

Biodiversity

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 Species¹ 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.

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

¹ *Priority Species and Habitats are those that are identified within a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and / or the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, Section 41.*

- 6.15 National legislation and planning guidance place a duty on local authorities to consider biodiversity through their Local Plans. The Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and will work with partners to ensure a proactive approach to protection, enhancement and management of biodiversity identified in national and local strategies and plans such as Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 6.16 Whilst the need for development will be carefully considered against its impact on biodiversity, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and the creation of new habitats can arise through sensitively located and carefully designed developments. For example, where habitats would be fragmented by new developments, it may be possible to create green corridors to reconnect habitats and assist species' movement and dispersal into the wider landscape thereby contributing to wider ecological networks.
- 6.17 BAPs provide guidance on targets and actions for habitats and species conservation. Further guidance on sites, species and habitats are set out in the Council's Biodiversity SPD. This also contains guidance for developers of how biodiversity should be considered in the development process.
- 6.18 It is recognised that climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity. As a means to make biodiversity more resilient to climate change applicants will be encouraged to reduce habitat fragmentation and to strengthen ecological networks to aid migration, natural dispersal and the exchange of genetic material within species.