Ecology, Landscape Assessment and Green Infrastructure in Neighbourhood Planning
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Bath & North East Somerset Council

Ecology, Landscape Assessment and Green Infrastructure in Neighbourhood Planning

Benefits of Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan

- Engages the community in decision making

- Helps in developing a shared vision for the area

- Can direct development and growth

- Identifies opportunities for enhancement of features and areas for the benefit of the built, natural and historic environment

- Can contribute to the health and wellbeing of individuals and the community

- Contributes to the collective knowledge of the district's assets - what makes the area special and why

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Ecology, Landscape Assessment and Green Infrastructure in Neighbourhood Planning

Relevant Aspects of a Neighbourhood Plan

A vision statement

Description of the area

Current issues

Development Opportunities

Policies and objectives

Design Briefs

Environment / community initiatives

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Definition of Landscape

"landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"

European Landscape Convention

It requires *"landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape".*

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Natural England policy considers *'landscape as an integrating framework encompassing and embracing the interactions of natural, cultural and perceptual attributes. Landscape is the context for, and consequence of, decision-making and provides the spatial framework through which we plan and manage change.'*

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

The National Planning Policy Framework
'must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans'

Core Planning Principles

4   *'Planning should seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings'*

5   *'Planning should take account of the different roles and character of different areas - - - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities'*

Specifically in relation to Neighbourhood Plans *'developments* (should) *add to the overall quality of the area - - - establish a strong sense of place - create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit - - - respond to local character and history - - - reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials - - -* (be) *visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping'*

NPPG

'Wider community aspirations than those relating to development and use of land can be included in a neighbourhood plan'

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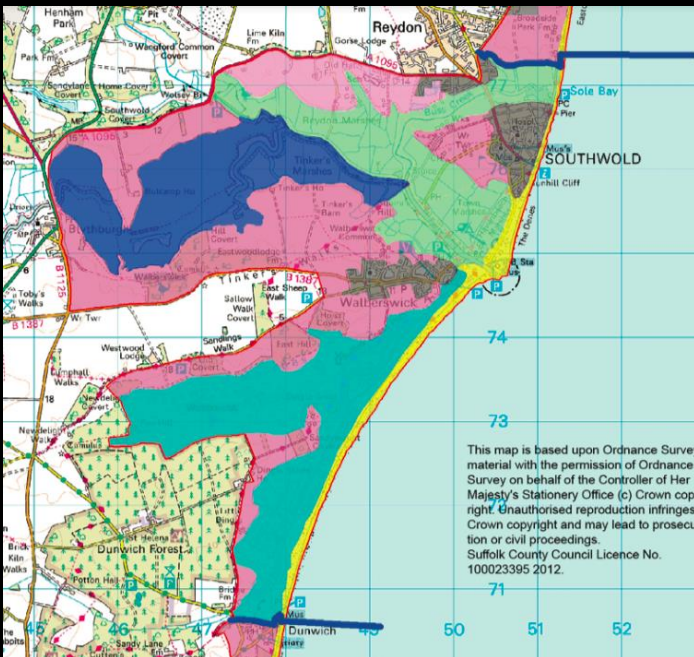
Understanding Landscape

- includes both developed and undeveloped areas

- includes rural and urban areas

- includes both distinguished and ordinary landscapes

- is shaped by human intervention and is continuously changing

- provides a range of benefits and services to support human and other life

- contributes to identity and a sense of place – essential for place making, community cohesion, quality of life, health and well being

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Landscape Character Assessment

provides understanding of the variations in landscape and establishing what makes a place distinctive.

identifies and describes geographically specific areas with a consistent character.

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Touching the Tide LCA

Landscape Character Type are areas with a consistent character but are not geographically specific eg 'river valley' or 'lowland grassland'.

Landscape Character Assessments can be done at a variety of scales eg 1:50,000, 1:25,000 or 1:10,000

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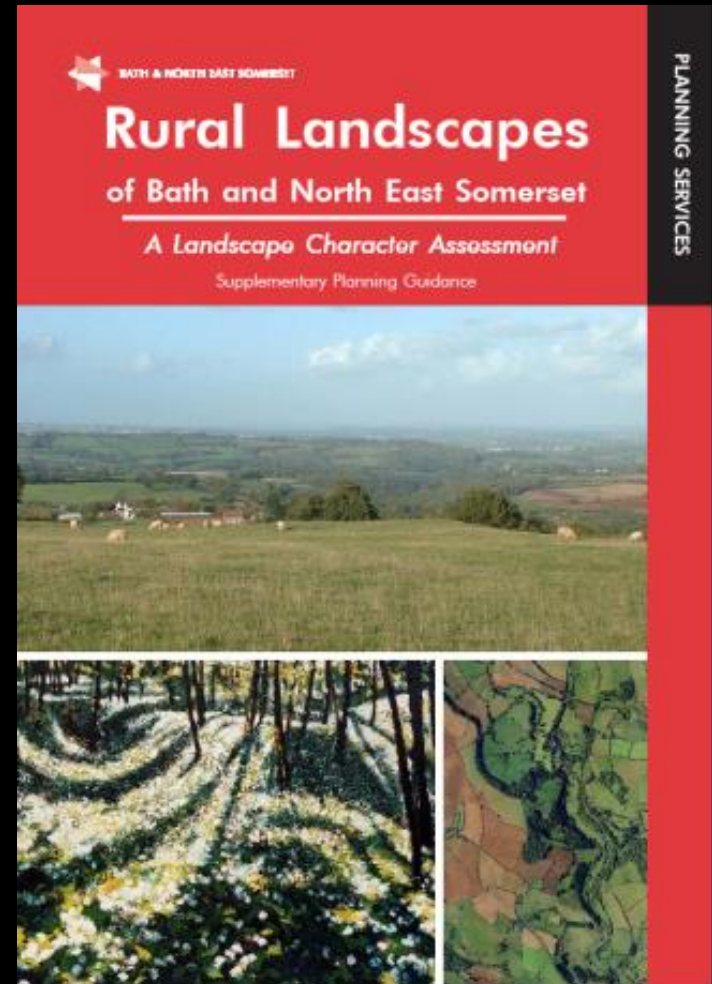# Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Stage 1

