

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Local Development Framework

**Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Document**

Draft Consultation Document

November 2007

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The contribution that biodiversity makes to sustainable development is clearly recognised in spatial planning policy and a range of Government priorities for sustainable living and growth. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 includes a core objective of helping to achieve a rich and diverse natural environment and in addressing the effects of climate change, there is growing focus on both the impacts on the natural environment and its role in adaptation.
- 1.2 Ensuring biodiversity has a positive role in the development process is an important aspect of urban regeneration and the continued renaissance in towns and cities. Our quality of life and the well being of our communities depend on how we manage the environment. This includes ensuring that the wildlife that surrounds us and the habitats on which they depend are given appropriate protection through sustainable land management and development and that opportunities to further enhance biodiversity are understood and embraced. Through greater understanding of the value of biodiversity to our environment, economy and communities as part of our essential 'green infrastructure', it should be increasingly seen that planning for biodiversity, need not be expensive or unduly constraining and is a positive consideration for new development, adding value to proposals through enhanced amenity, environmental management opportunities and contributing to local distinctiveness.
- 1.3 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to highlight biodiversity and development issues in Rochdale Borough and to ensure that all stakeholders understand the potential impacts of development on biodiversity, both positive and negative. It provides guidance to supplement Rochdale's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) adopted in 2006 and government national planning policy statements. The SPD also indicates other relevant plans, policies and strategies which provide advice, guidance or specific and relevant requirements for biodiversity. The SPD forms a part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will apply in the future to saved policies from the UDP which will remain relevant to planning decisions until incorporated into or superseded by new Development Plan Documents as required.

2 Objectives of the SPD

2.1 The overall objective of this SPD is to ensure that no net loss of ecological interest or assets occurs and that opportunities to enhance such interest are incorporated within development proposals where possible.

2.2 The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications providing a body of good practice for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the design, construction and future use of development. It will also be used to inform local masterplanning and regeneration strategies, programmes and proposals to ensure appropriate protection, mitigation and enhancement of the natural environment and urban and rural biodiversity through design, construction and future management of physical regeneration activities.

2.3 The SPD will:-

- Define biodiversity;
- Describe key biodiversity interests in Rochdale Borough and indicate key sites and spatial distributions;
- Set out a planning policy context for biodiversity;
- Outline potential threats and opportunities for conservation and enhancement;
- Illustrate good practice for identification, protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity through the development planning process; and
- Signpost sources of further advice and support to help ensure a robust and positive approach to identifying and designing for biodiversity interests.

2.4 **The objectives of the SPD can be summarised as:-**

- **To enhance the biodiversity interest of Rochdale district and ensure no net loss of ecological interest or assets;**
- **To ensure that development proposals support a sustainable ecological framework for Rochdale as a component of its essential green infrastructure;**
- **To support the maintenance, restoration, expansion and good management of designated sites and priority habitats;**
- **To safeguard protected and priority species and habitats;**
- **To support the delivery of relevant BAP targets through development proposals;**
- **To protect and improve wildlife corridors and stepping stones and the distribution and habitat resource for key species; and**
- **To promote public enjoyment of the natural environment close to where they live for recreation and education.**

2.5 The SPD is a valuable tool for ensuring that development proposals take full account of their biodiversity impacts and opportunities for enhancement. It will:-

- Help to ensure early consideration of individual sites and understanding what biodiversity interest may be present;
- Ensure that conservation and enhancement measures can be a planned and positive feature of design rather than being incorporated, often less than satisfactorily, at a later stage;
- Assist planning officers and developers to engage in more informed and positive pre-application discussions;
- Members of the local community will be able to use the document to help them make more informed representations to development proposals and to highlight concerns, support and proposed enhancements more effectively;
- Ensure that development planning is based on good information and positive design for biodiversity interests which can help to reduce delays in the planning process and reduce the potential for refusal of planning permission.

3 The Importance of Biodiversity in Rochdale

What is Biodiversity?

- 3.1 Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on earth. It is nature's variety of species, habitats and encompasses the whole range of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and other invertebrates, plants, fungi and micro-organisms. It includes variability within a species and the assemblages of plants, animals and micro-organisms that together form ecosystems and habitats.

Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

- 3.2 The UK Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future' (2005) sets out five guiding principles for sustainable development:

- living within environmental limits
- using sound science responsibly
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance

- 3.3 There are many benefits to society from biodiversity, which supports its role as an essential contribution to sustainable development. These include:

- Providing and supporting food production;
- Maintaining the environment and managing environmental risks e.g. soil erosion, pollution and flooding, the effects of climate change;
- Enhancing the image of towns and cities, providing distinctiveness and character;
- Enjoyment of the natural environment for leisure and tourism;
- Providing an open air classroom; and
- Improving mental and physical health and well being where people live, and go about their daily lives.

- 3.4 Rochdale MBC supports the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity as part of its broad approach to sustainable development and growth in the Borough. In addition to the UDP, the Community Plan 'Pride of Place', the Rochdale Renaissance Borough Masterplan and local area regeneration strategies and programmes all recognise the value of biodiversity to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough and its residents both now and in the future.

Issues Affecting Biodiversity

- 3.5 Biodiversity surrounds us in our daily lives and human activity in both urban and rural areas can affect the well-being, distribution and numbers of species. Effects can be both direct and indirect. Some of the principal negative effects which development and use of land can have on biodiversity include:-

- Damage to, loss and fragmentation of habitat through new development;
- Disturbance to habitat through unmanaged public access, construction practices or land use operations;
- Use of non native species or landscaping which is not based on good knowledge of existing ecology and its needs;
- Pollution (air, water, noise) generated through operations, traffic etc; and
- Poor land management - fly tipping, spread of invasive species, neglect and dereliction.

3.6 Species loss at a national scale has been significant in the twentieth and twenty first centuries largely due to the effects of human activity. At a global scale, the speed and consequences of climate change may have further fundamental impacts on biodiversity in England. The potential threats to biodiversity outlined above are relevant to the biodiversity assets of Rochdale district.

3.7 Government considers the planning system key to achieving sustainable development. As biodiversity is a good indicator of the health and well-being of our environment, it is important to gain a greater understanding of the impact of what we do and to mitigate negative impacts wherever possible. The development and use of land is one of the principal impacts on the environment both positive and negative and therefore the role of the planning system, robust survey evidence and good design practice is essential to ensuring a positive contribution to sustainable development and growth. This SPD will help to ensure that biodiversity is properly assessed and incorporated into the development process as a positive feature.

4 Landscape Character

- 4.1 The features and character of the landscape and townscape of Rochdale district and its surroundings provide an essential framework and resource for biodiversity. Features of the landscape including topography, geology, soils, water features and the urban footprint in particular settlement patterns and transport infrastructure provide the basis for both conservation of species and habitats and opportunities for further enhancement. Rochdale's land area totals 15,808 hectares with the urban area totalling approximately 4000 hectares. Within the urban envelope there is a network of greenspaces and watercourses of various types and sizes which taken with the substantial rural hinterland provides a significant resource for biodiversity.

Topography

- 4.2 The South Pennine Moors comprise the highest land in the Borough (up to 472m above sea level near to Blackstone Edge) and form a backdrop to the settlements in the north and east of the Borough including Rochdale, Littleborough and Milnrow. It is an important area for water gathering and forms the drainage basin for the rivers and streams which flow from the moors. Watercourses in the upland fringes are characterised by steep sided valleys often wooded such as the Spodden and Ashworth Valleys. Towards the south and west is lower lying land where the main settlements are located in the broad valleys of the Rivers Roch, Beal and Irk. There is a marked change in topography (around 71m above sea level in Middleton) moving towards the Borough boundary with Manchester.

Geology

- 4.3 The geology of the borough is characterised by uplands formed from millstone grit deposits laid down during the carboniferous era. This rock is resistant to erosion and was covered in ice during the Pleistocene Ice Age, which created the distinctive rounded shape to the moorland hills. As a result of poor drainage the moorlands are dominated by peat blanket bog, a nationally important habitat with its characteristic vegetation mosaic and an important archaeological value.
- 4.4 During the carboniferous era, areas of coal were also laid down in the borough, with coal mining taking place locally throughout the borough, particularly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. There are many gritstone edges around the Pennines and one important geological feature of the area is Blackstone Edge, an outcrop of black sandstone some 200 metres in length which shows the effects of peri-glacial weathering with the development of a weathering regolith on the surface of the grits. Another interesting feature of the area is the gritstone which is wide enough to form significant areas of pavement, an uncommon but interesting feature.

