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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Greater Cambridge Planning Policy Team,

Draft Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 28 November 2024, which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Our remit includes protected sites and landscapes, biodiversity, geodiversity, soils, protected species, landscape character, green infrastructure and access to and enjoyment of nature.

While we welcome this opportunity to give our views, the topic this Supplementary Planning Document covers is unlikely to have major effects on the natural environment. We do however advise you to consider the following issues and opportunities:

Chapter 5: Green Infrastructure

We welcome that a link has been provided to Natural England's [Green Infrastructure \(GI\) Framework](#) in the Further Guidance section. We advise, however that it could also be referred to within the text of Chapter 5 to note that it can be useful in helping to plan the quality and quantity of any GI required via planning obligations (perhaps in paragraph 5.6 or 5.8). This could be by applying the accessible greenspace standard of at least 3 hectares per 1000 population, and aiming for everyone to have access to greenspace within 15 minutes of home (see Appendix 2 of the [Green Infrastructure Standards for England Summary](#)). Development should be designed to meet the [15 Green Infrastructure Principles](#) and Major development should have a GI plan including a long-term delivery and management plan.

We also recommend that paragraph 5.8 suggests that GI contributions should be evidence-led and aligned with strategic planning. This may be, for example, by supporting any opportunities identified in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) and the new opportunity mapping that supports the emerging Local Plan (as noted in paragraph 5.6).

The upcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will also set out biodiversity opportunities and accessible natural greenspace measures. The SPD could therefore provide guidance that future planning obligations should seek to contribute towards achieving these measures, particularly where proposals are in or near relevant locations.

GI mapping resources are available [here](#) and [here](#). These can be used to help assess deficiencies in greenspace provision and identify priority locations for new GI provision. It is worth noting that Cambridge is one of the cities included in the pilot phase of the Urban Habitat Maps (modules 11 and 12) and the Urban Heat Management (module 13) layers of the [Green Infrastructure Map](#), so we recommend that you investigate this useful material.

Urban green space provides multi-functional benefits. It contributes to coherent and resilient ecological networks, allowing species to move around within, and between, towns and the countryside with even small patches of habitat benefitting movement. Urban GI is also recognised as one of the most effective tools available to us in managing environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves. Greener neighbourhoods and improved access to nature can also improve public health and quality of life and reduce environmental inequalities.

There may be significant opportunities to retrofit green infrastructure in urban environments. These can be realised through:

- green roof systems and roof gardens;
- green walls to provide insulation or shading and cooling;
- new tree planting or altering the management of land (e.g. management of verges to enhance biodiversity).

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature Tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts.

You could also consider issues relating to the protection of natural resources, including air quality, ground and surface water and soils within design plans. This would be particularly relevant in the north of the plan area, where there are areas of potential deep peat - see: [England Peat Status](#).

Further information is set out in the [Planning Practice Guidance](#) on Green Infrastructure and other natural environment matters.

Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment

A SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment only in exceptional circumstances as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance [here](#). While SPDs are unlikely to give rise to likely significant effects on European Sites, they should be considered as a plan under the Habitats Regulations in the same way as any other plan or project. If your SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulation Assessment, you are required to consult us at certain stages as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance.

We have reviewed the HRA and SA/SEA Screening Reports provided. Natural England agree with the conclusions and that further assessment stages should not be required.

Should the plan be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then, please consult Natural England again.

Please send all planning consultations electronically to the consultation hub at consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Catherine Duerden
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