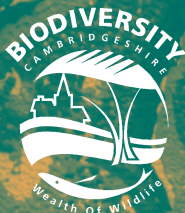




Biodiversity Checklist

Developer's guidance



Cambridgeshire
County Council

Environment & Transport

Developer's Guidance

Local Planning Authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough wish to encourage high quality development, which makes a positive contribution to the protection and enhancement of the local environment. This includes biodiversity and landscape issues. Both the recent Regional

Planning Guidance for the East of England and the Countryside & Rights of Way Act have identified the responsibility that local planning authorities have to help achieve the targets set in the national and local Biodiversity Action Plans. This is likely to be reinforced in the review of PPG9.

The Biodiversity Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has prepared this guidance in consultation with local authority planners. Its purpose is to inform you of the type of information relating to biodiversity that you may be expected to provide on submission of your application form.

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been written for key habitats and species in Cambridgeshire and can be viewed on the internet at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/sub/cntryside/biodiv/index.html.

These were produced by the Biodiversity Partnership, which consists of all local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as well as the Wildlife Trust, English Nature, the Environment Agency, RSPB and Anglian Water. The BAPs contain actions needed to protect and enhance these species and habitats.

But we must remember that biodiversity is not just about important or protected species, it is about all the animals, birds, plants and insects living in our environment.

There are a number of steps that you can take during the planning application process that will make your work easier *and* achieve gains for biodiversity in the county. It will also ensure that you do not contravene government legislation. For example, all wild birds and some native animals are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Specific offences relating to damaging or destroying nests and eggs can attract potential fines of up to £5,000 per nest or egg destroyed, and/or a custodial sentence of up to six months.

A. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

with the District Council Planning Officers, and other organisations such as the Wildlife Trust, will highlight issues at an early stage and will avoid unnecessary delay later in the planning process. This is particularly important for site selection and survey work.

B. KEY POINTS FOR MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Major developments (more than 10 houses, 1000 sq m floorspace or 1 ha, or any other development which may have a significant environmental effect) will be subject to the Biodiversity Checklist used by the local authority. The following box highlights the six main objectives to be achieved to ensure that development does not damage existing wildlife value and contributes proactively to enhancing that value.



SURVEY - INFORMATION IS VITAL!

- Ensure adequate survey data initially. The level of detail will vary according to the size of the development and the habitats and species concerned.
- Where protected or priority species are known or suspected, a detailed survey should be carried out by a specialist. A directory of environmental consultants is available online at http://www.ends.co.uk/consultants/consult_quest.htm.
- The aim is to provide sufficient information to determine the ecological impacts of the development, required before planning permission is granted. **Each application should provide some form of ecological statement.**
- The Wildlife Trust, English Nature, the Environment Agency and the local planning authority all hold some data. There may be a fee for provision of data.
- Consult these organisations for information on survey methods and timing. **It is important that survey work is carried out at the appropriate time of year.**
- Large developments (including some permitted developments) likely to have a significant impact on the environment require an Environmental Impact Assessment and should employ an ecologist to monitor the site before, during and after works are completed.

PROTECT - EXISTING HABITATS AND SPECIES

- Avoid adverse impacts to designated local, national or international sites and ensure that statutorily protected habitats and species are preserved. Site layout and design should retain existing habitat features of benefit to wildlife, including BAP habitats and species.
- It is important to keep features in context rather than as an isolated fragment, hence wildlife corridors and linking habitats are encouraged. For this reason a landscape plan should be provided at an early stage.

MITIGATE - AGAINST POTENTIALLY ADVERSE EFFECTS

- Minimise damage to habitats and species wherever possible. A planning condition can be set to require a mitigation strategy in line with any recommendations laid out in the Environmental Statement.
- English Nature can provide guidance on treatment of protected species. Some operations may require a licence.

- Try to ensure works are carried out at the appropriate time of year to avoid disturbance to species. Any disturbance may be in contravention of national or European law.

