

<b>Local Plan Panel Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	08 October 2020
<b>Report Title</b>	Biodiversity Baseline Study
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Mike Baldock, Cabinet Member for Planning
<b>SMT Lead</b>	James Freeman
<b>Head of Service</b>	James Freeman
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Aaron Wilkinson
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Classification</b>	Open
<b>Recommendations</b>	It is recommended that Members note the content of this report and the Biodiversity Baseline Study at Appendix I.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 As part of the Local Plan Review (LPR), and as per paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council will need to identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 1.2 Furthermore, the forthcoming Environment Bill 2020 will set this in law, stating that "...the 'biodiversity net gain' of any development would have to exceed the pre-development value by 10%" (Schedule 14 2(2)).
- 1.3 To assist with this, Kent Wildlife Trust Consultancy Services were commissioned to prepare a Biodiversity Baseline Study for the Borough, which is available at Appendix I to this report.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 To be able to comply with the requirements of the NPPF and forthcoming Environment Bill, it is necessary to have an understanding of the different habitats across the Borough and identify areas which provide the best opportunities for achieving biodiversity net gain.
- 2.2 The Biodiversity Baseline Study assists with this by considering the distribution of habitat types across the Borough and assessing the relative importance of these using high, medium and low classifications. These outcomes are visualised in a series of maps within the study.
- 2.3 It then goes on to provide recommendations on how these outputs can be used to assist the LPR when considering its strategy for biodiversity net gain. It also sets out guidance on how Officers in Development Management might consider the issue when dealing with planning applications.

2.4 The Biodiversity Baseline Study will form part of the evidence base used to determine the biodiversity strategy/policies for the LPR.

### 3 Proposals

3.1 The proposal, therefore, is that Members note the content of the Biodiversity Baseline Study.

### 4 Alternative Options

4.1 The identification, conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats across the Borough is a requirement of the NPPF. There would be no benefit to Members disregarding the content of the Biodiversity Baseline Study given that it provides that identification of habitats for the LPR to then be able to include policies to protect and enhance them. Therefore, there are no realistic alternatives.

### 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 No consultation has been undertaken or is proposed. However, this study will be used with other evidence to draft the content of the LPR. When the LPR is consulted on at the Regulation 19 stage, consultees will be able to make comments on this study if they wish to.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposal would align with: Priority 2: Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges.
Financial, Resource and Property	None identified at this stage – the work has been carried out within the Planning Policy budget.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Sustainability	The new Local Plan will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	The new Local Plan will require a full community impact assessment.

Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.
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## **7 Appendices**

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Biodiversity Baseline Study

## **8 Background Papers**

8.1 None