

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Conservation and Design Advisory Group
Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Conservation and Design Manager

12th July 2006

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To present to members of the Conservation and Design Advisory Group the amendments made following detailed consideration of the public consultation exercise for the draft South Cambs. Biodiversity Strategy and to seek support to recommend the draft to Cabinet for adoption as Council Policy.

Copies will be available for Members and can be viewed on the web site at:

www.scambs.gov.uk/biodiversitystrategy

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The Biodiversity Strategy will be fundamental to the delivery of high quality planning services.
Village Life	The Strategy will have a significant impact upon the enhancement of village life by ensuring that new development seeks to conserve and further enhance biodiversity.
Sustainability	The Strategy will be fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development by seeking the conservation of priority species and habitats.
Partnership	The Strategy outlines the current extent of external and internal partnerships. The Strategy will act as a catalyst for the forging of further partnerships.

Background

3. On the 26th January 2005 the Conservation Advisory Group considered a report on the developing *Biodiversity Strategy* that was to be statement of the Council's policy in respect of the preservation and enhancement of the district's biodiversity.
4. A further version of the Strategy was presented to the Group on the 27th April 2005 where the content and vision of the document was considered.
5. A final pre-consultation draft of the Strategy was presented to the Group on the 14th December 2005 for consideration and comment prior to its final draft production and undertaking of the consultation exercise.
6. Following printing of the draft Strategy, it was issued for public consultation via Members, all parish councils and selected conservation bodies and development organisations on the 10th March 2006. It was also published on the Council's website. The consultation period closed on 14th April and a report was presented to the Group on the 26th April 2006. A number of comments were received after the end of the consultation period, most significant were those received from the County Council relating to Local Sites.

7. In April 2006 Defra produced its guidance *Local Sites: Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management*. This guidance conflicted with the approach that was previously presented within the Strategy. It was agreed that it was not desirable to adopt an approach that was not consistent with the latest Government guidance as it would inevitably lead to confusion at a later date. Thus the section of the Strategy on Local Development Control Principles was re-written.

Considerations

8. All relevant comments from consultees have been incorporated and tables published upon the SCDC website. The version of the Strategy presented now incorporates a significant change to Local Development Control Principle BS3, and has resulted in the merging of previous principles BS3 and BS4. The concept of Local Biodiversity Areas has been removed and the Government recommended 'Local Sites' approach adopted (albeit that a Local Sites Partnership for Cambridgeshire is yet to be established).
9. The dates within the SC Biodiversity Action Plan have been set back by one year (where appropriate) to account for the latest set of delays and to keep the document up-to-date.
10. All minor typos have been incorporated.
11. The Strategy is now considered suitable to be put forward for consideration as Council Policy and copies have therefore been distributed for consideration by members of the Conservation & Design Advisory Group. It will also be placed on the Council's web site.
12. The input of the Planning Policy team will be required with respect to technical issues relating to S106 funding contributions before the Strategy can be proposed as Supplementary Planning Guide (SPD). This will be addressed at a later date.

Options

13. The Conservation & Design Advisory Group are requested to either:
 - a) Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio holder presents a report on this matter to Cabinet seeking adoption of the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy as Council Policy.or
 - b) To require officers to bring a further revised version of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy to a future meeting of the Conservation & Design Advisory Group incorporating additional amendments and revisions as agreed during the consideration of this matter by the group at their meeting on 12th July 2006.

Financial Implications

14. The production of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy will be funded from existing departmental resources. While a limited number of reference copies will be produced, publication will largely be by via the website.

Legal Implications

15. The South Cambs. Biodiversity Strategy is to be adopted as Council Policy in the short term. Following adoption of the new LDF (due March 2007) the Strategy will be

reviewed and cross-referenced to the relevant policies contained within the LDF. A sustainability appraisal will be prepared and the revised Strategy (together with the sustainability appraisal) will then be issued for further public consultation prior to adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Staffing Implications

16. None specific.

Risk Management Implications

17. The Council has identified the need to strengthen biodiversity conservation and to produce detailed biodiversity guidance for the development control process in accordance with PPS9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*. Failure to complete the publication and adoption of the Strategy may result in a lack of clear guidance and missed opportunities for biodiversity conservation.

Consultations

18. The draft South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy was issued for wide consultation as detailed in the report presented to the Group on the 26th April 2006.

Conclusions/Summary

19. Members will be aware of the increasing need for biodiversity conservation and to deliver an enhanced quality of village life. The establishment and adoption of appropriate planning guidance on biodiversity is fundamental to the achievement of a high quality development.
20. It is perhaps relevant to note that PPS9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* provides a significant steer for the planning guidance section of the Strategy and has been particularly well received by English Nature and the RSPB.
21. The Strategy will be an integral part of the emerging policy framework for the Council and will consequently have a major role to play in conserving biodiversity across the district.

Recommendations

22. The Conservation & Design Advisory Group are requested to express support for the Strategy and recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder presents the *South Cambs. Biodiversity Strategy* to Cabinet to seek its approval and adoption as Council Policy.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Planning Policy Statement 9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*. ODPM, 2005 Report to the Conservation Advisory Group 26th April 2006, together with appendices of the consultation exercise.

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