Landscape

- 4.5 Historically, the towns that comprise the borough of Rochdale developed rapidly following the expansion of the cotton industry in the 18th century. The open, exposed moorland fringe of the Borough to the north and east is

characterised by blanket peat and a mosaic of upland habitats which it supports. Principal land uses both active and relict include water supply, power transmission, mineral extraction and agriculture based on small holdings and rough grazing.

- 4.6 The enclosed upland which buffers the moorland and the urban fringes includes more varied field patterns on steep slopes often bounded by dry stone walls and hedgerows, and some field patterns medieval in origin. Tree cover is limited to steep sided cloughs, shelter belts and scattered copses. Vegetation is predominantly semi improved acid grassland, neutral grasslands and wet rushy pastures, some of which are now reverting to moorland. Land uses are primarily agriculture (mixed grazing), water supply and power transmission.
- 4.7 In the urban fringes, landscape is more varied in character and quality. In the north and east steep sided valleys such as the Spodden, Ashworth, Cheesden and upper Roch Valleys include significant wooded slopes (including semi-natural ancient woodland) and industrial uses many historic and relict. Elsewhere, there is a predominantly low lying open farmscape which also includes other open uses such as golf courses, equestrian facilities and allotments and encroachment of 'urban' land uses such as landfill, industry and housing. Landscape quality is variable from good to degraded.
- 4.8 The urban areas are characterised by the river valleys and the Rochdale Canal corridor extending into the heart of the town centres albeit interrupted in places by major roads and development. Remnant features of industry such as mill lodges and ponds, public parks, small urban woodlands, allotments, private gardens (in particular in suburban areas) and formal (sports, recreation and school grounds) and amenity public spaces are also key features of the townscape which serve to form a network of sites and corridors in many areas linking with the river valleys and the open countryside beyond e.g. Bowlee, Middleton and at Cronkeyshaw and Syke Commons, Rochdale. Open spaces are of variable size and quality in some, particularly inner urban, locations.

5 The Biodiversity Resource of Rochdale

- 5.1 The biodiversity resource of Rochdale is diverse and constantly changing. There are many sources of information which form the basis for identifying and auditing biodiversity which include:
- The Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) register which identifies the primary sites of importance in each Greater Manchester district. This is updated regularly
 - Phase 1 Habitat Survey of open land and water in Rochdale (1989) which provides a general habitat classification
 - Greater Manchester Biodiversity Audit (2000)
 - Records and surveys held by agencies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission
 - Phase 1 Survey of Key Urban Greenspace in Rochdale (2007).
 - Incidental records held by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit derived from site surveys, ecological assessment of development sites, local naturalists records etc. Local records can include sensitive data about species and habitats. Pre-application discussions with Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and Rochdale Council will help to determine where this is likely to be an issue and how best to proceed.
- 5.2 Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) work on behalf of Greater Manchester districts to provide expert advice and assistance on ecological matters including the impact of development proposals, mitigation measures, statutory duties and processes, and identification of key biological sites and features suitable for local designation. GMEU has a lead role in monitoring change in biodiversity i.e. its extent and quality which is important to ensure that policy is used effectively for ensuring the delivery of appropriate conservation and enhancement measures through development.
- 5.3 The biodiversity resource of Rochdale district can be illustrated by reference to broad sub regional descriptions, designated sites found within the Borough and key habitats as identified in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan.

Natural Areas

- 5.4 Natural Areas sub divide the landscape of England into discrete areas each with a characteristic series of wildlife and natural features. They are a way of interpreting the ecology of the country based on the principle that each area has a unique identity resulting from the interaction of wildlife, landform, geology, land use and human activity or impact.
- 5.5 Rochdale is of a diverse character and straddles two Natural Areas reflecting the transitional landscape character from the uplands of the South Pennines to the lower lying, more urbanised Mersey Basin. They are:-

The Southern Pennines

- 5.6 Primarily upland landscapes which include open moorland plateaux standing high above the urban centres to the north and east of Heywood, Rochdale, Littleborough, Milnrow and Newhey. Lower slopes include steep often wooded cloughs and farming predominantly based on small holdings. Steep sided river valleys including the upper reaches of the River Roch in Littleborough contain a mixture of settlement and transport infrastructure which in the case of the Rochdale Canal is an important biodiversity resource in its own right. High moorland is significantly underlain with blanket peat and millstone grit rock and with water catchment and rough grazing as dominant land uses, provides a habitat assemblage important for a variety of upland birds and waders. In Rochdale, the Rochdale Canal and part of the South Pennine Moors are Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The Urban Mersey Basin

- 5.7 The Urban Mersey Basin is one of the most densely populated parts of the country and at it's core are the rivers Mersey and Irwell for which Rochdale's principal rivers (including the Roch, Irk, Spodden and Beal) form an important part of the catchment. The Rochdale Canal is also a major feature of the area extending from Rochdale through Oldham and into Manchester City Centre. It is designated as SPA and SAC for its length through Rochdale district. The river valleys and watercourses and urban fringe farmscapes support a varied assemblage of habitats and species albeit often modified and created by human activity e.g. the Rochdale Canal, ponds and lodges, woodland and reclaimed or recolonised landfill and derelict land. The penetration of river valleys and the Canal corridor into the core of urban areas and the diversity of 'urban' habitats based on parks, gardens, allotments, water bodies and other remnant or active landscape features is a defining feature of the urban centres. Parts of the river valley woodland landscape in Rochdale district are of significant biodiversity value as Ancient Semi Natural Woodland i.e. composed of native tree species and where there is believed to have been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600AD. In Rochdale district, particular sites are found at Healey Dell, the Ashworth and Cheesden Valleys, and Hopwood Woods.

Natura 2000 sites

- 5.8 The Habitats Directive requires EU member states to designate a network of sites to protect the most vulnerable and seriously threatened species and habitats. This is also a requirement of the Birds Directive and together, the network of sites of special significance is known as Natura 2000. Sites within the network are either Special Protection Areas (for birds) and/or Special Areas of Conservation for other species and for habitats. Sites must firstly be designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) before they can be considered as SAC and/or SPA. Designation provides species and habitats with increased protection and management from land use or development which may affect their nature conservation status or value. Plans, programmes and proposals which could result in an adverse affect on the quality or integrity of a Natura 2000 site are required to undertake an "Appropriate Assessment" to determine the nature of the affect and how it could be successfully mitigated. It should be noted that the potential affect

could be generated from proposals or activities in an adjacent area to a Natura 2000 site. A screening opinion as to whether an Appropriate Assessment is needed will be sought from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit where required.

Rochdale supports 2 sites which are protected by European legislation:-

The South Pennine Moors

- 5.9 This site is both a SPA and a SAC, designated for the importance of its upland breeding bird assemblages (including merlin, golden plover, lapwing, curlew, dunlin, twite, short-eared owl) and for the upland habitats it supports (North Atlantic wet heaths, European dry heaths, blanket bog (the most south-easterly occurrence in Europe), transition mires/quaking bogs and ancient/old sessile oak wood). Only part of this extremely large site (64,983 hectares) occurs within Rochdale (6.6% of the total SPA area). Bog-building Sphagnum Mosses can be found in the upland although not widely. Characteristic vegetation includes heather, Hare's-tail cottongrass, crowberry and bilberry.

The Rochdale Canal

- 5.10 The SAC contains a botanically diverse waterplant community and is designated primarily for the populations of floating water plantain (*Luronium natans*) it supports. Other important waterplants include American pondweed (*Potamogeton epihydrus*) and grasswack pondweed (*Potamogeton compressus*). The SAC extends for the majority of the Rochdale Canal within Rochdale and Oldham districts.

UK Statutory Sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 5.11 The principal designation for sites and habitats of UK significance is a SSSI. Sites are designated and protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Their purpose is to safeguard sites of high natural heritage importance for current and future generations. The South Pennine Moors SPA/SAC and the Rochdale Canal SAC are also SSSI sites, which is a requirement of their advancement to EU recognition.

UK Priority Habitats

- 5.12 The UK Government has identified a series of priority habitats of principal importance which have been listed in Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and in Annex C of ODPM Circular 06/2005. National Habitat Action Plans have been produced for each of these to support their conservation and the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive. It is anticipated that this list will be updated by the Government as part of the ongoing delivery and review of the Biodiversity Strategy for England.
- 5.13 Within Greater Manchester a Biodiversity audit has been undertaken (GMEU 2000), which incorporates a review of where such habitats occur across the whole county and identifies other features of regional and/or county

importance to biodiversity. The Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP) has produced a number of specific habitat plans to further assist in maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity resource of the county. Rochdale MBC formally supports the GM BAP and will seek to target effort and resources at the conservation, enjoyment and enhancement of biodiversity in the borough through its various spatial planning and regeneration plans and programmes and the Community Plan.

