



East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# Hedgehog Recovery Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document

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Revision due on preparation of updated Local Plan

**This policy aligns with the following UN Sustainability Goals**



**Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities**



**Goal 15 Life On Land**

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# 1. The purpose of this document

This Design Guide is a Supplementary Planning Document, which will be used to help make decisions on planning applications. Its primary purpose is to help make sure new development in East Cambridgeshire protects and enhances habitats for hedgehogs, with the particular aim of creating new development which supports the recovery of hedgehog numbers in East Cambridgeshire.

This is the final document adopted by East Cambridgeshire District Council in September 2024, following a period of public consultation in May 2024. It will be used to assist in the determination of planning applications. We will expect developers to follow this document when preparing their planning applications.

The council already has a Natural Environment Supplementary Planning Document as well as other information relating to Biodiversity Net Gain and has other nature related plans. However, following a public vote in 2023, the people of East Cambridgeshire voted for hedgehogs to receive special attention and focus, with the aim of helping hedgehog numbers recover. Following that public vote, the Council has started a wide-ranging long term campaign to help hedgehogs, and this hedgehog specific Design Guide is just one part of that programme.

We have many hedgehogs in East Cambridgeshire, but like everywhere else in the country, their numbers are in decline, and we need to do all we can to help their numbers recover. One way to do this is to make sure new developments take simple steps which will help hedgehogs thrive in the new communities being built.

We hope many people will be interested in what this document is trying to achieve, but the primary audience for it are all those involved in the planning system. For example, developers, planning officers making decisions on planning applications and local residents or other community groups making representations on planning applications.

This design guide is here to help applicants. There is already a lot of legislation and national policy for you to comply with in terms of the natural environment, and this design guide aims to help you demonstrate how your new development is assisting with nature recovery.



## 2. An introduction to the Hedgehog Recovery Design Guide

Many native animals are under serious threat, one of which is the beloved hedgehog. The hedgehog (*Erinaceus Europaeus*) is now officially classed as ‘vulnerable to extinction’ on the [Red List for British Mammals \(found at \[www.mammal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MS\\\_RL20\\\_Britain.pdf\]\(http://www.mammal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MS\_RL20\_Britain.pdf\), opens in new window\)](http://www.mammal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MS_RL20_Britain.pdf). We lost at least 46% over the period since the turn of the millennium, and probably around two-thirds or more if we go back to the 1980s, leaving a total population now of just 500,000 remaining. That’s less than 1 hedgehog for every 100 people living in the UK.

It is this rapid decline which is of considerable concern. If the trend continues, they could become extinct within a generation.

Hedgehogs were once a common sight, but are now becoming a rare sighting in much of the country. The East of England, including Cambridgeshire, was once a stronghold for hedgehog numbers, but has seen some of the most severe declines. East Cambridgeshire is no exception. The abundance of hedgehogs in East Cambridgeshire is estimated to be down by well over 50% in the past 20 to 30 years, though long-term data at a district level is not readily available to be certain of the scale of losses.

Both rural and urban hedgehogs are declining, but for a range of reasons. According to Hedgehog Street ([website found at \[www.hedgehogstreet.org/\]\(http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/\), opens in a new window](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/)) the main likely reasons for rural hedgehog decline are:

- widespread use of pesticides reduces the invertebrates hedgehogs eat
- larger field sizes make it difficult for hedgehogs to move around the landscape
- hedgerow management by flailing now leads to hedges with gaps in bases, poor for nesting
- intensive management of pastures with herbicides and fertilizers reduce the amount of invertebrates
- increasing badgers, the main natural predator of hedgehogs, may have an effect where habitat is already degraded
- ploughing which can destroy permanent pastures



According to Hedgehog Street the main likely reasons for urban hedgehog decline are:

- impermeable garden fencing and walls limits the area of connected land available
- gardens lost to car parking or decking directly reduces foraging area
- busy roads causing mortalities, as well as this, they can disrupt dispersal routes for hedgehogs
- new developments usually lacking any connectivity between gardens
- over-management and development destroying hibernation habitats (typically scrubby or brambly areas)
- over-tidy gardening can remove dead wood, replace foraging areas with drives and decking and clear away overgrown corners
- use of pesticides and slug pellets can poison animals and kills the invertebrates that hedgehogs eat (as well as indirect poisoning of hedgehogs via hedgehogs eating poisoned invertebrates)

Following a public vote identifying hedgehogs as the ‘people’s choice’ for special assistance, East Cambridgeshire District Council has committed to a long-term programme of hedgehog recovery in the district, trying to address as much as it can the issues identified above, and working with as many people as possible.

This design guide is just one small part of that overall hedgehog recovery programme. It cannot solve all of the problems identified above, but it can contribute to finding solutions for some of them and especially some of the issues faced by urban hedgehogs.

Via this design guide, we would like to make sure that all new development, from a single house to a new housing estate and from a small business premise to a new business park, do their bit to help encourage the recovery in hedgehog numbers.

