



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

# WHAT'S SPECIAL TO YOU:

## Landscape Issues In Your Neighbourhood Plan



## **This guidance will be of interest if you:**

- are concerned about the impact of development on your local landscape, including on open spaces that you value for their beauty, tranquillity or cultural significance
- want to know how to articulate what it is that is special about your local landscape
- want to find out how you can influence planning decisions to protect and enhance their special qualities

**A Neighbourhood Plan could help you.**

**Understanding local landscape character could help you.**

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We also thank the neighbourhood planning groups who have developed the excellent policies that we include in this guidance.



# INTRODUCTION

CPRE campaigns for a sustainable future for the English countryside, a vital but undervalued environmental, economic and social asset to the nation. We believe that a beautiful, tranquil, diverse and productive countryside is fundamental to people's quality of life, wherever they live. CPRE is an active and long-term supporter of Neighbourhood Planning as a means to ensure that people's aspirations for the future of the places in which they live can be identified and acted upon.

Understanding and communicating what makes your local landscape special, and reflecting that understanding in a Neighbourhood Plan, can help ensure that future change is in harmony with landscape character.

This guidance is intended to help community groups develop strong landscape policies in their Neighbourhood Plans, to influence future development decisions that would affect their local area. You will find examples of existing Neighbourhood Planning policies that could inspire your own, such as to conserve landscape character, hedgerows, designate local green space and protect dark skies.

Neighbourhood Planning is gaining in popularity as more communities take advantage of the opportunity to shape the places in which they live. Common policy themes are transport, housing and design, yet trying to protect the character of local landscapes can be a challenging issue. CPRE's guidance on how to protect local landscape character will be a helpful source of information to enable groups to protect and enhance the landscapes they love.

This guidance is aimed at community groups, including Parish Councils, who are either already preparing Neighbourhood Plans or have an interest in protecting what is special about their local landscape. We want this guidance to help you put your landscape centre stage in

## HOW CAN THIS GUIDANCE HELP?

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan can help to strike a balance between the need for future development and the protection and enhancement of the built, natural and historic environment.

Local communities often feel that the planning process is top-down, and that they struggle to influence planning decisions, particularly at a strategic level. A Neighbourhood Plan can articulate clearly what the community wants and needs in terms of development; and how and where it would like to see those needs met.

This guidance:

- explains what is meant by landscape and Landscape Character Assessment;
- provides information on where to find information about landscape;
- sets out when and how a more local assessment should be prepared;
- shows how landscape can be used within the Neighbourhood Plan in preparing policies and making decisions;
- provides examples of best practice in integrating landscape into Neighbourhood Plans.

# ABOUT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Neighbourhood Planning is still a relatively new idea, introduced through the Localism Act 2011, and now over 2,000 communities, representing around 9 million people across the country, are now participating in Neighbourhood Planning.

While Local Plans lay out a vision of future development for a whole area, the needs of individual towns and villages within that area can vary. Neighbourhood Plans are optional documents that detail further development priorities for individual communities. They are community-led and can be written by town or parish councils, or, where there is no town or parish council, by a specially-created neighbourhood forum.

Taking part in the writing of a Neighbourhood Plan helps you have a say in the future use of land and buildings in your neighbourhood. A Neighbourhood Plan (sometimes called a Neighbourhood Development Plan) is a way of helping local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work.

It can be used to:

- develop a shared vision for your neighbourhood;
- choose where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built;
- identify and protect important local green spaces;
- influence what new buildings should look like.

Subject to conforming to national policies, as well as local plan policies for the area, and gaining support through a referendum of local residents, a Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted as a formal part of the development plan. This means that planning decisions have to be made in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan (and other parts of the development plan) unless there are very good reasons not to.

Taking part in the writing of a Neighbourhood Plan helps you have a say in the future use of land and buildings in your neighbourhood. Plans can include policies, identify sites for new development including housing, employment, business use, leisure and other forms of development which may be considered appropriate for the area.

Neighbourhood Plans can also protect and safeguard valued local landscapes for future uses (e.g. open spaces) or features (e.g. trees) and define development or settlement limits.

## **Specifically, Neighbourhood Plans can include:**

- landscape related policies;
- identification of specific development sites;
- design briefs for development;
- environmental initiatives to protect and enhance the local landscape.

**A general overview of Neighbourhood Planning and the various stages is can be found at [planninghelp.cpre.org.uk](http://planninghelp.cpre.org.uk)**

You can find out more about Neighbourhood Planning and support available for communities through [www.locality.org.uk](http://www.locality.org.uk) and [www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid).

# WHAT IS LANDSCAPE?

Landscape is more than just ‘the view’. The relationship between people, place and nature is the ever changing backdrop to our daily lives. What turns land into landscape is our perception of a place, combining how we appreciate its aesthetic qualities – its patterns, colours, smells, textures and sounds – and the associations we attach to them, such as memories, feelings of familiarity or a sense of awe.

