

CHAPTER 5

NATURE AND LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

- 5.1 Public awareness of conservation has been heightened by global environmental issues and by concern for the local environment. Local Authorities are required by Section 11 of the Countryside Act 1968 to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside - including conservation of flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, and extends to urban as well as rural areas.
- 5.2 More recently the importance of wildlife was stressed by Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 entitled "Nature Conservation". This states that it is an essential task of local authorities to ensure effective conservation of wildlife and natural features as an important element of a clean and healthy natural environment while making adequate provision for development and economic growth.

CORE POLICY NL.1 THE CITY COUNCIL WILL SUPPORT NATURE AND LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION IN GLOUCESTER.

- 5.3 The Planning Policy Guidance Note also recognises that our natural heritage is not confined to the various statutorily designated sites. The City Council will give added protection to valued natural areas and landscape features by designating, within the Local Plan, Nature Conservation Areas and Landscape Conservation Areas respectively.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICY

NL.1(a) LANDSCAPE AND NATURE CONSERVATION AREAS AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP ARE DESIGNATED BY THE CITY COUNCIL TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE VALUABLE LANDSCAPE AND WILDLIFE FEATURES RESPECTIVELY.

Nature Conservation

- 5.4 Within the City there are a variety of sites which already have some protection. Robinswood Hill is a Country Park and Robinswood Quarry and Hucclecote Meadows are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Hay Meadow north of the Hucclecote Site of Special Scientific Interest and part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest are designated as a Local Nature Reserve. In addition, the Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation has an agreement with the City Council to manage the Over Ponds area.
- 5.5 The City Council has produced a Nature Conservation Strategy which will provide a framework for the protection, enhancement and management of the City's wildlife resource. This Strategy identifies sites within the City that have been found to possess significant natural history value. The sites are shown on Plan 13 and the Proposals Map. These sites are graded A, B, C or D to reflect the variations in natural history importance between the sites. While it is considered necessary that these sites are actively conserved it is recognised that due to their differing value, relative to each other, not all sites would warrant the same level of protection; accordingly two tiers of site protection policy are provided, with a more stringent policy for A and B sites than for C and D sites. However, the natural history resource is not confined to designated sites. The background features of the natural landscape fabric (including general greenspace, road verges and waterways) are also important since they often provide the corridors and links which facilitate the movement of wildlife between urban sites and to and from the wider countryside. The City Council will safeguard the key habitats in the City through seeking Local Nature Reserve Designation and, where appropriate, developing sites through habitat creation into areas which could be designated as Local Nature Reserves to promote wildlife conservation and facilitate environmental education for all the City's inhabitants. Even within new developments significant wildlife conservation measures can be implemented and may involve the retention of established natural features and provision of facilities to encourage mammal, amphibian and bird populations. The City Council will seek to promote nature conservation through the policies and guidance provided in the City Nature Conservation Strategy. This Strategy gives further advice regarding appropriate management and enhancement of the City's wildlife resource.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

NL.1(b) DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHICH WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, ON A SSSI UNLESS THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROPOSAL OUTWEIGHS THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE SITE. WHERE A PROPOSAL IS OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO BE PERMITTED THE CITY COUNCIL WILL EXPECT THAT MEASURES WILL BE INCORPORATED TO MINIMISE AND MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST OF THE SITE AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, ON THE SITE'S FUNCTION AS A CORRIDOR TO OTHER WILDLIFE AREAS.

NL.1(c) DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHICH WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, ON A LOCAL NATURE RESERVE OR OTHER NATURE CONSERVATION AREAS GRADED A OR B, UNLESS THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROPOSAL OUTWEIGHS THE LOCAL INTEREST OF THE SITE. WHERE A PROPOSAL IS OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO BE PERMITTED THE CITY COUNCIL WILL EXPECT THAT MEASURES WILL BE INCORPORATED TO MINIMISE AND MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST OF THE SITE AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, ON THE SITE'S FUNCTION AS A CORRIDOR TO OTHER WILDLIFE AREAS.

NL.1(d) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD AFFECT, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, GRADE C AND D SITES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- (A) PROPOSALS ARE SITED AND DESIGNED TO CONSERVE THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST, OR**
- (B) APPROPRIATE MITIGATORY WORKS ARE UNDERTAKEN SO AS TO REDRESS THE LOSS OF IMPORTANT FEATURES ARISING FROM DEVELOPMENT. MITIGATORY WORKS MUST BE SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN THE LEVEL OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST OF THE SITE, OR**
- (C) THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROPOSAL OUTWEIGHS THE LOCAL INTEREST OF THE SITE.**

WHERE A PROPOSAL IS OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO BE PERMITTED THE CITY COUNCIL WILL EXPECT THAT MEASURES WILL BE INCORPORATED TO MINIMISE AND MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST OF THE SITE AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, ON THE SITE'S FUNCTION AS A CORRIDOR TO OTHER WILDLIFE AREAS.

