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Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



**Positive effects for
Biodiversity**

**Challenges and
Opportunities on a
typical Aberdeenshire
Housing Site**





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Introduction

- Background – current Policy and Planning Advice
- Example of an outline application for standard residential development
- Present challenges and opportunities in delivering biodiversity enhancement
- Aberdeenshire Council revised Planning Advice – some thoughts





Policy Background – Current

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SPP 2020 – seek benefits for biodiversity from new development *where possible*

ALDP Policy 2017

- enhancement of biodiversity in proportion to scale of development
- requirement for 4% Open Space in new residential developments

Planning Advice 2015:
Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in new development - links to a range of options for different scales of development.

PLANNING ADVICE: NUMBER 5/2015 opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in new development

This guidance details actions that could be taken to enhance biodiversity as part of development. It is designed to give a range of suggestions from small scale to those suitable for major applications.

Paragraph 194 of Scottish Planning Policy advises that 'planning authorities should seek benefits for biodiversity from new development'. This aspiration is incorporated into supplementary guidance in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan stating that the 'protection and enhancement of biodiversity should be considered for all types of development, from a housing scheme to altering or extending an existing building'. In all applications biodiversity enhancement opportunities should be considered and included as part of the plan.

All development is likely to have some impact on wild plants and animals with even house extensions resulting in loss of garden ground, which may support insects and birds. The primary aim should be to protect any wildlife habitats or features that are present on the site. There is also an opportunity for all development proposals to provide some enhancement to biodiversity to compensate for

losses and to lead to an overall improvement in our built environment. Using new planting to create linkages between existing areas of habitat is particularly important in a larger development.

Different scales and types of development will provide different opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Some of the suggested options will require more management to maintain their value. **Long term management and maintenance of any option must be considered and secured prior to taking on any project.** Land set aside for biodiversity enhancement will usually be counted as part of the "open space" element of any proposal.

Where possible, larger scale developments should seek to undertake projects which assist with the implementation of local biodiversity action plans for priority species and habitats. Details of these action plans can be found on the North East Scotland Biodiversity Action Plan website at: www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk



Option	Benefits	Links to advice/guidance	Notes
Larger scale development including residential and commercial			
As above plus SuDS	Creation of ponds or wetland habitats will support a variety of wetland plants and attract birds and insects. Even small areas of permanent water or wetland vegetation in detention basins can be beneficial.	See links for SuDS and Ponds and Soakaways above.	Consider reedbeds or willow filtration systems as alternatives for water treatment. Living roofs may be most appropriate to deal with surface water where space is limited.
Incorporate habitats/features within open space to create green corridors.	Retain existing wildlife habitat within the development. Links with other natural areas and the surrounding countryside are important to allow movement of wildlife along corridors. This contributes to a developments open space requirements.	www.woodlandtrust.org.uk	Link existing wildlife habitat and/or newly created green spaces with strategically placed trees, shrubs, hedges, dry stone wall or grass verge.
Habitat creation and restoration of existing habitats.	Contribute to meeting Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets for priority habitats. Creating/restoring high quality open space to enhance development. Consider wildflower grassland, native species woodland and wetland habitats. This contributes to a developments open space requirements.	www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk	Consider opportunities to re-meander canalised burns, carryout thinning of trees along watercourses, restore wetland habitat.

Development site



- Part of larger site agreed on appeal in 2009
- 2020 MCS application for 237 houses
- Largely agricultural land – main features of interest 3 trees (one veteran) and a tree belt bordering a burn on the eastern boundary.

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey included mitigation and enhancement measures. Separate Tree Survey undertaken.
- Worked with developers to secure biodiversity enhancement through the Landscaping Scheme which included improvements for pollinators. Additional measures for swifts and hedgehogs incorporated. CEMP also included biodiversity measures (e.g. INNS).



Revised Landscaping Scheme

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Mixed native species

Hedgerow and riparian mix hedging

Meadow and wet meadow planting

Native species tree planting

Improved connectivity to neighbouring sites



Species Measures



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Swift bricks



Hedgehog
highway



Issues with delivering biodiversity enhancement



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- Policy support at national and local level is helpful but needs to be very clear and preferably quantified to ensure the same high standards are applied everywhere.
- At present it is not clear how much enhancement is appropriate on any given site and who decides.
- Negotiation of acceptable amount of enhancement for every site is time consuming and leads to inconsistent delivery. Need input from experienced LA staff working with DM and developers.
- On the developers side there is a need for ecologists and landscape architects to work closely together. The Landscape Plan is generally the delivery mechanism for detailing what is delivered on the ground.
- Getting a good scheme on paper is only the start - resources needed to monitor and enforce.
- Ongoing maintenance - need to ensure information is passed on to the management company.



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Future Policy for biodiversity enhancement in Aberdeenshire Council....

- Aberdeenshire has a new Local Development Plan 2022 (currently with Reporter)
- Revising Planning Advice including one on 'Securing Positive Effects for Biodiversity'



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