



# LDF



## WIGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY



### Wildlife habitats and species Final Topic Paper 10

AUGUST 2011

### Core Strategy Submission Version



Places Directorate  
[www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy)

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## ONE

## Introduction

### Purpose of this document

**1.1** This is Topic Paper 10 on 'wildlife habitats and species'. It is one of 13 topic papers that we have produced to help ensure that our Local Development Framework Core Strategy is properly backed by robust and credible evidence. The 13 topic papers are:

1. Health and recreation
2. Community safety and neighbourhood quality
3. Community development and involvement
4. Education and learning
5. Economy and employment
6. Housing
7. Retail and centres
8. Accessibility
9. Built environment and landscape
10. Wildlife habitats and species
11. Energy
12. Waste
13. Natural resources and pollution

**1.2** Each topic paper provides a summary and analysis of the evidence which informs the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal. The evidence is set out in detail in a series of evidence reviews of the same name which sit alongside the topic papers. This topic paper focuses on policy CP12 'Wildlife Habitats and Species'. However it also supports the wildlife content of policies SP5 'Greenheart' and CP9 'Strategic landscape and green infrastructure', which are substantially covered by Topic Paper 9 'Built environment and landscape'.

**1.3** We have combined the evidence gathering stages for both the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal, to streamline the documentation produced and avoid duplication. This has ensured that sustainable development is embedded in the process of producing the Core Strategy. This topic paper also sets out how we have engaged

with the community and other stakeholders and established the legality and soundness of the policies. More details of this are set out in Section 9 'An assessment of legality and soundness'.

**1.4** Each topic paper can be read in isolation but, inevitably, there are important related matters in other topic papers and evidence reviews. The key related topic areas for wildlife habitats and species are:

- Natural resources and pollution
- Built environment and landscape
- Health and recreation
- Education and learning

**1.5** Rather than preparing an additional report on climate change, we have considered this important theme within each topic paper. This is to make sure that it is not viewed as a 'stand alone' issue.

## **How the Local Development Framework will be used**

**1.6** The Local Development Framework is the planning strategy for the borough. The Core Strategy is the principal development plan document in our Local Development Framework. It sets out what development is needed for the next 10-15 years, where this will go and how it will be achieved. For the most part the details will be determined in other policy documents that will make up the Local Development Framework. These will include an Allocations and Development Management Plan, area action plans and supplementary planning documents. All of these other documents will have to conform to the Core Strategy and be equally founded on a robust and credible evidence base.

**1.7** We have to work with national and European legislation on Sustainability Appraisal and national and regional planning policy. Of particular importance to wildlife habitats and species is Planning Policy Statement 9 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' and the Regional Spatial Strategy, which is currently part of the development plan for the Borough but will be revoked once the Decentralisation and Localism Bill is enacted.

**1.8** Wigan's natural environment is rich in wildlife and full of potential for countryside recreation. This was recognised by much of the borough being identified as one of a number of regional parks within the North West region. The borough contains a Special

Area of Conservation, four Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 91 Sites of Biological Importance. Specific areas of focus for the borough relate to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity including the protection and enhancement of priority habitats and species and the management of non-native invasive species.

**1.9** The Local Development Framework can provide planning policies that help deliver enhancement and protect environmental standards for the benefit of local communities. This will be achieved in line with the principles of sustainable development, ensuring that economic, social and environmental objectives are secured together.

### **How the Sustainability Appraisal framework will be used**

**1.10** The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of strategies and policies in the documents that form the Local Development Framework. This has been done from the outset in preparing the Core Strategy to ensure that decisions are made that accord with sustainable development.

**1.11** A framework of sustainability objectives has been used to test and ask questions of each approach considered in the Core Strategy. The appraisal process has a number of set stages that must be followed, but each stage has been revisited as new information became available.

**1.12** This topic paper contains the information we have used to help us identify the issues for wildlife habitats and species and geological features. This information has helped us to establish a set of sustainability objectives and sub-questions to tackle these issues - see Section 8 'Our sustainability framework'.

### **Viewing documents**

All documents related to the Core Strategy are available to view on our website at: [www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy).

Paper copies of the Core Strategy, Sustainability Appraisal and the 13 Topic Papers are also available at:

- All our public libraries (except the children's library)

## Viewing documents

- Wigan Town Hall\*
- Wigan Life Centre, College Avenue, Wigan, WN1 1NJ\*

*\* Until January 2012, when documents will be available at The One Stop Shop, Wigan Life Centre, The Wiend, Wigan, WN1 1NH*

## TWO

## Key plans, policies and strategies reviewed

**2.1** This section focuses on the most relevant published plans, policies and strategies and draws out the key messages for the Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal. The key plans and strategies which provide support for policy CP12 and the wildlife content of policies SP5 and CP9 and contribute to policies SP1, SP3 and SP4 from a wildlife habitats and species perspective include:

### International / European plans, policies and strategies

- **Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (2011)**  
- The Strategy sets out the targets for the EU to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services, with a longer term aim of protecting, valuing and restoring the intrinsic value of biodiversity.
- **European Union Directive on the Conservation of Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC as amended by 97/62/EC)** - The Directive establishes the statutory setting for clause 1 of policy CP12 Wildlife habitats and species, protecting Special Areas of Conservation and a number of protected species. In the UK the Directive has been transposed into national laws by means of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- **European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC as amended by 97/49/EC)** - The aim of the Birds Directive is to provide for the protection, management and control of naturally occurring wild birds and their nests, eggs and habitats within the European Union. In particular it seeks to protect all wild birds and the habitats of listed species through the designation of Specially Protected Areas, which are incorporated in the Natura 2000 network established by the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

### National plans, policies and strategies

Source: UK government unless stated otherwise

**Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2004)**

This policy reinforces the government's commitment to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment. It emphasises that we should give a high level of protection to our most valued wildlife habitats and that those with national and international designations should be given the highest level of protection.

**Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)**

With regards to wildlife habitats and species and geodiversity this policy specifically states that we should:

- Indicate the location of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, making clear distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national, regional and locally designated sites.
- Adopt a strategic approach to conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geodiversity in the formulation of development plan policies and recognise contributions to conserving these resources.
- Identify any areas or sites for the restoration or creation of new priority habitats which contribute to regional targets and support this restoration or creation through appropriate policies.
- Promote the incorporation of conservation interests for biodiversity and geodiversity within the design of development.
- Permit development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve biodiversity and geological conservation interest.

**Minerals Planning Statement 2: Controlling and mitigating the environmental effects of mineral extraction in England (2005)**

This policy considers the impacts of potential minerals operations on ecology and wildlife including habitat loss and impacts on sites of nature conservation. It also considers the benefits and scope for biodiversity through restoration of mineral restoration sites.