The policy in this design guide will assist all those involved in the planning system to recognise the important role they have in creating an environment where hedgehogs can thrive.

This document has been prepared under Town and Country Planning legislation as a supplementary planning document. This document is a material consideration that will need to be considered when planning decisions are made.



### 3. National and local context

#### National law

Hedgehogs are protected by British law under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to kill or capture them. They are also protected in Britain under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), prohibiting cruelty and mistreatment.

They're listed as a Species of Principle Importance in England under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Section 41.

More generally, public bodies such as East Cambridgeshire District Council have a duty under the NERC Act 2006 Section 40 to determine such policies and actions in order to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. The section explicitly says that, to achieve that overall aim, 'The action which may be taken by the authority to further the general biodiversity objective includes, in particular, action taken for the purpose of—(a)conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a population of a particular species'.

Biodiversity Net Gain, arising from the Environment Act, is also now a key part of the planning system. For the avoidance of doubt, nothing in this design guide should be taken to read as overriding the provisions of the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. Whilst it is considered extremely unlikely, if there is ever any conflict arising between this design guide and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, then the legal requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain prevail.

#### National planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) is the primary national planning policy document. Whilst this does not refer to hedgehogs specifically, it requires that 'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment' as a matter of principle, and that development should be 'providing net gains for biodiversity'.

The supporting 'live' [National Planning Policy Guidance \(NPPG\) \(found at \[www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment\]\(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment\), opens a new window\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment) provides extensive planning policy guidance on the natural environment, and even explicitly refers to hedgehogs by way of an example of where developers can take action. As stated, 'Relatively small features can often achieve important benefits for wildlife, such as incorporating 'swift bricks' and bat boxes in developments and providing safe routes for hedgehogs between different areas of habitat.'



## Local planning policy

The East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) is the primary planning policy document for East Cambridgeshire, together with Neighbourhood Plans in those parishes that have decided to prepare a parish-based planning policy document. Hedgehogs are not explicitly referred to in the Local Plan, but Policy ENV7 Biodiversity and Geology includes the following introductory paragraph.

‘Policy ENV7 Biodiversity and Geology

All development proposals will be required to:

- protect the biodiversity and geological value of land and buildings and minimise harm to or loss of environmental features, such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, wetland and ponds
- provide appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement or replacement of features and/or compensatory work that will enhance or recreate habitats on or off site where harm to environmental features and habitat is unavoidable
- maximise opportunities for creation, restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats as an integral part of development proposals.’

## Justification for supplementary planning policy on hedgehog recovery

There is, therefore, a clear legislative duty placed on East Cambridgeshire District Council to take action to help conserve and enhance biodiversity, together with explicit legislation encouraging some of those actions to be species specific.

Wider legislation recognises the importance of hedgehogs, and their general protection from harm.

There is also clear national and local planning policy identifying the important role the planning system has on enhancing the natural environment and boosting biodiversity.

With such clear national and local legal and policy support, together with a clear locally expressed desire to support hedgehog recovery, there are strong grounds to prepare specific local planning policy to help hedgehog numbers recover via new development.



## 4. Policy

Unlike some species, hedgehogs can thrive in urban environments. Gardens and public open spaces can provide excellent habitats and feeding opportunities for hedgehogs, as well as being a safe haven from their main natural predator, the badger. Generally speaking, and unlike most urban wildlife, domestic pets such as cats are unlikely to cause hedgehogs too many problems, though sometimes dogs can be a threat, especially for young hedgehogs (hoglets).

However, modern urban areas, such as housing estates and business parks, have placed considerable barriers to hedgehog success.

Newly constructed estates often have boundary fences and walls which encircle properties, preventing hedgehogs from roaming from one garden to another for food (and, typically, hedgehogs need to roam 2km a night for food). Not only do such boundary blockages cause roaming problems in themselves, but it pushes hedgehogs into public highways where there is high risk of road fatalities.

Newly laid out gardens are often devoid of any natural habitats suitable for hedgehog foraging, sleeping or hibernating.

Areas to the side or front of properties are all too often laid out with large areas of tarmac, of no use to a foraging hedgehog. Some rear gardens may have extensive decking provided, further preventing access to foraging areas. In the worst examples, areas of 'grass' are even provided as artificial grass, of no value to hedgehogs (or any other animals for that matter) at all.

To address these issues, the following policy applies.

### **Policy HR1 – Hedgehog Design Guide**

According to the BigHedgehogMap, hedgehogs have been sighted and recorded in virtually every parish across East Cambridgeshire. Developers should therefore work on a precautionary basis and assume that their site has at the very least the potential to be a home and/or foraging ground for hedgehogs.

Site specific surveys which attempt to evidence that no hedgehogs exist on the site shall not be used as evidence to avoid taking action as required by this policy, on the basis that hedgehogs can roam 2km per night and that the whole of East Cambridgeshire is deemed suitable in principle for hedgehogs to be present.

