

**EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH MAY 2002**

8. TRAP GROUNDS

The Committee considered the report submitted to the Executive Board on 23 April 2002 (previously circulated, now appended), the decision of the board, and the grounds for the call in of the decision. Steve Northey and Steve Pickles attended to discuss the details of the proposed sale of land and the nature conservation value of the site.

Councillor Fooks reminded the Committee that the discussion centred on the sale of the land and would not consider any details relating to the planning application submitted to the Council.

The following points were made by officers:

- (1) The site is listed in the Local Plan as a development site, and proposed access road enables the site marked D on the plans to be developed. The Local Plan also recommended an environmental assessment which had been carried out.
- (2) The site marked C on the plans is of ecological value and will be preserved, not sold for development. In addition, only the part of site D west of the access road will be sold for development. The wet woodland east of the access road and the whole of the site enclosed by the existing nature walk will be retained. However, the actual boundaries may vary slightly from those shown.
- (3) In terms of ecological significance, currently only site C is designated a Site of Local Importance In Nature Conservation (SLINC). The new Local Plan will designate the wet woodland section of site D as a SLINC, which will offer protection from future development.
- (4) The current environmental assessment states that the needs of ecology and housing should be balanced, and this is best done via the planning system.
- (5) The Council's nature conservation strategy is not adopted as supplementary planning guidance but sets out aspirations for the Council.
- (6) Further environmental data would be gathered from current surveys during the breeding season and plotting of habitats, and this would be used to develop a management plan for the remaining land.
- (7) English Nature were a statutory consultee for the planning application

The following points were made by Councillors:

- (8) The whole area is of nature conservation value to the city, although the western half is of less importance than the reedbeds and wet woodland. There is a need to protect areas designated as wildlife resources from the effects of nearby development. There is potential damage to the habitats of small animals, which are very close to the development site.
- (9) The site is officially classified as 'greenfield', and any more appropriate brownfield sites should be developed before this site.
- (10) The sale would provide social housing in the city, which is urgently needed, and provides a good reason for the sale of the site. However, more information is needed to minimise the impact on the remainder of the site.
- (11) The final decision should await the report from the Environment Agency.
- (12) The decision of the Executive Board to sell the site subject to the granting of planning permission does not in itself prejudice the Council's nature conservation strategy.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Executive Board:

- (a) that the decision made by the Executive Board on 23 April did not of itself undermine the conservation strategy, and should therefore stand;
- (b) but that the Committee did not consider that adequate information about the ecological impact had been provided to the Executive Board;
- (c) that the Executive Board should seek further ecological information before making a final decision as there was some doubt as to whether the current assessments were adequate.