

## **Background to Policy 8: Roydon Common Buffer Zone**

At the outset of developing the neighbourhood plan John Hiskett from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (Senior Conservation Officer) attended one of the steering group meetings in October 2017 to discuss green buffer zones and the development of wildlife corridors.

During consultation activities the community identified that they really valued the areas importance for wildlife, with Roydon Common and other wildlife designations identified as being an asset to the villages. There was strong support for protecting and enhancing the environment and these assets, and concern that development, including significant growth outside of the plan area, could impact upon them.

There was discussion at Steering Group meetings about how these wildlife designations could be protected within the neighbourhood plan. There was a lot of discussion about green corridors and the importance of Roydon Common. It was recognised that although the core of the site was known to have good quality habitat, the edges less so. It was also discussed that wildlife is transient, and therefore moves beyond the boundary of the Common.

The idea of including a buffer zone around Roydon Common at steering group meetings led to contact with Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

In February 2021 we met with Matt Jones, the Living Landscapes Officer from NWT to discuss the merit of identifying a buffer zone in the neighbourhood plan and how we would go about defining a buffer. Matt talked about how NWT has acquired land adjacent the Common, which will be managed to help relieve pressure on the really important habitats.

Matt talked about how the hydrology of the site is important and part of what leads to it having the importance it does. Much of the water supply for the wetland habitat comes from the north and the east. Development in this area could affect the water supply and therefore survival of the habitat. Agreed that the hydrology is key to defining a buffer zone.

Matt gave us the contact details for Ash Murray the Reserve Manager.

Following the meeting Matt and Ash provided some comments on the draft text for the Environment Section of the neighbourhood plan. This included a draft policy on establishing a Roydon Common Buffer Zone.

We met with Ash Murray in March 2021 to discuss the extent of the buffer, precise boundaries of the reserves and gather further information on hydrology that would help to justify a policy in the neighbourhood plan. Ash provided a lot of detail about hydrology. He explained that Roydon Common and its connected sites have a sensitive and very complex system of hydrology, which is fed from a wide catchment. Small changes in this hydrology could have significant impacts on the habitat at the core of the Common.

We talked about the impact development could have that comes forward within this catchment. Agreed that this evidence is critical to determining the extent of the buffer.

Following the meeting Ash provided a map of the proposed buffer, based on his knowledge of the hydrology of the area. This was received on 6 April 2021 as a shapefile for use in GIS.