- 5.14 The habitats of particular importance for Greater Manchester that are found in Rochdale include the following:-

UK Key Habitats

Upland oak wood
Wet woodlands
Lowland hay meadow
Lowland dry acid grassland
Lowland heathland
Swamp and tall herb fen
Springs and flushes
Upland heathland
Blanket bog

Important Habitats in a Greater Manchester Context

- 5.15 In addition to the UK priority habitats described above, Rochdale supports a diverse range of urban and rural habitats which derive their interest from factors such as topography, geology, current and previous land use patterns and processes and so on. The broad components of the habitat character of Rochdale are:

- **Woodland:** Rochdale only has about 4% of Greater Manchester's resource of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland. Within this, a significant amount in the principal urban fringe and rural river valleys is ancient (totalling around 121 hectares). Ancient woodland is noted for its habitat diversity and richness and the range of species it supports.
- **Semi-natural Grassland:** Rochdale has an extensive open land area and supports a high proportion of Greater Manchester's grassland in particular acid grassland. It supports more than 37% of the total unimproved acid grassland and almost 60% of marsh/marshy grassland.
- **Improved/Amenity Grasslands:** Nearly 25% of Rochdale is comprised of managed greenspace which has generally low nature conservation value but which has significant scope for enhancement.
- **Continuous Bracken:** Rochdale's upland fringes support more than 18% of the Greater Manchester total of this habitat.
- **Heathland:** Significant areas of heathland are found particularly in the Pennine landscapes to the north and east.

- **Bogs/mires/flushes:** Rochdale includes over 80% of the county's blanket bog, more than 90% of wet modified bog and 54% of acidic flush habitat in its Pennine uplands.
 - **Rochdale Canal:** The Canal is of high significance for aquatic plants including floating water plantain.
 - **Water bodies:** Rochdale has a large number of upland reservoirs and other water bodies such as farm ponds, former mill lodges and other small scale water bodies both urban and rural. The Borough contains 20 reservoirs which is the highest number in Greater Manchester.
 - **Rivers and streams:** The Borough is bisected by a series of rivers such as the Roch, Irk, Beal and Spodden with a number of large streams such as Stanney Brook, Sudden Brook and Cheesden Brook all of which as watercourses with associated land corridors form valuable habitats.
- 5.16 Rochdale MBC will assess all development proposals to ensure the appropriate identification of nature conservation interests and to protect, conserve and seek appropriate enhancements of such biodiversity resources as required. Key actions identified in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan and supporting initiatives will further help to inform the protection and enhancement of habitat diversity, quality and distribution.
- 5.17 In addition to the protected sites found in the South Pennine Moors and Rochdale Canal as described above, other, specific local biodiversity sites of importance have been and continue to be identified based on the most up to date ecological survey and assessment. They are currently:

Local Nature Reserves

- 5.18 Under powers given in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, local authorities have the power to acquire, declare and manage land as Local Nature Reserves. The function of a LNR is to preserve features and areas of special interest and to provide opportunities for the study and enjoyment of their natural interest. Natural England must be consulted on any proposal for a LNR designation. Rochdale currently has 3 designated LNRs;
- Healey Dell (jointly managed with Rossendale Borough Council)
 - Alkington Woods
 - Hopwood Woods

Further areas have been identified as potentially subject to a LNR proposal including the Roch Valley in Heywood.

Sites of Biological Importance

- 5.19 Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) are non-statutory sites which support substantive features of value for wildlife. They form part of an important 'second tier, of locally designated sites which is supported by DEFRA (April 2006). In Greater Manchester these sites are identified and the system administered by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). SBIs are

identified using a rigorous methodology with guidelines for site selection. Sites include habitats of UK and Greater Manchester Importance. Candidate and existing SBIs are part of a process of continual review and monitoring where new sites can be proposed and existing sites extended, reduced in size or regraded subject to the results of assessment. SBIs are approved for planning purposes by individual local authorities.

- 5.20 Rochdale currently has 43 locally approved SBIs, which cover more than 2,000 hectares, representing almost 15% of the total area of the borough. The SBI sites are graded to reflect their significance within the Greater Manchester wildlife resource. Grade A sites are of County Importance, Grade B are of District Importance and Grade C sites are of more than Local Importance (i.e. of value within township or ward).

Greenspace Corridors

- 5.21 Habitat value can be cumulative over an area where a continuous corridor or series of stepping stones form a vital resource to retain a diversity of species and habitat interest or the opportunity to achieve active conservation for specific individual species or habitats or assemblages. Wildlife corridors can be at various scales from very small local areas to extensive corridors following for example a river valley, canal corridor or other linear feature such as a road or railway. They are often physically connected to some degree but, a series of stepping stones which are not as well connected on the ground may also have specific value for birds and other more mobile species. Loss and fragmentation of habitat results in reduced populations, isolation of species, reduced genetic diversity and local species extinctions. Wildlife Corridors have an important role to play in dispersal for some plants and animals and provide opportunities to reverse these declines in ecological quality. They provide a helpful spatial framework to plan and actively promote and achieve good habitat conservation and management.
- 5.22 Corridors also have the potential to be multi functional providing valuable amenity, educational, recreational and aesthetic benefits associated with wildlife experience and open space. This is particularly the case in urban environments where such resources are often rather scarce.
- 5.23 It is critical that wildlife corridors should contain continuous or near-continuous concentrations of semi-natural habitats. However, the presence of gaps, constrictions and dispersed fragments does not negate the value of the corridor since such features can still provide important reservoirs for semi-natural habitats and valuable stepping stones for a number of plants and animals between fragments.
- 5.24 In Rochdale the importance of wildlife corridors and the multiple functions that corridors of open space provide in terms of landscape, visual amenity and access to informal open space have been recognised in the identification of Greenspace Corridors within the UDP. In addition, two recent pieces of survey work (Andrew McCarthy Associates and ECUS) have supplemented existing knowledge (Phase 1 Habitat Survey 1990) and helped refine the identification of exiting biodiversity features within key corridors and may be used to focus activity for future ecological/biodiversity gain and enhancement.

Key Species

- 5.25 It would be impractical for this document to identify and comment on every wild animal to be found in or likely to occur in Rochdale district. The document instead refers to those species which are of particular conservation concern.

Wild Animals and Plants Protected by Law

- 5.26 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, subsequent amendments of the Act and additional legislation enacted in the UK and in Europe includes a range of protective measures for wild animals (which includes all wild birds, badgers, bats, water voles, great crested newt and others) and plants (including bluebell and floating water plantain). It is an offence to ill treat any animal, kill, injure, sell or take protected species or to intentionally damage or destroy their places of shelter. It is also an offence to uproot protected plants as an unauthorised person. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 specifies that wildlife or habitats must not be recklessly disturbed. European Protected Species (EPS) are specified in the Conservation (Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38, 42 and Schedules 2, 4) and are rare or significantly declining in Europe. In addition to the legal requirements set out above and the need for planning permission, there is an additional requirement for a licence where a proposal would result in the capture, disturbance, damage or destruction of an EPS or its breeding or resting place.
- 5.27 It is important to ensure that prior to any development proposal being submitted to the local authority that the known or potential presence of a protected species is properly surveyed and appropriate steps taken to comply with legislation and to protect both species and the habitat on which they depend which for example may be a built structure such as a roof space or wall. Further advice is included later in this document.

UK Priority Species in Rochdale

- 5.28 More than 390 species of plant and animal have been identified by the Government as national priorities referred to as "Species of Principal Importance in England". This list is included in section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and ODPM Circular 06/2005. Species identified on the list have experienced one or more of specific criteria i.e. they are species subject to substantial recent decline, are under a high degree of threat internationally, are limited to restricted geographical areas or are protected by the Birds and/or Habitats Directive. A full list of UK priority species in Rochdale can be found in Appendix 3.

6 Planning Policy Context

- 6.1 The 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity signed by the UK Government at the Rio Earth Summit, requires that national strategies, plans and programmes for conserving and sustaining biological diversity are produced or incorporated into existing documents. The Habitats Directive requires EU Member States to protect and sustain biodiversity resources so that they remain available for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.
- 6.2 More recent commitments to address the effects of climate change note the potential impact on species and habitats and the need to identify ways of sustaining our biodiversity resource in that context.