**2.2** Other national plans, policies and strategies which provide support for policy CP12 and the wildlife content of policies SP5 and CP9 and contribute to policies SP1, SP3 and SP4 from a wildlife habitats and species perspective include:

- **The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)** - This White Paper sets out the government's vision for the natural environment around four key issues:
  - Protecting and improving our natural environment
  - Growing a green economy
  - Reconnecting people and nature
  - International and EU Leadership.
- **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010** - This is the UK legislation that provides for the protection of Special Areas of Conservation and European Protected Species.
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)** - This Act places a duty on local authorities "in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". The aim of this being to "raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, to clarify existing commitments with regard to biodiversity and to make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision making".
- **Securing the Future - UK Government sustainable development strategy (2005)** - This document identifies the protection of natural resources and enhancement of the environment and the need for an integrated policy framework to deliver this.
- **The England Biodiversity Strategy (2002) and Progress Report 2002-2006** - The Strategy highlighted five key issues:
  - Protecting the best sites
  - Promoting the recovery of declining species and habitats
  - Embedding biodiversity in all relevant sectors of policy and decision making
  - Enthusing people
  - Developing the evidence base.

- **Securing Biodiversity: A new framework for delivering priority habitats and species in England (Natural England, 2008)** - This document takes forward the England Biodiversity Strategy putting greater emphasis on identifying and carrying out the actions that are most urgent and have the greatest benefit for biodiversity and partnerships that will establish clear delivery and policy priorities.
- **UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994 - present)** - The action plan lists 1,150 species and 65 habitats as UK priorities based on their international importance, rapid decline or high risk. The plan makes an initial assessment of the most important types of action necessary for the conservation of each species.

### Regional / sub-regional plans, policies and strategies

#### **The North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008)**

The Regional Spatial Strategy forms part of the development plan for the borough, setting the context for our Core Strategy and other development plan documents. Policies with a particular relevance to wildlife habitats and species are:

**Policy DP 1 'Spatial Principles'** - 'Promote environmental quality' is one of the principles that underpin the strategy.

**Policy DP 2 'Promote Sustainable Communities'** - Sustainable communities should be sensitive to the environment, particularly by taking into account the environmental implications of development, improving the natural environment and conserving the region's heritage.

**Policy DP 7 'Promote Environmental Quality'** - This emphasises the need for us to maintain and enhance biodiversity and habitat quantitatively and qualitatively and ensure that our plans and strategies will be appropriately assessed in terms of its effect on the integrity and conservation objectives of sites of international importance for nature conservation.

**Policy DP 9 'Reduce Emissions and Adapt to Climate Change'** - Plans and strategies should identify, assess and apply measures to ensure effective adaptation to likely environmental impacts of climate change.

**Policy EM 1 (B) 'Integrated Enhancement and Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets - Natural Environment'** - Plans and strategies should secure a 'step change' increase in the region's biodiversity resources. Functional ecological frameworks should be developed to address habitat fragmentation and species isolation, with opportunities for habitat expansion and re-connection targeted. Geodiversity resources should also be protected.

**Policy EM 3 'Green Infrastructure'** - A key aim of green infrastructure is the maintenance and improvement of biodiversity.

**Policy MCR 1 'Manchester City Region Priorities'** - The provision of high quality green infrastructure will maximise accessibility to biodiversity.

**2.3** Other key regional or sub-regional plans, policies and strategies that provide support for policy CP12 and the wildlife content of policies SP5 and CP9 and contribute to policies SP1, SP3 and SP4 from a wildlife habitats and species perspective include:

- **River Douglas Catchment Flood Management Plan (Environment Agency, 2008)** - This plan aims to promote sustainable approaches to managing flood risk and considers the threat of flooding to sites that are designated to protect important wildlife habitats and species. This Catchment Flood Management Plan includes Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest and considers the impact of flooding on other locally important sites and protected species.
- **Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (2003) and habitats and species plans (various)** - The plans focus on local priorities and implementing national biodiversity targets. A total of 18 species and habitat action plans have been produced setting out objectives for the conservation of species habitats and species.
- **Greater Manchester Derelict Land Strategy (2002)** - This strategy set the framework for the reclamation of derelict land and buildings across Greater Manchester. One of the key objectives was to 'enhance biodiversity, forestry initiatives and recreational facilities'.

- **Red Rose Forest Plan (2000)** - The community forests have been developed "to achieve major environmental improvements in and around towns and cities, creating beautiful areas rich in wildlife, with associated provision for access, leisure and education, thereby making them more attractive places in which to live, do business and enjoy leisure time."
- **Greater Manchester Local Geodiversity Action Plan (2009)** - The action plan aims "to conserve, protect and enhance the unique geological and geomorphological heritage of Greater Manchester for the future".

### Local plans, policies and strategies

#### Wigan Unitary Development Plan (2006)

Local planning policies for wildlife habitats and species are contained in Chapter 9 'Environment and Design Policies' of the Unitary Development Plan. There are policies on Special Areas of Conservation (policy EV2A); nationally and locally designated sites (EV2B); features of importance for nature conservation and wildlife corridors (EV2C); species protection (EV2D); and trees, woodlands and hedgerows (EV2E). It is proposed to replace all of these except policy EV2C, with policies CP12 and SP5, as set out in Appendix A of the Draft Core Strategy (Proposed Submission version). Policy EV2C will remain in force until replaced by a future development plan document.

**2.4** Other local plans, policies and strategies which provide support for policy CP12 and the wildlife content of policies SP5 and CP9 and contribute to policies SP1, SP3 and SP4 from a wildlife habitats and species perspective include:

- **Vision 2026: Sustainable Community Strategy (2008)** - Policies CP12 and SP5 are in line with the 'Ambitious Communities' and 'Living Healthier and Longer' priority areas identified in the community strategy.
- **Wigan's Biodiversity Strategy (2005) and Biodiversity Action Plans (various)** - The strategy and action plans set out priorities for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity across the borough. The importance of partnerships and community

involvement in achieving this aim is recognised as key to the success of the strategy along with the protection and creation of wildlife sites and the promotion of Wigan's Greenheart.

- **Wigan's Woodland Strategy (1995)** - This sets out the council's commitment to protecting, enhancing, developing and promoting woodlands and urban tree cover. It identifies the need to bring more woodlands into appropriate management and the need to work in partnership with other organisations and the general public to protect and improve the quality of both woodlands and street trees.
- **The Mosslands Vision (2007)** - The vision looks at important mosslands in Wigan, Salford and Warrington and considers land use, current pressure and conflicts. The study then identifies key areas around Astley and Bedford Mosses for biodiversity, agriculture and recreation where action to improve each of these can be focused.
- **Greenheart Regional Park Vision (2008)** - One of the four objectives for the Regional Park is:
  - Support habitats and biodiversity of regional and national importance, including wetlands, waterways and woodlands.
- **Greenheart Regional Park Action Plans (2008)** - The action plans consider the key sites within Greenheart and the linkages across the area including access. It also sets out plans for the development of the regional park and identifies the strong link between the Greenheart Vision and the Core Strategy.
- **Wigan Economic Development Plan (2005)** - The plan sets out the goals for modernising the local economy increasing the number and quality of jobs but recognises that this should be balanced against the quality of life of residents, particularly the potential adverse environmental impact of major new development.