For all residential development, excluding householder applications, the planning application must provide a scheme of hedgehog recovery proposals, irrespective of whether hedgehogs are known to be on site or not.



Such a scheme must:

- a. where hedgehogs are known to be present on site, include a hedgehog management plan which provides a detailed arrangement for the conservation and enhancement of hedgehog habitats on site
- b. identify suitable measures for the construction stage which has the purpose of not disturbing habitats where hedgehogs are known to be located or have a reasonable prospect of being found (even if not found by sight), unless such habitats are proposed to be removed as part of the planning application and in which case reasonable measures be put in place to check for hedgehogs (any unexpected hedgehogs which are found must be appropriately relocated)
- c. identify the type of boundary treatment, with hedging preferred to fencing or walls if possible, such hedging should be native and ideally invertebrate friendly hedging, thereby providing a higher degree of invertebrates for hedgehogs to feed on (examples species include, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Yew *Taxus baccata*, Dog Rose *Rosa canina*, Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*, Bird cherry *Prunus padus*)
- d. where a wall or fence is to be used as the boundary treatment, insert at least one hedgehog hole along each such boundary wall or fence, with such a hole meeting the standards set out on the 'Hedgehog Holes - Standard Requirements' box below, unless that boundary is directly adjacent to a public road with no meaningful verge or footpath between the road and the boundary treatment
- e. demonstrate how the use of hard standing areas and garden decking is proposed to be kept to a minimum necessary to achieve the desired or required standards, whilst ensuring natural space is also created
- f. avoid all use of artificial grass, unless there is clear evidence why such provision is necessary, such as for health and safety reasons (low maintenance will not be accepted as a reason for installing artificial grass)

For major residential development, the scheme must also:

- g. identify, on any open space provided with the development (that is, not private individual gardens, but could be private shared gardens or more general public open space), an element of hedgehog friendly habitat to be created, such as hedgerow planting, scrub patches and loose (but safe) log piles
- h. identify where hedgehog homes will be installed in suitable locations (that is, within the hedgehog friendly habitat), on a minimum ratio of approximately one such hedgehog home (rounded up) per 20 domestic homes provided as part of the development
- i. Consider, for those development schemes which involve more substantial road infrastructure (such as spine roads or through routes), the installing of underground passes suitable for hedgehogs, especially where such passes would help connect two separate habitats likely suitable for hedgehog habitation and foraging

For non-residential development, the provisions set out above for residential based development proposals equally apply to non-residential development if the circumstances of the site, and the proposed use of the site, provides reasonable prospects for one or more of the above provisions to be achieved.

## Hedgehog Holes - Standard Requirements

1. Each hole must be at ground level and must create a gap through the fence or wall of approximately 13cm wide and 13cm high. Larger holes should be avoided, as that will encourage unwanted access by pets such as cats or dogs.
2. Each hole must have an appropriate sign near to the hole to educate the property owner of the purpose of the hole. For example, a small sign with the words 'Hedgehog Highway - please keep open' would be suitable. Such a sign must be made with a durable material.
3. The position of the hole along the boundary should be in a suitable place likely accessible to hedgehogs. For example, it should not be located near drains or other wet areas, nor any area which would require a hedgehog to 'step up' to reach it.

Examples of Hedgehog Holes can be found at [www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/) (opens in new window).



## 5. Implementation

To ensure the provisions of this design guide are not only considered at the design and decision stage, but are also delivered as the development proceeds, the council intends to insert the following words as a standard condition to any planning approval. However, the council reserves the right to amend the following words, should a particular development scheme warrant it.

### Standard condition for Outline Planning Applications

No occupation of the development shall take place until a scheme of hedgehog recovery measures has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be one or both of the following:

- where proposed for public spaces, be installed prior to the first occupation of the development
- where proposed as part of a private garden, be installed prior to the first occupation of the dwelling to which the garden relates

Thereafter, the approved measures shall be maintained for a minimum of 10 years following their installation.

This is to protect and enhance species in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and in accordance with policy SPD HR1 of the Hedgehog Recovery SPD 2024.

### Standard condition for Full Planning Applications

Either:

- a. If the detailed scheme of hedgehog recovery proposals are set out and agreed as part of the full planning permission, then it is likely that a simple cross reference to those proposals will be added as part of the standard condition 'Development shall be carried out in accordance with the drawings and documents listed below...'
- b. If a detailed scheme of hedgehog recovery proposals is not set out or agreed as part of the approved full permission, then it is likely a condition will be added as per the outline planning application standard condition set out above.

### Enforcement

The council has a dedicated monitoring and enforcement planning service, making sure that development is built in accordance with the conditions applied to it.

Such enforcement activities are likely to increase in the future, as the council will have wider biodiversity net gain monitoring duties and, where necessary, enforcement of any breaches.

The council is committed to spot checks of all new development to make sure hedgehog recovery measures approved as part of planning applications are delivered, and then maintained in the future.

End of document.