

CHAPTER 2

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

THE NEED

- 2.1 In its capacity as the Local Planning Authority SCDC has an obligation to consider how development will affect biodiversity. The conservation and enhancement of an ecologically diverse countryside and built environment alike presents many challenges within the rapidly changing district. This document aims to provide guidance on biodiversity issues that are likely to be encountered during the development control process. The document provides information on the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity across South Cambridgeshire and should be read alongside the SCDC Biodiversity Strategy. A full list of habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity conservation can be found in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006, section 41, www.ukbap.org.uk/bapgroupPage.aspx?id=112.
- 2.2 Priority Species and Habitats for conservation are those identified within the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and/or the NERC Act. Further information on BAPs can be found at: www.scambs.gov.uk/biodiversitystrategy, www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/sub/cntryside/biodiv, www.ukbap.org.uk.
- 2.3 The South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan proposes a varied range of actions in order to protect existing biodiversity and to achieve biodiversity gain. Habitat enhancement should aim to contribute towards BAP targets.
- 2.4 Tables 5 and 6 in appendix 5 detail Priority Species and Habitats for South Cambridgeshire. Other species and habitats may be added (or removed) as BAPs are reviewed.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE UK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

- 2.5 The UK Government is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) and seeks to meet its obligations under the convention through the biodiversity action planning process. Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) should be considered as the drivers for nature conservation across the UK, counties and districts for listed species and habitats.
- 2.6 In 2000 the Cambridgeshire BAP was launched. It was produced by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership and lists those species and habitats considered to be of particular importance at the county level.
- 2.7 The Cambridgeshire BAP has been used to focus attention on Priority Species and Habitats of particular relevance to the district. This document consequently aims to contribute to the achievement of the Cambridgeshire BAP by providing further guidance with respect to South Cambridgeshire.

THE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE

- 2.8 The district of South Cambridgeshire contains important habitats and species. The increase in the distribution of the otter throughout the 1990's can be considered as an indicator of the general health of the district's watercourses. The discovery of a population of the Barbastelle bat at Wimpole by the Cambridgeshire Bat Group led to the designation of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the UK Habitats Regulations, 1994. Large scale habitat creation projects such as the proposed Cambridgeshire Hundreds Woodland initiative and the National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision present examples of exciting opportunities to reverse some of the damage and habitat fragmentation of the past.
- 2.9 South Cambridgeshire is known to contain a broad range of statutorily protected species (refer to table 4). The habitat range of these species should never be considered to be static as species will move due to natural dispersal and / or environmental stresses.
- 2.10 In the past the largely rural nature of the district meant that wildlife could even find refuges within the villages. Species such as the great crested newt, barn owl and house sparrows were much more widespread. However, within villages, changing land-use and farming practice has placed increasing pressure upon a wide range of species. Small meadows, ponds and relatively quiet lanes have also been affected by change, and "unkempt" areas have been "tidied-up", often with a negative impact upon biodiversity. It is widely acknowledged that the opportunity to see and interact with biodiversity can enrich people's lives. It is therefore important to strive for the integration of wildlife within new developments.
- 2.11 English Nature (now Natural England) had undertaken a mapping exercise to display known information upon national Priority Habitats and protected sites. The information is presented on an interactive map entitled Nature on the Map (www.natureonthemap.org.uk). The map enables users to find information about protected sites and areas of semi-natural habitats. The map for South Cambridgeshire is presented in the SCDC Biodiversity Strategy.
- 2.12 It should be remembered that very little of the landscape that we see today has not been influenced by Man. However, recent decades have seen an increased rate of landscape change that has resulted in a significant loss of habitats including hedgerows, flower rich meadows, and wetlands. Other habitats, such as planted woodlands and grasslands are fragmented and are unlikely to ever receive the transfer of species that occurred in the past, thus their potential to become ecologically rich is limited without the positive intervention by conservationists or development schemes.