Establish what landscape character assessments have been carried out in your area

Do existing assessments sufficiently capture the local sense of place?

Are they sufficiently up-to-date?

Are they sufficiently detailed?

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Rural Landscapes
of Bath and North East Somerset

A Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

PLANNING SERVICES

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Stage 1

It may be sufficient to draw existing evidence together to capture the local character including identifying:
•locally distinctive landscape features, characteristics and special qualities
•Identifying landscape issues of local concern

If it is considered that the special landscape qualities or issues have not been captured sufficiently then it may be appropriate
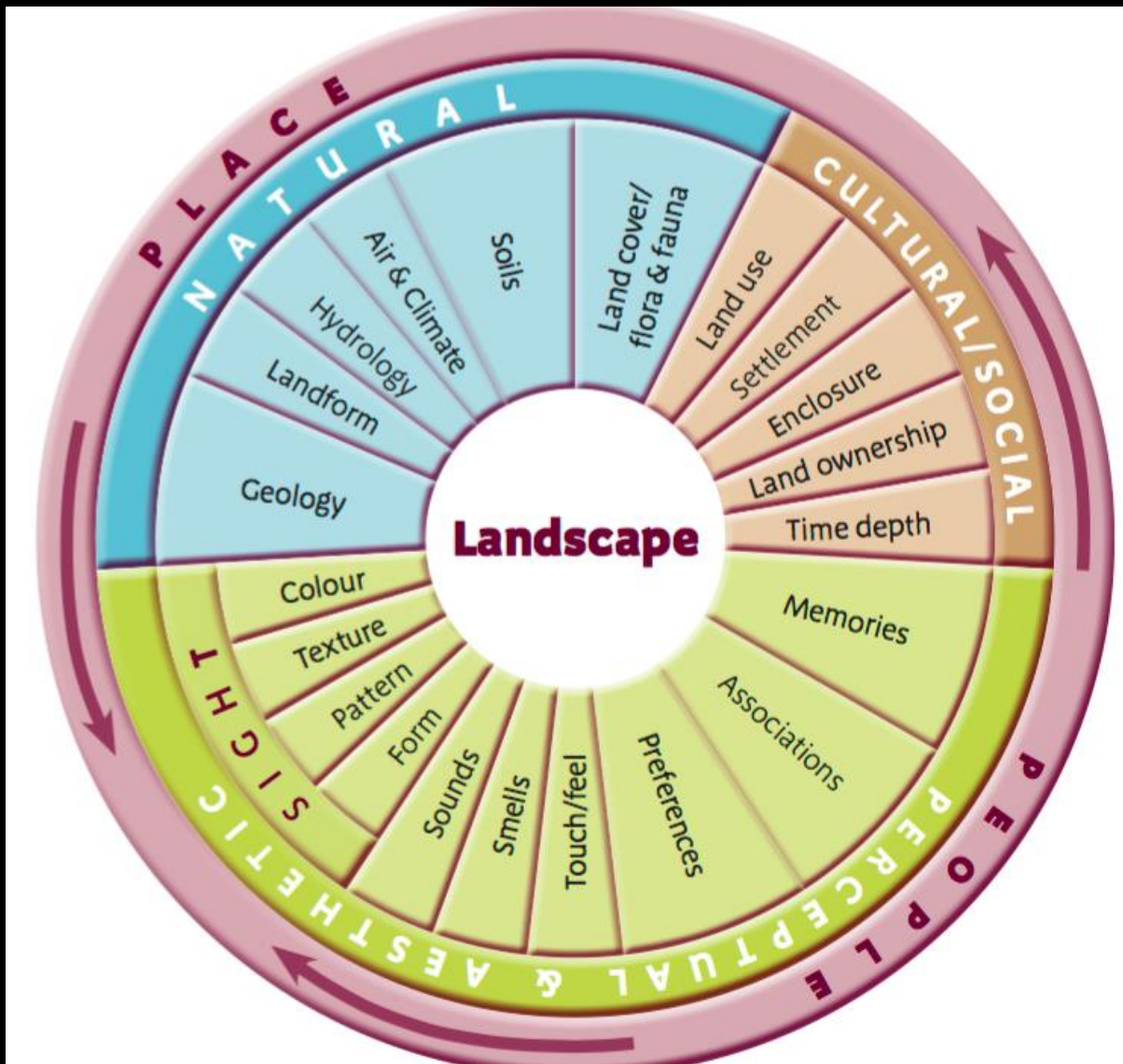to proceed to the next stages

Buildings and Details – The Parish is enriched by its legacy of fine older buildings of architectural interest with vernacular details which contribute greatly to the character of the area. More recent buildings have continued to reinforce the sense of place with use of materials. Key elements are:
- Central green space outside the church contained by the low stone walls so characteristic to the settlement.
- Informal grass verges and low irregularly capped boundary walls help maintain openness.
- No buildings extend above three storeys, with the majority being two storeys in height.
- Stone porches area a common feature.
- Historic listed buildings.

