

Report of	Meeting	Date
Joint LDF Officer Team	Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2014

## **CENTRAL LANCASHIRE BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE CONSERVATION SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT UPDATE**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To inform members about the progress of a Central Lancashire Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. It is recommended that members note the contents of this report and endorse the progression of a joint Central Lancashire SPD on Biodiversity and Nature Conservation.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

3. The Central Lancashire authorities are producing a Biodiversity SPD. This report explains the purposes and objectives of the SPD, the broad timetable and mechanism for its approval, and the intended route to its adoption and use.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **(If the recommendations are accepted)**

4. To ensure effective biodiversity and nature conservation guidance is in place that reflects the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) and which provides guidance for planning applicants on the application of Core Strategy and Local Plan policies on biodiversity and nature conservation.

### **BACKGROUND**

5. SPDs offer local planning authorities the opportunity to add guidance in specific policy areas. They are documents that must be prepared in consultation with interested parties, and must be subject to a screening process to discover whether a sustainability appraisal would be required. Unlike Development Plan Documents (DPDs) SPDs do not require independent examination before they are adopted.
6. On adoption, this SPD will be one of a suite of Central Lancashire SPDs that form part of the Local Development Framework for the Central Lancashire authorities of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble. They are to be considered alongside policy in the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and the Local Plans of the three authorities. The Councils are working alongside the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside (The Wildlife Trust) and Lancashire County Council (LCC) to produce this SPD.

7. This SPD relates to Core Strategy Policy 22 on biodiversity and geodiversity. In addition, the authorities each have a policy on biodiversity and nature conservation in their emerging Local Plans. These policies are set out in Appendix 1.
8. This SPD will explain the Councils' approach towards conserving, protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Planning can make an important contribution to protecting and improving biodiversity, which is defined as 'the variety of all life on earth'. Development can have a negative impact on biodiversity, both directly, through the destruction of habitat, and indirectly (e.g. development that results in changes to air or water quality over time). Development can also have positive impacts for biodiversity by integrating new habitats with adjacent spaces.

## **CONTENT OF THE SPD**

9. The SPD will provide guidance for applicants in terms of understanding the relevant Central Lancashire policies and what is required as part of the planning application process in order to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity.
10. The Framework and the local planning policies refer to the concept of ecological networks. Ecological networks are links between sites of biodiversity importance. Lancashire County Council are currently finalising ecological network mapping for Lancashire to cover woodland and scrub, grassland, and wetland and heath habitats. The SPD will provide information on how to consider planning applications having an impact on ecological networks in the Central Lancashire context.
11. The SPD will include sections on the following matters:
  - The legislative framework in relation to biodiversity
  - Relevant national and local policies on biodiversity and nature conservation
  - Internationally, nationally and countywide designated sites of biodiversity importance
  - The Lancashire Ecological Network
  - How biodiversity and nature conservation should be integrated into the planning application process. This will include information on when ecological surveys and assessments are required, the times of year to undertake surveys for particular species, what should be included in a survey and assessment, how to use the results in scheme design, how to avoid and mitigate harm, compensate for biodiversity loss and how to enhance sites to provide for a net gain in biodiversity, where possible.

## **NEXT STAGES**

12. A working group has been set up that includes officers from the three Central Lancashire authorities, Lancashire County Council and the Wildlife Trust. This group has met on a number of occasions and work is currently at an advanced stage in drafting the SPD.
13. A consultation draft will be finalised and 6 week consultation undertaken in September/October. Responses will then be analysed and the SPD finalised. It is then proposed to report the final SPD to respective Councils with a recommendation to adopt in November/December.
14. Final adoption cannot take place until the SPD and a statement setting out the people consulted and a summary of the main issues raised and how they have been addressed, is made available for a minimum of 4 weeks. Adoption is intended to take place after this period, which is likely to be in January 2015.

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