



Nature's Arc

Be part of it

How the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Arc can help
restore nature across central England

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



WOODLAND
TRUST



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire

3 STEPS

to build nature into the proposed Arc

The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and Woodland Trust call on government and all local decision makers

to put nature at the heart of development to achieve a net gain for wildlife in the proposed Arc by implementing three basic steps:

- Protect existing nature,
- Restore nature across the Arc,
- Set new standards for sustainable development in the proposed Arc.

Nature is vital for society, providing food, clean water and fresh air, and enriching our health and wellbeing. While the Arc is one of the most nature-deprived parts of the country, important wildlife-rich sites remain. To protect them in the face of the climate and nature emergency we have to think differently.

The Arc presents an opportunity to put nature first so that development can be delivered without damaging nature and the environment. It should create places in which people can benefit from a thriving natural environment that supports healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

A number of environmental organisations, with both aspirations and concerns for the Arc, have come together to set out key principles that must be followed if nature is to be restored and protected across the Arc.

The existing network of protected sites provides vital havens from which wildlife can spread into our towns, cities and countryside

STEP

1 Protect existing nature

- **Carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessments** of the proposals as a whole, rather than in a piecemeal way that ignores the cumulative impacts. Understanding the total impact of the proposed Arc is key to unlocking its full environmental potential.

- **Protect existing designated sites** and undesignated priority habitats through full application of the mitigation hierarchy.

- **Avoid loss of, or damage to, irreplaceable habitats** such as ancient woodland, fens and ancient meadows.

The silver-washed fritillary relies on well-managed woodland





New walking and cycle paths bring health and environmental benefits

STEP

2 Restore nature across the Arc

- **Establish a Nature Recovery Network** to create bigger, better and more connected places for wildlife around existing priority habitats and opportunity areas.
- **Prepare a strategic spatial plan** for the whole of the Arc that sets out the Government's ambitions and intentions in a clear and transparent way.
- **Introduce a duty on local authorities** to deliver a Nature Recovery Plan.
- **Achieve a minimum 20% net gain in biodiversity** from all forms of development (including infrastructure), measured by a single system applied across the Arc by all local authorities, Government and delivery agencies.
- **Undertake environmental assessments** to identify how planned development and infrastructure can deliver and secure this level of biodiversity gain in perpetuity.
- **Ensure at least double the area of land that is well managed** primarily for nature (from less than 8%).

STEP

3 Set new standards for sustainable development

- **Be carbon neutral (net zero) by 2045**, but take steps to bring this target forward to 2030.
- **Make all new development zero carbon.**
- **Achieve high standards of nature-friendly design and green infrastructure**, using the best existing case studies in the UK and across the globe.
- **Set up long-term management plans for all green infrastructure and new habitats.** Make suitably qualified and mandated organisations responsible for these.
- **Fund monitoring of the quality and management** of the new habitats and green infrastructure.
- **Put nature first.** The natural environment must be at the heart of proposals from the outset, and fully incorporated into decisions related to funding. Economic growth must respect environmental constraints.
- **Improve the quality of life of residents** by increasing climate resilience, biodiversity and access to nature across the Arc.
- **Be an exemplar of the natural capital approach and achieve the net gains in biodiversity** aspired to in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.
- **Secure the initial capital and long-term funding** to ensure all these measures are delivered and managed in perpetuity.

Research shows that building nature into new homes vastly improves our physical and mental health



The central idea

A Nature Recovery Network

A tool that harnesses development to provide true prosperity for people and wildlife

The creation of an ecologically coherent Nature Recovery Network (NRN) should be the central mechanism through which nature is restored in the proposed Arc. A NRN here should:

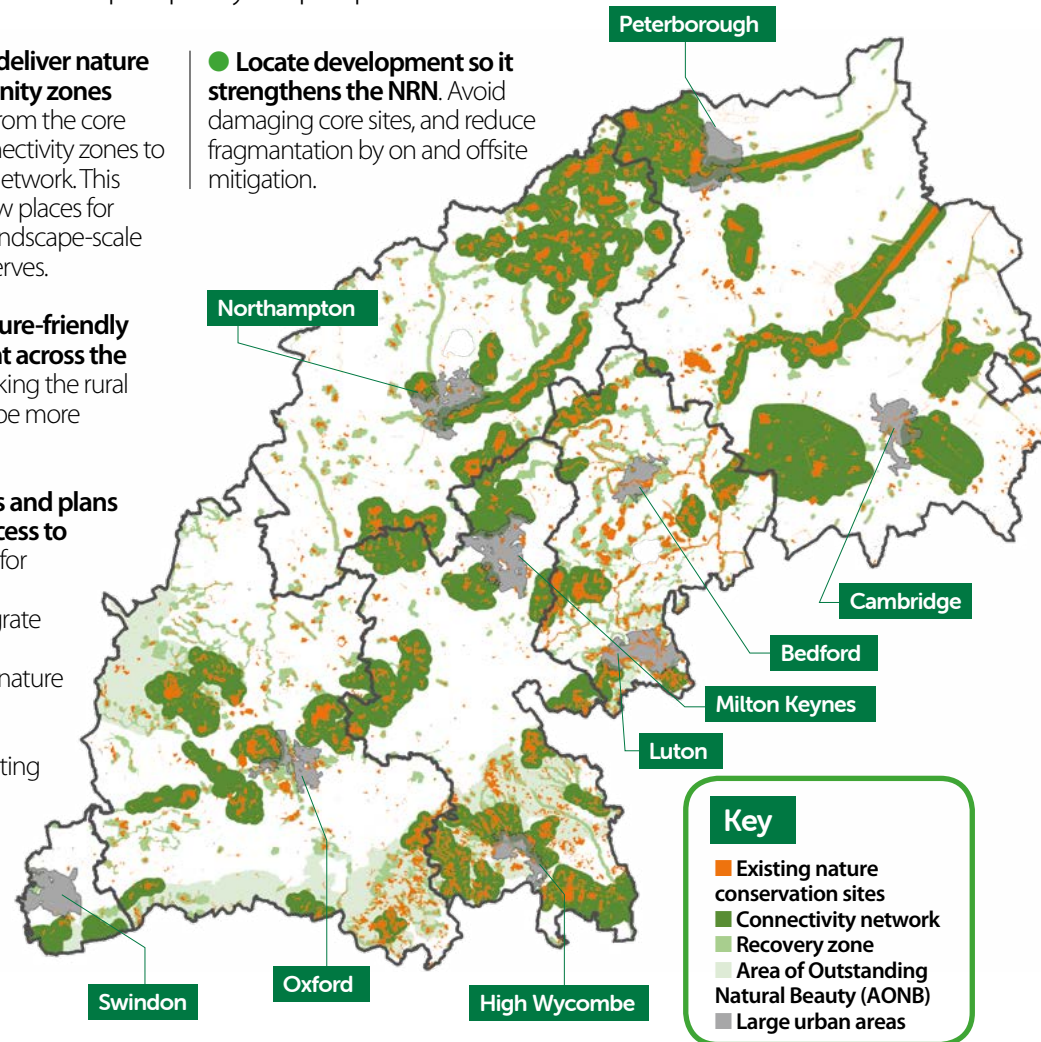
- **Set binding quantified targets** for each authority's contribution to the delivery of the overall NRN.
- **Map and plan to protect and enhance existing wildlife sites** – all internationally, nationally and locally designated wildlife sites. These need strong protection and to be managed well to form the backbone of the recovery network.
- **Map, plan and deliver connectivity zones** (areas in which habitat restoration and creation is a high priority) to extend and link the core natural sites above.

- **Map, plan and deliver nature recovery opportunity zones** – which build out from the core sites and their connectivity zones to create one whole network. This means creating new places for nature, including landscape-scale areas and large reserves.

- **Implement nature-friendly land management across the entire area**, by making the rural and urban landscape more permeable.

- **Ensure all maps and plans provide better access to nature** particularly for more deprived communities. Integrate wild space and enhancements for nature into all new developments and retrofit them in existing developments.

- **Locate development so it strengthens the NRN.** Avoid damaging core sites, and reduce fragmentation by on and offsite mitigation.



Be part of Nature's Arc

The proposed Oxford to Cambridge Arc could show how development can restore nature, rather than destroy it. If you are a politician, a developer, a planner or a business owner, you have a part to play. Please contact us:

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