PHOTO 9: Stone Walls and Porches are key features

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Landscape Character Assessment

An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment October 2014 Natural England

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Stage 2 - if a local or neighbourhood LCA is appropriate

Define the purpose of the assessment

Analyse and describe the landscape based on:
• Desktop work
• Field Work

Support with maps, illustrations and photos

May include:

- Housing types and settlement character areas
- How the settlement sits in the landscape
- The settlement edge
- Location of gateways (arrival)
- Open space and trees

- Distinctive features
- Habitat and biodiversity
- Landscape management considerations
- Development considerations
- Key views
- Condition

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Sources of Information

National Character Area Profiles – Natural England

AONB Landscape Character Assessments

Local Authority Landscape Character Assessments

- Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Conservation Area Appraisals
- Village Design Statements
- Listed Buildings
- Historic Environment Record
- Local Plans
- Local Authority evidence in preparation of the Local Plan
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and World Heritage Site Management Plans
- Green Infrastructure Strategies

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Stage 3

Landscape input into specific elements of the Neighbourhood Plan that will positively shape change

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Vision Statement

- Think long term
- Aspirations for your neighbourhood – what it could look like
  - Homes, businesses, shops, community facilities, open space, land-use, management
- Land use and development challenges

Examples of what could be included
- to increase opportunities for accessing open space and enjoying key views
- To raise the quality and local distinctiveness of new development
- To accommodate affordable housing that is fully integrated with the existing settlement

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Description of the area

Desktop study

- Review of available landscape character assessments and other sources
- Analysis of maps and aerial photos
- Prepare audit of designated sites and locally important sites

Fieldwork

- Landscape character
- Settlement assessment

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PLACEMAKING PLAN

PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

1. PATTERN	
Character Element	Photo(s)
A. Topography: *Flat Hilly Steep Shallow Plateau Valley Linear valley Several valleys*	
B: Layout: *Linear Grid-like Winding Regular Irregular Buildings close to the road Buildings well set back Front gardens Back gardens Long plots Thin plots Short plots Wide plots Clear centre No obvious centre*	

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning
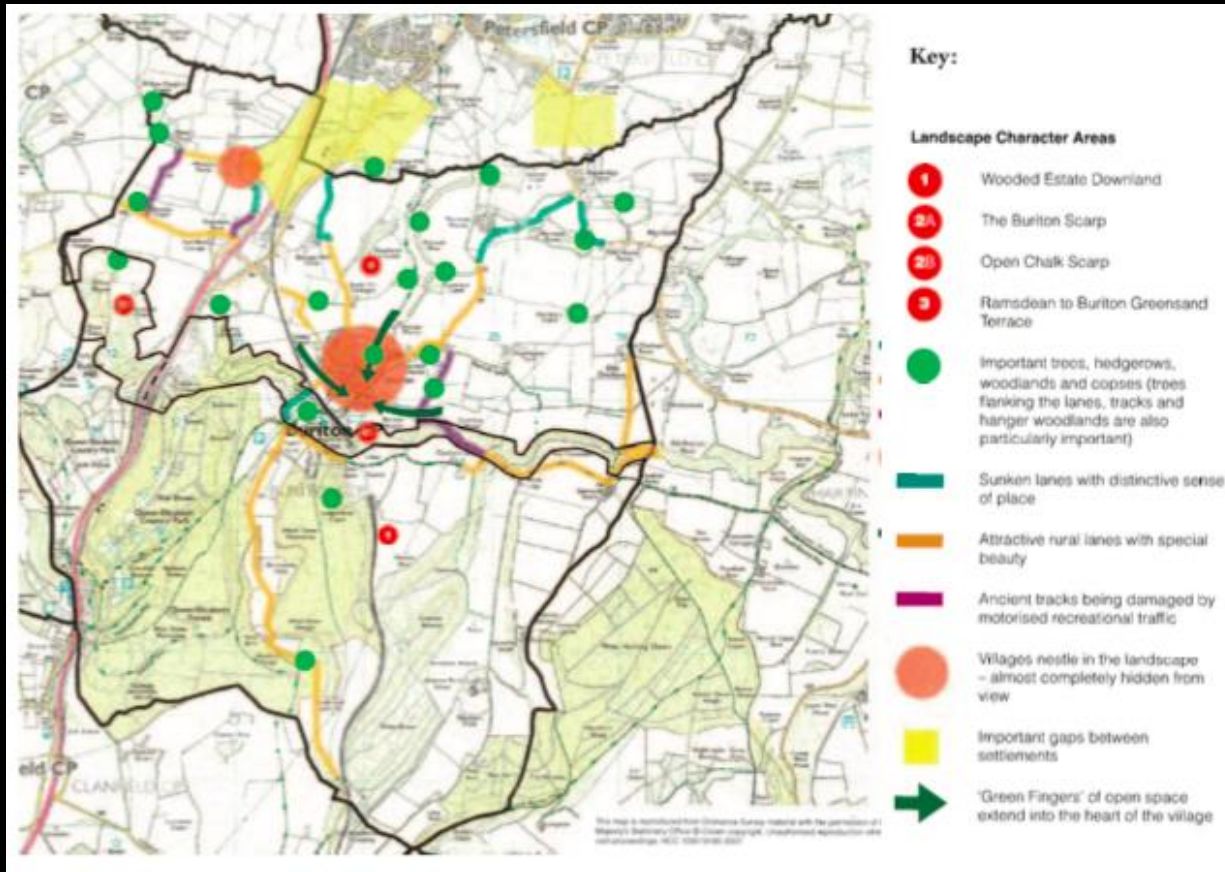
Description of the area

