

1.1.1. Policy EHNP 17 – Sustainable development and Environmental impact

This policy addresses various matters arising from development relating to environmental impact, including to biodiversity and its enhancement which are not covered elsewhere. The policy supports sustainable development with measures that are positive and beneficial to the environment.

District Policies require new development to deliver an enhancement in biodiversity, (Policies 45 Green Infrastructure and 46 Conservation and improvement of biodiversity) and to protect features such as trees and hedgerows. This EHNP policy is intended to help support the objective of biodiversity enhancement be achieved and seeks to incentivise developers to retain biodiversity value within the village and in so doing help minimise the environmental impact of development in East Hanney. This includes promoting green infrastructure and green travel such as provision of cycle routes within the village.

Aspects of this policy are intended to supplement Development Policy 25 and Development Policy 26 and assist in the mitigation of the consequential impacts of noise and air quality issues through use of green infrastructure specific to a required localised need. The District Development Policies are comprehensive and give good provision, the additional provisions within this EHNP policy addresses a specific need and align with the District Council policies.

East Hanney is located within a rural setting and green environment with a diverse and established range of wildlife which the community enjoys, and which includes rare and protected species. The green environment is a key aspect of the character of East Hanney. The effect of development on the environment is a concern of the community. The village has witnessed development of a number of green field sites which has resulted in a cumulative net loss in biodiversity value to the village.

An objective is to seek where appropriate, for developments to incorporate features which would positively enhance the green landscape and improve sustainable development.

This policy thus, encourages provision of some specific but small measures within the design of developments, which includes provision of habitat and design features to encourage species of wildlife, use of planting and buffers to address specific issues arising from development, as well as a wider initiative to encourage development to provide for enhancement in biodiversity within the village rather than offsetting, and thus help reduce the impact of development on the local environment.

It also aims to encourage provision of facilities to enable cycling and walking by way of provision of pathways and cycle paths within new developments, and linkages between developments and across the village.

Issue and Need

The wish is to protect and enhance the local environment including the high levels of biodiversity evident in the village. Currently where development occurs, at each site there has been a net loss to the village, developers applying biodiversity offsetting. It would be very positive for the sustainability of new housing schemes if enhancement in biodiversity could be achieved either onsite or within the village. This aligns to more recent thinking, there being clear benefit in retaining value within an area and minimising the impact of development on the local environment. Loss of

biodiversity may mean loss of green space and hedgerows or trees for example within a site, (which other DC policies aim to retain), loss at a site also having potential impact on character and landscape. The need is therefore for a policy to encourage retention and enhancement of biodiversity within the village and thus help reduce the environmental impact of development in the locality, rather than simply applying offsetting.

This is considered an important issue which has affected the village (the issue is also highlighted in policies EHNP6 and EHNP9). In every new development experienced there has been a negative resultant impact and therefore a cumulative consequential impact on the village green environment, as all new developments have been on green field sites.

Loss of trees, hedgerows and green landscape affects the balance of the whole natural environment on site. For example, at the strategic site under LPP2 known as Rosie Bees which formerly had a high biodiversity value, the developer proposed development with offsetting which resulted in a significant net biodiversity loss at the site, causing a net loss to East Hanney and the village environment.

The same has been experienced with the developer's application for phase 1 of the second strategic site under LPP2 'land at Ashfields Lane, East Hanney reference P21/V0376/FUL.

Developments have not instinctively provided within their designs features which would assist in retention of habitat for wildlife. If they were to do so this would be a positive and help achievement of biodiversity enhancement.

There is very little evidence of compensation by way of replacement or enhancement of green facility, wildlife habitat or natural space within the village. The need is for a policy within the Neighbourhood Plan to encourage developments to include provision within their designs for biodiversity enhancement, with some simple aspects as mandatory, such as space for wildlife pathways and habitat features.

There are also issues experienced within East Hanney relating to noise and air quality, especially in the corridor of the A338 as it passes through the village. Residents in the homes which already exist in the corridor complain of noise and vibration, there is also evidence that because of the heavy traffic flows which are experienced, air quality is poor. There is a need to help ensure mitigation locally through EHNP policy should any further developments arise along this corridor or where the environment may be similarly impacted.

