

# INTERIM APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

**To:**

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Infrastructure

Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee 28/06/22

**Report by: John Cornell**

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**Wards affected:**

All potentially

A Key Decision

## 1. Executive Summary

The Environment Act introduces the requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain above baseline conditions for all developments in England from November 2023. Local Planning Authorities (LPA) will need to ensure that developments in their jurisdictions comply with this new legislation and that BNG is delivered in a sustainable and transparent way.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service is looking to be day-one ready for this new legislation prior to November 2023. This means having viable solutions to the challenge of where to site BNG (if not wholly within the redline boundary) and how to approach this prior to guidance coming from Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

This paper proposes an interim approach for Greater Cambridge to fulfil that this need while recognising the principles already set out in the Environment Act around BNG, and emerging best practice. It is intended to provide guidance for planners, Planning Committees, and developers on a credible approach as developments currently underway need a practical and consistent approach to this challenge.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended to endorse this interim approach to siting biodiversity net gain for developments across Cambridge, and to note and welcome the emerging habitat banks in Greater Cambridge, with delegated powers given to the Joint Planning Director of Planning and Economic Development to make minor changes to the technical note at appendix A.

## **3. Background**

Full details of the proposed approach are set out in appendix A, which also includes details of two emerging habitat banks within Greater Cambridge.

It proposes a sequence for deciding where Biodiversity Net Gain should be located based on the mitigation hierarchy. It starts first with provision on site themselves, and where this not possible looking to strategic locations which have maximum benefit for biodiversity and can offer significant change at a landscape scale, before moving to more local community led solutions.

This is proposed as an interim approach to take us to November 2023.

The proposed approach will be considered by South Cambridgeshire District Council in a parallel Member approach. It will be considered by its Climate and Environment Committee Advisory Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022 and Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

## **4. Implications**

### **a) Financial Implications**

None

**b) Staffing Implications**

None

**c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

None

**d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

This suggested approach strengthens the Council's green credentials and would thus contribute to greening and carbon sequestration services provided by enhanced vegetation and habitats.

**e) Procurement Implications**

None

**f) Community Safety Implications**

None

**5. Consultation and communication considerations**

This proposal approach has had significant input from a broad range of officers from within the Council, discussions with relevant Non-Governmental Officers in the field, other LPAs and the Planning Advisory Service.

**6. Appendices**

Appendix A: GCSPS Protocol for the provision of BNG including offsite provision.

**7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact John Cornell, email: [john.cornell@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:john.cornell@greatercambridgeplanning.org)