

Committee: Local Plan Leadership Group

Date:

Title: Feedback on Consultation on theme 6:
Biodiversity

Thursday, 29 April
2021

**Report
Author:** Stephen Miles, Local Plans and New
Communities Manager
smiles@uttlesford.gov.uk

Summary

1. This report provides feedback on comments received during the community consultation including through the Community Stakeholder Forum (CSF) on the First Consultation (Issues and Options) Theme 6: Biodiversity.

Recommendations

2. That members note: -
 - the consultation responses and the Forum's views,
 - potential actions to address issues,
 - that the consultation ended on 21st April 2021, but no final recommendations will be made until all comments have been considered including to all nine themes and a comprehensive planning response is required.
3. That members provide further commentary for officers to consider when making final recommendations, and for referral to the Forum for information.
4. None at this stage in the Local Plan preparation process.

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

- None

Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	Consultation with the community is ongoing through social media channels, newsletters the CSF as and through public meetings,
----------------------------	---

	virtual and actual looking to the future.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	Access to healthy living and the role of biodiversity in this is a key plank of the Local Plan and ensuring equality of access to such amenity and Nature will be one of its underlying objectives. The Plan itself will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.
Health and Safety	The Local Plan will be subject to a safety audit
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	Biodiversity is a key component in addressing climate change because of its role in mitigating carbon emissions, carbon storage and keeping in balance the natural ecosystems, as well as providing healthy outdoor places of value to communities. Local Plan policy will address these issues.
Ward-specific impacts	This report relates across the whole District
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

Background

7. In preparation for the formal consultation on the draft Local Plan the Council has been consulting on a series of nine themes since October 2020. The Community Stakeholder Forum was set up with a range of representation to focus discussion and to elaborate on a wider variety of views on each topic. The aim is to inform and to help encourage debate and consideration of each topic following from which officers will use the Local Plan to address issues raised.
8. The sixth theme was on the topic of Biodiversity. This was added later in the programme at the specific request of CSF and members of the public because of its importance in the landscape and rural economy of the District. It was discussed by the Community Stakeholder Forum on 10th February 2021. The Forum heard a presentation by Dr Andrew Lovett, Director of Learning & Teaching in the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia. The presentation and a video of the Forum are available on the [website](#).

9. Following the Forum, the theme was open for public consultation, and comments made on the website over ensuing four-week period reported back to the Forum on 10th March. The Forum discussion was structured around four question areas:
- i. The value of biodiversity to our quality of life – how can we protect and improve our natural and green spaces?
 - ii. The role of biodiversity in addressing climate change – how can careful land management the countryside and villages and towns encourage biodiversity?
 - iii. Thinking strategically across the District boundaries and local areas – how can we connect nature areas?
 - iv. How can we use the Local Plan to manage, protect, enhance our natural assets; how could the local Plan provide for Nature?

Summary of consultation responses

10. There were 20 respondents who made a wide range of pertinent points summarised in the Appendix. When this was fed back to the Forum, they made additional points:
- i. The importance of an integrated approach to land management and the role of landowners and farmers in enhancing biodiversity
 - ii. The desire to consider the value of water to Nature as a whole and particularly where there is summertime scarcity (as well as localised flooding)
 - iii. The importance of soils and the soil structure to biodiversity and the need to protect this in considering types of development proposals.

Officer comments

11. The persistent emphasis made during this consultation on the rural context of Uttlesford and the value placed on its open space, access to nature and underlying appreciation of its role in climate change mitigation brings to the fore the need for sensitive and integrated land use and management planning policies. The ability to measure existing situations, apply emerging standards of environmental net gain and introduce stewardship of places of value will need to be considered carefully. It will be important to apply enforcement to the implementation of the policies to ensure that developers' strategies and proposals are enacted, funded, and maintained for many years.
12. There are key areas of work either underway within the Local Plan preparation or being considered to assist this:
- Mapping the areas of biodiversity value
 - Preparing a strategy for Biodiversity to include enhancement, connectivity, protection across the District

- Policies to devise ways to integrate biodiversity into development proposals whether this is for habitats or individual species, and to create opportunities to enhance nature potential such as green roofs
- Understanding methods of measuring biodiversity to assist monitoring its enhancement and 'net gain'
- Preparing a water management strategy looking at the Water Cycle and courses from a climate change and biodiversity perspective as well as water as a human resource
- Looking at biodiversity and its impact from solar farms and other more intrusive uses of the countryside
- Examples good biodiversity practice and policy making in the UK and further afield
- Exploring the connections with open space strategy, sports and recreation, and healthy lifestyles to ensure developments are appraised from these multiple but integrated perspectives
- How access to and protection of valued places of biodiversity value such as Hatfield Forest as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR), and further afield can be achieved, addressing to the Habitats Regulations
- Consideration of the need and opportunity for a new country park functioning also as a nature reserve
- Consider the links to the local economy in the green business and skills sector, rural crafts, and farm management.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That sufficient protection of local places of biodiversity value or under threat is not achievable	2	3	The Local Plan, working with local communities, will seek to designate areas special areas of value to be enhanced or protected in development proposals. This will require policy backing

That inadequate ecological or habitat compensation is not achieved where development adversely impacts on areas with biodiversity value	1	3	Locally policy will require on/off-site mitigation and enhancement measures and appropriate land management to maintain biodiversity value through policy detail and landowner agreements
Difficulties in measuring Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) may impact on its achievement	1	2	The Government is devising metrics to assess BNG and this will be a policy requirement supported by national planning advice and environmental legislation

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.