There is a particular problem along the A338 because the road is typically very busy and is used by heavy commercial goods vehicles, the traffic is often stationary during peak travel periods, the route being the main link from Grove and Wantage to Oxford and beyond linking to the A420 and thereon to the A34, M40 or west to Swindon. The extent of the problem can only worsen as the growth planned for Grove and Wantage is delivered.

Evidence is shown below of the extent of noise and air pollution experienced. Homes are exposed to high levels of vibration and noise that are significantly beyond WHO guidelines.



The DEFRA noise map clearly identifies a channel along the A338 where legal limits are exceeded. The case for this is also supported by a report dated 2020 undertaken by consultants for a developer on an application alongside the A338 at the Ashfields Lane site which found that the noise limits were 3 times the WHO guidelines.

Accordingly, should any new housing development be allowed within that zone, a clear buffer between the A338 and the position of any housing should be within the solution.

There is also need is to ensure that existing screening is not redeveloped without alternative procedures in place, thus ensuring retention of at least a layer/buffer of appropriate screening.

This policy proposes provision which is biodiversity positive and supplemental to that within Development Policy 25 and Development Policy 26. This EHNP policy also seeks to encourage green travel and for provision within developments of appropriate infrastructure to encourage green travel such as bicycle racks, cycle tracks and for pathways to be provided where possible. Currently, there is no cycle way across the village and very limited provision of space for bicycle storage/parking.

There is need for these facilities to be provided and thus encourage use of environmentally friendly modes of transport within the village. It would be beneficial and in keeping with the intent of District policies for such infrastructure to be provided.

Rationale

The rationale is to seek to ensure use of environmentally positive solutions to issues such as noise or air quality, to promote enhancement in biodiversity within the village, as well as improvement of East Hanney’s green credentials. This includes the provision within developments of flora and fauna friendly facilities as standard which offer habitat and encourage wildlife such as swift boxes and pathways for wildlife. The benefit being the provision of habitat (the natural habitat often being lost from development), and in so doing, assisting in the delivery of sustainable development.

One of the problems experienced in East Hanney as a result of the cumulative loss of green sites is that when a developer makes use of the District Council net biodiversity offsetting scheme, the contribution from the developer is made for investment in biodiversity enhancement within the District. Whilst this is biodiversity positive, it has resulted in a negative impact on this village, with

financial benefit being paid by the developer into a general DC scheme. Typically, this is paid to a third-party charity such as TOE (Trust for Oxford Environment) or the Oxford Environment Bank, who decide where it is allocated. The consequence has been a cumulative loss for the village and therefore harm or loss to the green environment of East Hanney. The number of green field sites and habitat lost in East Hanney has been significant and is now visual, because whole areas of paddock and open fields have been developed. At the same time there are landowners in the village who are sympathetic to enhancing and protecting the green environment which would be of benefit to the community. The Parish council also has access to land such as Kingsleases for which it needs funds to undertake a planting and a natural development programme. There is also a need to enable green pathways.

Developers are encouraged to discuss with the Parish Council opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and minimising impact of a development on the village environment by way of supporting local green projects such as planting. This policy also aligns with EHNP6 Trees and Hedgerows.

Developers are also encouraged to design sites and dwellings in an environmentally beneficial way by ensuring through policy the inclusion within developments features that will support wildlife.

Examples include:

- * For all developments of 4 or more dwellings the inclusion in the designs for the provision of Swift bricks,
- * Hedgehog pathways providing connectivity for mammals through developments. *Note: Chilton NP Policy P5 also reflects this 'where practicable, development proposals should preserve hedgerows and verges as "wildlife corridors"*
- * Use of insect/bee attracted grasses and vegetation at selected points throughout a development including in the public open space delivered, this will help attract native grasses and flowers through the trail of pollination.

Discussions with the Planning team regarding the loss of biodiversity and impact on habitat has resulted in the inclusion as a condition of various of the above aspects within recent planning applications, evidencing that this simple approach to helping maintain habitat for species is deliverable. For example, the site allocated under Local Plan Part 2 known as North-East of East Hanney – Rosie Bees P19/V0910/FUL. For this application the Parish Council requested biodiversity enhancements particularly to encourage wildlife be provided as a condition. The Committee report made the recommendation and Planning consent when it was granted with the following condition 'Condition 17'. 'Prior to any development above slab level details of swift bricks including their design, the number to be installed on houses (which shall number at least 6 swift bricks), and which houses they shall be installed on including their positions shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority'.

