



## POLICY

# Planning and Development Management

### 1. Background

- 1.1. Development (which is taken here to include new built development and changes in land-use) can have a significant negative impact upon biodiversity through
- a) Direct loss of wildlife habitats;
  - b) Fragmentation and isolation of wildlife habitats;
  - c) Changing natural processes, such as the local water regime or sediment flow;
  - d) Changing the availability and/or quality of natural resources, such as water;
  - e) Damage to or destruction of populations of wild plants or animals;
  - f) Increased indirect damage, for example, from recreational pressure and domestic animal predation on habitats close to new housing areas;
  - g) Reducing options for responses to future environmental change, or for future environmental enhancements: and/or
  - h) Broader environmental impacts, such as increased carbon dioxide emissions which contribute to climate change.
- 1.2. Conversely, development can be used to deliver significant biodiversity gains, for example by
- a) Restoration and/or enhancement of existing wildlife habitats;
  - b) Creation or re-creation of wildlife habitats;
  - c) The re-creation of connections between existing areas of habitat;
  - d) Careful design to incorporate features of benefit to wildlife, or to reduce broader environmental impacts.

Post responsible for this policy: Head of C, P & E	Last approved by Conservation Committee: October 2015 Last ratified by Council: November 2015
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- 1.3. Formal procedures exist through which the form, extent and location of development can be influenced, through national government policy, strategic planning (including local plan policies), and development management (the determination of individual planning applications).
- 1.4. Because of the nature and scale of both the negative and positive impacts of development, Kent Wildlife Trust seeks to influence planning policy and decision-making at all levels.

## 2. Kent Wildlife Trust approach to planning and development

- 2.1. In carrying out its work on planning and development, Kent Wildlife Trust will:
  - a) Seek to support, influence and facilitate positive planning for biodiversity.
  - b) Seek to minimise negative impacts upon biodiversity resulting from development, and oppose those policies or developments which, in the Trust's reasoned opinion, would cause unacceptable loss of or damage to biodiversity.
  - c) Seek to be reasonable and fair, working positively with planners, developers, and/or other agencies to achieve an outcome which is acceptable to all parties, although recognising that the Trust's first responsibility is to secure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
  - d) Have regard to the most up-to-date available information, expert opinion and/or policy on biodiversity issues, including, but not limited to, the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan, national and county Red Data lists, best practice guidelines, and the conservation and ecological literature.
- 2.2. Kent Wildlife Trust is often approached by individuals and organisations concerning policies or development which may have an impact on landscape quality, public amenity, access, or other matters in addition to any impacts upon biodiversity. The Trust exists primarily as an organisation to promote the conservation of biodiversity, and this is its main area of expertise. Therefore, in its work on planning and development, the Trust will normally confine itself to:
  - e) Matters which affect biodiversity either directly or indirectly;
  - f) Matters which affect people's physical or intellectual access to, or enjoyment of, biodiversity;
  - g) Matters which affect the Trust's ability to operate or manage its own landholdings effectively; and
  - h) Matters of wider environmental sustainability which impact upon biodiversity.

## 3. Areas of work and working priorities

- 3.1. Kent Wildlife Trust will seek to influence planning issues at the following levels:
  - a) **National and International.** The Trust will not normally comment independently on national or international policies or programmes, but will work through The Wildlife Trusts partnership and Countryside Link. In doing so, the Trust will, where possible make available to these partnerships any particular expertise or information which it possesses. The Trust may choose to comment independently where the issue concerned has a particular impact on Kent<sup>1</sup>, in which case any response by the Trust will seek to support and expand upon any response made by the partnership as a whole.
  - b) **County, unitary, district and neighbourhood.** The Trust will place a high priority on influencing

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<sup>1</sup> The Trust regards Kent as comprising the administrative County of Kent and the area covered by the Medway Unitary Authority. The Trust will not normally seek representation on planning issues in the Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley, except where there is a potential impact on a Kent Wildlife Trust reserve in one of these boroughs. In such cases, the Trust will liaise closely with London Wildlife Trust.

planning policies and programmes at county, unitary, and district level, recognising that without policies to protect enhance and restore wildlife, our ability to influence individual developments is greatly reduced.

- c) **Individual planning applications.** The Trust will seek to be consulted on and to influence individual planning proposals which may have a positive or negative impact on biodiversity.
- 3.2. Because of the very large number of planning proposals and policies of potential interest to the Trust, all notifications and consultations will be assessed upon receipt, and priority will normally be given to those which have the greatest potential impact (either positive or negative) upon biodiversity.
- 3.3. In addition, the following considerations will also apply:
- a) The Trust will normally respond to all planning policies or proposals affecting its reserves and sites of county importance for biodiversity (i.e. Local Wildlife Sites, previously known as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest).
  - b) The Trust will normally draw to the attention of the appropriate decision-makers the need to comply with Natural England's standing advice on legally protected species.
  - c) The Trust will not normally respond to planning proposals affecting nationally or internationally protected sites where this would form part of the statutory responsibility of one of the national agencies. The exceptions to this would normally be:
    - Where the Trust's response might serve to support and reinforce the national agency's position.
    - Where there may be an impact on a Trust reserve.
    - Where the Trust feels that there would be a significant risk to nationally or internationally important biodiversity should we fail to submit an independent view.
    - The Trust will not express an opinion on areas where we have insufficient expertise to defend this (e.g. hydraulic fracturing) but may draw to the attention of the appropriate decision-makers the need to assess and understand the risks to biodiversity arising from issues of concern.
- 3.4. The Trust will not normally respond to planning policies or proposals which have only a very restricted impact upon biodiversity, or upon biodiversity only of neighbourhood importance, unless resources are available to do so once other planning priorities have been fully addressed. However, the Trust will, as far as possible, provide support to local communities, organisations or individuals in the protection and enhancement of local biodiversity.