Structured description using desktop work and fieldwork - use headings of existing higher level assessment where possible

- Character summary
- Landform and Drainage features
- Land cover and land use
- Landscape and heritage features
- Open spaces and links
- Settlement pattern
- Buildings and details
- Key views and landmarks
- Detracting elements
- Supporting maps , illustrations and photos

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Description of the area

Use of supporting map:
- Local / Neighbourhood LCA
- Key landscape features eg ridge lines, important trees
- Lanes with special qualities
- Key views

Buriton VDS

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Current Issues

Could include one or more of the following:

- Development pressures
- Decline in quality of hedges and trees in fields
- Retaining distinct identity of the settlement
- Affordable housing provision
- Shortage of open space or public access
- Improving quality of life
- Discordant street scene
- Conserving and enhancing character
- Decline in bird population

Evidence from existing LCAs (Forces for Change and Management Guidelines sections)
Supplemented by Local LCA (desktop and field work)

Protect – Manage – Opportunities:
- What features are under threat
- What detracts from the landscape and what changes would have greatest negative effect
- what needs greater care and appreciation
- What positive changes would improve the landscape and environment

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Policies and Objectives

- Conserving and enhancing local character, features and qualities and ensure appropriate management

- Identifying and protecting key views

- Reinforcing settlement pattern

- Protection of key aspects of a settlements setting

- Accommodating new development including specifying building height, layout, materials, open space and Green Infrastructure and heritage, landscape and ecology assets to protect or enhance

- Provision of new open space, footpaths and Green Infrastructure

- Improved community facilities

- Improving specific areas (streets, developed edges)

- Addressing specific issues such as parking provision, street lighting

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Development Opportunities

Establish existing development situation - allocations and needs
Establish existing environmental initiatives
Use Landscape Character Assessment information to identify potential sites
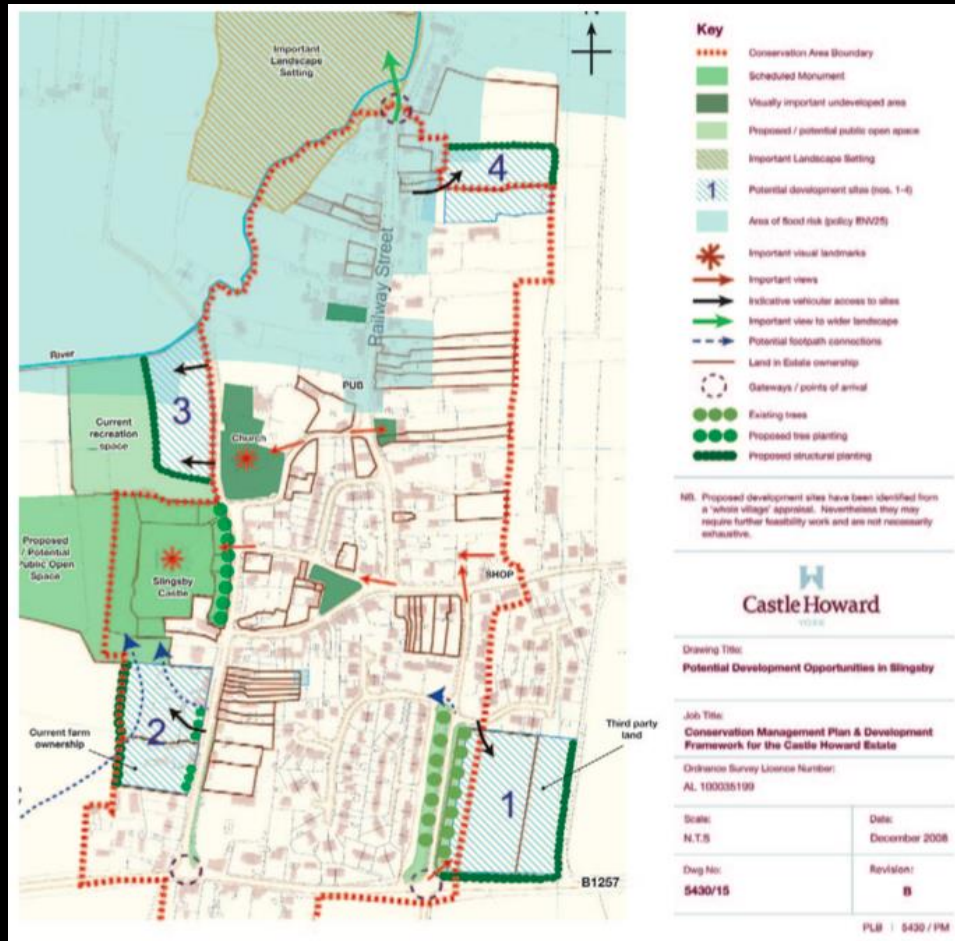Use structured toolkit to assess sites
Analyse and set out the advantages and disadvantages of sites

