

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

1.1 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

Policy Context

Policy Context EU Habitats Directive [Directive 92/43/EC]

The Habitats Directive aims to contribute towards protecting biodiversity - the variety of life - through the conservation of natural habitats and wild plants and animals. Recognising that wildlife habitats are under pressure from increasing demands made on the environment, the Directive provides for the creation of a network of protected areas across the European Union to be known as 'Natura 2000' sites. This network includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which, on land, are already Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Maintain or restore in a favourable condition designated natural habitat types and habitats of designated species listed in Annexes I and II respectively of the Directive. If a project compromising one of these habitats must proceed in spite of negative conservation impacts due to it being in the public interest, compensatory measures must be provided for. Linear structures such as rivers/streams, hedgerows, field boundaries, ponds, etc., that enable movement and migration of species should be preserved.

The EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409/EEC 1979

The Birds Directive has created a protection scheme for all of Europe's wild birds, identifying 194 species and sub-species (listed in Annex I) among them as particularly threatened and in need of special conservation measures. There are a number of components to this scheme. Member States are required to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the 194 threatened species and all migratory bird species. SPAs are scientifically identified areas critical for the survival of the targeted species, such as wetlands. The designation of an area as a SPA gives it a high level of protection from potentially damaging developments.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Imposes duty on Member States to sustain populations of naturally occurring wild birds by sustaining areas of habitats in order to maintain populations at ecologically and scientifically sound levels.

Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice (EU Sixth Environment Action Programme)

The latest Environment Action Programme gives a strategic direction to the Commission's environmental policy over the next decade, as the Community prepares to expand its boundaries. The new programme identifies four environmental areas to be tackled for improvements:

- Climate Change;
- Nature and Biodiversity;
- Environment and Health and Quality of Life; and
- Natural Resources and Waste.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

To protect and restore the functioning of natural systems and halt the loss of biodiversity in the European Union and globally.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, Rio de Janeiro 1992

This convention was agreed among the vast majority of the world's governments and sets out their commitments to maintaining the world's biodiversity so to achieve a more sustainable economic development. The Convention establishes three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Article 6a requires each Contracting Party to develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

PPS 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPS9 sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. The policies will need to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of regional spatial strategies. In the context of this PPS, biodiversity is the variety of life in all its forms as discussed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

- To ensure that the potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity and geological conservation are fully considered.
- Development plan policies and planning decisions should be based upon up-to-date information about the environmental characteristics of their areas (biodiversity and geological resource).
 - They should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests.
 - The form and location of development should take a strategic approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity, promote opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity features and prevent harm to biodiversity conservation interests.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The act implements the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the 'Bern Convention') and the European Union Directives on the Conservation of Wild Birds and Natural Habitats. The Act is concerned with the protection of wildlife and their habitat (countryside, national parks and designated protected areas).

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Addresses the problem of species protection and habitat loss by setting out the protection that is afforded to wild animals and plants in Britain.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan

The UK BAP was published in response to the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). It highlights a number of priority habitats and species with associated action plans.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Objectives: Conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms'.

The principles set out *inter alia*:
 Conservation of biodiversity should be an integral part of Government programmes, policy and action.
 The precautionary principle should guide decisions.

'Working with the Grain of Nature': A Biodiversity Strategy for England (2002)

The Strategy seeks to ensure biodiversity considerations become embedded in all main sectors of public policy and sets out a programme for the next five years to make the changes necessary to conserve, enhance and work with the grain of nature and ecosystems rather than against them.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Ensures biodiversity considerations are embedded in all main sectors of economic activity. (It is the principal means by which the government will comply with duties under section 74 of the CRoW Act).

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS14) of the East of England (Draft Revision)

Bedford now lies within the East of England region for planning purposes. RSS14 is based on the principles of the UK's Strategy for Sustainable Development and sets out a strategy to guide planning and development in the East of England to the year 2021. This includes the scale and distribution of provision for new housing and identifying priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, minerals and waste management. It aims to improve the quality of life and sets out proposals which will influence where people choose to work and live and how to move about the region. RSS14 is currently under review – the final RSS14 is due to be published in early summer 2007.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

- Protect and enhance the natural environment, including its biodiversity character.
- Identify biodiversity conservation areas and biodiversity enhancement areas, to deliver large-scale habitat enhancement for the benefit of wildlife and people.
- Protect and enrich the regions biodiversity through conservation, restoration and re-establishment.
- Address local biodiversity action plan (BAP) targets e.g. by expanding and linking areas of native woodland and the creation of new wet woodland for which this region is a priority.
- To ensure that internationally and nationally designated sites in the region are given the strongest level of protection.

Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy

MKSM spans three regions, the East of England, the South East and the East Midlands. In the East of England it sets out a spatial strategy for the growth locations of Bedford/Kempston/Marston Vale, Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

To ensure that development contributes to an improved environment, by requiring high standards of design and sustainable construction, protecting and enhancing environmental assets (including landscape and biodiversity) and providing green space and related infrastructure (green infrastructure)

Bedfordshire and Luton BAP

Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan is the response to national biodiversity planning and shows how this commitment can be delivered locally. It identifies local priorities and caters for local distinctiveness. It also provides consensus on the conservation action required to protect and enhance our wealth of wildlife. Development and implementation of the Action Plan is being co-ordinated by the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Forum.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Objectives:

- Develop common messages relating to biodiversity action.
- Raise awareness of what individuals can do to improve biodiversity in their own environments.
- Promote understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity to all sectors of the community.

- Promote biodiversity as an indicator for sustainable development.
- Provide opportunities for all sectors of the community to participate in biodiversity work.

Targets:

- Increase the number of people actively involved in action for biodiversity by 50% by 2010.
- Ensure that every school within the county is contacted regarding biodiversity and 25% are undertaking curriculum based activities by 2010.
- Increase the number of informal education activities relating to biodiversity within the county by 25% by 2010.
- Raise the awareness of biodiversity issues by 50% by 2010.

Indicators:

- Membership figures of WT/BTCV/Bedfordshire Natural History Society/RSPB/Friends of Marston Vale groups etc.
- Number of voluntary nature work local groups
- Number of School groups visiting Wildlife Education Centres/Facilities
- Number of Wildlife Watch groups in the County and members of Wildlife Watch
- Number of and attendance levels at Discovery days/events
- Number of people sending in survey information into the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre
- Number of conservation volunteer work days

Designing for Sustainability – Luton Borough Council Supplementary Planning Guidance

This document sets out what the Borough Council expects in terms of sustainable design and energy conservation.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Incorporate open space and landscaping using native species.
Minimise the impact of a development by safeguarding and enhancing habitats and features.