'Rising to the Challenge: A Climate Change Action Plan for England's Northwest 2007-09'

- 6.3 This action plan has been produced with a twin objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to those effects of climate change which are unavoidable. Amongst the actions it promotes are the assessment of potential climate change impacts on the region's landscapes and sensitive species and habitats, acknowledging the potential for loss of species and habitats diversity without effective mitigation and adaptation measures. Biodiversity can also have a positive role in helping to address the effects of climate change as a key component of the natural environment, for example the role of blanket bog as a carbon bank and the role of trees in creating local microclimates in towns and cities. The Plan specifically advocates assessment of the role of natural systems for carbon sequestration and in reducing flood risk. The role of Green Infrastructure in helping to adapt and mitigate for climate change is also supported. The planning system, in acknowledging such roles is a significant mechanism for conserving and extending appropriate open spaces and networks as part of its objectives for sustainable development.

The Water Framework Directive

- 6.4 The Water Framework Directive is the most substantial piece of EU water legislation to date and requires 'nearly' all inland and coastal water bodies to reach at least "good" status by 2015 (i.e. achieving good ecological status could be affected by whether the water body is heavily modified or not). It applies to all surface freshwater bodies (including lakes, rivers and streams), groundwaters, groundwater dependant ecosystems, estuaries and coastal waters out to one mile from low water. The Directive aims to improve the ecological health of inland and coastal waters and prevent further deterioration, especially by protecting against diffuse pollution in urban and rural areas through better land management. This will help to safeguard and improve water quality in a way which enables environmental, social and economic considerations to be balanced sustainably. The ecology of water bodies and their wider environments e.g. river valley corridors are an important part of the requirement to ensure a healthy, well balanced water environment.

- 6.5 The Environment Agency is producing River Basin Management Plans for each region in England to implement the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and will include objectives for the conservation and enhancement of aquatic biodiversity and their environs. The North West River Basin District plan is anticipated in 2009. This will set out in general terms how the water environment will be managed and will provide a framework for more detailed decisions to be made. Plans will bring together water and land management as an integrated approach to river basin management and appropriate consideration of social, economic and environmental issues will inform detailed objectives and their practical delivery.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

- 6.6 The Act is a significant body of legislation which brings together a range of duties and provisions relevant to planning policy and practice. The establishment of Natural England has brought together in a single organisation, the primary responsibilities for enhancing urban and rural landscapes and biodiversity and the enjoyment of the natural environment. The Act also encourages joint working between the new agency and others such as the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission in the conservation, enhancement and promotion of biodiversity e.g. through the Regional Forest Frameworks and flood defence measures. The Act also requires public bodies, including local planning authorities, to have proper regard, in the exercise of its functions, to conserving biodiversity. This includes ensuring better compliance with existing duties such as notifying Natural England of potentially damaging operations to an SSSI before granting consent. This highlights the important role which planning policy and practice has in ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and seeks to ensure that consideration of biodiversity in the design, assessment, construction and future management of development becomes an integral feature of policy and decision making.

Planning Policy Statements

- 6.7 Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes where a replacement PPS has not yet been published, articulate the Government's national policies on different aspects of land use planning in England. They are supplemented by Minerals Planning Statements (MPS) for issues relating to the minerals industry. They set out the principles and processes to ensure that development is sustainable and that the assessment of proposals through development plan policies and procedures is consistent, robust and in line with national government and relevant EU policy. PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' sets out overarching planning policies for sustainable development through the planning system which underpin more specific PPS's and their statements of national planning policy. PPS1 emphasises that good planning is a proactive and positive approach which incorporates an appropriate mixture of regulation and enablement in a plan led system. A consultation paper for a draft PPS 'Planning and Climate Change' has been published and when finalised it will supplement the existing PPS1 and provide additional guidance on the role of spatial planning in addressing climate change and its impacts.

- 6.8 All PPS's recognise the need to protect and enhance biodiversity through the design, construction and future use of developments. Biodiversity is accorded appropriate weight as a material consideration dependent on its statutorily protected status or otherwise but in all cases, good practice promoted through PPS's is based on the principle of a full and proper assessment of biodiversity interests and to protect, mitigate the effects of development and compensate for loss as appropriate. There is also a clear expectation that where possible steps will be taken to improve biodiversity as part of development, through for example incorporating natural features into a proposal, providing open space or landscaping, flood defences or site restoration after a use is completed e.g. minerals extraction, waste disposal or wind power developments.
- 6.9 The principal PPS for biodiversity is PPS9. There are also other PPS's which highlight more specific opportunities for biodiversity which are also indicated below.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPS 9 sets out a series of principles to help ensure the proper assessment of the impacts of development proposals on biodiversity:

- Policies and planning decisions should be based on up to date information about the local environment and its key characteristics;
- Policies and planning decisions should maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity;
- Appropriate weighting should be given to sites designated as being of international, national and local importance;
- Policies should take a strategic approach to biodiversity and the conservation, enhancement and restoration of sites, areas and features both individually and collectively;
- Opportunities for promoting biodiversity within the design of development should be included in policies;
- Development which conserves or enhances biodiversity should be permitted;
- Planning decisions should prevent significant harm to biodiversity. If this is not possible by good design or locating development elsewhere, appropriate mitigation or compensation measures then planning permission should be refused;
- Opportunities for sustaining and enhancing biodiversity, in particular priority habitats should be highlighted where appropriate by the local authority and supported by policies.

PPG2: Green Belts

- 6.10 Once Green Belt is defined, the use of land within has a positive role to play in terms of how land is used and managed. Green Belt can provide accessible landscapes close to where people live for their enjoyment and well being. Land can be actively conserved and enhanced for its nature conservation interest. PPG2 in Annex A highlights the need for this positive

land management approach that supports its core objectives and functions and notes the role of environmental agencies and partnerships in securing active and positive land management which presents opportunities for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 6.11 PPS7 sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas including settlements and the rural landscapes including those on the fringes of urban areas. Policy aims to ensure that the countryside remains an important natural resource to be enjoyed by all. Countryside quality and character should be protected and where possible enhanced and particular regard given to areas which have been statutorily designated for their landscape or wildlife interest. In the urban fringes, planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements where required.

PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

- 6.12 PPG17 includes a typology of open space both private and publicly accessible and identifies its primary role and function which should be protected and enhanced as appropriate in development proposals and to assist sustainable development which meets the needs of the community in terms of open space provision and function. The typology includes:

- natural and semi-natural greenspaces including urban woodland;
- green corridors;
- amenity greenspace;
- allotments, community gardens and urban farms;
- cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds.

PPG17 recognises the biodiversity value, existing and potential of these types of spaces which should be properly considered in development proposals.

PPS25: Development and Flood Risk

- 6.13 PPG25 sets out the requirements for carrying out Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and a sequential test to inform the avoidance or minimisation of flood risk and its appropriate management where flood defences are required. There is a greater emphasis on moving away from the reliance on artificial flood defence structures and to encourage the enhancement, restoration or recreation of 'natural' features where possible. The incorporation of biodiversity conservation and enhancement measures into flood risk management and sustainable drainage systems e.g. through washlands, flood storage ponds, removal of culverts and the restoration of naturally functional flood plains are recognised by the Environment Agency as a positive design and land management opportunity which can often add further value for recreation and public amenity and enjoyment.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West

- 6.14 Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RSS13) provides a regional planning framework for the North West and its sub regions. Policy ER5 “Biodiversity and Nature Conservation” mirrors national planning policy by affording the strongest protection for sites and species with international or national designations or status. It also recognises the wider value of biodiversity to the region and seeks to ensure there is no net loss in the value of other biodiversity assets in the region. Restoration and re-establishment of habitats and species populations are supported in line with UK and local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- 6.15 In January 2006 a draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West was produced seeking to review and update the existing strategy. An Examination in Public was held in 2007 and the final approved plan is expected in 2008 which will cover the period to 2021.
- 6.16 Policy EM1 of the draft RSS is called “Integrated Land Management” which replaces a number of previous policies. It is a broad policy including landscape and heritage, woodlands and biodiversity. The policy refers to plans and strategies seeking to deliver a “step change” increase in the region’s biodiversity resources through delivering regional targets for maintaining, restoring and expanding priority habitats and delivering the targets of local Biodiversity Action Plans. Policy states this should be done by protecting, expanding and linking areas for wildlife within and between the locations of highest biodiversity resources whilst encouraging protection, and improvement of the ecological fabric elsewhere. Policy is supported by a broad indicative map showing areas of greatest opportunity for delivering biodiversity benefits with an expectation that it will be given a finer local grain of detail. Policy recognises the importance of developing functional ecological frameworks that will address habitat fragmentation and species isolation and notes the Pennine landscapes as being an area of opportunity.
- 6.17 Policy EM3 of the draft RSS is called “Green Infrastructure” and seeks to promote this emerging concept based on multi-functional greenspace networks in plans, strategies and programmes. Opportunities for identifying and delivering green infrastructure should be promoted and embedded into plans in particular where access to natural greenspace is limited or connectivity poor.
- 6.18 The proposed revision of RSS policies represents a significant recognition of the role and value of biodiversity and how it will best be promoted, conserved and expanded.

