

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet 5 <sup>th</sup> July 2021.
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery.
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Stephen Kelly, Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development

## Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

### Executive Summary

1. South Cambridgeshire District Council currently has an existing Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) dating from 2009 which is out of date, as it does not reflect existing Local Plan policies or relevant national legislation. This SPD is currently the main guidance on interpreting biodiversity-focused planning policy for applicants and thus is in urgent need of change.
2. This Council has made a commitment to Doubling Nature, through an adopted Strategy of that name in February 2021. It has stated that it is green to the core and recognises a biodiversity emergency. As such, it is imperative that its SPDs and guidance on these matters are up-to-date and reflective of current policy.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that this committee support the passage of this SPD through this process to the next phase, which is public consultation prior to its return to this committee for review and adoption in late 2021.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. South Cambridgeshire District Council should maintain the currency and utility of key guidance on issues identified as important to it and its constituents. This SPD represents just such a document and brings guidance on planning and biodiversity up to date.

## Details

5. Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies into the development plan. They are however a material consideration in decision-making. They should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development.
6. Within this SPD are references to key changes within Local Plan policy and national legislation (NPPF 2018), which have arisen since the publication of the previous SPD in 2009. Among these are references to measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), a nationally recognised metric used to ensure that development replaces more biodiversity than it takes through the development process. While already present in existing legislation, BNG will also form an important part of the anticipated UK Environment Bill when expected mandatory figures are due to be published. The SPD also sets out important non-binding biodiversity targets for developers and provides up-to-date examples of these, thus helping applicants visualise the actions they might need to apply to their own projects. District Level Licencing for great crested newts is referenced in this SPD, again, giving clarity for developers on current policy.
7. Beyond the specific changes to policies affecting biodiversity, this SPD as a whole process is reflective of the Councils desire to not only amplify existing policies where they impact biodiversity, but also indicate its commitment to new and ambitious policies which might emerge in the new Local Plan process currently underway.

## Options

- A) Approve public consultation of SPD as written
- B) Suggest amendments prior to consultation period

## Implications

8. None

## Financial

9. This project is in budget and is following the anticipated trajectory of work set out in the Project Initiation Document.

## Legal

10. Legal have been consulted on elements of the sections describing Biodiversity Net Gain and wording has been approved.

## **Staffing**

11. Work on this SPD will and has been undertaken by officers in the BNE Team, but also from colleagues in Planning Policy, Development Management and Communications.

## **Consultation responses**

12. The consultation period is yet to begin (anticipated as running from July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021 until September 2021).
13. Given that the report is also going to CCC Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee, delegated powers are also sought should there be any minor changes made by that process - to be delegated to the Joint Planning Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor.

## **Background Papers**

Equality Impact Assessment  
Consultation Statement

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Biodiversity SPD  
Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment  
Appendix C: Consultation Statement

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