Luton Local Plan (2001 – 2011)

The Local Plan is to guide development and the use of land. It contains policies and proposals for land use and transportation.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Not to grant planning permission for development that will not enhance or create habitats, where feasible, or is likely to adversely affect sites of nature or biodiversity interest, unless the benefits outweigh need to protect nature conservation, or proposals include create an alternative habitat (of at least equivalent value) in the locality.

To ensure a development will not adversely impact on the ecology of the River Lee or its tributaries, banks or corridors.

Community Plan for the Borough of Bedford 2004-2010

The production of this, the second Community Plan for the Borough of Bedford, has been co-ordinated by the Bedford Partnership Board, the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough. The over-arching aim is "Working Together to Improve Health and Well-Being" and the objective is to lay the foundation stone for an improved quality of life for everyone who lives, works or visits the Borough.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Enhance and diversify the network of green spaces and access corridors.
To work towards a natural environment with an understanding of biodiversity, landscape and cultural value to encourage protection and enhancement for future generations.

Bedford Borough Council Development Plan Document (DPD): Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (Submission version)

The Core Strategy & Rural Issues Plan sets out the long term spatial vision for the borough and the objectives and policies needed to deliver that vision. The DPD was submitted to the Secretary of State on 3 July 2006 and a six week consultation period followed. An independent Inspector will be appointed in May 2007 to consider all representations received in response to the consultation. It is expected that this DPD will be adopted in December 2007.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Policy CP26 - The biodiversity of the borough and in particular priority habitats, species and geodiversity features, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. Appropriate mitigation and/or compensation will be required where damage results from the development.

Mid Beds Local Plan (First Review Deposit Draft)

The Plan was adopted in 2004 and guides development and the use of land over the next 10 years. The policies and proposals for land use and transportation are used to give planning advice and form the basis for determining planning applications.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

To protect and enhance Sites of Special Scientific Interest, County Wildlife Sites and other valued wildlife habitats.
To protect rare species.
To protect and enhance the District's total wildlife resources.

South Bedfordshire Local Plan (Review Deposit)

The Local Plan was adopted in 2004 and provides comprehensive planning guidance for development in the area up to the year 2011. It develops the policies and general proposals of the Structure Plan and relates them to precise areas of land in the area. It sets out policies for environmental planning and management, in particular relating to conservation and improvement of the environment, efficient use of land and resources and the management of traffic.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Conserve, maintain and enhance the natural and man-made environment of the District and in particular wildlife habitats, historic sites and buildings, conservation areas and attractive landscapes. Creating new wildlife habitats and maintaining and, where possible, increasing biodiversity.

Baseline review

- 1.1.1 This section reviews the baseline ecology and nature conservation of Bedfordshire County and Luton Borough. The next section of the topic paper outlines how these issues specifically relate to waste management.

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna in Bedfordshire and Luton

- 1.1.2 According to Natural England, there are forty Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Bedfordshire and Luton designated for their wildlife and / or geological assets. However, only 1.2% of Bedfordshire's land area is designated as SSSI and 7.1% is recognised as semi-natural habitat. These are the lowest figures for any East of England County and below the East of England average of 6.7% (SSSI) and 18.5% (semi-natural habitat). Therefore it is important to note that the undesignated areas within Bedfordshire have the potential to contain important biodiversity, flora and fauna, and consideration should not be limited to the designated areas within the County.
- 1.1.3 The condition of the SSSIs within the County (as of 13th April 2007) is good as is shown by the two tables below:

Bedfordshire

% Area meeting PSA target	% Area favourable	% Area unfavourable recovering	% Area unfavourable no change	% Area unfavourable declining	% Area destroyed / part destroyed
85.73%	64.41%	21.32%	9.56%	4.05%	0.65%

Whole of England

Area meeting PSA target	Area favourable	Area unfavourable recovering	Area unfavourable no change	Area unfavourable declining	Area destroyed / part destroyed
75.42%	44.82%	30.60%	15.95%	8.56%	0.07%

Habitats

Internationally Designated Conservation Sites

- 1.1.4 There are no sites within Bedfordshire and Luton designated as a European Site such as a Ramsar Site, Special Protection Area (SPA) or Special Area of Conservation (SAC), although there are sites in neighbouring counties. If the plan was likely to have an effect on such a site, an 'Appropriate Assessment' must be carried out. 'Appropriate Assessment (AA)' is required under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) for any proposed plan or project which may have a significant effect on one or more European sites and which is not necessary for the management of those sites. The purpose of AA is to determine whether or not significant effects are likely and to suggest ways in which they could be avoided.

- 1.1.5 An Appropriate Assessment screening exercise¹ was undertaken for the Minerals DPD which found significant effects on European sites are unlikely due to the fact that there are no European Sites within the County Boundary; that there are no European sites within close proximity to the County Boundary which are likely to be exposed to any significant effects and that in combination effects with other plans are not envisaged.
- 1.1.6 In light of the conservation requirements of designated sites in other counties and the nature of the effects of the Waste DPD a similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the effects of the Waste DPD on designated sites. This decision will be kept under review at the issues and options stage and preferred options stage and if it is felt there is a risk of significant effects, a formal appropriate assessment process will be initiated.

Nationally Designated Conservation Sites

- 1.1.7 There are a number of designated wildlife sites in Bedfordshire and Luton consisting of five Natural Areas, seven Wildlife Priority Areas, three National and twenty Local Nature Reserves and forty Sites of Special Scientific Interest. National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are offered the highest level of protection and should be managed appropriately. Table 1 (at the end of this document) gives more details regarding SSSIs and NNRs in the county. Thirty Six of the SSSIs are biological/conservation SSSIs and four of them are geological SSSIs– Biddenham Pit, Kensworth Chalk Pit, Nine Acres Pit and Double Arches Pit. There are also a number of County Wildlife Sites within the county that have no legal protection yet have been recognised for their wildlife values and derive protection from inappropriate development through Local Authority development plan policies.
- 1.1.8 There are a number of un-designated wildlife sites that form a vital component of the overall network of wildlife and habitat features within the County, such as meadows, woodland and copses, hedgerows and trees. Although these sites do not have any legal protection, their conservation is essential for preserving wildlife corridors between sites and supporting an important range of plants and animals.

BAP Habitats

- 1.1.9 The National Biodiversity Action Plan identifies a number of natural priority habitats within a classification of broad habitats which cover the whole surface of the UK. Biodiversity Action Plans have been prepared in Bedfordshire and Luton for both broad habitats and priority habitats as follows.
- 1.1.10 Broad Habitats: acid grasslands, arable and horticulture, boundary and linear features, broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, built up areas and gardens, calcareous grassland,

▪ ¹ Treweek Environmental Consultants (2007): *Appropriate Assessment Screening for the Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals Development Plan Documents*.

coniferous woodland, improved grassland, neutral grassland, rivers and streams and standing open water and canals.

