



Overview of the CE Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

It emphasizes the importance of biodiversity, highlights the threats it faces due to development, and outlines the role of the planning system in improving biodiversity. The SPD explains terms, sets expectations for biodiversity net gain, and provides guidance for developers to achieve this, all within the framework of the planning system.

The purpose of the document is to add detail to existing development plan policies, serving as guidance rather than forming part of the official development plan. The SPD focuses on the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Policies Document.

The SPD aligns with national and local planning policies, including the Environment Act 2021, requiring a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity for most planning permissions. The National Planning Policy Framework is referenced, emphasizing the need to protect, enhance, and provide net gains for biodiversity.

Local planning policies, particularly from the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, are highlighted. These policies stress the importance of ecological networks, biodiversity metrics, and tree/habitat preservation.



Comments on Final Draft of the CE Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Sandbach Town Council value environmental conservation, stakeholder engagement, and legislative compliance, and therefore we see the report's objectives and content as positive and highlight four key topics Emphasis, Legislation, Consultees and Guidance.

1. **Biodiversity Emphasis:** The report highlights the importance of biodiversity and aims to improve it through the planning system. This emphasis is positive for environmental conservation.
2. **Alignment with Legislation:** The report aligns with the Environment Act 2021 and other national planning policies, demonstrating a commitment to legislative requirements for biodiversity net gain.

In addition to this legal approach we believe in instances where government and councils have the opportunity to breach the spirit of the requirements and do so, the planning authority should be required to point this out. i.e the government bodies do something a developer could not get away with.

3. **Consultees :** We encourage the views of 'responsible nature professionals' to be heard above all others. Developers including government and councils have for too long held approaches to habitat protection or designs that support it as unnecessary and expensive. It is critical they accept a change in priorities to invest in bio diversity gain and recognise a responsibility and duty to lead this change. We hope developers take on board the comments and topics thrown up by other consultees in a spirit of co-operation.
4. **Guidance for Developers:** Providing guidance for developers on achieving biodiversity net gain demonstrates a practical approach to balancing development and environmental conservation which developers must embrace and build on. In time we feel confident the lead in biodiversity gain will come from these developers as they embrace change.

The effectiveness of changes will depend on how well it is implemented. Challenges may arise in achieving the targeted biodiversity net gain, especially if it involves significant changes in development practices. These we feel will be overcome by developers and responsible nature professionals having an open mind to resolve these obstacles.

Striking the right balance between development needs and biodiversity conservation and gain will be challenging. Some stakeholders may argue that the document either doesn't go far enough to protect the environment or that it imposes unnecessary restrictions on development. Sandbach Town Council see this document as hopefully the first major step to a process of continual improvement by all parties in bio diversity gain that exceeds these initial objectives.

Sandbach Town Council recognise that initially, depending on the specific views and interests of certain stakeholders, there may be opposition or concerns about the impact of the proposed policies on current development projects. We also appreciate for those who prioritize unrestricted development, there will also be concerns about potential challenges and impacts on development projects and profitability.

The council recognise these concerns but believe an improved standards regime supporting biodiversity if combined with other sustainability design considerations will offer developers and our region new opportunity improving our communities well being and opportunities for developing healthy and sustainable businesses.