

Matters 8&9, action 7 note

During the Matters 8&9 session, Policy LPC06 of the Plan was discussed, and action 7 for the Council recorded as follows,

“Consider LPC06, section 4 and whether replacement should be made the priority focus.”

It was suggested by a participant in the session that ‘replacement’ should be prioritised in section 4 of policy LPC06. However, the Council was not in agreement. The Inspectors requested the Council give this further consideration and provide a view. This note serves to fulfil this recorded action.

The Council has considered this issue with colleagues at the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), and there is concern about making replacement the priority focus in the policy. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric does include measures to ensure appropriate replacement habitat by requiring the replacement of like for like habitats for some specific habitats and a 'no trading down' approach in terms of biodiversity value. So this is an issue that will resolve itself to an extent once BNG becomes mandatory in 2023.

In addition, if the Council prioritised a requirement for direct replacement habitats through policy, this may not always be the most desirable or appropriate option. Direct replacement would mean direct replacement of species poor grassland for example, whereas more appropriate mitigation would be the creation of species rich grassland. Whilst the suggested alternative approach may be appropriate in relation to certain sites, any amendment to the Policy would apply to all sites, and this may not always be appropriate as above, and therefore the Council does not consider it a sound policy approach.

Due to site constraints, it may also be appropriate in some cases to create smaller areas of habitats than those being lost but to ensure that those smaller areas have a higher biodiversity value.

Therefore, the Council proposes it is preferential to leave Policy LPC06 section 4 as drafted in the Local Plan Submission Draft in this respect to provide the appropriate framework for all sites, and in cases where replacement of habitats is the most appropriate approach, there is policy support for this.