- 1.1.11 Priority Habitats: Ancient and / or species rich hedgerows, cereal field margins, chalk rivers, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, eutrophic standing waters, fens, lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland heathland, lowland wood pasture and parkland, reedbeds and wet woodland. In most cases development will be restricted in these areas in order to protect rare and protected species these habitats support.

BAP Targets in Bedfordshire and Luton

- 1.1.12 In the following paragraphs a general summary of the County's targets to increase the quality and quantity of BAP related habitats within the County is provided.

Woodland

- 1.1.13 By 1992 the area of woodland in the County had declined to 7000 hectares representing just seven percent of the land area. The BAP Target is to increase by 1,500 hectares, the area of woodland in the County by 2015.

Waterways and Wetlands

- 1.1.14 There are few rivers in Bedfordshire and Luton that have not been physically and chemically altered by man. Decline in the quality of our rivers and their habitat has contributed to the loss of otter and water vole populations in the county. The BAP Target is to maintain and improve river quality and habitat to help establish sustainable populations of otters and water voles in Bedfordshire.

Heathland and Acid Grassland

- 1.1.15 Two hundred years ago extensive areas of heathland and acid grassland were present along the Greensand Ridge between Leighton Buzzard and Gamlingay. All that remains now are small fragments totalling about 42 hectares of heathland and 85 hectares of acid grassland. The BAP Target is to increase the amount of heathland and acid grassland on the Greensand Ridge to 180 hectares by 2005 and to 230 hectares by 2010.

Urban Habitats

- 1.1.16 Wildlife rich green spaces in towns and cities are under ever increasing pressure. The BAP Target is to provide an accessible informal greenspace such as a nature reserve, community pocket park, millennium green, community woodland at a minimum of 1ha per 1000 population.

Calcareous Grassland

- 1.1.17 Only 300 hectares of flower filled chalk downland remain in Bedfordshire and Luton. The BAP Target is to create an additional 50 hectares of flower rich chalk grassland by 2010.

Farmland

- 1.1.18 Bedfordshire lost 24% of its hedgerows between 1945 and 1976. They declined a further 2% between 1976 and 1991, leaving an estimated 4,500 km of hedgerow in the country. The BAP Target is to plant 75km of new, native species rich hedgerow by 2005. Unfortunately, there has not been any monitoring of the BAP hedge planting target. Alternative data presented by the Greensand Trust for Bedfordshire County Council² has shown that the Environmental Stewardship scheme had 275 Km of hedgerow entered into the scheme as either restoration or new planting, which is an increase of 75km on the 2000 figure (although it is difficult to separate new planting from restoration of existing in these figures).

County Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves

- 1.1.19 County Wildlife Sites are key hotspots of wildlife that are considered important for securing and sustaining the wildlife capital of the County. Bedfordshire and Luton has close to 400 County Wildlife Sites. The best examples of CWS are often recognised as SSSI which are statutorily notified by English Nature. SSSI's are a representative series of quality wildlife habitats and it is recognised that on their own they will not sustain the wildlife capital of the county, they need to be seen as a series with CWS. Luton has 25 County Wildlife Sites of which Warden and Galley Hills is the only SSSI (Wildlife Trust, 2005).

² [The Greensand Trust for Bedfordshire County Council \(March 2005\): The Natural Environment: Indicators of Sustainable Development in Bedfordshire.](#)

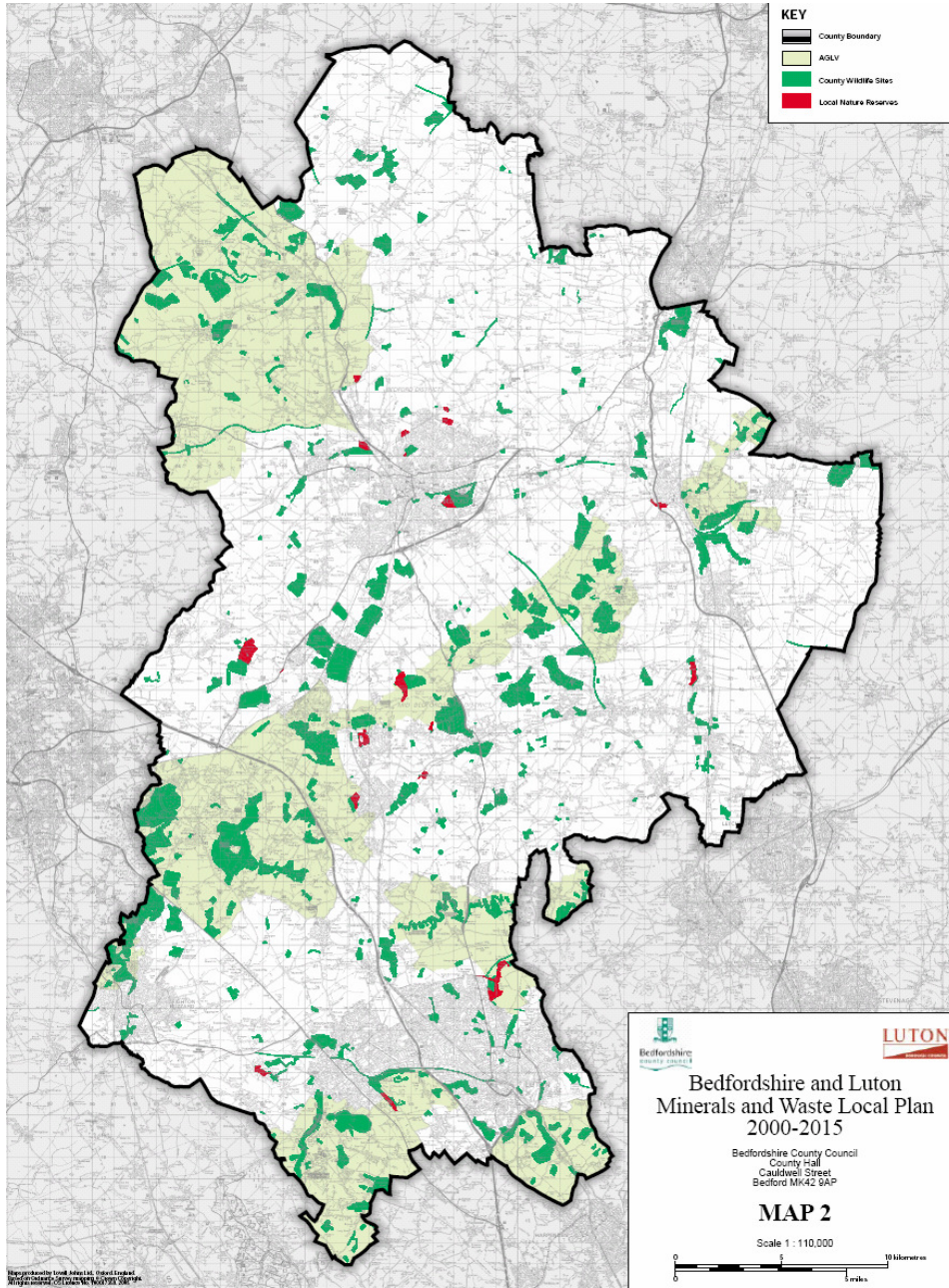


Figure 1.1: County Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves

Ancient Woodlands

- 1.1.20 Ancient Woodland is land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and may be:

- Ancient semi-natural woodland - ancient woodland sites that have retained the native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, although it may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally; or
 - Ancient replanted woodland - ancient woodland sites where the original native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, usually with conifers and usually this century.
- 1.1.21 The Ancient Woodland Inventory for England identifies over 22,000 ancient woodland sites in England³ (Natural England), covering less than 2% of the UK (Woodland Trust). Figure 1.2 shows the location of Ancient Woodland in Bedfordshire.
- 1.1.22 As the terrestrial habitat most representative of original, natural, stable conditions, ancient woodland is home to more threatened species than any other habitat in the UK. This is supported by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, which identifies that broadleaved woodland supports almost twice as many species of conservation concern as any other habitat e.g. more than twice as many as chalk grassland and almost three times as many as lowland heathland.

▪ ³ Ancient woods over 20,000 square metres in size are recorded in Ancient Woodland Inventories (AWIs)

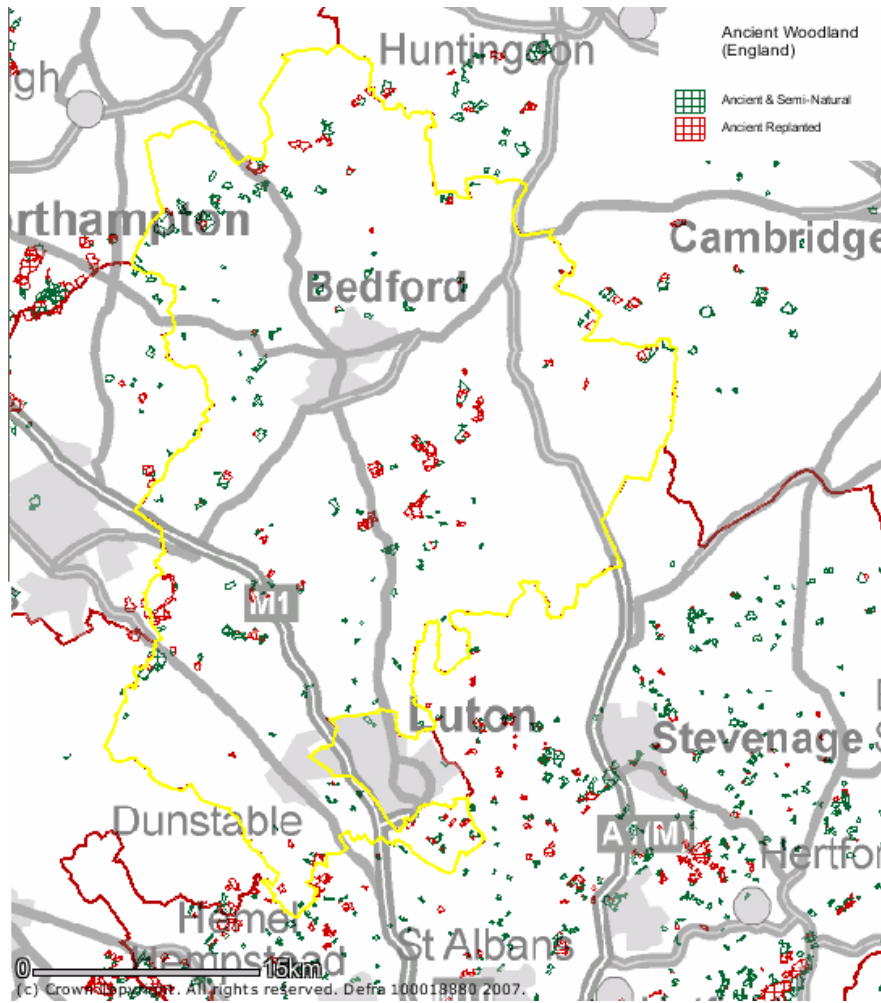


Figure 1.2: Ancient Woodland in Bedfordshire (Source: Magic)

Veteran Trees

- 1.1.23 English Nature have defined veteran trees as: "trees that are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of their age, size or condition". In relation to oak it has been taken that trees with a diameter of more than:
- 1.0m are potentially interesting;
 - 1.5m are valuable in terms of conservation; and
 - 2.00m are truly ancient.
- 1.1.24 It has been estimated that Britain may be home to around 80% of Europe's ancient trees (Ancient Tree Forum). The BCC Review 2005 – 6 identified over 450 veteran trees in

Bedfordshire (BCC). They harbour a unique array of wildlife and echo the lives of past generations of people.

Regional Summaries

- 1.1.25 Due to the range of habitats throughout Bedfordshire and Luton, the following sections contain a summary of the main ecological features within each region of the County.

South Bedfordshire

- 1.1.26 South Bedfordshire, in common with much of lowland Britain, has lost most of its natural wildlife habitats. Even the limited number of semi-natural habitats of wildlife importance remaining in ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, downland, marshes and wetland, and heath and common land are under pressure from agriculture, mineral extraction, urban development, public access, etc. This is leading to the fragmentation and isolation of sites and diminishing wildlife interest.
- 1.1.27 English Nature has identified Natural Areas based on the distribution of wildlife, natural features, land use patterns and the human history of each area. For South Bedfordshire, Natural Area profiles have been undertaken for The Chilterns, The West Anglian Plain and The Greensand Ridge. Each profile describes and reflects the local distinctiveness of the area and helps to determine priorities and objectives for nature conservation in those areas.

Bedford

- 1.1.28 In terms of biodiversity, the main wildlife priority areas in the borough are the valley of the River Great Ouse and the ancient semi-natural woodlands in the north. The borough contains eight sites of special scientific interest and seven local nature reserves. To supplement the statutory sites, a county based tier of non-statutory county wildlife sites has also been designated. Together, these sites represent the key sites for nature conservation within the borough.
- 1.1.29 Sites of importance for nature conservation should be protected from any adverse effects as a result of development. Of particular importance are the River Great Ouse and other wildlife corridors. Opportunities should be taken to enhance existing sites of importance as well as to mitigate any harm caused to nature conservation interests.