## THREE

# Other key evidence reviewed

## Key sources of information

**3.1** This section provides a summary of other key evidence reviewed and a snapshot of the borough in terms of wildlife habitats and species and geodiversity, outlining key characteristics, trends, issues and opportunities. It also gives an overview of the infrastructure and climate change considerations and a summary of stakeholder and community involvement related to wildlife habitats and species.

**3.2** The main sources of information used are:

### National

- Nature Nearby - Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (Natural England, 2010)
- Trees in Towns 2 (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008)
- Water for life and livelihoods (Environment Agency, 2006)
- Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning: Incorporating the natural, built and historic landscapes, and rural issues into plans and strategies (Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and Environment Agency, 2005)

### Regional / Sub- Regional

- Wild About the North West: A Biodiversity Audit of North West England (North West Biodiversity Forum, 1999)
- The Agenda for Growth: The Regional Forestry Framework for England's Northwest (North West Regional Forestry Framework Partnership, 2005)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Regional Spatial Strategy - Consolidated Report (North West Regional Assembly, 2008)
- Greater Manchester Ecological Framework (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, 2008)

### Local

- Wigan's Biodiversity: An audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the borough (2010)

- Wigan Community Plan monitoring system (Wigan Borough Partnership)
- Wigan Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Reports (2004-2009)
- Development and Protected Species Supplementary Planning Document (2007)
- State of the Borough Audit (December 2005)

## **Background / overview**

**3.3** Over 70% of the borough is green space and, as such, it is an important habitat for a variety of animal and plant species. One of the biggest issues for us today is how to conserve the diversity of wildlife in the face of continued pressure from people, whose needs and demands are constantly growing. Changing climate will also have an impact on delicate eco-systems.

## **Designated habitats**

**3.4** The borough has several areas that are protected against development for their ecological value. There is one Special Area of Conservation, 4 Sites of Special Scientific Importance, 91 Sites of Biological Importance and 5 Local Nature Reserves. Our infrastructure audit at the end of this section has further details and a location map.

## **Habitats Regulations Assessment**

**3.5** Sites that have European-level protection are protected by the Habitats Directive. Under this directive a Habitats Regulations Assessment must be carried out to ensure that impacts on these sites do not occur as a result of strategies, plans, policies and projects.

**3.6** Wigan has one site with European-level protection, at Astley and Bedford Mosses, which is part of the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation. However, we must also consider the impacts of our strategies, plans, policies and projects on European sites in surrounding areas. As such we need to consider the likely environmental resource demands of development in our borough, such as on water supply and quality, energy use and recreation. All of these can put pressure on sites with European-level protection outside our boundaries, especially when considered alongside other national, regional and local plans. The Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation includes two areas outside of Wigan, at Risley Moss and Holcroft Moss in Warrington. These are also considered within our Habitat Regulations Assessment.

**3.7** A Habitats Regulations Assessment was prepared for the Regional Spatial Strategy. Baseline maps and data have been collected about the location, sensitivity and condition of sites with European-level protection in North West England. The impacts of policies on each site have been assessed and avoidance measures proposed where impacts are possible. Following this no adverse impacts were identified on the Manchester Mosses site.

**3.8** Habitats Regulations Assessment may be required for certain projects and proposals at a local level if they are likely to affect the Manchester Mosses site. This could include strategic park and ride schemes, transport provisions, pressure from recreation / loss of greenspace and land for employment, as examples. Integrated water management is likely to have positive impacts for sites with European-level protection.

**3.9** In developing our Core Strategy, we can benefit from the findings of this Habitats Regulations Assessment and draw from the baseline studies and maps compiled.

**3.10** You can find more information on the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Regional Spatial Strategy at [www.nwrpb.org.uk](http://www.nwrpb.org.uk).

**3.11** The council has carried out a Habitats Regulations Assessments on the Core Strategy. An initial assessment was undertaken at our preferred options stage and this has been updated for our Revised Proposals and Draft Policies and then our Draft Core Strategy (Proposed Submission version). These assessments have run in parallel and feed in to the sustainability appraisal process.

**3.12** The Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Draft Core Strategy (Proposed Submission version) identified the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation as the only European site that could potentially be affected by the policies including the Key Strategic Site and Broad Locations. The assessment has identified some potential impacts from sites in the east of the borough where, depending upon the detailed proposals, there is a possibility of increased atmospheric pollution and / or recreational pressures at the Special Area of Conservation. The assessment then sets out mitigating plans, policies and strategies to address these potential impacts and avoid any significant harm to the special interest of the area.



## Protected species

**3.13** Globally, extinction of species is currently running at one thousand times the natural rate and this is largely because of human activities. In order to halt and reverse such declines, certain species are protected by law and / or are prioritised for protection through national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans.

**3.14** The Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plans are published on the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project website at [www.gmbp.org.uk/site/](http://www.gmbp.org.uk/site/). There are currently 9 habitat actions plans and 9 species action plans, the majority of which are relevant to Wigan Borough.

**3.15** Wigan currently has five Local Biodiversity Action Plans aimed specifically at protecting species and / or habitats that are strategically important within the borough and neighbouring areas. These are:

- Reedbed
- Mossland
- Bittern
- Great Crested Newt
- Red Squirrel.

**3.16** There are a wide variety of other species of importance recorded in Wigan. These include a range of bird species such as skylark and reed bunting, dragonflies and damselflies and mammals such as water vole and bats.

**3.17** The council has produced a Supplementary Planning Document to provide guidance and advice to developers on dealing with protected species.

## Wildlife corridors and linked networks

**3.18** Wigan has a large network of green infrastructure, which includes protected habitats, parks, river and canal corridors, ponds, street trees, gardens and other landscape / green features. Many of these are located within the Greenheart countryside park and the mosslands. They include Amberswood, Kirkless, Haigh Plantations, Viridor Wood, Bickershaw and Collier's Wood. Well connected, good quality green infrastructure is important because it can help enhance our quality of life, manage flooding and pollution,

support wildlife and form corridors that allow species to move between important habitats. The provision of linkages between habitats and to adjacent areas is increasingly important as species face additional pressures from the impacts of climate change. This linked network will be key to aiding movement between suitable habitat. The Greenheart countryside park should make a significant contribution to green infrastructure.

