

REPORT FOR DECISION

Bury
COUNCIL

Agenda
Item 7

MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 21 May 2019

SUBJECT: SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE: 2017 REVIEW

REPORT FROM: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LOCALITIES)

CONTACT OFFICER: CHRIS WILKINSON

TYPE OF DECISION: COMMITTEE

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS: This report is within the public domain

SUMMARY: This report describes the purpose and application of the Register of Sites of Biological Importance in Bury. It also identifies the latest changes made to the Register. Nine SBIs and potential SBIs were reviewed. **Castlesteads Woods, Burrs** was added to the SBI register due to the UK Biodiversity Priority Habitats it supports. **Spen Moor Ponds** was removed from the register due to changes in grassland management, a decline in pond habitat, decline in great crested newt populations and permitted development. **Pilsworth** lost 0.6ha due to a loss of grassland habitat through lack of management. **Hawkshaw Brook** gained 0.4ha of additional habitat, **Cyrus Ainsworth Nurseries & Parkers Lodges** gained 0.4ha of additional woodland habitat and **Starling Road Reservoir** gained 0.7ha of additional grassland habitat. **Hollins Plantation** recorded no changes to the site boundary or area. **Simister Wetlands and a grassland in the Hawkshaw Brook valley** were also visited to assess the sites for SBI potential but they did not meet the SBI Guidelines criteria (2016).

**OPTIONS &
RECOMMENDED
OPTION**

It is recommended that Planning Control Committee adopts the 2017 update of the Register of Sites of Biological Importance for use in development planning and management.

Other options (not recommended) are to not adopt the updated Register, or to partially adopt the updated Register.

IMPLICATIONS:

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Policies EN6/1 and EN6/2 of the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan set out the Council's approach to managing development affecting existing and future SBIs.

Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:

The costs of the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, which compiles and updates the SBI Register, are funded through existing budgets.

Statement by Executive Director of Resources:

None

Equality/Diversity implications:

None.

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

*Yes
The National Planning Policy Framework provides that planning policies should identify and map sites of importance for nature conservation and biodiversity. Updating the Register of Sites of Biological Importance will help to ensure that the Council complies with and its approach is where required, compatible with national planning guidance. The main issues are covered in the reporting.*

Wards Affected:

All

Scrutiny Interest:

N/A

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
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Scrutiny Commission	Committee	Council	
	✓		

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Borough's Unitary Development Plan identifies a number of Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) that policies EN6/1 and EN6/2 seek to protect from harmful development. The wildlife value of sites is however, not static; it may increase or decrease as vegetation changes, neighbouring land changes in character, or survey information improves. The UDP policies anticipate this by referring to both existing SBIs and those to be designated in the future.
- 1.2 The Greater Manchester Register of Sites of Biological Importance is maintained and updated on behalf of the ten Greater Manchester Districts by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. The entries relating to Bury are kept by the Head of Strategic Planning and Economic Development. The sites are classed as Grade 'A' (of regional or county Importance) 'B' (of district importance) and 'C' (of importance within the *identified* geographical locality).
- 1.3 The Ecology Unit's Service Level Agreement requires it to re-survey each SBI at least every 10 years. It does this incrementally and produces an annual review of the sites it has surveyed in the previous year. The 2016 review was reported to committee on 4th September 2018. The 2017 changes are the subject of the current report and is the latest available information.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 Para 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework says that 'plans should....identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife rich habitats and wider ecological networks including....locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity'. Para 175 says that 'when determining planning applications,.....if significant harm from a development (*to biodiversity*) cannot be avoided..., adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- 2.2 Unlike Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) do not have statutory protection. However, the designation of 'regional and local sites' (i.e. SBIs) is promoted (in the NPPF and elsewhere) as a planning tool for conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Designation allows identified sites of ecological value to be protected from harmful development that requires planning permission.

- 2.3** The designation of SBIs is an objective and methodical process of evaluating sites against set criteria. Bury Council has consistently chosen to use the designation as a way of protecting the Borough's wildlife by incorporating SBIs into the planning process.
- 2.4** A list of changes to the register, a list of current SBIs and a location plan are attached to this report. The register has not changed substantially for some years.
- 2.5** An EQIA Initial Screening Assessment is appended to this report. It finds that the proposal to adopt the updated SBI Register serves an existing policy with minimal implications for equality or cohesion.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The 2017 update of the Greater Manchester Register of Sites of Biological Importance describes the current state of the most valuable sites of wildlife interest in the Borough. It will assist the Council in making decisions, particularly on planning applications, in accordance with government guidance, adopted Council policy and good practice. Its adoption is therefore recommended.

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APPENDIX 1: SBI REVIEW 2016

BURY – DISTRICT SYNOPSIS

In the review period January – December 2017 the Ecology Unit visited 9 SBIs and potential SBIs, representing 18% of Bury's SBIs.

Castlesteads Woods, Burrs was added to the SBI register due to the UK Biodiversity Priority Habitats it supports.

Spenn Moor Ponds was removed from the register due to changes in grassland management, a decline in pond habitat, decline in great crested newt populations and permitted development.

Pilsworth lost 0.6ha due to a loss of grassland habitat through lack of management.

Hawkshaw Brook gained 0.4ha of additional habitat and for technical reasons (see below).

Cyrus Ainsworth's Nurseries & Parkers Lodges gained 0.4ha of additional woodland habitat.

Starling Road Reservoir gained 0.7ha of additional grassland habitat.

The following site recorded no changes to the site boundary or area, but revisions of the site description or qualifying features may have occurred: **Hollins Plantation**.