- Greenfield / brownfield
- Land uses (site and adjoining areas)
- Relevant policy for the site
- Topography
- Views
- Boundaries
- Landscape features
- Public Rights of Way
- Connections and access

- Character area
- Details of surrounding buildings (height, materials etc)
- Availability of the site
- How development could be integrated with surrounding area
- Identify environmental opportunities

Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Development opportunities

Analysis of Potential Development Sites could include

- Information gathered as part of the Local LCA,
- Potential development sites
- Opportunities associated with each potential site

Touching the Tide
Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONBs

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Landscape Assessment in Neighbourhood Planning

Design Brief - for selected development sites

Prepare guidance on how development should take place
- Building heights
- Layout
- Materials
- Open space and Green Infrastructure provision

Specify aspects of a site to conserve or enhance
- Landscape features

Identify environmental initiatives that development of the site could deliver
- Management of adjoining field for community use and ecological enhancement
- Improvement of an adjoining watercourse
- Realignment of a PROW

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Environmental and community initiatives

Reinforcing landscape character

- New woodland

- Reinstatement of hedges

- Improved development boundaries

- Improved public access

- Enhancement of watercourses

- Reinstating ponds

- Improved street scene

- New open spaces, Green Infrastructure and ecological corridors

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Ecology, Landscape Assessment and Green Infrastructure in Neighbourhood Planning

The Way Forward

- Opportunity for communities to have a voice

- Opportunity for positive change

- It would be great to have more Neighbourhood Plans with heritage, landscape and ecology at their heart

- Can do single topic Neighbourhood Plan

- Needs to tie in to the local planning context

- Needs to tie in with other local initiatives

BATHSCAPE

Revitalising our Landscape for People, Nature and Heritage

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25th January 2017

Questions

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Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning

Habitat Regulations

Integrating Ecology throughout plan making

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Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Habitat Regulations

EU legislation to protect our most precious wildlife resources across Europe – European sites /Natura 2000 sites

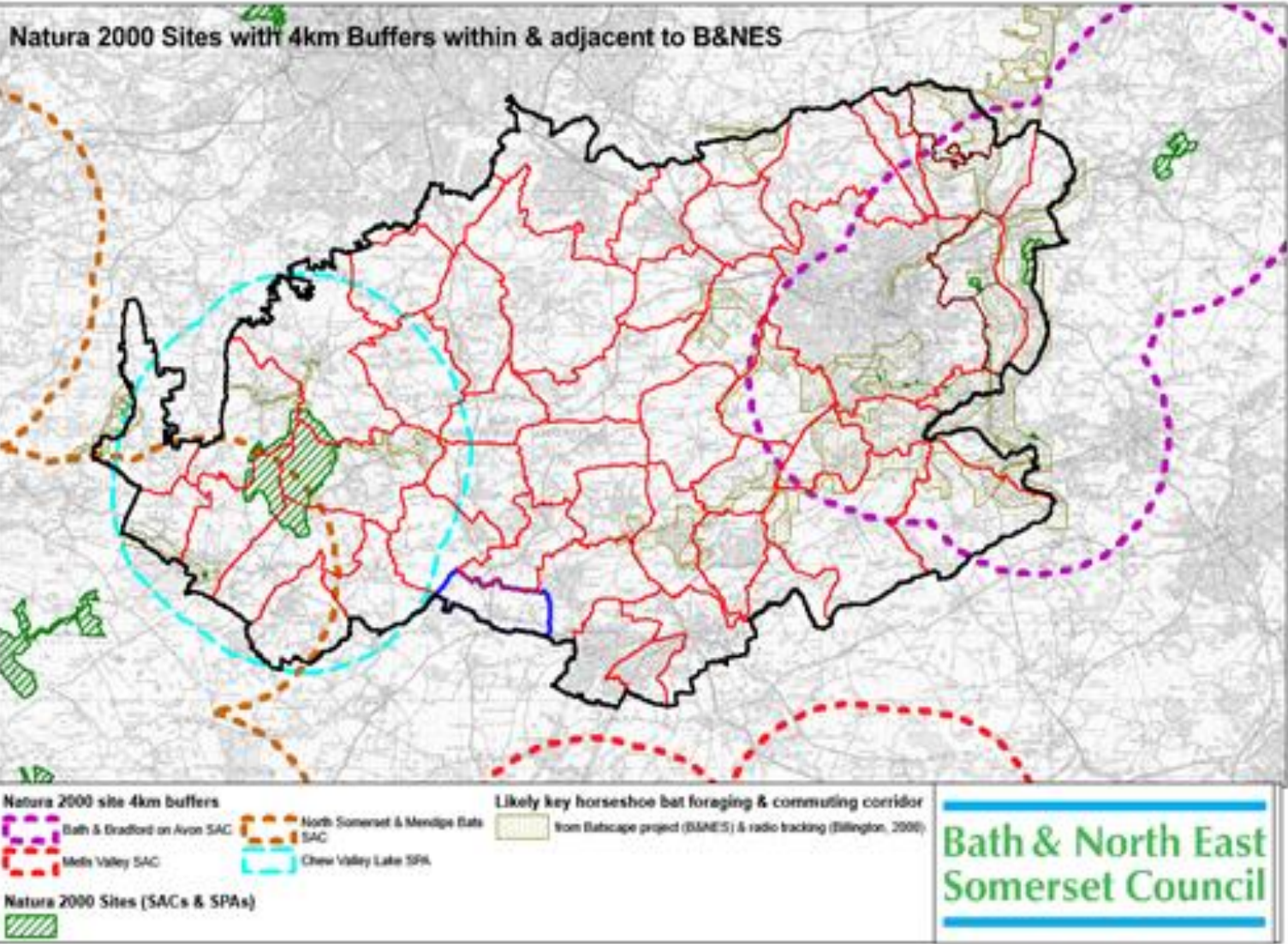Transposed into English law by Conservation Regulations 2010

