

SWDP 22: Biodiversity and Geodiversity



- A. Development which would compromise the favourable condition of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)⁽⁴⁷⁾ or other international designations or the favourable conservation status of European or nationally protected⁽⁴⁸⁾ species or habitats will not be permitted.**
- B. Development likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)⁽⁴⁹⁾ will not be permitted, except where the benefits of the development at that site clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSIs.**
- C. Development which would result in the loss or deterioration of an Ancient Woodland (AW), a Veteran Tree (VT), or a nationally protected species will not be permitted unless the need for and the benefits of the proposed development in that location clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration.**

47 Sites of international importance are considered invaluable and will be subject to the strongest scrutiny (Includes candidate SACs).

48 To include anything protected in the [Wildlife and Countryside Act \(1981\)](#) and [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations \(2010\)](#)

49 Includes candidate SSSIs.

- D. Development which would compromise the favourable condition or the favourable conservation status of a Grassland Inventory Site (GIS), a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), a Local Geological Site (LGS), an important individual tree or woodland and species or habitats of principal importance recognised in the Biodiversity Action Plan, or listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, will only be permitted if the need for and the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the loss.**
- E. Where the policy requirements of B, C or D have been met, full compensatory provision, to include establishment (secured through a legal agreement where appropriate), commensurate with the ecological / geological value of the site will be required. In the first instance this should be through on-site mitigation, the details of which should be agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Off-site mitigation will only be acceptable where on-site mitigation is shown not to be possible.**
- F. Development should, wherever practicable, be designed to enhance biodiversity and geodiversity (including soils) conservation interests as well as conserve on-site biodiversity corridors / networks. Developments should also take opportunities, where practicable, to enhance biodiversity corridors / networks beyond the site boundary.**

Reasoned Justification

1. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment is one of the Framework's core planning principles and Section 11 sets out how planning policy should achieve this. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) requires public bodies to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Without an appropriately strong planning policy the recent trend of biodiversity and geodiversity losses will continue. Bringing back or re-creating lost habitats is fraught with technical difficulties and is unproven for many habitat types and so the local planning authority expects protection of important existing features to be the norm in most cases, with re-creation after habitat loss to be considered only where this is not practical. Where habitats are retained, protected, enhanced or created, the local planning authority will require information regarding long-term management so as to ensure that features (and particularly those required in mitigation for harm) can be maintained into the future. This may in some circumstances need to be secured by legal agreement. Without positive action therefore there is real danger, particularly given the likely impacts of Climate Change, that in the long term the ecosystems themselves will begin to fail.
2. The Natural Environment White Paper (2011) estimated that the economic and social importance of the UK natural environment equates to approximately £30 billion per year. Worcestershire is blessed with a rich variety of biodiversity and geodiversity assets, which is an important factor in both the relatively high quality of life experienced by most residents and the attractiveness of the area as a business and tourist destination.