

Policy GE3: Biodiversity, Geological, Landscape and Archaeological Conservation

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Ancient Woodlands, Local Wildlife and Geological Sites will be protected and enhanced. Proposals for development on other sites, having biodiversity or geological conservation value, will be permitted provided that they protect, enhance and/or restore habitat biodiversity. Development proposals will be expected to ensure that they:
 - a) lead to a net gain of biodiversity, where appropriate, by means of an approved ecological assessment of existing site features and development impacts;
 - b) protect or enhance biodiversity assets and secure their long-term management and maintenance;
 - c) avoid negative impacts on existing biodiversity;
 - d) preserve species which are legally protected, in decline, are rare within Coventry or which are covered by national, regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans.
2. Where this is not possible, adequate mitigation measures must be identified. If mitigation measures are not possible on site, then compensatory measures involving biodiversity offsetting will be considered, but only in exceptional circumstances.
3. Biodiversity will be encouraged particularly in areas of deficiency, in areas of development and sustainable urban extensions, and along wildlife corridors. Opportunities will be sought to restore or recreate habitats, or enhance the linkages between them, as part of the strategic framework for green infrastructure. Protected Species, and species and habitats identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), will be protected and conserved through a buffer or movement to alternative habitat. Identified important landscape features, including Historic Environment assets, trees protected by preservation orders, individual and groups of ancient trees, ancient and newly-planted woodlands, ancient hedgerows and heritage assets of value to the locality, will be protected against loss or damage. In the case of archaeological remains, all practical measures must be taken for their assessment and recording in accordance with Policy HE2.

Planning legislation places a biodiversity duty of care on all local and public authorities, emphasising that development plan policies and planning decisions should be based upon up-to-date information about the environmental characteristics of their area. These characteristics include the relevant biodiversity and geological resources of the area. In

reviewing environmental characteristics, the Council will continue to assess the potential to sustain and enhance these resources.

Connectivity between sites and buildings, and resilient and robust ecosystems, which are adaptable to change, are essential to ensure retention of existing levels of biodiversity and to enable these to be enhanced wherever possible. As part of new developments this could be achieved through well designed gardens, green roofs or landscape features. Resilient and functioning ecosystems support a range of human population needs, including flood management, control of atmospheric pollution, and access to green space.

In order to restore good levels of biodiversity across the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull sub-region, it is important to have urban areas that are permeable for wildlife, with havens for wildlife through the city and connected corridors linking sites. Green infrastructure planning and implementation can contribute strongly to fulfilling this. Biodiversity will be promoted as a core component of sustainable development and landscapes for living, underpinning social, health, environmental and economic benefits, together with community well-being and local quality of life.

All development proposals will be expected to avoid negative impacts on existing biodiversity. Where this is not possible, mitigation measures should be identified, if these are not possible on site, then these should be offset elsewhere as a compensatory measure, but only in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances may include the comprehensive delivery of a planned strategic allocation in accordance with a Council approved Masterplan. In all such cases though, compensatory provisions should be made as close to the original site as possible. In this instance development proposals should be guided by the Council's approach to biodiversity offsetting as set out in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, or any subsequent update to this document and national policy. In all instances, the long-term management and maintenance of ecological features must be demonstrated. In order to assist in ecological assessments, the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre should be consulted.