

Appendix 1

Appendix 1: Principles for Development within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

The following guidance provides a set of development principles which should be used when considering site allocations and determining planning applications in the context of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping (BOM) and the ecological network it alludes to. These principles are to be used in conjunction with New Policy 4: Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains within this Draft Local Plan.

Ecological networks are key to creating a more robust natural environment which will be resilient to future pressures¹. They will play an integral role in the creation of Nature Recovery Networks and likely act as the basis of any local work towards a national strategy, for example Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Biodiversity opportunity mapping categories.

Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Categories

Dark Green: Ecological network – high quality	Consists of Priority habitat, these are the core areas of an ecological network and are of high value in terms of distinctiveness. These may require management to either maintain or improve their current condition.
Light Green: Ecological network - opportunity for management	These areas are not currently Priority habitat, but are important for biodiversity and the functionality of the ecological network of which they are part. They provide an opportunity for their quality to be improved through management, with positive results for biodiversity.
Dark Brown: Opportunity for creation - more joined up	These are not currently part of an ecological network, but provide opportunities to connect together two or more ecological networks through habitat creation.
Light Brown: Opportunity for creation	These areas are not currently part of an ecological network, but provide opportunities for increasing the size of an ecological network through habitat creation.

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework



Guidance regarding site allocations and planning permission applications in a Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping context

Biodiversity opportunity mapping (BOM) developed by the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership highlights both the existing ecological network and where the best opportunities lie for improvement in regards to the extent of habitat in the network, the condition or distinctiveness of said habitat and overall connectivity of the network. All policy and decisions should take into account the impact of development to these networks and where possible avoid permitting proposals which may negatively affect the existing network. Where this is not possible, or where development is planned on areas identified as an opportunity for creation, principles should call for quality design which will protect and enhance the existing network.

Biodiversity net gain should prioritise onsite habitat creation and management over offsite. Where land earmarked for development contains, either partially or entirely, any areas highlighted by the BOM, these should be seen as opportunities to contribute to onsite biodiversity net gain requirements in a way that will also conserve, restore and enhance ecological connectivity. However, it should be recognised that **Ecological network - opportunity for management areas** and **Opportunity for creation areas** identified by the BOM, which are not part of a development area, are well placed as locations for habitat creation or management. Doing so contributes towards any required offsite biodiversity net gain commitments for development. Additionally, habitat created in an ecologically desirable location or in an area identified for biodiversity by a local strategy are valued more highly by Defra’s biodiversity net gain metric. Any sites recognised by the BOM which apply to be included on the register of biodiversity gain sites should be given due regard in planning for their importance to enhancing ecological networks.

Notes on suggested principles

- For the purpose of ecological networks “habitat creation” refers to semi natural or natural habitats.
- Any habitat created should fit with the existing ecological network and be either the same habitat type or related habitat. A related habitat refers to habitats often found in association as part of a dynamic complex.²
- Ecological advice should be sought in the preservation and enhancement of ecological networks and achievement of biodiversity net gain.

² Natural England (2021) The Biodiversity Metric 3.0: Technical Supplement



Development Principles

Where allocated sites or sites submitted for planning permission contain or overlap with any **Ecological network – high quality area**, the following principles should apply:

1. **High quality ecological network areas** consists of Priority habitat and contain the most valuable habitats. It should not be built on and should be buffered against impacts of development. Where development is permitted on land containing areas of **high quality ecological network**, the development layout should use the principles of the Mitigation Hierarchy and be designed in such a way as to avoid damage to these areas.
2. **High quality ecological network areas** should be recognised as a potential opportunity to achieve biodiversity net gain requirements by improving condition through sensitive management.

Where allocated sites or sites submitted for planning permission contain or overlap with any **Ecological network – opportunity for management area**, the following development principles should apply:

1. Proposals should avoid development on **Ecological network – opportunity for management areas** where possible.
2. Where this is not possible, the development layout should ensure that connectivity of the network is maintained. This can be achieved through quality design, for example by leaving strategically important habitat in place to create wildlife corridors or the use of green/brown roofing to act as stepping stones between larger areas of habitat; or through the effective creation of new habitat as part of a landscaping scheme which allows for the migration and dispersal of species.
3. Proposals should fulfil onsite net gain requirements through creation and sensitive management of habitats, in a way that will enhance the ecological network either by ensuring connectivity or improving condition.

Where allocated sites or sites submitted for planning permission contain or overlap with any mapped **Opportunity for creation areas**, the following development principles should apply:

1. Where development takes place on **Opportunity for creation areas**, applications should include information clearly demonstrating how opportunities to maintain or enhance the ecological network (in regards to the extent of habitat in the network, the condition or distinctiveness of said habitat) and overall connectivity in the network, have or will be taken. It should include aspects of quality design; for example, by leaving strategically important habitat in place where possible to create wildlife corridors or the use of green/brown roofing to act as stepping stones between larger areas of habitat. It should also take any opportunities for effective habitat creation as part of a landscaping



scheme which ensures connectivity between habitats for the species which utilise them.

2. Proposals should prioritise any **Opportunity for creation areas** within the development site for habitat creation. This will ensure that requirements for both biodiversity net gain and the enhancement of ecological networks are achieved in an effective way. Habitat creation onsite should maximise the potential for the ecological network in regards to: the extent of habitat in the network, the condition or distinctiveness of said habitat and the overall connectivity of the network. Additionally, habitat created onsite in an ecologically desirable location or in an area identified by a local strategy, are valued more highly by Defra's biodiversity net gain metric.

¹

Relevant NPPF policy:ⁱⁱ

180. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

185. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

186. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

(Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework)

