

Section 6: Natural Environment

Stratford's green spaces provide an important network of multi-functional areas and corridors which are capable of providing a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Availability of green space was one of the most important things that people like about the town. Existing green open spaces, such as the Clopton Hills need to be protected and where possible improved, with measures to safeguard and enhance the town's biodiversity and natural environment – in particular the River Avon corridor and the town's trees.

New developments must include green space, which ideally should be connected to other green spaces, and new housing developments must provide garden and food growing space, either as part of the property or as nearby allotments. Although the town is generally well supplied with sports facilities, the District Council's 2011 Open Space Assessment identified a shortfall in the provision of mini and junior football pitches and junior rugby pitches, as well as a shortfall of play space for children and young people. Further housing development will put pressure on play and sports provision, so this Plan includes proposals to secure additional facilities.

This Plan also needs to consider provision throughout the plan period and therefore look ahead to likely social and environmental changes, in particular, the implications of climate change. All new developments need to take account of possible flooding and drainage problems, while buildings must be energy efficient and sustainably constructed. The Plan also aims to encourage the generation of local renewable and low carbon energy.

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles (NPPF, paragraph 7). Contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy is pivotal to achieving the environmental role.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan seeks to provide the local policy framework to deliver this role.

Objective A: Preserving and Enhancing Local Biodiversity

Woods and copses and other habitats, which include meadows, scrubland and water bodies, enhance and maintain the natural environment. The River Avon is an important local biodiversity corridor, but a wide variety of habitats is essential for protecting wider biodiversity. Trees in particular bring a number of benefits, many of which will be more important in future years because of climate change. They reduce the effects of flash flooding, they provide shade and keep places cooler in the summer, and they help to preserve biodiversity. Trees also create a sense of place and have a positive impact on people's physical and mental health.

Policy NE1 – Local Nature Reserves

The following areas will be designated as Local Nature Reserves:

- 1) Warwick Road Lands
- 2) Bridgetown Woodland and Meadow

Proposals which would adversely affect the environmental quality of these areas will not be supported. Proposals which positively enhance or contribute to the environmental quality of these areas will be supported.

Explanation

Many important species are protected under legislation and regulations but often habitats are not. This policy recognises the importance of preserving and enhancing habitats to ensure that wider biodiversity is protected.

“Warwick Road Lands” is a designated Local Wildlife Site and “Bridgetown Woodland and Meadow” is currently being considered for designation as a Local Wildlife Site. This designation only carries a duty of care and has no statutory element attached to it. This Plan seeks to enhance the degree of protection over these important sites by designating them as Local Nature Reserves - a

designation which does carry some statutory protection. The designation of sites as Local Nature Reserves is fundamental to achieving this objective.

Policy NE2 – River Avon Biodiversity Corridor

Proposals within the active Flood Zone of the River Avon will be required to show that they will not damage the river's role as a biodiversity corridor or linkages between the river and other important biodiversity sites.

Proposals which would adversely affect the environmental quality of the corridor will not be supported. Proposals which positively enhance or contribute to the environmental quality of these areas will be supported.

Explanation

All development should aim to support and enhance the biodiversity value of the River Avon corridor and recognise the importance of river meadows in flood management. Development within Flood Zones 1 and 2 must demonstrate that it will not reduce the capacity and capability of the functional flood plain. Water compatible uses within Flood Zone 3 may be acceptable in certain circumstances but other forms of development will be strictly resisted.

Policy NE3 – Trees and Hedges

All new development will be expected to protect mature healthy trees and hedges. Where this is not possible, new trees and hedges should be planted to replace those lost. All new developments should incorporate the planting of appropriate nursery stock native trees and hedges in their plans.

Large-scale developments will need to demonstrate they have been landscape led in order to avoid retrofitting of poor quality or token landscaping.

Explanation

Plans for new developments should have regard to existing trees, hedges and shrubs, which should be integrated into the overall purpose and structure of the development. Where an area for development includes existing mature trees, plans should be based on the assumption that these trees will be preserved. In all cases the future growth of new and existing trees should be taken into account during site planning. Root protection areas shall be clearly identified and respected.

Policy NE4 – Neighbourhood Area Biodiversity Action Plan

A Biodiversity Action Plan shall be prepared for the Neighbourhood Area in consultation with key stakeholders and the public.

All proposals should take account of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and show what effect, if any, they will have on local biodiversity. Where development involves a loss of biodiversity or habitat, appropriate habitat should be created in mitigation.

Explanation

The Neighbourhood Area Biodiversity Action Plan (NABAP) provides a neighbourhood level response to the Government's National Action Plans for threatened habitats species and will sit alongside Warwickshire County Councils Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), which is currently under review.

Biodiversity Action Plans contribute to national targets. Our NABAP will assist in achieve these targets wherever these are relevant to the Neighbourhood Area but it will also set local targets. It will contain actions for all our local habitats (woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, etc.) and many of our threatened and declining local species. It will have clear measurable targets and assemble the local people and local organisations that are ideally placed to deliver the necessary actions.

The NABAP will provide a strategy for action in two parts. Firstly, it will set out the strategic framework and main courses of action, and secondly, it will contain the detailed actions required for priority habitats and species in the Neighbourhood Area.

Key stakeholders include Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre, Warwickshire County Council and various other experts in their fields as well as local people and organisations.