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs),
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Ramsar sites

Require the competent authority to undertake an appropriate assessment of any plan or project likely to have a significant effect

The competent authority is the plan making authority – the Local Planning Authority

Staged process of assessment – Neighbourhood Plans shouldn't go beyond Stage 1

Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Habitat Regulations

What do we need to do?

- Find out if your plan area is home to, or adjacent to a European Site – record your findings

- Find out how your plan will be considered CHECK IN WITH LPA. If further screening needed:

  - *Make sure your whole plan making team know about process*

  - *Adopt an iterative approach to plan making*

  - *Provide clarity to LPA about any policy changes or amendments*

- Ensure you record the responses and outcomes of the process

Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning

A vision statement

Description of the area

Current issues

Development Opportunities

Objectives andPolicies

Design Briefs

Environment / community initiatives

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Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Planning context

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".

NPPF Requirement

109. The planning system should contribute to and *enhance* the natural and local environment by-

minimising impacts on biodiversity and *providing net gains* in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by *establishing coherent ecological networks* that are more resilient to current and future pressures

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Vision

- What is special or distinctive about the wildlife of your area?

- What do people value or like best about the natural environment?

- What does the area look & sound like now – could you improve it?

- Have natural habitats been lost; are any in decline?

- Could you bring them back by end of the plan period?

- Do people have easy access to nature ?

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Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning

Possible ecological visions

"Ecological networks through the area will be robust and well established, particularly between Hanger Wood, Brakers copse, and East Meadow."

"Local dormouse populations will have extended their range and distribution following the restoration of hedgerow links and creation of woodland pockets to reconnect our ancient woodland sites"

"Local pollinators and small blue butterflies will be thriving throughout the area, and will benefit from a well maintained network of flower-rich footpaths, vergers and byways that people enjoy"

"Parishioners have lots of opportunities to enjoy and support local wildlife, in particular Parish Wildlife Volunteers are regularly active helping farmers and landowners with practical habitat projects at Jacobs common; the Withy pools and Ridgetop farm"

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Describing the ecology of your area

Wildlife mapping is key

Stage 1: Desk top review of existing information
Stage 2: Local knowledge & local verification
Stage 3: Additional surveys?

Aim to identify:

- designated wildlife & geological sites
- wildlife networks & corridors
- areas of natural habitat
- trees and hedgerows
- areas where positive habitat improvements would be desirable
- any fragmented habitats
- habitats and species distributions of both national and local interest

South West Local Records Centres

Environmental Data for the South West of England

Bristol Region	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Gloucestershire	Somerset	Wiltshire