Landscape is everywhere; from mountains, uplands, moors and the seascapes of our stunning coastline, to rolling countryside and traditional green parks in urban and rural areas, each with their own distinctive character and sense of place. All landscapes matter - wherever they are and whatever their condition.

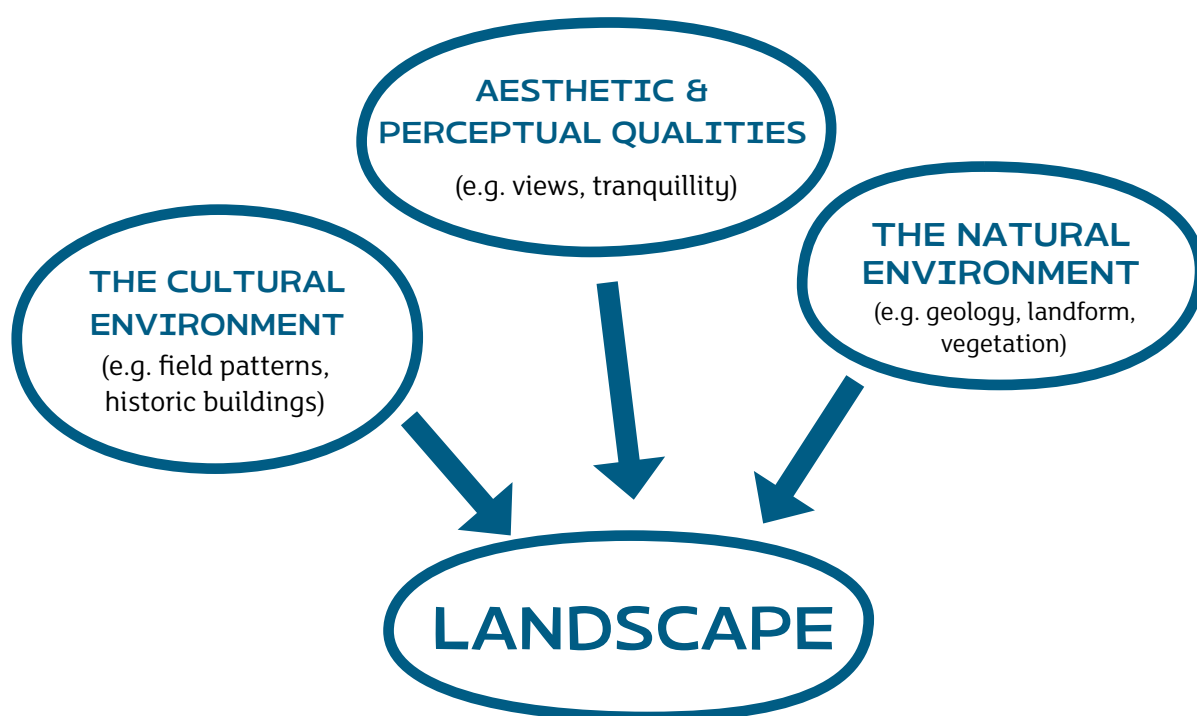
A commonly used definition of ‘landscape’ is: “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and or human factors”.<sup>1</sup>

Our landscapes vary because of their underlying geology, soils, topography, land cover, hydrology, historic and cultural development, and climatic considerations. These physical and socio-economic influences combine to make one landscape different from another.

England’s landscapes are hugely diverse: England has 159 distinct **National Character Areas**<sup>2</sup>, including ten National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Including landscape in Neighbourhood Plans provides an opportunity to identify what makes the place where you live unique, and to ensure that its special qualities and distinctive characteristics are protected, and enhanced, through the Neighbourhood Planning process.

## A WIDE RANGE OF FACTORS COME TOGETHER TO CREATE YOUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT:



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/13732-2/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

# PLANNING CONTEXT & LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

There is strong support for landscape character in national planning policy. For example, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states ‘core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking’, and ‘take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it’.

This means that in all countryside, not just designated areas, planning decision-makers should think carefully about the character of the area to ensure that necessary development does not cause unnecessary harm. The overwhelming need for new housing, economic development and infrastructure means that there are significant pressures to permit new development and it is not possible simply to reject a development proposal without clear reasons for doing so. Understanding the landscape can help provide protection from damaging development, and help to mitigate the impacts of development where it is needed.

There are a number of tools that can be used to defend undesignated countryside from such development, including developing an understanding of landscape character and ensuring it is captured in your Neighbourhood Plan. The Government’s National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) underpins the NPPF and states: ‘One of the core principles in the NPPF is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.’ The guidance emphasises that landscape should be taken into account in plan-making and decision-taking on planning applications.