Luton

- 1.1.30 Within the town there are many varied sites, including Dallow Downs with its wildflowers; Bradgers Hill with foxes, deer, and ancient farming terraces; Cowslip Meadow, a unique fragment of Marshland; Legrave Common which is the source of the River Lea and Luton's first Local Nature Reserve. This is also the site of the Wauluds Bank ancient heritage monument. There is also the rolling grassland of Galley and Warden Hills, home to many nationally rare wildflowers.

Mid Bedfordshire

- 1.1.31 The District contains parts of three natural areas, these being the Bedfordshire Greensand, the majority of which lies within the District, Middle England and the Chilterns.
- 1.1.32 Wildlife Priority Areas, (based on the Natural Areas concept developed by English Nature, as the basis for much conservation work) in Mid Bedfordshire are as follows: (i) The Valley of the River Great Ouse; (ii) The Wetlands of the River Flit; (iii) The River Ivel and Hiz Valleys; (iv) The Heathlands of the Greensand Ridge; and (v) The Chalk Downland of South Bedfordshire.

Protected Species

- 1.1.33 Many nationally important species can be found within Bedfordshire and Luton:

Otter and water vole

- 1.1.34 Otter and water vole are known to inhabit banks, ditches and dykes of slow-moving rivers and streams. Care should therefore be taken to avoid contamination of waterways that may provide habitats to these species which are dependent on freshwater habitats.

Bats

- 1.1.35 Seven species of bat are present within the county. Bats use woodland and overhanging cliff faces as roosts and could therefore be present within mineral workings.

Dormice

- 1.1.36 Dormice inhabit deciduous woodland with scrub, coppiced woodlands and hedgerows, they sleep in nests made of honeysuckle bark.

Fungi

- 1.1.37 There is one species of fungi, *Conocybe fimetaria*, found in the County that is listed in the Red Data Book. This species favours lowland acid grassland.

Reptiles

- 1.1.38 Adder, natterjack toad and great crested newt are of note in the county. With regard to the great crested newt and natterjack toads, contamination of fresh water bodies should be avoided.

Butterfly and moths

- 1.1.39 There are nine protected species of moth and butterfly in the county including the small blue which exists in the north Chilterns. It exists mainly in localised colonies on chalk downland and in quarries, both active and abandoned, where kidney vetch grows. Also of note is the light feathered rustic moth.

Birds

- 1.1.40 There are a total of twelve species of nationally important bird within the county. Five species of bird are protected under Special Areas of Conservation and a further thirteen are priorities for conservation action.

Plants

- 1.1.41 There are four national priority plant species within the county and 24 further species of conservation concern.

Fish

- 1.1.42 There is one species of fish, the Spined Loach, protected under BAP's. Care should be taken to avoid damage to its aquatic habitat. In the UK, spined loach *Cobitis taenia* appear to be restricted to just five east-flowing river systems in eastern England – the Rivers Trent, Welland, Witham, Nene and Great Ouse, with their associated waterways (JNCC 2005).

Invertebrates

- 1.1.43 There are 18 species of invertebrate within the county, 3 are SAP (Species Action Plan Priority Species) species and 15 are found in the Red Data Book.

Issues associated with Waste Management

- 1.1.44 All waste management activities can have an effect on biodiversity due to:
- Direct land take and associated habitat loss including fragmentation of habitats;
 - Effects from the pollution and disturbance caused by the transport of waste;
 - Changes in air quality, water quality, noise, vibration, light emissions, dust deposition as a result of construction and operation;
 - Changes in pattern of human activity and associated disturbance or damage;
 - Creation of barriers or other obstacles affecting the movement of animals;
 - Changes in habitat management (this may be both positive and negative);
 - Changes in soil conditions (this may be both positive and negative);
 - Changes in number of predators and/or prey;
 - Introduction of new habitats and/or species; and
 - Contribution to the green infrastructure and the wider biodiversity network through sensitive restoration.
- 1.1.45 The effects of waste management on designated or valued sites are important and these areas should be avoided where possible. However, biodiversity outside these areas and encouraging activities to support the achievements of BAP targets are also important. It is often undesignated (but valuable) linking habitats that are vital for the biodiversity of an area.

- 1.1.46 If waste management does impact upon biodiversity, then compensation measures and mitigation is required. Mitigation should be pro-active through the plan through site selection, timing, and consideration of alternatives.
- 1.1.47 Waste management can have a positive impact on biodiversity particularly through good site management and the restoration of old landfill sites may provide an opportunity to create some of the habitats prioritised in local Biodiversity/Habitat Action Plans. Some of the larger waste management companies now have biodiversity action plans for their own sites.
- 1.1.48 Modelling work commissioned by the Highways Agency to assess the level of growth proposed in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy indicates that, unless traffic is managed, sections of the trunk road network in the County may experience increased levels of congestion, leading to increased noise and deterioration in air quality and have an effect on biodiversity etc.

Trends

- 1.1.49 Several habitat types have been in decline over the past few years and these include:
- Woodland;
 - River habitat;
 - Heathland and acid grassland;
 - Calcareous Grassland; and
 - Hedgerows.
- 1.1.50 With increased development, care must be taken to ensure that impact on habitats and species is kept to a minimum and where possible enhanced.
- 1.1.51 The very best nationally important wildlife sites in the County appear to be doing relatively well but almost half of the County Wildlife Sites monitored are not in good condition (BCC Natural Environment Indicators):
- Wildflower grassland and heaths are a major cause for concern.
 - Rivers and wetlands are showing consistent improvement.
 - More land is going into environmentally sensitive management schemes but the percentage of total land covered is still very small. It is not known how much private conservation initiatives add to this total.
 - There are worrying declines of farmland, woodland and some urban birds.

Scoping Consultation

Key Issues and Implications for Waste Planning

- Diversity doesn't have to be in a specially designated site for it to be important. Needs to be recognition that protected species occur outside designated sites. Issue needs to be raised as very small area of Bedford is designated.
- Various data sets - Ancient woodland and Grassland (compiled by English Nature) as well as a national project for veteran trees could be referred to.
- Need to look at wider picture, green infrastructure, green corridors etc. Green infrastructure plan.
- Need to make sure that County Wildlife sites are referred to.
- Refer to modelling work commissioned by the Highways Agency to assess the level of growth proposed in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy and the links between increased levels of congestion and the effects on biodiversity.
- Put a more balanced issues section forward as appears negative. Need to look at what outcomes can have a positive effect in terms of contributions, wider environment etc.
- Developer contributions can be utilised for improving locally native flora and fauna (biodiversity).
- Litter needs to be referenced within the appropriate section
- Problems may arise if sites are "overtied".