### **Accessibility to green spaces, wildlife and recreation**

**3.19** There is now a growing body of evidence that shows a connection between biodiversity and people's health and well-being. For example, research demonstrates that most people's heart rate drops measurably when they enter countryside areas. Being surrounded by nature, whether in an urban park, country park or open countryside, makes us feel more relaxed and helps to improve our health.

**3.20** Over 75% of the population uses the borough's parks and open spaces. Wigan has the highest amount of formal and informal greenspace in Greater Manchester and is aiming to achieve at least the minimum provision of natural greenspace recommended by Natural England. These are:

- Everyone should have an area of natural greenspace within 300 metres of home. Currently this has not been quantified although it is likely that the majority of homes will have this provision.
- There should be one hectare of land designated as Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population. Currently there are 300 hectares of land designated as Local Nature Reserve so we are less than 10 hectares short of this target.
- There should be at least one accessible 20 hectare site within 2 kilometres of home. This is met for over 80% of homes in the borough.
- There should be one 100 hectares site within 5 kilometres of home. This is met for most homes in the borough.

### **Priority habitats**

**3.21** Wigan's Biodiversity: An Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough identifies the UK and Greater Manchester priority habitat types that occur. These can be broadly grouped under the headings water, reedbed, mossland, woodland, grassland, heath and managed greenspace. The following sections provide a brief overview of the information in the study, the full text of which is available to view on our website.

## Water

**3.22** There are many watercourses (rivers, brooks, streams and ditches) and waterbodies (pools, lakes, flashes, meres, ponds, lodges and reservoirs) that are classed as UK or Greater Manchester priority habitats throughout the borough. Several large waterbodies of 2 hectares or more are concentrated in a corridor from Pennington Flash in Leigh to Wigan Flashes, along the Hey Brook and Leeds-Liverpool Canal. These support a significant proportion of the borough's bird diversity. These large areas of standing open water also support swamp, fen and bog habitats and, with more than 1,100 ponds across the borough, provide habitat for many species of wetland plants, invertebrates particularly dragonflies and damselflies, protected species such as water vole and significant populations of amphibians.

**3.23** These wetland habitats also have an important function to perform within the borough's ecosystems, storing water and reducing flood risk and improving water quality before it reaches our streams or rivers. The impact of increased flooding and changes in water tables and levels as a result of climate change could have a significant impact upon water quality and potentially lead to a reduction of species supported by our watercourses and waterbodies.

## Reedbed

**3.24** Nearly all of the 56 hectares of reedbed habitat in Wigan is associated with the flashes, lakes and ponds described above, with the Wigan Flashes Local Nature Reserve supporting the majority. With approximately 98% of the reedbed habitat in Wigan falling within the Greenheart area there is clear potential for Greenheart to contribute to the safeguarding of Wigan's wetlands and the species they support.

## Mossland

**3.25** Pristine raised bog habitat is exceptionally rare and there are no such areas left in Wigan. However, degraded sites which are capable of being restored such as Astley and Bedford Moss and Highfield Moss are given high conservation priority. Both are Sites of Special Scientific Interest and, as recognised above, Astley and Bedford Moss is part of a European Special Area of Conservation. Other remnants of mossland occur at Wigan Flashes and Chat Moss.

**3.26** The significance of mossland as a store for carbon is becoming clearer as more research in this field is now being undertaken. The greatest threat to this priority habitat is from peat extraction and agricultural improvements, particularly where there is an impact upon drainage systems. Air quality and climate change are other threats which could adversely affect this habitat.

### **Woodland**

**3.27** Woodland and dense continuous scrub currently cover around 1,797 hectares or 10% of the Borough, compared with the averages nationally of 12% and in Europe of over 30% (Forestry Commission, 2010). This is despite the fact that approximately 70% of the borough is open land. However, there are regionally significant areas of other habitat types which should not be lost to the creation of new woodland sites.

**3.28** There is a need to ensure no further loss of woodland and promote an increase in native woodland. The presence of ancient woodland is a material consideration for planning. The borough has just over 120 hectares of ancient woodland, across 22 sites, which is just under 7% of the total cover of woodland and dense scrub.

**3.29** New trees and woodlands contribute to urban and rural regeneration and deliver both conservation and landscape benefits, while also being a reserve of timber for the future.

### **Grassland**

**3.30** The majority of grassland habitats within the borough have resulted from the reclamation and restoration of post-industrial sites. As a result, areas of acid and calcareous grasslands in the borough do not fit the UK priority habitat definitions. There are however some habitats that qualify as regional priorities, such as lowland acid grassland, marshy grassland and lowland meadows. The colonisation of spoil heaps, boiler ash and blast furnace slag has led to habitats that include early successional stages of plant communities, open grassland with bare ground and scrub. There are approximately 50 hectares of diverse grassland sward established, or establishing, on previously developed land in areas such as the former Bickershaw colliery and the old Rainfords site at Wigan Flashes. These are areas which may be suitable for priority habitat classification 'Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land'.

**3.31** Intensification and lack of management are the major factors affecting the species diversity of many grasslands, particularly impacts upon drainage systems and changes to grazing regimes. Fragmentation of habitat by using land for development can also degrade diverse habitats as they are 'tidied' to make open spaces more aesthetically acceptable or useful for recreation.

### **Heath**

**3.32** Heath is a rare habitat in Wigan, found in only small, isolated patches often as a result of the colonisation of colliery spoil sites. This fragmentation mirrors the regional and national trends and leaves sites vulnerable to damage, degradation and loss of species. The largest continuous area of heath is part of a mosaic habitat with woodland, occurring along the former railway corridor from Bickershaw Colliery northwards towards Park Road, Hindley.

**3.33** A lack of management can have a serious impact upon heathland sites, allowing tree and shrub encroachment and competition with grass species. Increasing recreational pressure can lead to erosion and compaction and as many sites are so small, anti-social behaviour such as uncontrolled burning can result in complete destruction of the habitat.

### **Managed greenspace**

**3.34** Urban managed greenspaces are included within the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan and cover a range of managed sites that have a value for wildlife. This includes golf courses, churchyards and cemeteries, road verges, parks and playing fields, allotments and private gardens. With approximately 20% of the borough classed as managed greenspace, this is a significant resource for wildlife, although the risk of inappropriate management is high as much of this land is in private ownership. Development pressures can result in encroachment and degradation of the fringes of some of these areas.

### **Management of wildlife sites and priority habitats**

**3.35** Many wildlife sites are not currently subject to any specific conservation management. Where opportunities exist and as funding allows, sites are being identified to be brought into appropriate conservation management. The environmental grant schemes such as the Woodland Grant Scheme and Higher Level Stewardship have

provided funding for sites such as Amberswood, Kirkless, Wigan Flashes and Lightshaw Meadows. Other sites have been identified for future funding bids such as Highfield Moss and Lawns Wood.