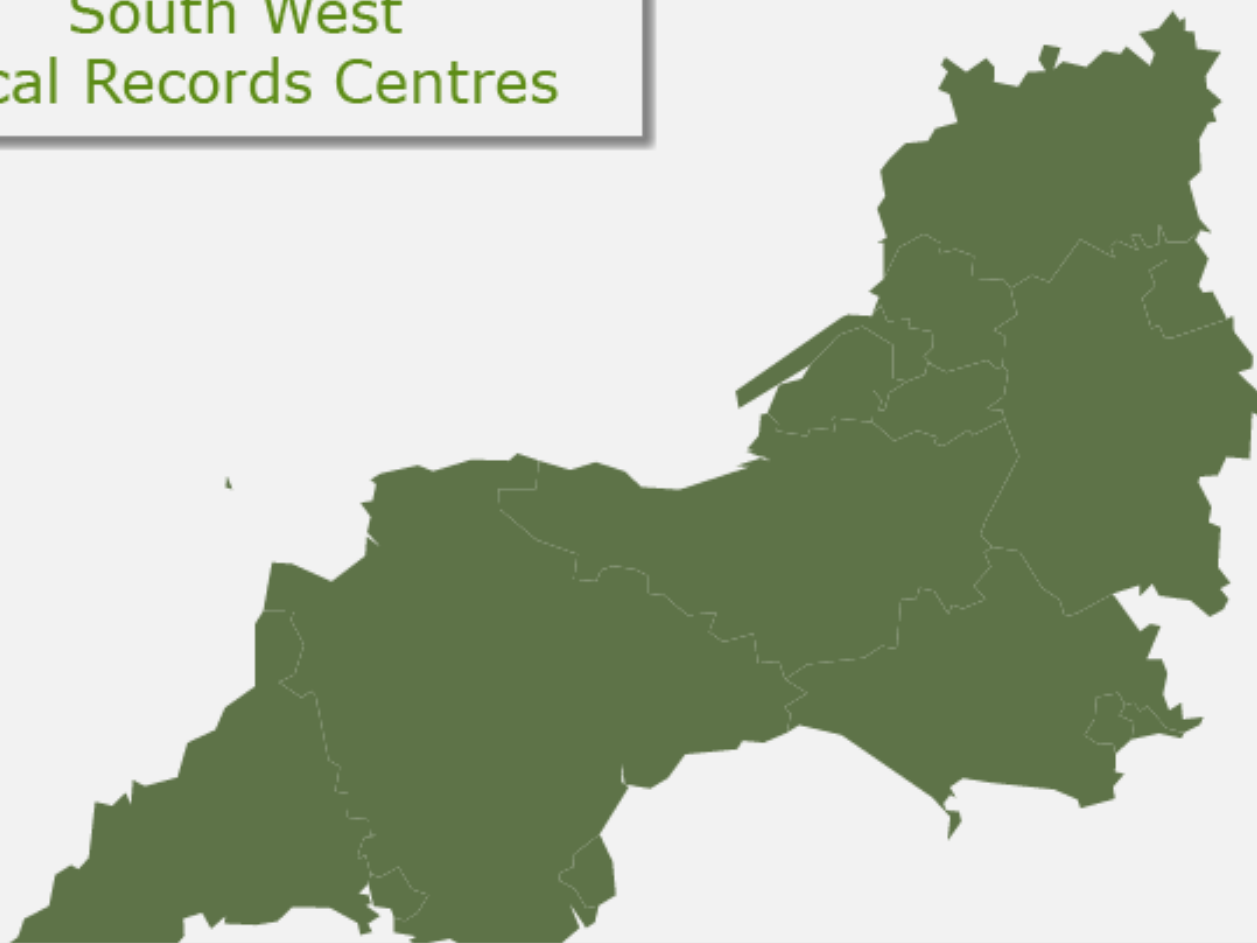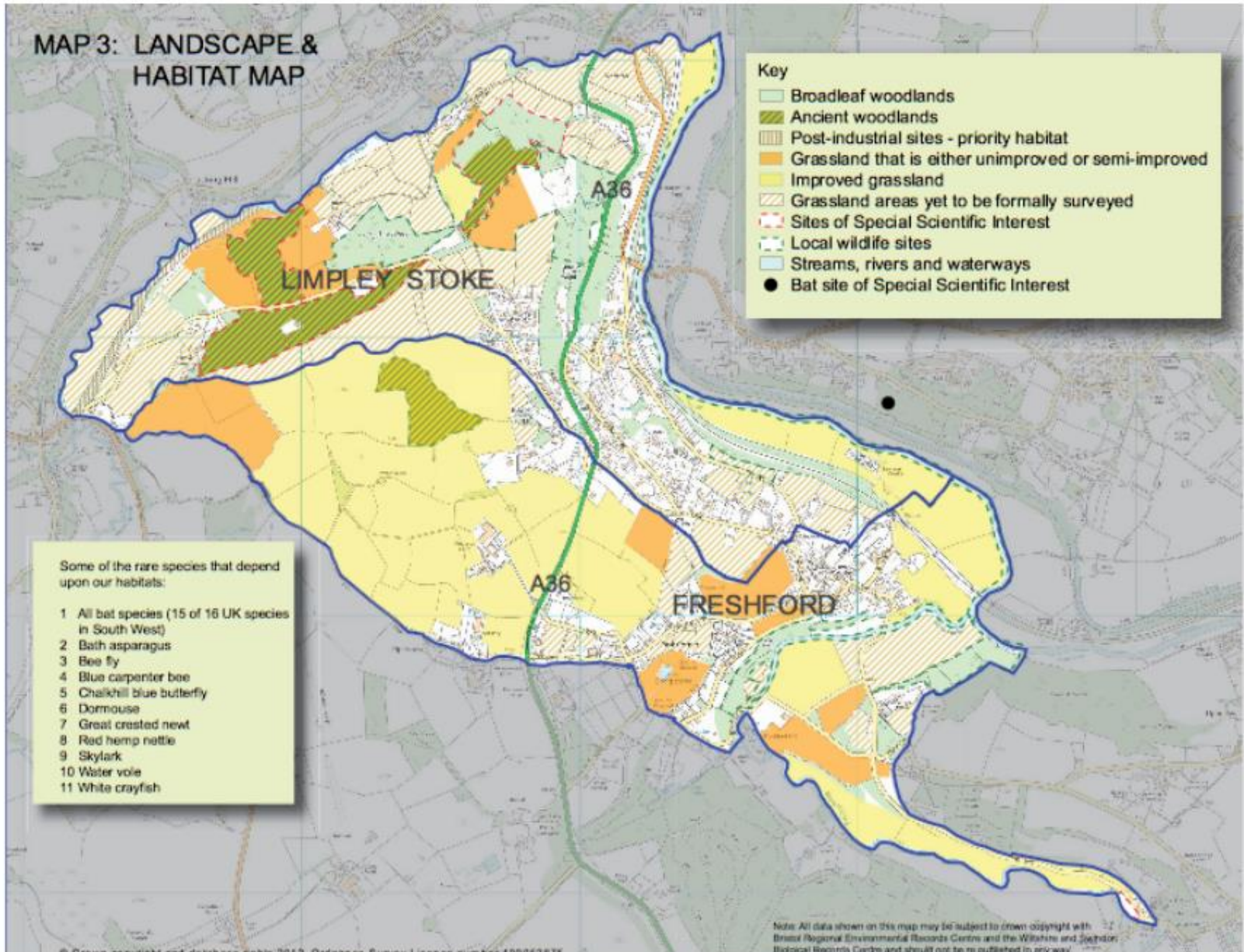## South West Local Records Centres