Comments on the Objectives for the SA

- "where appropriate" may need to be included, although there is a danger that this could result in nothing being done.
- Alternative wording - "To protect and enhance sites designated for their ecological value where opportunities arise."
- Include an objective that looks to enhance biodiversity e.g. use of waste as manure.
- Include "wider biodiversity and other green infrastructure." Add: Ensure that waste sites do not affect habitat corridors. Where barriers to movement are created, alternative provision should be made.
- May need to consider impacts further afield than just Bedfordshire.
- Re draft indicator 2: Include actions that result in habitat creation or extension.
- Does the plan mention pollution, emissions (active and passive) and human activities associated with waste?
- Re draft indicator 2: Include 'degradation'.
- County Wildlife Sites should be mentioned specifically in Objective 2.

Relevant Objectives for the SA

- 1.1.52 Taking into account all of the above information the following objectives and indicators have been chosen for the SA:

SA Objectives	SA Questions. Does the plan...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect and enhance sites designated for their ecological value where opportunities arise. To protect and enhance the wider biodiversity and other green infrastructure within the County. Ensure that waste sites do not affect habitat corridors. Where barriers to movement are created, alternative provision should be made. Maximise potential biodiversity value of existing waste sites. Maximise restoration opportunities for biodiversity at the end use of waste sites and contribute to realising local and national BAP targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include actions that directly or indirectly affect Natura 2000 sites, SSSIs or other designated sites including County Wildlife Sites? Include actions that will cause habitat loss, fragmentation or degradation? : Include actions that result in habitat creation or extension. Include actions that help to reach targets or compromise targets of BAPs? Include actions to ensure restoration to biodiversity is a priority where appropriate?

Sources of data

- Natural England website
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Local BAP – Bedfordshire and Luton
- ~~<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/lbap.aspx?id=369>~~
- The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough <http://www.wildlifebcnp.org/bedsbap/pdf/grndpine.pdf>
- The Greensand Trust for Bedfordshire County Council (March 2005): The Natural Environment: Indicators of Sustainable Development in Bedfordshire.
- Bedfordshire County Council www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- Luton’s Heritage <http://www.visitbeds-luton.com/luton/heritage.htm>
- Treweek Environmental Consultants (2007): *Appropriate Assessment Screening for the Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals Development Plan Documents.*
- Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan: First Review: Deposit Draft Incorporating Proposed Modifications (PM)
- Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan <http://www.wildlifebcnp.org.uk/bedsbap/bllbap.htm>
- Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan <http://www.bedford.gov.uk/bedford/planning/CS%20Scoping%20Report%20final.pdf>
- South Bedfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2004) Review http://www.southbeds.gov.uk/Local_Plan/contentsfr.html
- Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011 <http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/BedsCC/SDsps.nsf/Web/ThePage/Bedfordshire+Structure+Plan+2011>
- MAGIC: www.magic.gov.uk

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- Ancient Tree Hunt: <http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk>
- Wildlife Trust, Environment and Non-Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee (February 2005): Briefing Note – Wildlife Trust Statement, Review of Conservation.
- Ancient Tree Forum website: <http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/ancient-tree-forum/atfaboutus/vision.htm>
- Natural England: http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/gis/tech_aw.htm
- Woodland Trust website: <http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/campaigns/briefingsmore/ancientwoods.htm>

Data Gaps

- More recent BAP targets.
- Information on the effect that waste management is having on biodiversity in Bedfordshire at the moment.
- Grassland data sets are currently being updated by English Nature and County sets are incomplete.

Table 1: Bedfordshire SSSIs and NNRs		
Reserve	Size	Details
BARTON HILLS NNR and SSSI	44ha	Barton Hills NNR and SSSI is an example of chalk grassland typical of the northern Chilterns. The site also includes areas of beech woodland and ash-maple woodland. There is also a range of characteristic chalk grassland plants such as wild thyme, horseshoe vetch, marjoram and rockrose, and a good show of orchids in summer. Butterflies are a feature of the site with large numbers of chalkhill blue, marbled white and grizzled skipper.
KING'S WOOD, HEATH & REACH NNR	63ha	The reserve is an important area of ancient semi-natural woodland. Birch, sessile oak, bracken and heather grow in the sandy areas, with pedunculate oak, hornbeam and dog's mercury on the clay. The site is also home to rare mosses and fungi and there are recent records of the purple emperor butterfly here.
KNOCKING HOE NNR and SSSI	9ha	Knocking Hoe NNR and SSSI is an area of chalk grassland at the north end of the Chilterns. The site is of exceptional importance in supporting large populations of a number of rare plants.
BIDDENHAM PIT SSSI	0.41ha	This old gravel pit provides exposures in terrace gravel laid down by the Bedfordshire Ouse. The deposits here include clayey and silty layers, which have yielded interglacial mollusca and mammalian remains.
BLOW'S DOWN SSSI	46ha	Blow's Down is part of the Lower Chalk escarpment situated to the south east of Dunstable. Here the escarpment changes abruptly from a north west aspect to south west facing and the chalk is capped by clay. These marked geographical and geological features which also include a small disused quarry and old banks associated with medieval cultivation terraces, have influenced the development of a wide range of grassland communities which are a particular feature of this site.
COOPER'S HILL SSSI	18.06ha	Cooper's Hill is the best remaining example in Bedfordshire of the once more extensive heathland situated on the thin acidic soils of the Lower Greensand ridge. Lowland heath has a limited distribution in south eastern England where it has declined markedly in recent years.
DEACON HILL SSSI	35.4ha	Deacon Hill is a remnant of chalk downland with a characteristic species rich, calcareous grassland flora. Many of the plants are now uncommon in the county
DOUBLE ARCHES PIT SSSI	1.61ha	This locality shows the best accessible exposure of Lower Greensand and Gault in the Leighton Buzzard area, an area celebrated for its outcrops of these rocks. The study of these Lower Cretaceous rock units locally has played an important part in the elucidation of sedimentary, fossil and environmental changes through time in the Cambridge-Bedford province.
DROPSHOT MARSH SSSI	2.73ha	Dropshot Marsh represents a type of wetland habitat once common in South Bedfordshire where a series of springs issue at the junction of glacial gravels with the underlying impervious Oxford clay. The Marsh has a mosaic of vegetation associations merging into neutral grassland and the flora is rich with both marsh and meadow species. An unusual feature of the marsh is a small area of 'quaking bog'.
DUNSTABLE AND WHIPSNADDE DOWNS SSSI	73.36ha	A steep escarpment situated on the Middle Chalk, this site extends for 3km between Dunstable and Whipsnade. With a westerly aspect, the steep slopes support a typical chalk downland flora, a habitat greatly reduced in extent both within Bedfordshire and nationally.
FANCOTT WOODS AND MEADOWS SSSI	13.26ha	Fancott meadows are mainly ancient ridge and furrow, exhibiting the characteristic species richness of unimproved neutral grassland traditionally managed for hay and grazing. Part of the site is surrounded by a strip of semi-natural woodland with a varied ground flora and providing shelter for the meadow.
FELMERSHAM	21.64ha	Located on River Gravels between Sharnbrook and Felmersham, this site