### **Ecological and geological provision within new developments**

**3.36** When considering development proposals any ecological impacts are taken into consideration in the determination of planning applications. In addition to the requirement to mitigate or compensate for unavoidable impacts the council also has a duty to seek the provision of opportunities to enhance biodiversity as a result of new development.

**3.37** The type and scale of enhancement will vary depending upon the scale of each particular development, but there are significant opportunities to provide bird nesting and / or bat roosting features within even the smallest schemes. Larger schemes should look to provide water or landscape features that will enhance the development and could contribute to wider green infrastructure. Examples of the types of enhancement that could be carried out are included within our Supplementary Planning Document 'Development and Protected Species'.

### **Biodiversity enhancement opportunity areas**

**3.38** The Biodiversity Study identified eight 'biodiversity enhancement opportunity areas' distributed across the Greenheart area. Their selection was based on data that indicated where priority habitats have been recorded historically but may now be in decline, together with areas of previously developed land which are now regenerating naturally. These provide locations that are suitable for the restoration or enhancement of significant priority habitats. The 8 areas are:

- Area A: grassland and mosaic habitats near Kirkless Lane and the Kirkless Site of Biological Importance in Ince.
- Area B: habitats around Turner's Flash at Wigan Flashes.
- Area C: the former landfill site and grassland to the east of Amberswood Common, between Ince and Hindley.
- Area D: the former Bickershaw Colliery site at Leigh.
- Area E: land east of Dover Bridge, Abram, adjacent to the Leeds-Liverpool Canal.
- Area F: dismantled railtrack south of Forshaws Tip and land to the north and east of Barlows Farm, near Hindley.

- Area G: Ashton Heath at Ashton.
- Area H: land to the east of Park Lane Colliery, Abram.

**3.39** These areas could be a key resource for offsetting unavoidable losses on development sites where agreements can be drawn up with potential developers and landowners.

### **Geodiversity**

**3.40** Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and natural processes forming the earth's surface. There is a strong interrelationship between biodiversity and geodiversity, with many important geodiversity sites also being sites of biological importance. The Greater Manchester Local Geodiversity Action Plan sets out six objectives to achieve the aim, 'to conserve, protect and enhance the unique geological and geomorphological heritage of Greater Manchester for the future'. These are:

1. Carry out a geodiversity audit of Greater Manchester;
2. Develop a continued strategic approach to partnership and involvement in the plan
3. Disseminate geodiversity information
4. Raise awareness of geodiversity
5. Monitor and update the action plan
6. Establish a sustainable conservation and management programme to ensure the long term protection of the geodiversity in Greater Manchester.

**3.41** The key issue for the achievement of the aim and objectives is how it will be resourced. For the borough the initial key issues are to identify the existing geodiversity resource and include geodiversity information in development plan documents.

**3.42** The first Greater Manchester Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan on 'Quarries' was published in March 2011. It considered both the ecological and geological importance of quarry sites. Although no sites in the borough were surveyed, there are a small number of sites known to have interest. Further information will need to be gathered on these to inform any proposals that would affect any geological or geomorphological interest.

## Climate change considerations

**3.43** How we prepare for climate change and reduce further greenhouse gas emissions is a major challenge. It requires changes to almost everything we do and must, therefore, be considered from many different perspectives. The issues that are particularly important for wildlife habitats and species are:

- Migration of species
- Earlier springs / flowering / breeding / migration
- Loss of habitats
- Flooding of habitats
- Trees / flora under stress
- Different pests and diseases
- Drought / fires
- Changing farming patterns



## Key community and stakeholder involvement

**3.44** There are a number of 'key stakeholders' who have played an important role in the development of our approach to wildlife habitats and species. By identifying and involving these key stakeholders from an early stage, we have been able to establish a stronger evidence base and more sustainable policy options.

**3.45** The following key stakeholders have been involved:

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
- Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Red Rose Forest
- Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project
- Wigan Biodiversity Partnership (including specialist interest groups)
- Major developers and landowners
- Wigan Borough Partnership, our local strategic partnership
- Community groups (including Townships, Community Network)
- The residents of the borough.

**3.46** These key stakeholders have been involved at all stages of the Core Strategy's preparation including issues and options, preferred options, revised proposals and draft policies and proposed submission.

**3.47** At the proposed submission stage, there were 6 representations on policy CP12 'Wildlife Habitats and Species', one in support from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. Two members of the public object to the loss of wildlife if land is taken for development at 'Junction 25, M6 motorway, south of Wigan' (policy SP4 5) and one of these also requests that the area is designated as a Site of Biological Importance. As the majority of the area is currently in agricultural use it is not likely to meet the criteria for designation. Natural England and the Environment Agency want the policy title changed to 'Wildlife and geodiversity' – we are not proposing this change as geodiversity is not a widely understood word and it would over-emphasise it relative to wildlife habitats and species,

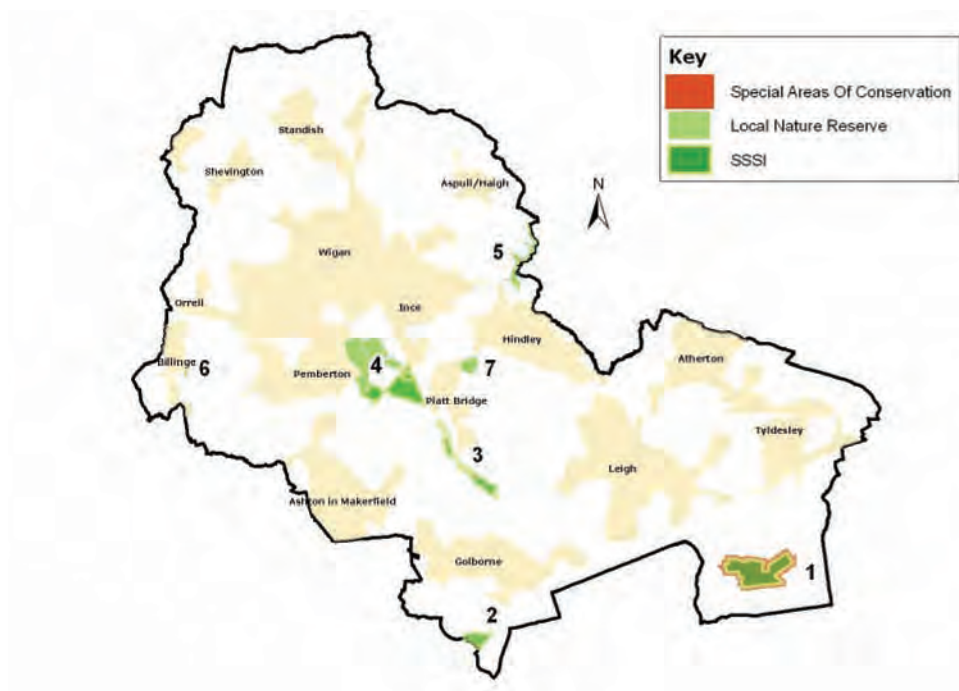
which are far more important in Wigan Borough. However they do also seek various changes to the wording of the policy and explanation, for accuracy and to strengthen it. These are appropriate and are proposed as minor changes 1.26, 1.27 and 1.28.