ENHANCE - EXISTING HABITATS AND CREATE NEW ONES

- Planning authorities will be proactive in enhancing habitats and creating new where appropriate, in accordance with Regional Planning Guidance 6.
- The extent of any habitat enhancement or creation will depend on the size of the development and its location. Habitat creation must fit with the landscape character area (see over) but additional consultation with the Wildlife Trust, English Nature and other conservation organisations is advised. See back page for details

COMPENSATE - WHERE DAMAGE IS UNAVOIDABLE

- The developer can enter into a planning agreement to re-create habitat on or off-site.
- The developer may wish to make a financial contribution towards the management of nearby sites. This is especially relevant where the development could lead to increased pressure on those sites. (e.g. noise and disturbance through increased amenity use of the site).

MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

- Provision must be made for appropriate management of retained features and of new or enhanced habitat.
- The developer should monitor the site, particularly the establishment of new or enhanced habitats and to ascertain any effects on wildlife during or after works.
- The developer should be responsible for management, at least for the first five years. Options for long term management include an agreement with the Wildlife Trust, the local parish council or conservation group, the relevant housing association or the local authority itself. The developer may wish to offer a commuted sum for the management through a planning obligation.
- Planning agreements will also secure the preparation and implementation of a management plan, and long-term monitoring in accordance with the agreed management plan objectives.

Practical steps to enhance biodiversity

This is an easy tick-list of steps that you can take to enhance biodiversity on any proposed development.

PLANTING SCHEMES

- Use native species of local provenance in accordance with the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines e.g. replace bird cherry with wild service tree
- Incorporate existing habitats (scrub / woodland / grassland / ponds etc.) into 'green spaces'.
- Use required Public Open Space to achieve wildlife benefits. Grass mixes do not have to be standard rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) - use native grass and wildflower mix from a local source.
- Leave rough grassland areas with appropriate mowing regimes as wildlife corridors.
- Use a Show Home garden or borders to promote wildlife gardening e.g. wildflowers for insects, hedges and scrub for birds such as Song Thrush, and ponds.
- Use management conditions to ensure chemical-free rough grassland buffer zones are kept on field edges and alongside hedgerows and ditches.
- Encourage the linkage of existing open spaces with wildlife corridors and other features.
- Create environmental features in parks and open spaces, including copses, ponds, ditches and dead wood piles.



- Landscaping of sports and recreation sites should follow guidelines such as those produced by the Committed to Green Foundation <http://www.committedtogreen.org/> to ensure maximum wildlife benefit compatible with the intended land use.

DRAINAGE AND WATER MANAGEMENT

- Collect run-off water in balancing ponds or sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) e.g. ditch systems, reedbed filtration systems.
- Balancing ponds and ditches are important landscape and wildlife features too so incorporate sensitive planting e.g. of reedbed
- Drainage ditches should be created in place of underground pipes where possible.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

- Swift / House martin / Swallow / Bat / Owl boxes.
- Green roofs or climbing plants on unused walls as nesting habitat for birds and for invertebrates - use native species which act as food plants for native insects, such as ivy, wild clematis, and honeysuckle.
- Road, rail or bridge 'underpasses' or other structures for toads, badgers, otters and other animals may be required if these species are known to be in the area.



HABITAT CREATION

- Focus on key habitats for that location (see over). Wild-flower meadows are often appropriate in a semi-urban context.

Habitat Creation

Many different habitats are found throughout the county and give each area its own distinct landscape character.

Guidelines for appropriate landscaping according to countryside character are already given in the

Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines'.

The list below highlights the key habitats targeted in the different character areas of the county.

This gives an indication of the habitats to consider in creation schemes around Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. More detailed information for the

Peterborough area is available in

Peterborough's 'Natural Environment Audit' (also SPG).