Local Planning Policy

- 6.19 Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council recognises the importance of biodiversity as a part of the green infrastructure for the district, its communities and environment in its strategic approach to the regeneration of the Borough and its social, economic and environmental well-being. A broad framework of plans and strategies exists to help achieve and support sustainable development and communities. Individually and in combination they provide a robust framework for supporting the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Rochdale and inform and guide specific area

based regeneration strategies, plans and proposals. This SPD should be used to inform and help guide the delivery of physical regeneration strategies, supporting activities for their delivery and the development of future initiatives as a part of the local planning framework that must be taken into account :-

Rochdale Renaissance Borough Masterplan

- 6.20 Published in 2004, the Masterplan contains a 15 year vision for Rochdale Borough for “an attractive location in a successful city region, with a distinctive lifestyle and identity”. A major theme of the Masterplan is “Capitalising on Our Environmental Assets” recognising the value of the natural environment for image and amenity, recreation and supporting biodiversity.

‘Pride of Place’ – the Community Plan for Rochdale

- 6.21 The Community Plan sets out the Local Strategic Partnership’s vision for the Borough and includes a series of key objectives and targets to help achieve them. Priorities for protecting and improving the environment include supporting new woodland planting, soft end use land reclamation, identifying new Local Nature Reserve potential and producing a Local Biodiversity Action Statement to help implement the Greater Manchester plan.

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

- 6.22 The Unitary Development Plan (Adopted June 2006) serves to guide the future use and development of land and buildings in the Borough until 2016. It is the main document against which planning applications are judged through reference to the Plan and other material considerations. The UDP provides a means of implementing national and regional planning policy in the context of local social, economic and environmental priorities and strategies, plans and proposals to deliver them. The Plan provides a framework of policies to:

- Control the location and quality of new development;
- Encourage and stimulate new development where appropriate;
- Protect and improve the environment; and
- Safeguard the Borough’s most important natural and built assets.

- 6.23 The UDP sets out specific policies for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and where required in specific issue, site or area based policies and proposals, explicit individual criteria are included. Core policies are appended to this document in full. In brief, the principal policies which the SPD specifically supplements (with a short description of their purpose) are:-

G/NE/1 (Part one policy): Nature Conservation

General policy setting out the UDPs objectives for protecting existing biodiversity and encouraging further enhancement through development and the Council’s own activities.

G/EN/5 (Part one policy): Landscape and Woodlands

General policy highlighting the need to protect and enhance landscape character and quality and woodlands including their biodiversity interest.

BE/8: Landscaping in New Development

Landscaping schemes in new developments should be of a high quality and enhance or create nature conservation interest where required in amenity landscaping.

EM/10: Derelict Land and Buildings

Development proposals for derelict land and buildings should recognise the ecological value of natural regeneration and other existing features of land and buildings including the presence of protected species. Derelict sites can provide significant opportunities for environmental improvements incorporating nature conservation benefits.

EM/11: Other Degraded Land and Buildings

Applies a similar principle to Policy EM/11 in respect of neglected and underused land and buildings which are not defined as derelict.

G/8 (A-D): Greenspace Corridors

The policy identifies a network of Greenspace Corridors on the Proposals Map which have a multi functional value for wildlife, amenity and recreation. Development proposals should help to sustain and where possible enhance the functions, character and setting of the corridor or specific parts of it including its value as a wildlife site or corridor.

LT/7: Rochdale Canal

The policy supports development proposals which will protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the Rochdale Canal as a Special Area of Conservation.

NE/2: Designated sites of Ecological and Geological/Geomorphological Importance

Applies to statutorily designated sites and areas of importance and local designations with recognition of the weight of protection to be applied to European, national and local sites. It seeks to protect their integrity and value through not permitting development which would cause significant harm and where appropriate ensuring appropriate mitigation on or off site.

NE/3: Biodiversity and Development

The policy highlights the requirement to consider the effect of development on all existing natural features outside of designated sites including peat. Development proposals should safeguard or mitigate for such features as appropriate. New landscaping and open spaces which safeguard or create biodiversity interest will be encouraged.

NE/4: Protected Species

Ensures that the legal requirements for protected species are complied with and that proper consideration of the impact of development proposals on protected species is given.

NE/6: Landscape Protection and Enhancement

Recognises that biodiversity such as characteristic semi-natural vegetation contributes to landscape character. Proposals should conserve, restore, enhance and maintain features as appropriate.

NE/8: Development Affecting Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Safeguards the nature conservation value of existing trees, woodland and hedgerows and any protected species interest that may be present.

NE/9: Protection of Woodlands

Specifies the need to conserve and enhance existing woodlands including ancient woodlands for a series of values including biodiversity.

NE/10: New Woodland Planting

The policy supports new tree and woodland planting which assists biodiversity through accessible urban natural greenspace, use of locally native species, encouraging natural regeneration and restoring fragmented woodlands especially ancient woodland.

RE/2: Countryside Around Towns

Encourages development proposals which conserve and enhance biodiversity in the countryside in and around the main urban centres including river valleys and other 'urban fringe' areas.

6.24 These policies should be applied as required to all development proposals in addition to any specific site or area specific policies. The full policy wording for these and other UDP Policies can be found in the Unitary Development Plan and can be viewed online at www.cartoplus.co.uk/rochdale/

6.25 Other SPDs produced by the Council, and existing SPGs, where there is as yet no SPD proposed, may also refer to the need to conserve and enhance biodiversity or may usefully be used together with this SPD. In all cases reference should be made to this SPD and to any other relevant SPG and SPD which may contain more site or area specific advice or requirements. Existing and emerging documents at present include:-

- *Urban Design Guide (SPD)*
- *Residential Design Guide (SPD)*
- *Public Realm Design Guide (SPD)*
- *Provision of Recreational Open Space (SPD)*
- *Wind Power Developments (SPG)*

- 6.26 The Local Development Framework will ultimately replace the UDP with a series of new Development Plan Documents (DPD). Many of the policies in the UDP will be saved and remain relevant, some unchanged or with only minor alterations and incorporated into new Development Plan Documents. Others will remain relevant until they are superceded by future DPDs or deleted if they become out of date or redundant due to new government policy. The primary policies relating to biodiversity and development included in this document will form part of the framework of saved policies to be incorporated into the LDF. This SPD will continue to be relevant to planning policy and decision making in support of the emerging LDF and its Development Plan Documents.

7 Biodiversity and Development Proposals

- 7.1 The policy framework for development as referenced in this SPD sets out a body of policy guidance to assist the preparation of sustainable development proposals and ensure their rigorous assessment in terms of the impacts, both positive and negative that development could have on the natural environment. Activity in our towns and cities and in the countryside places demands on the natural environment and without proper consideration in decision making new developments can result in the damage or loss of habitats both temporary and permanent. It is important to ensure that biodiversity is properly considered at all stages of the planning and development process i.e.

- **Site Selection:** understanding the site and its biodiversity and landscape context. This may involve the consideration of alternative sites or determining whether parts of the site require particular protection or design solutions ;
- **Design:** ensuring that good design conserves and provides opportunities for enhancing biodiversity where possible and maximising its environmental functionality e.g. as a habitat or wildlife corridor, enabling public access or for flood risk management. Where there is unavoidable loss or damage, incorporating appropriate mitigation and if required, compensation measures;
- **Construction:** using good construction practices to minimise disturbance, damage and loss; and
- **Future use:** ensuring that appropriate consideration has been given to safeguarding biodiversity interests both on and off site in the future use and management of development.

- 7.2 The process is substantially assisted by full and early pre-application discussion with the local planning authority who can provide advice about potential biodiversity issues and signpost sources of further advice and assistance. This is strongly recommended in all cases before any detailed design process is commissioned or undertaken and can avoid unnecessary delay or problems later in the planning process. A constructive and early dialogue can help to ensure that legal requirements e.g. in respect of European protected sites and species are understood and that other potential biodiversity constraints and opportunities are discussed at a point in the development process where site survey, design and construction practice may be most usefully informed.
- 7.3 The following guidelines are intended to inform developers and others with an interest in development proposals and their impact on biodiversity. They are not prescriptive but intended to indicate good practice in ensuring a rigorous and robust consideration of biodiversity.