**3.48** Further information is available in our Consultation Reports. Changes are set out in the 'Schedule of Minor Changes to the Draft Core Strategy for Submission to the Secretary of State'.

## Infrastructure audit

### Protected areas

**3.49** The borough has several areas that are protected against development for their ecological or geological value. These are listed below and their locations are shown in Figure 3.1 below (please note that the numbers next to each site listed correspond with the numbers on the map).



**Figure 3.1 Designated sites of importance for wildlife**

Ben to update map so it includes new LNR at Three Sisters

**3.50** Astley and Bedford Mosses (labelled 1 on the map above) also form part of the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation. This site consists of degraded raised bogs that are still capable of natural regeneration.

**3.51** There are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which include wetlands, flower-rich meadows and peat bog. They are some of the country's best wildlife sites:

- Astley and Bedford Mosses (1, as above)
- Highfield Moss (2 on the map)

- Abram Flashes (3)
- Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss (4)

**3.52** The borough currently has 91 Sites of Biological Importance, including woodland, canals, reedbeds, ponds, lakes, flashes, mosslands, disused railway tracks and marshland. These sites are not designated by law but are protected by planning policies - currently policy EV2B in the Unitary Development Plan, in line with Planning Policy Statement 9. The sites are assessed by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit on behalf of the council and are designated based on criteria applied to all sites across Greater Manchester. The sites are graded A (of county importance), B (of district importance) or C (of more than local importance).

**3.53** There are currently five Local Nature Reserves:

- Borsdane Wood (5 on the map)
- Wigan Flashes (part of which overlaps with a Site of Special Scientific Interest) (4)
- Greenslate Water Meadows (6)
- Low Hall (7)
- Three Sisters (8)

**3.54** We have identified key wildlife corridors to support functional networks for wildlife habitats and species, including features of nature conservation importance. These were originally identified within the borough's Nature Conservation Strategy and are currently designated under policy EV2C in the Unitary Development Plan. They are shown in Figure 3.2 below.

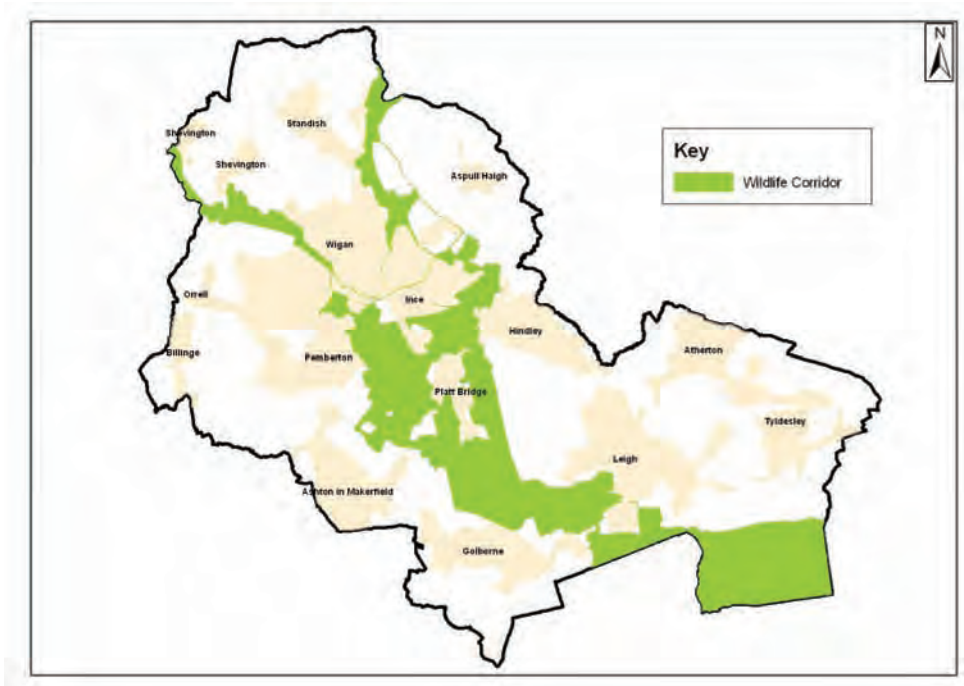


Figure 3.2 Designated wildlife corridors in the borough

## FOUR

### Key messages

**4.1** A number of key messages have been drawn from the evidence review identified in Sections 2 and 3. The table below identifies these and the most relevant source documents. These key messages have all been addressed in the Core Strategy, particularly by policy CP12 but also the wildlife habitat content of policies SP5 'Greenheart' and CP9 'Strategic landscape and green infrastructure' and policies SP1, SP3 and SP4.

Message	Source documents
Development will have an impact on wildlife habitats and species. We must make sure that provision is made for enhancement, mitigation and protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wigan's Biodiversity Strategy (2005) and Biodiversity Action Plans (various)</li> <li>Wigan's Biodiversity: An Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough (2010)</li> <li>The England Biodiversity Strategy (2002) and progress report</li> </ul>
There is a need to protect and enhance the Borough's most important environmental assets - parks, woodland, trees, open and green spaces, wetlands - for their intrinsic value and contribution to quality of life, urban cooling / adaptation to climate changes, image, tourism and recreation (no net loss).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)</li> <li>Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)</li> <li>Minerals Planning Statement 2: Controlling and mitigating the environmental effects of mineral extraction in England (2005)</li> <li>Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)</li> <li>Water for life and livelihoods (2010)</li> <li>The England Biodiversity Strategy (2002) and progress report</li> <li>The North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008)</li> <li>Greater Manchester Derelict Land Strategy (2002)</li> <li>Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (2003)</li> <li>Wigan's Biodiversity Strategy (since 2005)</li> <li>Wigan Tourism Strategy 2004 - 2009 (Draft)</li> </ul>

Message	Source documents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vision 2026: Sustainable Community Strategy (2008)</li> <li>● River Douglas Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009)</li> <li>● Nature Nearby - Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (2010)</li> <li>● Wigan's Biodiversity: An Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough (2010)</li> </ul>
<p>Our priority habitats for protection and enhancement include mosslands, wetlands and ancient woodland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The England Biodiversity Strategy (2002) and progress report</li> <li>● Nature Conservation Strategy (2nd Edition) (1991)</li> <li>● Wigan's Woodland Strategy (1995)</li> <li>● Red Rose Forest Plan (2000)</li> <li>● The Mossland Vision (2007)</li> <li>● Wigan's Biodiversity Strategy (2005) &amp; Wigan Biodiversity Action Plans (various)</li> <li>● Wigan's Biodiversity: An Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough (2010)</li> </ul>
<p>The Greenheart Countryside Park will play a key role in safeguarding Wigan's wetlands and the species they support. It will also provide the key mechanism for enabling education and community access to wildlife and geodiversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Greenheart Regional Park Vision (2008)</li> <li>● The Greenheart Regional Park Action Plans (2008)</li> <li>● Wigan's Biodiversity: An Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough (2010)</li> <li>● Vision 2026 Community Strategy (2008)</li> </ul>

