

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

AUTHOR/S: Conservation Manager

14th December 2005

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To seek Members support on progress for the preparation of the *South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy* and the preparation of a Consultation Draft, and to seek authorisation to undertake a wider consultation exercise.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The Biodiversity Strategy will be fundamental to the enhancement of 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. Hopefully 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 has now been produced and is presented to the Group for consideration and comment prior to its final production and undertaking consultation.
6. The next stage shall be to prepare a public consultation version of the Strategy. This will result in the current final draft being reproduced in the Council's corporate style. This will result in a document similar to the Council's Design Guide, adopted as Council policy.
7. The ultimate intention is that the Biodiversity Strategy will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as part of a family of SPDs prepared in support of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) and submitted to GO-East as part of the "Local Development Scheme". The aim is to adopt the SPD by June

2007. However, the Strategy cannot be formally adopted as an SPD in advance of the LDF consequently in order for it to be used as planning guidance it will need to be adopted as Council policy.

8. The Strategy will be an integral part of the LDF and will establish the Council's philosophy with respect to biodiversity conservation and development control. This will include the new town and city fringe developments. Consequently it is essential that the Strategy, especially the section relating to *Planning Guidance*, is available for use by Members, officers and developers by the summer of 2006. Hence the need for Member's approval at this stage.

Considerations

9. The overall structure of the Strategy has evolved from the document presented to Members in April 2005. The Strategy now reflects the latest national policy (PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), reflects the Pre-submission Public Participation draft of the LDF and takes account of the Council's Corporate Objectives.
10. The content of the Strategy is now as follows (a detailed presentation on each section will be made at the December meeting of the Group):

Foreword

Introduction

1.0 Biodiversity Statements

2.0 Strategy Context

2.1 The Vision

2.2 Biodiversity Conservation – The Need

2.3 Policy Framework

2.3.1 Corporate

2.3.2 National Government

2.3.3 Local Authority Documents

3.0 The Biodiversity Resource

3.1 The Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan

3.2 The South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Action Plan

4.0 Planning Guidance

4.1 Local Development Control Principles

4.2 Enhancing Biodiversity Through Development Schemes

4.3 Examples of Habitat Creation and the Inclusion of Good Biodiversity Design

4.4 Statutorily Protected Species

4.5 The South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Site Checklist

5.0 Partnership Working

5.1 Existing Partnerships

5.2 Facilitating Action – The Wildlife Enhancement Scheme

5.3 Community and Social Inclusion

5.4 Corporate Working

6.0 Useful Contacts and Information

7.0 Appendix

7.1 Sources of Reference and Further reading

7.2 Table 14 National Guidance

7.3 Table 15 Local Authority Documents

7.4 Table 16 Council Partnership Projects

Options

11. The Conservation Advisory Group are asked to:
 - a) Consider the presented final draft *South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy* and agree to its preparation as a Consultation Draft and recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorises the commencement of a public consultation exercise, the findings of which are to be reported back to the Conservation Advisory Group in due course for further consideration.
 - b) To identify areas of the Biodiversity Strategy that are of concern and direct officers to undertake appropriate revisions so that it can be returned to the Conservation Advisory Group for further consideration prior to recommending the undertaking of the consultation exercise.
 - c) To reject the final pre-consultation draft of the Biodiversity Strategy outlining the reasons for the decision.

Financial Implications

12. The production of the Strategy will be funded from the existing departmental resources.

Legal Implications

13. The Strategy is to be ultimately adopted as Council policy supporting the existing Local Plan 2004 and the Community Strategy. The longer term intention is that it is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in support of the Local Development Framework and the statutory Local Plan.

Staffing Implications

14. None specific.

Risk Management Implications

15. 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

16. The Planning Policy team has been consulted on the general content of the Local Development Control Principles section of the Strategy.
17. The Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Partnership has been consulted on the South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Action Plan.
18. The Project Officer for the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) has been consulted on the general content and format of the Strategy.

19. The following bodies are proposed for future consultation: all Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, Go East, Cambridge Horizons, Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Partnership, the Wildlife Trust, ALGE and relevant amenity groups.

Conclusions/Summary

20. Members will be aware of the increasing need to ensure greater level of conservation and further enhancement of biodiversity in order to ensure sustainable development in the context of an increasing need for development in South Cambridgeshire. Fundamental to the achievement of biodiversity conservation is the establishment of appropriate guidance and planning principles. The Strategy will be fundamental to the necessary policy framework and will consequently have a major role to play in both conserving biodiversity and guiding the management and creation of new habitats inline with biodiversity action plan targets.

Recommendations

21. The Conservation Advisory Group are requested to recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder:
- a) Agrees to finalise the current document into a consultation draft and seek comments from appropriate consultees on the *South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy*.
 - b) Agrees to the preparation of a external Consultation Draft and the undertaking of a consultation exercise.
 - c) Report back on the results of the consultation exercise prior to subsequently presenting the *South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy* to Cabinet as Council policy.

Background Papers:

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- *Developing Effective Biodiversity Policies*, CAG 23rd May 2003
- *South Cambridgeshire District Council – Biodiversity Strategy*, CAG 27th April 2005

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