Table 1: Bedfordshire SSSIs and NNRs

Reserve	Size	Details
GRAVEL PITS SSSI		consists of a series of flooded pits which were active until about 1945. Many habitats have developed, with tall fen communities surrounding open water, neutral grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodland. This variety of habitat supports a very diverse flora, including several species rare and declining in the county and an exceptionally high number of dragonfly <i>Odonata</i> species.
FLITWICK MOOR SSSI	59.78ha	Flitwick Moor is a remnant of a eutrophic (nutrient rich), valley mire and the largest area of wetland in Bedfordshire. Nationally this is a habitat that has become increasingly uncommon especially in south east England where it is most characteristic. The moor is renowned for both its flora and rich invertebrate fauna.
GALLEY AND WARDEN HILLS SSSI	46.95ha	Located on the northern edge of Luton, and situated on the Middle Chalk with an overlying cap of claywith- flints, this site supports areas of unimproved neutral and calcareous grassland with structural variety provided by scattered and dense scrub. It supports a characteristic downland flora, including many locally uncommon species and nationally rare plants.
HANGER WOODS SSSI	24.12ha	Situated on the poorly drained soils of the boulder clay, the wood extends along the gentle north west facing slope of a narrow ridge. It represents a habitat which is very scarce in Bedfordshire, a poorly wooded county, and which has generally declined throughout its range in lowland England. Hanger Wood is one of the best remaining examples of wet ash-maple woodland in Bedfordshire exhibiting a flora characteristic of the heavy, slightly basic clay soils. The wood is typical of an ancient, semi-natural woodland, formerly managed as coppice-with-standards with a rich variety of shrubs and a diverse ground flora including species uncommon in the county.
HOUGHTON REGIS MARL LAKES SSSI	20.12ha	Houghton Regis Marl Lakes have developed in a large disused quarry within the Lower Chalk north of Dunstable. The Lakes are an example of habitat type which is the rarest form of standing water in Britain confined to chalk or limestone areas with very few examples in southern England. A mosaic of wetland communities have developed associated both with the open water and water-logged areas surrounding the lakes including examples of base rich fen. This extensive area supports a range of other species associated with wetland habitats including an outstanding assemblage of dragonfly, as well as being an important ornithological site in the county.
KENSWORTH CHALK PITS SSSI	131.33ha	This site provides the best Chalk Rock exposure in central England, a distinct band which forms a marker horizon in the late Cretaceous Period. The top surface of the Chalk Rock is extremely fossiliferous and has yielded many well preserved and rare specimens including ammonites.
KINGS AND BAKERS WOODS AND HEATHS SSSI	212.8ha	The site represents the largest area of woodland in Bedfordshire as well as remnants of lowland heath and acidic grassland. It lies on the Boulder Clay passing to Lower Greensand, producing an outstanding series of soil types ranging from slightly calcareous to acid and from wet to well drained. This exceptional range is reflected in the rich variety of species and habitats. Most of the wood is ancient and the diverse tree and shrub layer shows wide structural variety derived from centuries of coppice and high forest management.
KINGS WOOD AND GLEBE MEADOWS, HOUGHTON CONQUEST SSSI	36.10ha	Kings Wood is an example of ash/maple woodland, characteristic of the heavy Oxford and Boulder Clays. It represents a habitat which has become increasingly scarce in Bedfordshire and over its natural range in lowland England. The wood demonstrates the structural and biological diversity of an ancient, seminatural woodland, and the rich flora includes several species which are uncommon within the county.
MARSTON THRIFT SSSI	37.41ha	Marston Thrift is an example of ash/maple woodland, characteristic of the heavy Oxford and Boulder Clays. It represents a habitat which has become increasingly scarce in Bedfordshire and over its natural range in lowland England. The wood is characteristic of an ancient, semi-natural woodland, formerly managed as

Table 1: Bedfordshire SSSIs and NNRs

Reserve	Size	Details
		coppice-with standards. The wood is benefiting from the re-establishment of this traditional form of management in some areas.
MAULDEN CHURCH MEADOW SSSI	4.14ha	Maulden Church Meadow is an unimproved pasture situated on the Lower Greensand ridge about 11 km south of Bedford. The higher northern part of the meadow rests on a thin cap of boulder clay, and supports neutral grassland communities which are dominant over most of the site. The Lower Greensand is exposed in the southernmost part of the meadow and here a more acidic grassland community has developed. Maulden Church Meadow represents a habitat that is now scarce throughout lowland Britain due largely to changes in agricultural practice.
MAULDEN HEATH	7.56ha	Maulden Heath is an example of lowland acidic grassland, situated on a gentle south-facing slope of the Lower Greensand ridge near Clophill, about 11 miles south of Bedford. The site consists of two separate areas supporting characteristic plant communities with variations which reflect their distinctive topographies. The grassland represents a habitat type uncommon nationally and restricted in its distribution in Bedfordshire where it is now one of the few remaining examples.
MAULDEN HILL AND PENNYFATHER'S HILL	148.77ha	This is a large block of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland situated 10 km south of Bedford. The site supports an exceptionally rich invertebrate fauna including both county and national rarities and therefore has a distinctive and important contribution to make to invertebrate conservation in Bedfordshire. Especially important is the ride-associated invertebrate fauna.
NARES GLADLEY MARSH SSSI	5.12ha	Nares Gladley Marsh is situated on the alluvial deposits which overlie the Lower Greensand in the valley of the River Ouzel in Bedfordshire, about 3 km north west of Leighton Buzzard. A series of springs emerging from the Greensand form a complex of wet flushes surrounded by marshy grassland which have developed rich plant communities. These grade into unimproved acidic grassland on the drier slopes. The site represents one of the best remaining river valley and hillside marsh systems in the county and is typical of wetland habitat now seriously reduced in extent nationally.
NINE ACRES PIT SSSI	20.72ha	This locality shows a Lower Cretaceous section spanning the Aptian and Albian stages, including the finest development of Carstone and Shenley Limestone in the Leighton Buzzard area as well as superb exposures of dune bedding in the Upper Woburn Sands.
ODELL GREAT WOOD SSSI	85.69ha	A large and mostly unspoilt example of wet ash-maple woodland with an exceptionally rich flora. It is in many respects the best example in Bedfordshire of this type of woodland, which has become increasingly scarce throughout its range in southern and eastern England.
POTTON WOOD SSSI	85.51ha	Potton Wood is a large ancient woodland of the wet ash-maple type which is largely restricted in its national distribution to the heavy soils of lowland Britain. The wood has a structure and rich flora characteristic of the West Cambs Boulder Clay woodland group. Most of the wood is primary with some very old secondary woodland on ridge and furrow. Some of the rides are a particularly valuable element of the wood, supporting a rich neutral grassland flora including species uncommon in the county.
PULLOXHILL MARSH SSSI	5.08ha	A very good example of a base-rich marsh, occurring in this part of the county where springs arise along the sedge of a cap of glacial gravel overlying impervious Gault clay. This type of habitat, although widely distributed in southern Britain has been greatly diminished both in extent and quality as a result of drainage and changes in agricultural practice.
SANDY WARREN SSSI	16.40ha	This site supports one of the few remaining examples in Bedfordshire of the once more extensive heathland situated on the acidic soils of the Lower Greensand ridge and representing one of the more northerly examples of lowland heath of the Anglo-Norman association.