Message	Source documents
The mosslands particularly at Astley and Bedford Mosses provide an important role in the storage of carbon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minerals Planning Statement 2: Controlling and mitigating the environmental effects of mineral extraction in England (2005)</li> <li>• Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (2003)</li> </ul>
There is a need to identify, protect and enhance features of importance for geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)</li> <li>• Greater Manchester Local Geodiversity Action Plan (2009)</li> </ul>
The identification of linked networks is key to the protection of habitats and species particularly in the consideration of adaptation to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)</li> <li>• Wigan's Biodiversity: An Audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the Borough (2010)</li> </ul>



## FIVE

### Main spatial planning issues identified

**5.1** Set out below are the issues relating to wildlife habitats and species which have been identified during preparation of the Core Strategy. Section 5 of the Draft Core Strategy lists the headline issues for the borough.

#### Issue WHS 1

There is a diverse range of wildlife sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Biological Importance and other priority wildlife habitats and species in the borough which need protecting and enhancing, but there are inconsistencies in the quality and management of habitats. Areas where they have been poorly managed and need improving include Kirkless and Westwood in Wigan, Amberswood at Ince and Lawns Wood at Crooke near Wigan.

#### Issue WHS 2

Water quality and levels of pollution within the borough's watercourses and waterbodies have an impact upon wildlife habitats and species.

## SIX

### Main infrastructure issues identified

**6.1** The infrastructure audit in Chapter 3 sets out the current position in the borough. A number of key issues regarding infrastructure provision are identified below:

#### Issue WHS 3

Greenheart will be critical to the borough's green infrastructure and adaptation to climate change. Ensuring that wildlife habitats and species are part of linked networks will be a key component of this.

#### Issue WHS 4

New development needs to address the continuity of wildlife habitats through design and enhancement on-site, linking into surrounding habitats.

#### Issue WHS 5

There is a need to improve public accessibility to areas of countryside and wildlife habitat, whilst conserving and protecting habitats.

## SEVEN

### Main sustainability issues identified

**7.1** We have identified key issues for the sustainability appraisal to ensure that it is appropriately focused on what is most important and relevant for Wigan Borough. These help to inform the sustainability appraisal framework. They are:

#### Issue WHS 6

Development will have an impact on wildlife and nature conservation. We must make sure that provision is made for enhancement, mitigation and protection.

#### Issue WHS 7

Environmental assets should be valued and protected strongly because of their strategic importance to wildlife, recreation, resilience to climate change and health and wellbeing. There should be no net loss.

## EIGHT

## Our sustainability framework

## Sustainability objectives and criteria

**8.1** The following sustainability objectives and appraisal criteria have been established as part of the framework for assessing the Core Strategy. The objectives have been developed to reflect:

- Government guidance on sustainability appraisal such as 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Development Plan Documents (2005)' and recognised frameworks such as the Integrated Appraisal Toolkit (North West Regional Assembly and other agencies).
- The key sustainability issues identified in this topic paper.
- Policy context and legal requirements.
- Feedback and suggestions from consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (which contained a set of objectives and criteria).

**8.2** The Sustainability Appraisal is underpinned by 19 headline objectives. Objective 1 specifically relates to wildlife habitats and species.

Sustainability Objectives	Appraisal Criteria / Sub questions
<b>Objective 1:</b>  To protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.	Will it protect and promote effective management of Wigan's sites of nature conservation importance?
	Will it conserve and enhance natural / semi natural habitats and wildlife corridors?
	Will it provide opportunities for the enhancement and creation of habitats and to foster species conservation, diversity and resilience to climate change? (Particularly for priority species)

Sustainability Objectives	Appraisal Criteria / Sub questions
	Will it maintain, enhance and increase (rural and urban) tree cover and woodlands.
Habitats Regulations Assessment	Will it protect and promote effective management of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation (including candidate sites) in Wigan and surrounding areas? Feed results into Habitats Regulations Assessment.

## Baseline position

**8.3** This section identifies the key indicators and baseline data relating to wildlife habitats and species for the Sustainability Appraisal process.

**Data: Sustainability objective 1: To protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.**

Indicator	Wigan baseline	Wigan trends	Targets	Comparisons	Issues / Comments
The proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented	27% (2009-2010)	Increase in first two years of measuring this indicator	Increase of 1% per year 2009-2012		Achieving target
The percentage area of land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the local authority area in favourable condition.	Due to an ongoing programme of improvement and management, Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest is 100% favourable condition. Abram Flashes - 31.1% favourable Highfield Moss - 80.16% favourable Astley & Bedford Moss - 1.41% favourable and		The government's Public Service Agreement target is that 95% of Sites will be in favourable or improving condition by 2010.	England - 74.3% North West - 83.6%	Most sites in Wigan are starting to be managed leading to an increase in those that are improving condition. Figures by Natural England - 1st January 2011.

Indicator	Wigan baseline	Wigan trends	Targets	Comparisons	Issues / Comments
Condition of habitats designated as Special Areas of Conservation - Astley & Bedford Mosses	1.41% favourable and 77.89% unfavourable (recovering),	77.89% unfavourable (recovering),	Improving		Purchase of additional land by Community Forests North West so majority of Abram Flashes being brought into management by Lancashire Wildlife Trust from 2010.  Figures show that approximately 80% of the site is meeting the Government target. Additional funding has been secured by Lancashire Wildlife Trust for mossland work which will hopefully continue this improvement.

Indicator	Wigan baseline	Wigan trends	Targets	Comparisons	Issues / Comments
Hectares of land designated as Local Nature Reserves per 1000 head of population	269 ha (2009)	Gradual increase, sites not designated each year	304 ha		Other sites to be identified
Number of new tree preservation orders.	29 (2010) Total of 641 being managed.	Numbers increased every year since 2004-2005	Target of 30 per annum for 2011-2015	not available	Achieving target.
The percentage of the Borough designated as woodland	10% in 2010	data gap	not available	England, North West - no data for 2010	Wigan has a lower proportion of woodland cover than the UK average (12%). However this is balanced by significant areas of other habitats.



## NINE

### An assessment of legality and soundness

**9.1** This topic paper provides a summary of the evidence required for our Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal. This Topic Paper serves policy CP12 'Wildlife habitats and species' and the wildlife content of policies SP5 'Greenheart' and CP9 'Strategic landscape and green infrastructure'. The purpose of this section is to show that we have produced our Core Strategy in line with legal requirements and these policies are 'sound'.