Site Survey and Assessment –Pre-application Information

- 7.4 It is essential to know what the existing biodiversity interest of a proposed development site is before considering design or construction proposals. It should not be assumed that a site has no biodiversity interest for example, because it consists of buildings or vacant land. All land and buildings potentially have biodiversity interest and reasonable steps should be taken to ensure it is taken into proper account in the development process for example vacant brownfield, underused or derelict sites may have established natural re-vegetation providing habitat interest and old buildings may provide a habitat for protected species such as bats.
- 7.5 It is also important to be aware of the impact that development, whether through design, construction or future use, could have on surrounding areas and whether there are biodiversity benefits which could be achieved through for example landscape buffers or linking with adjacent habitats.
- 7.6 An early visual and map based appraisal should identify basic site features such as trees, hedges, water or wetland features, wildflowers or grassland. Knowledge gained from existing survey data and site records, specific site surveys and local records and anecdotal discussion notes will build a more detailed picture of the biodiversity interest of a site to inform next steps which may include specific early consultations or legal requirements which need to be adhered to. Site surveys must be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced ecologists and in the case of surveying for protected species, hold additional qualifications or a license where required. An appropriate front loaded site survey process can save lengthy negotiation or delay later in the process.
- 7.7 The scope and detail of a survey will vary depending on the type and scale of development and its specific location but each planning application should include a sufficiently detailed ecological statement setting out the ecological impacts of a proposal to accompany a planning application. Early discussion with the local planning authority will assist in determining how to proceed in each case.
- 7.8 An ecological survey or statement should include full details of any site survey carried out, the surveyors and their qualifications, methodology used (including reference to survey dates, times and weather conditions), existing data sources referred to and consultations carried out. The survey or statement should establish baseline data and include appropriate site assessment which should include as necessary:-
- Existing land uses (including buildings) and the landscape characteristics and features of the site (e.g. topography, vegetation, water features) and its surroundings using existing data and specific site surveys where required;
 - Details of any ecological or landscape designations or incidence of priority species or habitats which apply to the site and its surroundings (including reference to relevant European, UK, and Greater Manchester designations and priorities);
 - The confirmed or likely presence of protected species;

- The likely impact of development proposals (both direct and indirect and including construction and usage) and proposed mitigation measures where required;
- Details of proposed compensatory measures for residual impacts where mitigation cannot safeguard conservation or reinstatement of ecological interest damaged or lost;
- Details of any specific ecological enhancements proposed;
- An overall assessment of the impact of development with recommended actions to ensure the appropriate protection of biodiversity interests in the development process.

Key considerations for ensuring adequate site survey and assessment are:-

Ensure all available existing site data is reviewed where available.

Discuss available information and key contacts with the local planning authority and Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. There may be a charge for some information and protected species records may be sensitive and not directly available to developers or their representatives.

Discuss site survey requirements with the local planning authority prior to engaging in detailed design activity.

Early discussion may highlight specific site survey requirements and historic site issues which are relevant to developing proposals and which will be required to accompany a planning application. For larger proposals or those where it is a specific statutory requirement under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations this may form a part of an Environmental Statement. There may also be specific processes that need to be followed where there are protected species issues to address. More detailed survey advice or support may be required from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit or in some cases, regionally based agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Use suitably experienced and qualified ecological surveyors where required

Ensure that ecological surveys are carried out by appropriately qualified and experienced specialists and using recognised good practice methods. This is particularly important for protected species surveys where specially licensed surveyors may be needed. Advice about suitably qualified surveyors is available through Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.

Surveys should be relevant to the proposal and include off site impacts where appropriate.

Understanding the site, its features and its setting is important to ensure that a survey takes into account all potential development impacts both on and off site e.g. through disturbance, drainage, severing wildlife corridors, barriers to flight or movement etc. The survey should also highlight potential for enhancement, mitigation and compensation measures which requires a robust knowledge of on site and adjacent species and habitat interest. It is important to use a surveyor with appropriate experience and to ensure that the scope of the survey is agreed with the local planning authority.

Where surveys are required ensure that sufficient time to allow for seasonal constraints is built into the planning process.

Seasonal constraints can apply to ecological surveys for specific species and habitats. This may be due to factors such as over-wintering, breeding, hibernation, presence of vegetation etc. It is important to be aware of any constraints to allow a suitable lead in time for survey requirements and to carry out survey tasks at appropriate times. An illustrative chart is included as Appendix 5two. Further advice is available from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit where required.

Maintaining and Enhancing Biodiversity

- 7.9 The companion guide to PPS9 refers to the good practice principle of ‘no net loss’ of biodiversity and to aim for a ‘net gain’ in biodiversity resources as a result of a development proposal. Development should seek to avoid harm to biodiversity recognising that established biodiversity in many cases may be difficult or practically impossible in some cases e.g. ancient woodland, to recreate. A rigorous approach to site selection, site analysis, design and an awareness of the landscape context for a site are essential to ensure that biodiversity interests are fully and appropriately considered and catered for in proposals and their implementation.

- 7.10 Site design should be informed by current good practice and based on a series of key principles which reflect the objectives of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan:-

- Conserve greenspaces, water spaces and natural features within development and wherever possible incorporating new wildlife habitat, natural features landscaping and built features which attract wildlife
- Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity to help achieve targets in national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans
- Contributing to local distinctiveness i.e. locally characteristic ecosystems and landscape character
- Protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors and stepping stones
- Improving quality of life through public access to and enjoyment of the natural environment for health, well being and education
- Enhancing environmental management e.g. cooling and shading, flood risk management, improving water quality, pollution control.

- 7.11 These principles support the Green Infrastructure approach as defined in draft Regional Spatial Strategy where the multi functional benefits of a network of open spaces at all spatial scales from urban centres through to the open countryside are brought together as a strategic spatial concept supporting environmental management (e.g. flood risk management) and climate change adaptation, access to green spaces, species and habitat conservation and networks and improved amenity, image and quality of life for communities.
- 7.12 Rochdale MBC is currently producing a Green Infrastructure Strategy (expected Summer 2008) which will provide assistance in targeting green space need and opportunity including potential species and habitat actions to benefit specific geographical areas. Within the Green Infrastructure Strategy, a Local Biodiversity Action Statement will identify a series of actions to be encouraged to help achieve targets in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan. Local open space assessments, species and habitat records, BAP targets and spatial habitat distributions will be used to inform a local ecological framework which will be a part of a comprehensive Greater Manchester Ecological Framework being produced by Greater Manchester Ecological Unit with the University of Salford. As these documents are completed and as required, updated, they will be made available as a resource for prospective developers to inform the design process through the Council's website and published documents as appropriate.

Design and Development Principles for Biodiversity

- 7.13 It is not the purpose of this document to provide comprehensive and prescriptive design advice to apply to specific types of development. Although most development proposals will have some impact on biodiversity, the scale, type and location of each development proposal, its construction, operation and supporting infrastructure will create a specific series of design issues and they should be dealt with on a case by case basis, informed by early pre-application discussions and site assessment. Rochdale district includes a diverse range of landscapes and habitats including extensive moorlands and upland farmland, wooded river valleys and a complex urban

area with a series of habitats in a mosaic of corridors and stepping stones derived from natural features and its industrial past and it is not possible to give detailed advice for each specific habitat or landscape area in this document - that is properly the role of good pre-application discussions and supporting consultations and publications.

- 7.14 Sources of web based and published good practice and contact details for further specialist advice and assistance are included at the end of this document. Good design for all types and scales of development should be based on a robust analysis of the site and its landscape and land use context. Development can have a range of impacts on habitats and species through effects on breeding, resting and feeding areas, flight paths or terrestrial species travel routes. This can include the effects of changes to conditions such as lighting, drainage, noise and other pollution, loss or change of vegetation, management regimes e.g. mowing or use of pesticides, public access and so on which can sometimes extend far beyond the development site. Equally, proposals can bring positive benefits for species and habitats by protecting, extending, enhancing, re-creating or re-introducing habitat and species interest.
- 7.15 Understanding the wide range of functions that vegetation can have is also important for example the role of blanket peat or trees as a carbon sink, pollution control, shelter, cooling and shading. Ecological features can be linked to the design of many functional greenspaces or land uses such as recreational open spaces, flood defence measures, amenity landscaping and road verges, sustainable drainage systems, shading and shelter for example.
- 7.16 Development should not reduce the capacity of sites or areas to support the incidence, distribution and diversity of species and habitats and should not change key ecological processes through their construction, future operation or future restoration to open space (e.g. minerals and waste disposal sites, wind farms).
- 7.17 The following principles should be taken into account when preparing development proposals and will help to inform early discussions and the process of identifying their potential impact on biodiversity both adverse and positive:-

Ensure appropriate timing of activities

- Site assessment and surveys should be carried out at appropriate times of the year to enable the full range of impacts to be evaluated;
- Construction should avoid key seasonal constraints such as the bird nesting season.

