D9 BIODIVERSITY

OBJECTIVES

D9/a To achieve and maintain a thorough understanding of the existing biodiversity of the Plan area before, during and after construction.

D9/b To minimise any adverse impact on the existing species and habitats of particular biodiversity importance that may arise as a result of development.

D9/c To maximise the biodiversity value of the green spaces that either remain or are created as a result of development, in balance with other functions for these areas.

D9/d To maximise the biodiversity of the urban areas.

D9/e To establish awareness within the local population of the biodiversity within and beyond the town and thus encourage its protection and enhancement.

D9/f To establish a high degree of connectivity between 'green' areas associated with the development of the town and the wider countryside, balanced with a need to minimise the adverse impacts to the surrounding ecology that might arise due to the substantial population increase in the area.

D9/g To ensure the maintenance and funding of the resources for biodiversity including the habitats and flora and fauna of merit.

D9/h To make use of existing features of ecological value to contribute to the creation and retention of key habitats within the new development.

D9/i To develop an appropriate management strategy to ensure high quality, robust and effective implementation, adoption and maintenance of the biodiversity areas.

INTRODUCTION

D9.1 The Area Action Plan lies within a mainly arable farmland landscape that supports few hedgerows, copses, woodlands, major water courses or water bodies. This has led to the biodiversity of the area being relatively poor by national and regional standards. There is no land within the Area Action Plan that is statutorily designated for wildlife protection.

D9.2 However, the site itself includes as well as arable land, rough grassland on the disused airfield with associated hedgerows and woodland plantation, Oakington and Longstanton Brooks, a network of ponds and a disused railway embankment. These key habitat areas provide good shelter, food and commuting resources for a range of protected species known to be within the area. The key protected species recorded within the Area Action Plan are badgers, bats, amphibians, reptiles, birds, water vole, otter and brown hare. The key principle will be to achieve a net increase in biodiversity.

EXISTING BIODIVERSITY FEATURES

POLICY NS/19 Existing Biodiversity Features

Biodiversity Surveys

a) The developer will be required to undertake a full programme of ecological survey and monitoring before, during and after construction to establish which areas of biodiversity need protecting and enhancing. The surveys should conclude by proposing strategies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

Management Strategy

b) 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

c) 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.

Biodiversity Surveys

D9.3 In order to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area it will be essential to undertake full programmes for ecological survey and monitoring before, during and after construction. This will identify key areas of value to inform the design process and to develop strategies for:

- Key species, particularly badgers, bats, great crested newts, barn owls, common lizard, grass snake, invertebrates, water vole and brown hare; and

- Key habitats, including woodland, individual trees of merit, open water, mosaics of grassland, hedgerows and associated ditches.

D9.4 It will be important to draw up strategies for the creation, retention and management of key habitats important for foraging, and shelter, and mitigation for protected species to ensure and encourage their continued presence within the new development.

Management Strategy

D9.5 As with landscape, a Biodiversity Management Strategy will be needed to maintain and fund biodiversity (see NS14 - Landscape: Management Strategy). The landownership structure of public open space should be as simple as possible and subject to a single agreed management strategy in order to be comprehensive and all embracing. It will be important that any biodiversity management strategy receives the full support of the local communities who should be involved in creation and care of habitats. This can be achieved by informing the residents of the town about the biodiversity of the area through community / wildlife groups, on-site information boards and local newsletters.

Retention of Existing Features

D9.6 Existing biodiversity features will be incorporated into a green network to facilitate the movement of people and wildlife between them and prevent them becoming isolated.

D9.7 The existing features are mature and support a relatively rich range of wildlife for the area. It is important to retain these habitats where possible. The Biodiversity and Landscape Management Strategy will consider how to enhance this resource through extensive woodland management including thinning, replanting and establishment of a diverse scrub and herb under-storey.

NEW BIODIVERSITY FEATURES

POLICY NS/20 New Biodiversity Features

Eastern Water Park

a) A water park along the eastern boundary of the town and west of the disused St Ives railway line will be created with an extensive wetland habitat and managed to maximise its value to key species.

Southern Parkland Country Park

b) A Country Park with 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.

The Northern Country Park

c) The Northern Country Park to the west of Station Road, Longstanton will offer a major opportunity to create a substantial area of semi-natural fen-edge landscape with appropriate wildlife habitats incorporating existing features such as the copse and pond at its heart.

Green Corridors Through and Beyond the Town

d) Green corridors will be established through and beyond the town to provide links to larger scale wildlife habitats further afield such as Fen Drayton Pits and Needingworth Quarry.

Creating Habitats Within The Urban Area

e) 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.

New Biodiversity Features

D9.8 A landscape strategy is being developed for Northstowe (see Landscape section) which envisages the creation of a water park along the boundaries of the new town where it meets the Guided Bus route, and the creation of ~~a~~ two Country Parks, between Northstowe and Oakington and to the north-west of the town to the west of Station Road (the B1050). The Country Parks offer significant opportunities to create wildlife habitats over a wider area.

D9.9 The landscape strategy suggests that green corridors would penetrate into and through the urban area, based on drainage infrastructure, and existing landscape features will also act as wildlife corridors. For biodiversity it is the connectivity between these open areas and the links to the larger green areas on the periphery and thence into the open countryside which will enable wildlife to spread and flourish.

Creating Habitats Within The Urban Area

D9.10 There are a number of ways in which biodiversity can be maximised within urban areas, such as by incorporating green roofs, erection of bat bricks and boxes, bird nest boxes, installation of mammal tunnels and other means of crossing points along severed routes. All of these will need to be designed and installed at appropriate locations to gain maximum net gains. The urban design and landscaping of the town can also contribute through the establishment of a network of open spaces planted with indigenous species which will support a wide range of wildlife.