The inclusion within this policy for the provision of green cycleways, footpaths and linkage between developments with supporting basic infrastructure to encourage cycling and walking within East Hanney adds to the green credentials of the village and is in accordance with the District policies, particularly Core Policy 35 Promoting Public Transport, Cycling, and Walking.

There are clear benefits including deterring use of cars within the village for short journeys, and encouragement of healthier lifestyles. Currently, the village does not have any identifiable cycleways

and there is little linkage between developments, thus this policy is provided to help address this need.

For the village to be able to enjoy the benefit of cycleways and for residents to be able to cycle, green cycleways need to be planned for and should be a consideration of major developments. For this to be achieved developments need to incorporate such features within the layout and to seek opportunity for linkage. The new developments along the Steventon Road were not strategically developed with provision of a cycle way or green route. For the future, it would be beneficial for the village if developers could be required through this policy to provide for appropriate cycle and pathway linkages.

The change in building regulations with new technical guidance relating to the installation of EV charging points within new developments which came into effect in June 22 is welcomed and meets with the rationale of this policy.

The rationale is therefore to positively encourage biodiversity enhancement by encouraging reinvestment in the Parish, and through the provision of features within new developments which will benefit wildlife and the local environment, and to promote green path and cycleways. Each of which will be of benefit and help reduce the environmental impact of development within East Hanney.

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- **Provision of facilities to encourage cycling and walking are encouraged All major developments to be permeable to enable active travel cycling and walking through the settlement using easiest routes and thereby deterring car use (e.g., no gated cul de sacs)**
- **Communal visitor bicycle parking (Sheffield type, etc) to allow for 1 bicycle per 2 new dwellings to be provided in each new development of 4 or more dwellings.**

Use of natural vegetation and screening is required in areas with exposure to high levels of noise and vibration.

- **Existing screening are not to be redeveloped without alternative procedures in place.**
- **Measures may include setting dwellings further away from the source with an intervening vegetated buffer zone which will also address particulates and other air quality issues impacting homes and gardens.**

Biodiversity enhancements are encouraged on all developments of 4 dwellings or more as part of the developers' proposals, including:

- **provision of swift bricks into the design and build of homes, with a preference for at least one every 4 dwellings,**
- **provision of routes for wildlife pathways through developments by way of preservation and introduction of hedge rows and verges as wildlife corridors**
- **provision of bird boxes and owl boxes, together with insect hotel style features within the landscape plans.**
- **Use of insect/bee attracted grasses and vegetation at selected points throughout a development including in the public open space.**
- **Proposals which result in a net biodiversity loss but can provide biodiversity compensation elsewhere within, and for the benefit of the Parish of East Hanney, will be supported. If there are no reasonable local solutions, other biodiversity compensation projects will be considered.**
- **For larger scale developments developers are required to discuss with the Parish Council at an early stage opportunities for enhancing biodiversity within the village.**

Evidential Material

- Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey
- Base Line Evidence
- Technical Report and response on noise levels relating to proposed development at Ashfields Lane 2020
- WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines: www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/noise/environmental-noise-guidelines-for-the-european-region
- Defra noise map

Policy Context

- District Council Core Policy 1, Sustainable Development
- District Council Core Policy 44, Landscape
- District Council Core Policy 45, Green Infrastructure
- District Council Core Policy 35 Promoting Public Transport, Cycling, and Walking
- District Council Development Management Policy 25, Noise
- District Council Development Management Policy 26, Air Quality
- District Council Net biodiversity offsetting requirements. Ref: [VoWH Biodiversity Net Gain statements¹](#)
- Chilton Neighbourhood Plan, Policy 6

¹ 'Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development and land management that leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state than before, after first avoiding and minimising harm'. It has been in operating since 2013, although now refined. 'To measure biodiversity net gains and assess the impacts of planning applications, we use biodiversity metrics. We aim to ensure that all developments achieve a net gain of biodiversity however, sometimes it is not always possible to avoid a causing a net loss. Where residual losses of biodiversity are unavoidable, developers can pay to create habitat of equal or greater value to wildlife. This is called biodiversity offsetting and is a key mechanism to deliver biodiversity net gain.'