
Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



LNRS and the Planning System

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1. The role of LNRS in planning

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a statutory document. One of its key roles is in the setting of local planning policies. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) places a duty on all public authorities to consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity. In complying with this duty all public authorities must “have regard” to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Government issues guidance on how Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should interpret the legal duty to “have regard” to LNRS. It includes information on how Local Planning Authorities should have regard to LNRS in both plan making and planning decision-making.

Many developments on land require planning permission. These will all need to consider any local plan policies relating to the LNRS.

The planning system already requires new development to enhance nature. The LNRS mapping of opportunities need be taken into account within new developments, and also where any off-site enhancements are required.

The LNRS identifies areas of particular importance for nature recovery. However, this does not replace existing policies or protections on designated land (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest). This can only be done through the relevant legislation or planning policy. The range of existing designations are described in the LNRS and shown on the map.

2. Local Plans

Local Plans are produced by Local Planning Authorities to guide development. The **National Planning Policy Framework** [in paragraph 192(a) as at November 2025] states that such plans should identify, map and safeguard areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation.

The government’s **Natural Environment Guidance** explains the relationship between a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Local Plans. It states that Local planning authorities should consider the priorities set out in the relevant LNRS when determining how their local plan should contribute to and enhance the local and natural environment.

The guidance goes on to say that Local planning authorities should be aware of those areas mapped in the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and the measures proposed in them. They should consider what safeguarding would be appropriate to enable the proposed actions to be delivered. The guidance notes the potential to target stronger safeguarding in areas the local planning authority considers to be of greater importance. This will enable local planning authorities to

support the best opportunities to create or improve habitat to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including where this may enable development in other locations.

The guidance will be used when existing Local Plans in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough come to be updated.

3. Planning decision-making

Local planning authorities make planning decisions taking into account the Local Plan and all “material considerations”. The LNRS is likely to be one of those material considerations.

Paragraph 47 of the Guidance states that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is an evidence base which contains information that may be a ‘material consideration’ in the planning system, especially where development plan documents for an area pre-date Local Nature Recovery Strategy publication. It is for the decision-maker to determine what is a relevant material consideration based on the individual circumstances of the case.

The Local Planning Authority will need to consider the relevance and importance of the LNRS identifying a piece of land as an “area of potential importance for biodiversity”. As set out previously, the LNRS does not replace existing policies or protections on designated land, nor introduce them.

Some uses, such as agricultural crops, are not within the scope of the planning system. Whilst the Local Plans or the LNRS do not control what land owner and managers can do with their land in those circumstances, it is hoped that the opportunities presented in this Strategy will inspire action to create and enhance nature.

4. Biodiversity Net Gain

New developments need to enhance biodiversity as part of obtaining planning permission. The Defra Biodiversity Metric rewards the creation of the right type of habitats in the right areas through a strategic significance multiplier, giving 15% more biodiversity “units” to areas formally identified within a Local Strategy. Defra and Natural England have specified that a LNRS should be the document to guide where habitat restoration and creation in biodiversity offsetting sites and habitat banks will be rewarded with the strategic significance multiplier.

Paragraph 48 of the Guidance sets out how Local Nature Recovery Strategies are designed to promote the delivery of off-site biodiversity gain in the right places. It

states, “Local Nature Recovery Strategies will identify areas where habitat creation, restoration or enhancement would be most beneficial for nature recovery and wider environmental outcomes. They can play a critical role in supporting offsite gains to be delivered in a way that maximises biodiversity benefits, when these are required to achieve a development’s biodiversity gain objective. This can help to support bigger and more joined-up areas in which our wildlife can thrive.”

As has been previously noted, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LNR area has significantly less habitat than many other parts of England and the habitats that remain are highly fragmented. The area is also one of the fastest growing parts of the country with massive development pressures. The need for biodiversity offsetting is therefore likely to be significant and local stakeholders wish to see this effectively targeted.

To identify and apply BNG strategic significance, use the relevant information published in the LNR and descriptions as set out in table 7 of **The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide**.