URBAN AREAS

(Cambridge, Peterborough and the market towns)

Built Environment and Derelict Sites
Parks, Shelterbelts & Open Spaces
Urban Forest
Allotments
Gardens

CHALKLANDS

(Chalk belt from Royston - Newmarket through South and East Cambridgeshire)

Woodland
Hedgerows
Rivers and Streams inc. Chalk Streams
Parks, Shelterbelts & Open Spaces
Roadside Verges
Lowland Calcareous Grassland

PETERBOROUGH GRAVELS & NORTH WEST LIMESTONE

(around Peterborough)

Woodland
Hedgerows
Lowland Calcareous Grassland
Mineral Restoration Sites
Rivers and Streams

BRECKLAND

(East Cambridgeshire near Suffolk border)
Acid Grassland and Heathland
Woodland

FENLAND

(also in northern East Cambridgeshire and eastern Huntingdonshire and Peterborough area)

Parks, Shelterbelts & Open Spaces
Wet Woodland
Fens
Traditional Orchards
Drainage Ditches
Floodplain Grazing Marsh
Reedbeds

WESTERN CLAYLANDS & SOUTH EAST CLAY HILLS

(Huntingdonshire, northern South Cambridgeshire and southern East Cambridgeshire)
Woodland
Ponds
Lakes and Reservoirs
Meadows and Pastures
Hedgerows
Rivers and Streams

NENE & OUSE VALLEYS

Floodplain Grazing Marsh
Meadows and Pastures
Mineral Restoration Sites
Lakes and Reservoirs
Wet Woodland
Rivers and Streams



USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

BRE (2000) EcoHomes - an environmental rating
<http://www.bre.co.uk/press/2000/april/eco060400.html>

Cambridgeshire County Council (1991)
Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines - a manual for management and change in the rural landscape Granta Editions, Cambridge. (SPG)

PECT (1995) *Peterborough Natural Environment Audit* (SPG)

English Nature publications:

Badgers - Guidelines for developers.

Water Vole - Guidance for planners and developers.

Bats in roofs - a guide for surveyors.

Wildlife Trust for Peterborough (1997)
Swallows, Martins and Swifts... Sharing our Buildings. A guide for architects, builders, developers and surveyors. (in conjunction with Peterborough City Council.

CONTACTS

Direct general enquiries to the Wildlife or Biodiversity Officer at the Local Planning Authority. Tree Officers and Countryside Staff also hold some information.

Cambridge City Council 01223 457000

Landscape Architect

Cambridgeshire County Council 01223 717111

Biodiversity Officer *or* Senior Countryside Officer

East Cambs District Council 01353 665555

Landscape Officer

Fenland District Council 01354 654321

Assistant Planning Officer *or* Fenland Countryside Projects Officer

Huntingdonshire District Council 01480 388388

Tree and Landscape Officer

Peterborough City Council 01733 563141

Wildlife Officer

Police 01480 456111

Cambridgeshire Constabulary Wildlife and Environment Liaison Officer

South Cambs District Council 01223 443000

Conservation Officer *or* Trees and Landscape Officer

*For enquiries regarding the following **habitats**, please contact the listed organisations:*

Grasslands: English Nature, the Wildlife Trust

Woodlands: the Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission

Rivers and Lakes: Environment Agency

Farmland: Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

Urban Habitats: the Wildlife Trust

*Information on **species** is available from the following organisations, as well as from leaflets included in the reference list:*

Mammals: English Nature (protected species inc. otters, water voles and bats), the Wildlife Trust (water vole and otter data).

Birds: RSPB

Invertebrates: the Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation

Reptiles and Amphibians: the Wildlife Trust, English Nature (protected species inc. grass snakes and great crested newts)

ORGANISATIONS:

Butterfly Conservation 01954 780467

Dr Val Perrin

English Nature 01733 405850

Forestry Commission 01842 815544

Woodland Officer (for Cambridgeshire),

FWAG 01223 455812

Farm Advisor

RSPB 01603 660066

Assistant Conservation Officer

The Environment Agency

Cambs Conservation Officer 01480 414581

Peterborough Conservation Officer 01522 513100

The Wildlife Trust

Cambs Senior Conservation Officer 01223 712401

Peterborough Conservation Officer 01733 346902

Please direct any questions related to the Biodiversity Action Plans to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough contacts above.

Alternatively, please contact:

Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator 01223 718573



This leaflet has been produced and funded by Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of the Biodiversity Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

For further information or if you would like a copy of this booklet on audio cassette or in Braille, large print or other languages, please contact the Environment Programme Team at the address below:

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Internet: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/sub/cntryside/biodiv

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