Ensure sensitive construction practices

- Ensure appropriate safeguarding of habitat interests both on and off site through appropriate site management measures such as pollution control (noise, air, light, run-off, waste materials etc), site traffic management, restricting contractor and public access to sensitive areas, hours of operation, building techniques used etc;
- Carry out early discussions with the local planning authority and other consultees as required to agree an acceptable construction method statement, ensure good practice and that special requirements (e.g. statutory procedures for sites affecting European Protected Species) are understood and complied with;
- For larger or more complex or sensitive proposals an ecologist may be necessary to support and advise the Clerk of Works in respect of construction methods and practice and ensuring appropriate supervision of activities to ensure compliance with legal requirements or good practice.

Consider the impact of proposals on protected sites and species

- avoid development of key sites and locations within them;
- ensure the impact of proposals on adjacent protected sites and species is fully assessed and appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures identified;
- seek early advice and carry out protected species surveys where occurrence is confirmed or likely (including derelict or vacant land and buildings);
- ensure compliance with all legal and other requirements for statutorily protected sites and species;
- identify appropriate measures wherever possible to enhance protected sites and extend favourable conditions for protected species on land and in buildings e.g. through landscaping or bat boxes, cleaning and monitoring roof spaces and bat/bird boxes, provisions to safeguard species movement e.g. underpasses or other road crossings.

Design should be based on a clear understanding and recognition of existing landscape character and open space assets and networks.

- produce a masterplan or site framework for green and water spaces to highlight the interface between development and landscape features and functions including those in adjacent areas e.g. drainage patterns;
- incorporate natural features of sites (including revegetated 'derelict' features e.g. disused railway lines or sparsely vegetated areas which may for example have been colonised by butterflies) into proposals wherever possible and appropriate;
- ensure that established landscape character and locally distinctive flora and fauna informs design of new, modified and reclaimed open spaces and the incorporation and extension of natural features or the creation/re-creation of habitats;

- identify if there are opportunities to protect and extend habitat links with adjacent areas to minimise habitat fragmentation and conserve and extend wildlife corridors, mosaics and stepping stones;
- use locally native species in planting schemes;
- ensure that invasive plants are appropriately eradicated and not inadvertently spread through proposals for landscaping or future management;
- ensure that the impact of maturing landscaping features is understood i.e. whether it will help to safeguard existing habitat interests or will result in its loss over time e.g. through tree growth and its impact on light and ground flora or drainage.

Incorporate biodiversity into flood risk management, sustainable urban drainage and climate change adaptation activities using natural features and landscapes

- avoid development in the natural flood plain of rivers where possible;
- where possible, remove or 'skylight' i.e. open up culverts;
- replace or remove inappropriately sized or redundant features such as bridges and weirs;
- incorporate and combine landscape and biodiversity conservation and enhancement measures with flood risk management (storage and attenuation) requirements where possible;
- use sustainable urban drainage systems to enhance site drainage and water quality management including features such as swales, drainage ditches, balancing pools to conserve, enhance or reintroduce wetland habitats;
- Identify other aquatic improvements that may be incorporated into the development including fish passes and water management activities to enhance aquatic biodiversity.

Consider the biodiversity opportunities of buildings and associated public and private spaces

- Ensure that buildings do not affect habitats through shading or other impacts caused the scale and proximity of built structures;
- Ensure that proposed landscape elements are practically suited to their location and will not cause long term management problems such as public safety, reduced highway visibility or damage to buildings, pavements or services;
- Consider where landscape buffers or changes to the orientation and location of buildings, operations and access routes can reduce the impacts of pollution such as noise or air pollution from vehicle movements or parking;
- Consider green and brown (i.e. rock and soil rather than plant material) roof systems, climbing plants on unused walls and other greening treatments of 'hard' spaces such as terraces, decks and balconies in both large and small buildings (including shelters) for their contribution to the environmental management of buildings (rainwater management, cooling, shading and insulation etc) and the value they can bring for birds and insects;
- Identify opportunities for providing roof space habitats for species such as swift, swallow and bats;

- Consider the effects of artificial lighting and spot flood lighting which can affect bats and night feeding birds;
- Consider the role of trees in developments which can provide amenity, shelter, natural cooling for buildings and public spaces and local biodiversity benefits;
- Introduce biodiversity interest through unmown grass verges, grass and wildflower mixes for seasonal colour and wildlife on amenity and recreational open spaces including playing fields;
- Use street trees where appropriate to define spaces and create and connect wildlife corridors;
- Ensure peat alternatives are used in landscaping schemes;
- Avoid the use of chemicals where rough grassland or wildflowers e.g. meadows or verges is to be encouraged;
- Ensure that landscaping features selected will be allowed to mature without affecting or being affected by neighbouring development;
- Retain existing natural features such as trees, hedges, water bodies and wet areas in gardens where possible to provide amenity for residents and to help retain local wildlife corridors and stepping stones;
- Promote opportunities for wildlife in garden spaces through show home gardens and promotional activities.

Include appropriate public access to natural greenspace for quiet enjoyment, recreation and education

- identify opportunities to provide access to natural greenspace within 300m of where people live to help deliver Natural England objectives for green infrastructure supporting improved quality of life, health and well-being;
- use greenways to provide multi-functional wildlife corridors and public access routes within developments and to adjoining open spaces or countryside;
- ensure that access provided does not lead to habitat damage or species disturbance and does not encourage anti-social behaviour or unlawful vehicular or other public use of land e.g. fly tipping which can affect biodiversity and its public enjoyment;
- consider including communal natural greenspaces within developments which can provide enjoyment of biodiversity in residential, commercial or employment developments;
- Identify opportunities for community, schools or workforce involvement in site design, planting or ongoing management to encourage awareness vigilance and ownership.

Management and Monitoring

The effective conservation of existing biodiversity and the successful incorporation of new biodiversity resources into both the development and the wider local environment requires a commitment to appropriate management from either the developer or other agent such as the local council or voluntary sector bodies. Maintenance of biodiversity interests need not be an expensive or onerous task but does need to be carried out taking account of specific issues such as particular species or habitats, seasonal tasks, public access to the site, use of pesticides, effects of adjacent land management and so on. Where biodiversity features are a part of private spaces such as gardens, this needs to be carefully considered.

For larger projects, sites with public open space or where there are complex issues such as the presence of protected species or priority habitats, a management plan should be prepared and will usually be required by the local planning authority. Plans should specify required management tasks and details of how and when they should be carried out with any specific expertise required. They should be adequately resourced with clear responsibilities for future actions and capable of being implemented in the longer term where there is a new owner or landscape management arrangements may be changed.

The management plan should also include provisions for suitable ongoing monitoring to ensure that any problems in the establishment of biodiversity features can be highlighted and the effects of future land use (including that on adjacent land) or the success of mitigation measures can be assessed and remedial action taken if needed.

Case studies and illustrations to follow in final document – moorland/upland farmland, urban/urban edge examples

Development Control

7.18 The development control process is critical in ensuring that biodiversity is adequately protected and encouraged in accordance with the requirements of PPS9.

7.19 PPS9 advocates good practice for biodiversity as:

- A rigorous and effective decision making process based on information, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and the scope for new benefits;
- Ensuring that planning applications are submitted with adequate information;
- Securing necessary measures to protect, enhance, mitigate and compensate through planning conditions and obligations;
- Effective planning enforcement where required;
- Identifying ways to incorporate biodiversity into the design of new development.

7.20 The Royal Town Planning Institute have published a five point approach to planning decisions for biodiversity included in the companion guide to PPS9. The approach is designed to ensure that planning decisions provide a framework for safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity based on adequate details of the proposal, its impact and how it can be managed and any additional biodiversity benefits which can be secured.

The RTPI approach can be summarised as:-

Adequacy of information

- Is there sufficient information about the site's biodiversity and the potential effect of development?
- Is relevant expertise available to advise on the significance of effects?

Avoiding adverse effects

- Have all adverse effects on wildlife species and habitats been avoided where possible?