Table 1: Bedfordshire SSSIs and NNRs

Reserve	Size	Details
SMITHCOMBE, SHARPENHOE AND SUNDON HILLS SSSI	86.14ha	Between Sundon and Streatley, on the steep sinuous north-facing Lower Chalk escarpment are areas of unimproved calcareous grassland with a rich assemblage of characteristic plants. The natural process of habitat change is amply illustrated by the formation of species-rich scrub which merges into mature beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> woodland. Many of the plants associated with this site are now uncommon in the county and nationally this is a habitat that has been greatly reduced both in extent and quality through agricultural improvement and changes in agricultural practice.
SOUTHILL LAKES AND WOODS SSSI	25.28ha	Southill Woods is an example of a wet valley alderwood which has developed where springs and flushes arise at the junction of the Lower Greensand with the Gault Clay of mid-Bedfordshire. The woodland grades westward into open, tall fen vegetation. A small stream bisects the wood, and where it meets Southill lake there is an area of old reed bed. The lake is important for its small island which is occupied by the larger of only two heronries in the county. Valley alderwood is uncommon both in the county and throughout eastern England. Drainage has generally reduced the extent of wetland habitats nationally.
STEVINGTON MARSH SSSI	7.48ha	Stevington Marshes are situated next to the river Great Ouse about 9 km north-west of Bedford. The site is important not only for supporting wetland communities, a habitat uncommon in Bedfordshire and much reduced in extent and quality nationally, but also the surrounding pastures of Jurassic Limestone grassland which are very restricted in distribution throughout eastern England.
SUNDON CHALK QUARRY SSSI	26.17ha	Sundon Chalk Quarries are part of a large disused complex of chalk pits just to the west of Upper Sundon in Bedfordshire. Within the quarries is found a range of habitats including small areas of fen, lakes, chalk grassland, species-rich scrub and developing woodland. This variety of habitat has enabled a rich and varied insect fauna to develop making this one of the most important invertebrate sites in the county. An outstanding assemblage of 16 breeding species of dragonfly and damselfly have been recorded from the lakes and wetlands.
SWINESHEAD WOOD SSSI	21.57ha	Swineshead Wood demonstrates the structural and biological diversity associated with ancient, seminatural woodland. The wood is an example of ash/maple woodland, characteristic of heavy Oxford and Boulder Clay and has been managed in the past as coppice with standards. Uniformly wet, this site has a rich flora including species associated with ancient woodland sites. The woodland represents a habitat that has become increasingly scarce both within Bedfordshire and nationally.
TEBWORTH MARSH SSSI	5.58ha	This is one of the largest surviving base-rich marshes in the county, with a diverse community. The marsh is a mosaic of different plant associations, dominated by species typical of a base-rich habitat but with some components indicative of more acidic conditions.
TILWICK MEADOW SSSI	2.56ha	Tilwick Meadow is a small area of unimproved neutral grassland situated about 7 km north of Bedford on the undulating chalk boulder clay, which in this part of northern Bedfordshire overlies the Oxford Clay. The meadow, which is on the site of a medieval village abandoned during the black death, has developed an extremely rich flora and represents a habitat that is now both rare within the county and nationally uncommon due largely to changes in agricultural practice.
TOTTERNHOE CHALK QUARRY SSSI	13.41ha	The site is situated on a north-west facing slope of the Chilterns escarpment which has been much quarried in the past. It supports species-rich unimproved chalk grassland which has close affinities with that of the nearby Totternhoe Knolls SSSI. The grassland includes a mosaic of plant associations related to the uneven terrain and variety of aspects. The rich assemblage of characteristic chalk grassland plants includes several county and national rarities. In the central part of the site the grassland has been replaced by dense shrub. Chalk grassland is a habitat under threat, having been greatly reduced in extent both locally in Bedfordshire and nationally.

Table 1: Bedfordshire SSSIs and NNRs

Reserve	Size	Details
TOTTERNHOE KNOLLS SSSI	13.08ha	Totternhoe Knolls is a remnant of a chalk downland with characteristic species-rich calcareous grassland flora. Situated on a bluff of the lower chalk the site incorporates a Norman earthworks and old stone quarry workings. Chalk grassland has become greatly reduced in extent both locally and nationally. Within Bedfordshire extensive areas of the downland have been lost through agricultural reclamation and changes in management practice.
TOTTERNHOE STONE PIT SSSI	2.05ha	The phosphatic base of the Totternhoe Stone is exposed at this site. It consists of a lime mud containing phosphatic pebbles and a rich late Cretaceous deposit of shark teeth. It has yielded many taxa of small sharks. Working upwards through the deposit the faunal composition changes. The basal part contains larger teeth, but as the sediment fines upwards small rays make an appearance.
WAVENDON HEATH PONDS SSSI	4.72ha	Wavendon Heath is located 2km north-west of Woburn and is situated on the Lower Greensand ridge. The site includes several habitats including three ponds representing areas of acidic mire and supporting plant communities uncommon throughout eastern England, two meadows of unimproved and semi-improved acid grassland, and an area of damp birch woodland. The importance of this site centres on the three ponds artificially created by dams across a small valley and fed by a wet flush on the hill slope. They represent a habitat characteristic of the Bedfordshire Greensand but now uncommon due to agricultural changes and afforestation.
YELDEN MEADOWS SSSI	2.76ha	Yelden Meadows are a fine example of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland occurring on clay in North Bedfordshire. This habitat has been greatly reduced in extent nationally and is now rare in Bedfordshire. The grassland community on the site is an example of <i>Alopecurus pratensis-Sanguisorba officinalis</i> flood meadow. This community type is noted for a species-rich, varied sward of grasses and herbs which has been maintained traditionally as a hay meadow with grazing during the winter. The <i>Alepocurus-Sanguisorba</i> community is a lowland grassland that, once common, is now local in the midlands and southern England. This decline has primarily been due to agricultural improvement and such losses are still continuing.

Source: Natural England