**9.2** Some of the legal requirements are procedural and concern the Core Strategy as a whole rather than individual policies; these are covered in the Self Assessment of Soundness and Legal Compliance document that accompanies the Core Strategy. The 4 legal requirements that are specific to contents of the Core Strategy are:

1. Community and stakeholder involvement
2. Subject to sustainability appraisal
3. Regard to the sustainable community strategy
4. Conforms generally to the Regional Spatial Strategy

**9.3** A further requirement is to have "regard to national policy" but this is also covered under a similar 'test of soundness'.

**9.4** To be sound the Core Strategy must be **justified, effective** and **consistent with national policy**. Compliance with these tests of soundness is assessed against the following 6 'soundness' sub-headings:

1. Founded on a robust and credible evidence base; and
2. The most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives
3. Deliverable, including:
  - Identifying what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount, type and distribution of development proposed for the borough;
  - Ensuring that there are no regulatory or national policy barriers to delivery;
  - Ensuring that partners who are essential to delivery are signed up to it;
  - Being coherent with the core strategies prepared by our neighbouring councils.

4. Flexible
5. Able to be monitored
6. Consistent with national policy

**9.5** The remainder of this section sets out the case for policy CP12 against the 4 legal requirements and the tests of soundness and policies SP3 and SP4 from a wildlife and habitats perspective. Policies SP5 and CP9 are considered in Topic Paper 9 'Built Environment and Landscapes'.

### **Policy CP12 Wildlife Habitats and Species**

#### **Community and stakeholder involvement**

**9.6** The community and key stakeholders, including Natural England, Environment Agency, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Greater Manchester Ecology Unit have all been involved at each stage of the Core Strategy's preparation. Their views and comments have been considered and have helped to shape the content and direction of policy CP12 and other policies where appropriate. Policy CP12 therefore complies fully with the Statement of Community Involvement in respect of who has been involved or consulted, and how and when consultation has taken place. Details of this involvement are set out in Section 3 of this Topic Paper and within our Consultation Reports.

#### **Subject to Sustainability Appraisal**

**9.7** Policy CP12 has been shaped by the outcomes of a robust sustainability appraisal that satisfies the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The appraisal process was founded on the collection of thorough baseline information about wildlife habitats and species and key stakeholders were involved, including Natural England, Environment Agency and the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. The process informed the original choice of policy and subsequently tested it against sustainability principles and objectives. It was then further adapted to address sustainability issues and, as a result, is the most sustainable policy for Wigan Borough that we could reasonably include in the Core Strategy. The full details of the appraisal can be found in the Sustainability Appraisal Report (August 2011).

## General conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy

**9.8** Policy CP12 is in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy, specifically:

- It accords with the spatial principles set in policy DP1 by promoting environmental quality.
- It promotes sustainable communities in accordance with policy DP2 by ensuring that we are sensitive to the environment, and particularly by improving the natural environment.
- It promotes environmental quality in accordance with policy DP7 by protecting and enhancing biodiversity and habitats, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- It contributes to the reduction in emissions and adapts to climate change in accordance with policy DP9 by considering adaptation to the environmental impact of climate change.
- It enhances and protects the region's environmental assets in accordance with policy EM1 by setting a framework for protecting and increasing the biodiversity resource and ensuring habitats are part of linked networks to address habitat fragmentation and species isolation.
- It contributes to green infrastructure in accordance with policy EM3 by maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

## Regard to the sustainable community strategy

**9.9** Our sustainable community strategy 'Vision 2026' was produced in 2008 in line with the Core Strategy timeframe. It identifies four priority areas and this policy is in line with 3 of them:

- Ambitious Communities
- Living healthier and longer

## Founded on robust and credible evidence

**9.10** Policy CP12 is founded on robust and credible evidence as shown in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this topic paper. This is backed up further by a separate 'Wildlife, habitats and species' evidence review document. The key sources of evidence which support policy CP12 are the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan and Wigan's Biodiversity: An audit of the Biodiversity Resource within the borough (2010).

## **The most appropriate strategy when considered against the alternatives**

**9.11** The alternative would be not to provide a policy framework for protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats and species. This would not be a sustainable approach and failure to protect wildlife habitats and species would result in the loss of designated sites and priority habitats and species which are critical to maintaining the quality of life and economic value of the borough. Therefore, our approach is deemed the most appropriate strategy in the context of the significant reviewed evidence, consultation and current economic climate.

### **Deliverable**

**9.12** The key messages identified in section 4 of this document indicate what needs to be addressed in the borough with regard to wildlife habitats and species. To address these messages and deliver change and improvement in the borough, policy CP12 has indicated a set of key delivery items. These are set out in the table beneath the policy and include protecting designated wildlife sites and regional and local priority habitats, ensuring that habitats are part of linked networks, and preparing a supplementary planning document on development and habitats.

**9.13** Alongside the council, a number of organisations including Natural England, Red Rose Forest and Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust will play a crucial role in the delivery of this policy. The support of these organisations is demonstrated in our Consultation Reports that accompany the Core Strategy.

**9.14** Neighbouring authorities have been involved at all stages of the policy's preparation. West Lancashire, St Helens and Warrington Councils made supportive representations to this policy at the proposed submission stage. No councils objected. This indicates that the policy is coherent with the Core Strategies of neighbouring authorities.

**9.15** There are no regulatory or national policy barriers to the delivery of the policy.

### **Flexible**

**9.16** Policy CP12 establishes the strategic focus for wildlife habitats and species. It provides a policy direction for the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats and species based on the national, regional and local significance of habitats and species

that meets national policy and guidance. To ensure that policy CP12 does not become dated it retains a level of flexibility which gives the policy the ability to adapt to future changes during the plan period.

### **Able to be monitored**

**9.17** The means for monitoring this policy are set out in chapter 10 of the Draft Core Strategy (Proposed Submission version), specifically:

- Condition and quantity of designated sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Biological Importance and Local Nature Reserves

### **Consistent with national policy**

**9.18** Policy CP12 is consistent with national policy, with regard to the key documents reviewed:

- Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

## TEN

## Next Steps

**10.1** This is the final version of the topic paper summarising and analysing evidence on wildlife habitats and species that we have gathered to inform our Core Strategy: Submission Version and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.

**10.2** Previous versions of each topic paper and evidence reviews are available from the 'Issues and Options', 'Preferred Options' and 'Draft Core Strategy - Proposed Submission version' webpages for the Core Strategy, on our website at [www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy). This is to provide a record of what evidence was available at each stage of Core Strategy preparation.

**10.3** We may update this topic paper to inform a future development plan document or a review of the Core Strategy.

# LDF

WIGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY

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