



Report to:	Cabinet	7 February 2022
Lead Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins - Lead Cabinet Member for Planning	
Lead Officer:	Stephen Kelly - Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development	

Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

Executive Summary

1. The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was first brought before this Committee in June 2021 with the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to public consultation. Cabinet agreed to this and public consultation was undertaken between 23 July and 17 September 2021.
2. A range of feedback was received from members of the public and organisations. Responses have been carefully assessed by officers, and a number of modifications to the draft SPD are proposed. This report recommends that the SPD is supported and requests Cabinet adopt it, so that it can be used as a material consideration in planning decisions supporting implementation of the adopted Local Plan.

Recommendations

3. This Advisory Committee is recommended to:
 - a) Consider the main issues raised in the public consultation, and responses to the representations received and the proposed changes to the SPD as set out in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix 1 of this report);
 - b) subject to (a), recommend the amended Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD to Cabinet (appendix 2 of this report) with authority to make any necessary editing changes to the SPD prior to publication be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Delivery.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To review and recognise the comments received in response to consultation on a draft document and to amend it as proposed to reflect those comments, and to ensure the Council has up to date guidance in place for its communities and developers relating to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity at development sites. The SPD promotes a more sustainable and more nature-friendly approach to development.

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.
6. Due to ongoing climate and biodiversity emergencies, the Councils need current, up to date and accurate guidance for development schemes in order that development does not leave biodiversity in a worse condition than prior to development but improves the condition and / or increases the area of habitats which can support biodiversity.
7. The SPD was initially drafted in early 2021. Engagement with members was in place from the outset and prior to a public consultation in July, the draft version of the SPD came before members of both Councils during committee meetings in June for approval to take to consultation. The public consultation period ran between 17 July and 23 September 2021 and met the requirements of the Councils' Statement of Community Involvement.
8. Around 40 responses were received from many local interest groups, members of the public, and interested organisations providing recommendations and feedback. The Statement of Consultation (appendix 1 to this report) details the comments received, provides a summary of the main issues raised, and how they have been taken into account. It includes details of modifications proposed to the consultation version that have been included in the version now proposed to be adopted.
9. In addition to responding to the consultation responses, factual changes to text have also been applied to the SPD to reflect that the Environment Bill has now passed through the democratic UK Parliamentary process and has received Royal Assent, becoming the Environment Act as of 9 November 2021.
10. The consultation draft Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment screening, and in both cases the requirement for further reassessment was screened out. The amendments now proposed do not change these conclusions, and an updated screening report has been prepared (appendix 3). They also are not considered to change the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) that accompanied the consultation (appendix 4).
11. Once adopted, this Biodiversity SPD will supersede the current South Cambridgeshire SPD covering biodiversity, (2009) and (subject to the decision by Cambridge City Council) will become a joint SPD for biodiversity for Greater Cambridge.

Options

12. The Committee can choose to:

- Recommend to SCDC Cabinet adoption of the Biodiversity SPD as amended
- Recommend to SCDC Cabinet not to adopt the Biodiversity SPD, but seek further amendments

Implications

13. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications might be noted; By choosing to adopt the SPD, the Council will allow its immediate use a material consideration for planning and development across South Cambridgeshire / Greater Cambridge LPA. Adopting a new SPD which covers the topic of biodiversity and includes the most up-to-date national policies will signal the Councils intention to back its Doubling Nature and Green to the Core agendas.

Risks/Opportunities

14. There is a risk if we do not adopt of having out of date guidance, which would miss the opportunities to shape the way our biodiversity planning policies are implemented to achieve the best outcomes.

Climate Change

15. Positive impact (through the strengthening of guidance on the provision of biodiversity and its associated habitats.

Health & Wellbeing

16. Positive impact (through the strengthening of guidance on the provision of biodiversity and its associated habitats. This is often linked to the provision of green space across Greater Cambridge, which can positively impact mental health and wellbeing.

Consultation responses

17. The consultation approach is set out in the main report; Appendix 1 sets out the representations received and responses and suggested actions to address the comments made. The communication of the results of the consultation, and of the final adopted document will follow standard procedure for Supplementary Planning Documents and will be in keeping with expectations and agreed approaches of both Councils.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Being green to our core

18. The SPD promotes a more sustainable and more nature-friendly approach to development which will bring many positive direct impacts, as well as many indirect positive impacts. The adoption of the Biodiversity SPD will ensure that developers and communities have access to up to date and accurate guidance on existing policy and legislation relating to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity at development sites.

Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Draft July 2021
<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2316/gcsp-biodiversity-planning-doc.pdf>

Draft Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Statement of Consultation - July 2021
https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2318/consultation-statement_july_21.pdf

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report
https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2319/greater-cambridge-biodiversity-spd-sea_hra-screening-report_2021_final-copy.pdf

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): Draft Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document
<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2317/bspd-eqia-july-2021.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix A. Statement of Consultation

Appendix B. Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (for adoption)

Appendix C. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening (updated)

Appendix D. Equalities Impact Assessment (updated)

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