for Priority Species: criteria and indicative thresholds (trigger list) for when a Protected Species Survey (and Preliminary Ecological Assessment) is required

Column 1	Species likely to be affected and for which a survey will be required													
	Bats	Barn Owls	Breeding Birds	Gt. Crested Newts	Otters			Water Vole	Badger	Reptiles	Amphibians	Schedule 8 Plants & Fungi		Other BAP species
Proposals for development that will trigger a Protected Species survey														
Proposed development which includes the modification conversion, demolition or removal of buildings and structures (especially roof voids) involving the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all agricultural buildings (e.g. farmhouses and barns) particularly of traditional brick or stone construction and/or with exposed wooden beams greater than 20cm thick; all buildings with weather boarding and/or hanging tiles that are within 200m of woodland and/or water; pre-1960 detached buildings and structures within 200m of woodland and/or water; pre-1914 buildings within 400m of woodland and/or water; pre-1914 buildings with gable ends or slate roofs, regardless of location; all tunnels, kilns, ice-houses, adits, military fortifications, air raid shelters, cellars and similar underground ducts and structures; all bridge structures (especially over water and wet ground). 	•	•	•											
Proposals involving lighting of churches and listed buildings or flood lighting of green space within 50m of woodland, water, field hedgerows or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water.	•	•	•											
Proposals affecting woodland, or field hedgerows and/or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water bodies.	•		•			•	•		•			•		

Proposed tree work (felling or lopping) and/or development affecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> old and veteran trees that are older than 100 years; trees with obvious holes, cracks or cavities, trees with a girth greater than 1m at chest height; 	•		•												
Proposals affecting gravel pits or quarries and natural cliff faces, or caves.	•		•						•						
Major proposals within 250m* of a pond or Minor proposals within 100m* of pond (Note: A major proposals is one that is more than 10 dwellings or more than 0.5 hectares or for non-residential development is more than 1000m ² floor area or more than 1 hectare)				•											
Proposals affecting or within 25*m of rivers, streams, lakes, or other aquatic habitats such as reedbeds, or fen.	•		•		•			•			•	•			
Proposals affecting 'derelict' land (brownfield sites), allotments and railway land.			•	•					•	•	•				
Proposed development affecting any buildings, structures, feature or locations where <u>Priority Species are known to be present</u> **.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			
<p>* Distances may be amended to suit local circumstance on the advice of the local Natural England team and/or Local Biodiversity Partnership</p> <p>** Confirmed as present by either a data search (for instance via the Biological Records Centre or as notified to the developer by the local planning authority, and/or by Natural England, the Environment Agency or other nature conservation organisation.</p>	Bats	Barn Owls	Breeding Birds	Great Crested Newt	Otters			Water Vole	Badgers	Reptiles	Amphibians	Schedule 8 Plants & Fungi			Other BAP species

Table 3.7: Local Requirements for Designated Sites and Priority Habitats: criteria (trigger List) for when a Preliminary Ecological Assessment is required

1. DESIGNATED SITES (as shown on the Policies Map)	
Internationally designated sites	Special Protection Area (SPA) Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Ramsar Site
Nationally designated sites	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) National Nature Reserve (NNR)
Regionally and locally designated sites	County Wildlife Sites (CWS) Local Nature Reserve (LNR) City Wildlife Site (CiWS) Protected Roadside Verges (PRSV)
2. PRIORITY HABITATS (Habitats of Principal Importance for Biodiversity under S.41 of the NERC Act 2006)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows ▪ Floodplain grazing marsh ▪ Fen, marsh, swamp and reedbeds ▪ Purple moor grass and rush pastures ▪ Lowland beech and yew woodland ▪ Lowland calcareous grassland (e.g. species-rich chalk and limestone grasslands) ▪ Lowland heathland and/or dry acid grassland ▪ Lowland meadows (e.g. species-rich flower meadows) ▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (ancient woodland) ▪ Lowland wood-pasture and parkland ▪ Rivers and streams (e.g. chalk streams) ▪ Standing open water and canals (e.g. lakes, reservoirs, ponds, aquifer fed fluctuating water bodies) ▪ Wet woodland 	
3. OTHER BIODIVERSITY FEATURES	
(as identified by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secondary woodland and mature/veteran trees ▪ Caves and disused tunnels (e.g. roosts for bats) ▪ Trees and scrub used for nesting by breeding birds ▪ Previously developed land with biodiversity interest (i.e. brownfield sites) ▪ Urban green space (e.g. parks, allotments, flower-rich road verges and railway embankments, mature gardens) 	

Further guidance

3.5.16 Further guidance on integrating biodiversity considerations into new developments is available as follows:

- Detailed Greater Cambridge specific guidance will be included in the forthcoming Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.
- CIRIA (2019). Biodiversity Net Gain – Principles and Guidance for UK construction and developments (RP1048). Available online at: https://www.ciria.org/Research/Projects_underway2/Biodiversity_Net_Gain.aspx
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plan – priority species. Available online at: <http://www.cpbiodiversity.org.uk/biodiversity-action-plans/priority-species>
- The British Standards Institute Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development (BS42020:2013)
- Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf
- Cambridgeshire County Wildlife Site Register. For details of individual sites see Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC), available online at: <http://www.cperc.org.uk/>
- Cambridgeshire Opportunity Mapping (currently in production should be available March 2019)
- CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2013). Available online at: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidance-on-preliminary-ecological-appraisal-gpea/>
- Action for Swifts. Guidance for including bird boxes in residential developments. Available online at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1J9UBWBtdkV6C5EqyxAJIT-PFAia9g2mMiYHf9YKmbBbc/edit>
- DEFRA (2012). Technical Paper: The metric for biodiversity offsetting pilot in England. Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69531/pb13745-bio-technical-paper.pdf