- 5.6 Although information has been gathered for designated Nature Conservation Areas, the value of such areas may change with time and, areas of natural history importance, as yet unknown, may become subject to development proposals. The City Council will therefore determine whether an application should be accompanied by an appraisal or full survey of natural history interest, along with details of the measures to ameliorate the impact of development on wildlife. This will ensure that conservation aspects are given full consideration and that any necessary conditions regarding the siting and treatment of development, are included to minimise the impact on wildlife and physical features.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

NL.1(e) APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT LIKELY TO AFFECT SITES OF KNOWN OR POTENTIAL NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY APPROPRIATE SURVEY INFORMATION ON FLORA AND FAUNA AND ON THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON WILDLIFE. THIS INFORMATION WILL BE A MATERIAL CONSIDERATION WHEN DETERMINING THE APPLICATION.

NL.1(f) WHERE AREAS OF NATURAL HISTORY VALUE ARE IDENTIFIED, THE SITING AND TREATMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SHALL BE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO MINIMISE AND MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON WILDLIFE AND PHYSICAL FEATURES.

Landscape

- 5.7 The Riverside Meadows and Robinswood Hill are recognised landscape features in the City. The approved Structure Plan designates Robinswood Hill a special landscape area and states that land adjacent to the River Severn has both visual and scientific value and its unique open riparian landscape is particularly sensitive to the effects of development. Other areas of landscape value are also worthy of protection and the City Council will designate such areas Landscape Conservation Areas. These sites have been designated not only for any inherent landscape value they may possess, but also for their functional role in providing green space within a densely built up area and preventing the coalescence of adjoining urban areas. The open fields to the west and south of Hempsted have been designated a Landscape Conservation Area. The village of Hempsted is situated on raised land above the River Severn flood plain. The slopes below Hempsted are a significant topographical feature and form an effective edge of settlement at this point. The Landscape Conservation Area aims to protect these slopes and surrounding flood plain from development which would materially affect the character of the area. It will avoid continuous development from Quedgeley to Hempsted Lane and protect the views from the village across the Severn Vale and along what will become an important approach to the City centre. The open fields in the centre of Hempsted are designated because of the important contribution they make to the special character of the village. Protection is also given to the views out from the village across the City to Robinswood Hill and the Cotswold escarpment. The southern part of the Coney Hill Hospital site is an important landscape feature in the now largely developed eastern part of the City. It is a prominent site from Robinswood Hill and an important and attractive feature in an otherwise unbroken urban setting. Several other designations focus around river courses which not only give separation between built up areas but help provide recreational and wildlife corridors within the City. The Landscape Conservation Areas are shown on Plan 14.
- 5.8 The land between the existing urban area and The Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is designated in the Structure Plan as a Special Landscape Area.

Structure Plan General Policy L.5 states:

“PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE PROTECTION OF LANDSCAPE IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY. SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE PROTECTION OF THE LANDSCAPE WILL ALSO BE GIVEN IN SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS AND AREAS SENSITIVE TO DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES. THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS ARE LOCATED AS FOLLOWS:-

...BETWEEN THE GLOUCESTER URBAN AREA AND THE COTSWOLDS, INCLUDING ROBINSWOOD HILL.”

This policy was included to ensure the continuity of open countryside between the existing urban area of Gloucester and the Cotswold A.O.N.B.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICY

NL.1(g) WITHIN AREAS DESIGNATED AS LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AREAS DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHICH WOULD DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THOSE AREAS. APPROPRIATE OPEN-AIR RECREATIONAL USES WHICH RESPECT THE INDIVIDUAL APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER OF THESE AREAS WILL BE PERMITTED, AND SMALL-SCALE BUILDINGS WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO SUPPORT SUCH RECREATIONAL USE WILL ALSO BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT THEY ARE APPROPRIATELY LOCATED, DESIGNED AND LANDSCAPED.

Co-ordination

- 5.9 In addition to the City Council's responsibilities in managing many of the recreational facilities detailed in chapter 4, it also provides a large input into a variety of environmental issues. Environmental improvements, for example, are increasingly being promoted in the Inner Area and the rest of Gloucester. The City centre is also benefiting from a wide variety of "hard" landscaping improvements (see the Built Environment chapter) and much is being done to ensure the protection of Gloucester's nature and landscape assets. The Nature Conservation Strategy is another important part of the Council's policies to protect the best of the natural environment.
- 5.10 Through the Nature Conservation Strategy and the Green Up Gloucester rolling programme for environmental works, the City Council will continue to support and direct the implementation of a wide range of environmental initiatives, encompassing landscaping and conservation projects. The realisation of significant environmental improvements will be sought through developing a co-ordinated partnership involving land/property owners, residents, businesses, the City Council and other public agencies.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICY

NL.1(h) THE CITY COUNCIL WILL CO-ORDINATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS THROUGHOUT GLOUCESTER.

- 5.11 The importance the City Council attaches to the riverside and adjacent rural area is reflected in its encouragement of greater public use through circular walks (Policy LR.3(b)). These areas need protection, enhancement and effective management if the most is to be made of these important wildlife and recreational resources. This will involve the co-ordination of a wide ranging variety of existing interests in the river, the riverside and the canalside, including landowners, occupiers, users, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and other interests as appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICY

NL.1(i) THE CITY COUNCIL WILL CO-ORDINATE THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, VISUAL UPGRADING AND PROTECTION OF GLOUCESTER'S RIVERSIDE AND RIVERSIDE MEADOWS.