Technical gains and losses are often due to the increasing accuracy used to draw boundaries and measure areas. Techniques used include orthorectified aerial photographs, which can be overlaid on the GIS system with the OS map base. This enables boundaries to be drawn to the edges of habitats where a clearly definable ground feature (e.g. fences, walls, streams etc) is not appropriate to use. In addition site areas are automatically calculated by the GIS system and a new OS base was acquired in 2017.

Simister Wetlands and a **grassland in the Hawkshaw Brook valley** were also visited to assess the sites for SBI potential but they did not meet the SBI Guidelines criteria (2016).

APPENDIX 2: FACT SHEET

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY

2017 REVIEW



Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

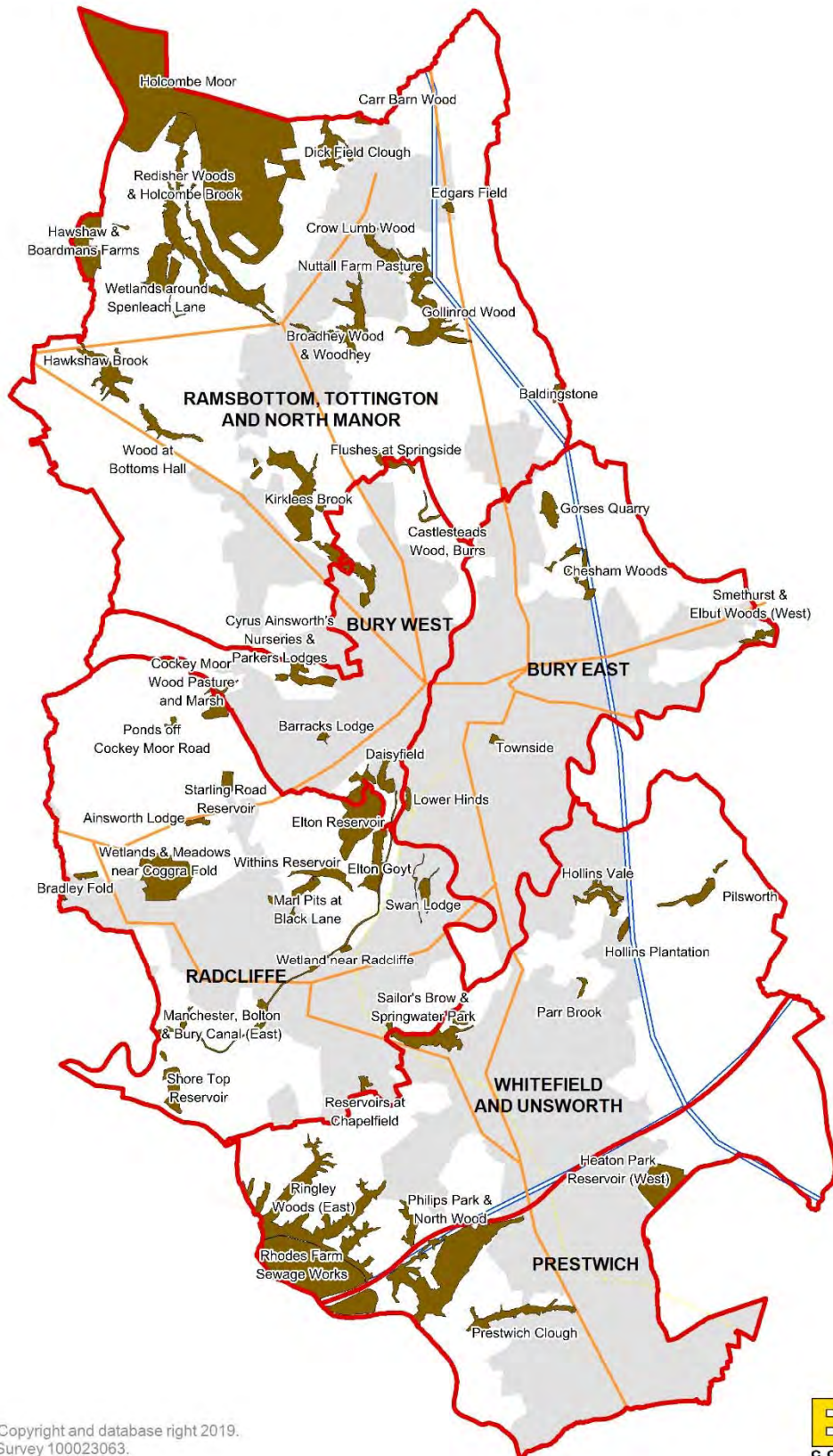
DISTRICT FACT SHEET (All areas in hectares)

BURY

				Net Change 2016 – 2017	
	1984	2016	2017	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBIS	27	50	50	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBIS	691.3	925.0	912.2	-12.8	-1.4
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	9	19	19	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	554.4	763.9	764.3	+0.4	+0.1
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	19	18	-1	-5.3
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	65.0	115.6	100.0	-15.6	-13.5
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	12	13	+1	+8.3
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	71.9	45.5	47.9	+2.4	+5.3
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI			2016	2017
-	-			-	-
Grid Ref	New Sites			Grade	Area
SD796130	Castlesteads Woods			C	1.7
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total		Grade	Area Lost	Present Total
SD783094	Spen Moor Ponds		B	15.2	0
SD830084	Pilsworth		B	0.6	6.9
Grid Ref	Partial Gains		Grade	Area Gained	Present Total
SD759146	Hawkshaw Brook		A	+0.4	13.7
SD782110	Cyrus Ainsworth’s Nurseries & Parkers Lodges		B	+0.2	8.2
SD773098	Starling Road Reservoir		C	+0.7	3.0
Grid Ref	Site visited with no change/change to description only				
SD820080	Hollins Plantation				

APPENDIX 3: SBI LOCATION MAP

Sites of Biological Importance in Bury: 2017 Review



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