- **What We Do**

- **Our Data Search Services**
  - **Data Search Standards**
  - **Data Quality Standards**
  - **The Legislative Framework**

- **South West Regional Work & More Services**

- **Find Us - Use Our Postcode Search**

- **Contact Us**

- **Volunteer for Us**

MAP 3: LANDSCAPE & HABITAT MAP

Key
- Broadleaf woodlands
- Ancient woodlands
- Post-industrial sites - priority habitat
- Grassland that is either unimproved or semi-improved
- Improved grassland
- Grassland areas yet to be formally surveyed
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Local wildlife sites
- Streams, rivers and waterways
- ● Bat site of Special Scientific Interest

LIMPLEY STOKE

A36

A36

FRESHFORD

Some of the rare species that depend upon our habitats:

1. All bat species (15 of 16 UK species in South West)
2. Bath asparagus
3. Bee fly
4. Blue carpenter bee
5. Chalkhill blue butterfly
6. Dormouse
7. Great crested newt
8. Red hemp nettle
9. Skylark
10. Water vole
11. White crayfish

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Key sources of information & inspiration

Forest School

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Describing the ecology of the area

Use mapping to identify:

- key sites and species to protect from change

- areas where habitat improvements are needed

- areas where habitats could be created or restored

- areas where habitat links can be made

- areas where wildlife has been lost

- areas where change and development can be accommodated

- areas that could be better managed or used

And to inspire local enagement

Issues

The natural world is in serious trouble and it needs our help as never before.

state of nature

Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Issues

UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) June 2011 clarifies how the natural world provides us with services that are critical to our wellbeing and economic prosperity.

BUT reports:

- nature is consistently undervalued in decision-making
- many of the services we get from nature are in decline
- Over 40% of priority habitats declining
- Over 30% of priority species declining
- pollinators have been declining for 30 years

State of Nature : 3,148 species studies - 60% of species have declined over the last 50 years

Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Issues

- Wildlife is in decline
- Talk of Nature Deficit Disorder
- Interacting with nature improves memory performance
- Jogging in natural green space is better for you than jogging in built space
- Exposure to the natural environment makes you "a better person"
- 7% of depression cases and 9% of high blood pressure cases could be prevented through access to green space

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Local Issues

- Local Wildlife

- Local population

- Sense of community

- Housing & employment

- Parking, footpaths & cycle ways

- Parks and open spaces

- Management of road verges

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Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning

Development Opportunities

- Help to find them – using vision, evidence base & issues
- Embrace them
- Enable them to provide for people and wildlife

Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Objectives & Policies

NPPF:117 To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale

- identify and map components of the local ecological networks,

- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and priority species populations,

- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests

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Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Objectives & policies

Restore degraded habitats – set clear areas based targets for habitats you want to improve; pond restoration

Deliver new wildlife habitats – set targets for pond creation; new hedgerows; new woodland

Provide greater habitat connectivity by protecting and restoring wildlife networks and corridors

Provide opportunities for getting people involved in wildlife recording and monitoring

Policy – All new buildings must provide artificial nesting or roosting sites for birds/bats

Policy – Protect & enhance Neighbourhood Plan community wildlife areas and networks

Policy – All new landscaping schemes must be designed to achieve clear ecological objectives (provide for pollinators; improve local habitat connectivity; provide missing habitats)

Design Briefs

Guidance on how to achieve multiple benefits –
eg new verges to be species-rich; SUDS with wildlife value

Use of local species in planting schemes (new verges)

Reference to local hedgerow characteristics

Details of artificial nest boxes most suited to local materials

Requirements to provide new wildlife habitats or habitat restoration within public realm & green spaces

Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning
Environment & community initiatives

- Wildlife recording and mapping project
- Wood School / out door learning site
- Wildlife gardening project
- Local wildlife volunteers to help farmers with habitat management
- Establish community wildlife areas and networks
- Wildlife walking trails – habitat connections
- Pond restoration
- Hedgerow network projects
- Butterfly & pollinator gardens
- Biodiverse public open space
- Nest box building and installation days
- Wildlife fetes
- Village bio blitz

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Final thoughts

- Neighbourhood Plans provide a real opportunity to benefit the natural environment

- Involve everyone as much as you can – on-going consultation, debate & refinement – listen & respond

- Integrate ecological evidence and aspirations throughout plan making process

- Enable your plan to evolve – an iterative process

- Avoid using the natural environment to stop necessary development

- Use necessary development to deliver benefits for the natural environment

- Include projects and aspirations to deliver enhancements and enjoyment of the natural environment