Effective mitigation

- Can unavoidable adverse effects be minimised by mitigation measures secured through the use of planning conditions or obligations?

Compensation

- Can any residual effects after mitigation be compensated by additional measures to offset harm? Can they be secured by planning conditions or obligations?

Incorporating new benefits

- Where there would be no significant harm to wildlife species or habitats, can new biodiversity benefits be incorporated into proposals and guaranteed through planning obligations?

This general process should take account of statutory requirements that may apply to a proposal such as those required by the EIA regulations or the Habitat regulations in respect of protected sites or species.

Development process illustration to follow in final document.

8 Implementing Biodiversity

Planning conditions and obligations

- 8.1 The principal means of implementing biodiversity through development proposals is through the granting of planning permission. In some cases it may be necessary to secure specific biodiversity measures through development through conditions attached to a planning permission or through a planning obligation.
- 8.2 Conditions can restrict or regulate works and include specific requirements to ensure that adverse impacts are avoided, mitigated or reduced or that specific compensation or enhancement measures are carried out. In some cases, the actions necessary to address biodiversity issues may be secured through a section 106 planning obligation for example where enhancement or mitigation will take place outside of the development site or where financial provisions for measures or ongoing management arrangements are involved. The scope and terms of conditions and any obligations should be informed by early discussion and negotiation which can reduce delays later in the planning process.
- 8.3 Where necessary, the Council has a range of enforcement powers to ensure compliance with planning conditions or obligations. In addition, other bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency may use powers available to them under legislation where their statutory interests are not complied with.

Local Regeneration Initiatives

- 8.4 In addition to individual planning permissions sought by developers, development proposals may form a part of a broader suite of regeneration proposals contained in area based masterplans and strategies. In Rochdale district these currently include:
- *Housing Market Renewal Area masterplans and regeneration strategies (various)*
 - *Rochdale Canal Corridor regeneration strategy (2003)*
 - *Heywood Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN) strategy*
 - *Township Plans*

There are also smaller area based regeneration and redevelopment areas many of which are identified in the UDP as 'Areas of Opportunity' for physical regeneration, often focusing on discrete older industrial areas or derelict and vacant land and buildings.

- 8.5 The Council works in partnership with a range of bodies including Rochdale Development Agency, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, Greater Manchester Police, Primary Care Trust and other local strategic partner agencies and externally with North West Development Agency, Forestry Commission, Natural England and others. The Borough Masterplan, 'Pride of Place' Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement include strong objectives

and targets for access to natural greenspace, improved woodland management and biodiversity enhancement.

- 8.6 In addition there are sub regional strategies and programmes for land reclamation such as the Greater Manchester Derelict Land Strategy (2002) which is being delivered in part through programmes such as the Forestry Commission's Newlands programme. Sub regional planning and economic development strategies and programmes are also increasingly referring to the role of the natural economy and essential green infrastructure as both a response to climate change and as a part of the Greater Manchester City Region's social and economic offer.
- 8.7 Local regeneration strategies, areas of opportunity and associated masterplanning and proposals have the potential to significantly affect biodiversity resources, especially in the older urban neighbourhoods and the urban edges of the district. There is an opportunity for proactive measures to facilitate a more sustainable approach to regeneration through creative planning for biodiversity as a part of masterplanning and detailed design processes for the location, function and design of green infrastructure based on existing, enhanced and new resources. The principles and guidance contained in this SPD are relevant to regeneration and development activity proposed to implement such strategies and their objectives for protecting and enhancing green infrastructure and open spaces. Proposals must conform with relevant policies contained in the UDP and other relevant planning policies and guidance which this SPD supports.
- 8.8 In addition other partnership action plans and strategies can inform planning for biodiversity, providing advice, ideas and proposals for green infrastructure enhancement and management which could be supported through or incorporated in development proposals. These include:-

Pennine Edge Forest (PEF) Action Plan

- 8.9 PEF is a strategic community forestry partnership for eastern Greater Manchester including the districts of Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport and Tameside. The partnership seeks to deliver the objectives of the Regional Forestry Framework for the North West and support local regeneration and green infrastructure projects and programmes through project advice, piloting good practice and delivery of schemes. PEF is actively working to improve access to natural greenspace and enhance the biodiversity value through new woodland planting, woodland management, street and community greening to improve the quality of life and create sustainable urban and rural landscapes. Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers work closely with PEF to help engage with and involve local community interests and support local training initiatives.

Pennine Prospects

- 8.10 Pennine Prospects is the Rural Regeneration Company for the South Pennines promoting social, economic and environmental regeneration and sustainable environmental management for the core South Pennine uplands and its communities with strategic partners including Natural England, Forestry Commission, and RSPB. The area includes the extensive South Pennine Moors Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation at its

core. The Heritage Strategy for the Southern Pennines includes a range of objectives for biodiversity to support the conservation and enhancement of the SPA/SAC and other important biodiversity across the area such as clough woodland, peatland and upland farmscapes. An Integrated Management Strategy and Conservation Action Programme (IMSACAP) has previously been produced to highlight pressures and opportunities for biodiversity in the SPA/SAC and the wider uplands and Pennine Prospects is currently engaged in developing strategic partnership working and funding bids to support upland conservation and access to natural greenspace.

Local Land Management

- 8.11 The Council can also play an active role in planning for biodiversity through its own land management activities which includes three Local Nature Reserves and extensive greenspaces in its ownership throughout the district including land within the river valley and greenspace corridor network. There may be opportunities for new development proposals to work with the Council to improve the quality or connectivity of natural greenspace sites and networks through good design and active partnership.
- 8.12 Key objectives and activities to be promoted from these and other partnership activities and how they help to deliver the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan will be brought together in the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy to be published in 2008.

In final document:

Chapter 9: Further advice/assistance

Appendices

Appendix 1

Natura 2000 Sites in Rochdale MBC.

Appendix 2

Locally Designated Sites in Rochdale MBC

Appendix 3

Priority Species in Rochdale MBC (attached)

Appendix 4

Priority Species and Habitats Distribution in Rochdale MBC

Appendix 5

Key Dates for Site Survey (attached)

Appendix 6

Priority Areas for Ecological Framework Enhancement in Rochdale

Appendix 7

Primary UDP policies

References/Glossary – to follow

Appendix 3

Priority Species in Rochdale MBC

In Rochdale the relevant species of high conservation concern with recent specific records or likely to be found are:

- Water vole
- Brown hare
- Pipistrelle
- Skylark
- Linnet
- Reed bunting
- Spotted flycatcher
- Tree sparrow
- Grey partridge
- Bullfinch
- Song thrush
- Great crested newt
- Floating water plantain
- Grasswack pondweed

Other UK species of conservation concern include:

- Hedgehog
- Mountain Hare
- Badger
- Stoat
- Daubenton's Bat
- Whiskered Bat
- Noctule
- Brown long-eared bat
- Common Shrew
- Pigmy Shrew
- Common Toad
- Common Frog
- Palmate Newt
- Smooth Newt
- Bullhead
- Lymnaea glabra (mud snail)
- Bluebell
- Western gorse
- White clawed crayfish

Other significant species found or likely to be found in Rochdale include:

- Kingfisher
- Dunlin
- Twite
- Siskin
- Little-ringed plover

- Merlin
- Peregrine
- Hobby
- Water rail
- Shelduck
- Barn owl
- Lapwing
- Common sandpiper
- Stictorectes lepidus (water beetle)
- Cheilosia soror (hoverfly)
- Dark green fritillary
- Small heath
- White - letter hairstreak
- Autumn Crocus
- Rusty-backed fern
- Petty whin
- Marsh gentian
- Dwarf mallow
- Fringed water lily
- American pondweed
- Deer grass

It should be noted that the above list is indicative and based on best available current information from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. Monitoring and recording of species is resource intensive and cannot be comprehensive at any one time. Individual ecological surveys will provide a finer grain of detail which may identify other protected or priority species.

Appendix 5

Key Dates for Site Survey

The following charts outline the optimal survey time for some of the more common ecological surveys. They are indicative, and surveys should always be discussed with the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit or Rochdale Council prior to commencing the survey.

Habitats

| Habitat | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| River, canals, ponds | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Grassland | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reedbeds and swamp | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moorland | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Woodland and scrub | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hedgerows | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Species

| Species | | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---------------------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Birds | Breeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Wintering | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reptiles | Breeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Basking | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Crested Newts | Breeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Habitat | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Badgers | Setts | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Habitat | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Water Vole | Presence | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Habitat | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Crayfish | | | | | | | | | | | | | |