Landscape should be at the heart of national and local planning decisions. In 2006, the UK Government signed the European Landscape Convention (ELC), the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape.<sup>3</sup> It is dedicated exclusively to promoting the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe and became binding in this country in March 2007. The ELC also encourages the protection of the valued features of all landscapes - not just those in nationally protected areas - including protection through the planning system.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The stronger the evidence base behind your Neighbourhood Plan, the more influence it will have. That’s why understanding landscape character matters; it’s a recognised and objective way of describing an area’s sense of place, and of protecting it for the future.

Landscapes which are different from one another are said to have their own landscape character comprising a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics.

National Character Areas (NCA), produced by Natural England, divides the country into 159 geographically specific and unique NCAs.<sup>4</sup> Each of these areas have a detailed NCA descriptive profile, which forms a useful starting point for understanding landscape in your area. NCAs, however, are often too general to specifically inform a Neighbourhood Plan and therefore it is necessary to also consider character assessments, which may have been undertaken by local

<sup>3</sup> The UK’s commitments under the ELC will be unaffected by Brexit, as it is not an EU initiative.

<sup>4</sup> England’s National Character Area profiles provide both a strong evidence base to underpin local planning policy and a summary of opportunities for the future management of an area. The profiles could give broad context for your Neighbourhood Plan.

authorities for their administrative areas (unitary, district or county). Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).

These latter assessments give a finer grained understanding of landscape and set out key characteristics and special qualities. Each assessment provides detailed descriptions of the landscape and in some cases also provide strategy and guidance for the future of the landscape, including its planning, management and conservation. This will help inform the drafting of policy within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Existing Landscape Character Assessments will be a useful source of information in gathering an evidence base for your Neighbourhood Plan; however they may not be sufficiently detailed to match the scale required for Neighbourhood Plans. You will also need to investigate if district and borough assessments cover your area and if they are out of date. Having reviewed the existing Landscape Character Assessments and other relevant documents listed above, a decision needs to be made as to whether there is sufficient information on local character for the Neighbourhood Plan area or not, and if the information is sufficiently up to date. For example, do the existing studies and reports capture the area's 'sense of place'?

If they do, then you will simply need to draw the evidence together as a statement of Local Character – essentially, a summary of available information written in a way that is accessible to everyone.

If existing documents don't capture what you think is important, you may want to consider commissioning a local Landscape Character Assessment of your own and may require professional support.

Examples of Landscape Character Assessments that have been commissioned to support a Neighbourhood Plan are:

#### **Cuckfield in Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2012)**

The Parish Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment to inform the development of their Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2014. You can view the Plan at <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-licensing-building-control/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/cuckfield-neighbourhood-plan>.

The LCA report divides the landscape into 33 areas of specific landscape character and considers them against a range of criteria that makes each area unique. The landscape value, sensitivity and capacity of each area are then summarised. The LCA can be viewed at [http://www.cuckfield.gov.uk/Cuckfield-PC/UserFiles/Files/6.Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment.pdf](http://www.cuckfield.gov.uk/Cuckfield-PC/UserFiles/Files/6.Cuckfield%20Landscape%20Character%20Assessment.pdf).

### **East Bergholt in Suffolk Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal (2015)**

In May 2015 East Bergholt Parish Council commissioned The Landscape Partnership to analyse the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape around the village of East Bergholt to accommodate new development. The results of this **Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal (Appendix D8)**<sup>5</sup> formed part of the evidence for their Neighbourhood Development Plan which was adopted in late 2016.

### **Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment (2015)**

Lavenham Parish Council commissioned this **Landscape Character Assessment**<sup>6</sup> in autumn 2015 which provides a parish-wide assessment of the character of the landscape around the town. The main purpose of the assessment is to assist the preparation of the **Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)**<sup>7</sup> and to inform the Lavenham Sensitivity Study. The suite of documents will help the local community plan for change at neighbourhood level and understand what impacts development could have on Lavenham. They will be of use to those managing change to protected heritage assets or managing change in the countryside.

If you choose to undertake your own assessment, advice on how to do this can be found at [<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landscape-and-seascape-character-assessments>]. You can still engage a landscape architect in an advisory role to guide the approach for the assessment and to review the findings/presentation of information.

Any new assessment work should follow Natural England's published **guidance**<sup>8</sup> and best practice.

If the Neighbourhood Plan area includes a large settlement then you should consider broadening the LCA to include analysis of the following:

- the range of housing types and character areas within the settlement;
- the location of gateways and sense of arrival;
- how the settlement sits and relates to the landscape;
- the built edges and interface with the landscape;
- key views and the way in which different parts of a settlement may function and contribute to local distinctiveness;
- open spaces, landscape parklands, hedgerows and trees that are of particular value;
- any tranquil areas and dark skies that should be protected.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.eastbergholt.org.uk/neighbourhood%20plan/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lavenhamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Lavenham-Landscape-Character-Assessment-document.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.lavenhamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/REVISION-37.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/396192/landscape-character-assessment.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396192/landscape-character-assessment.pdf)

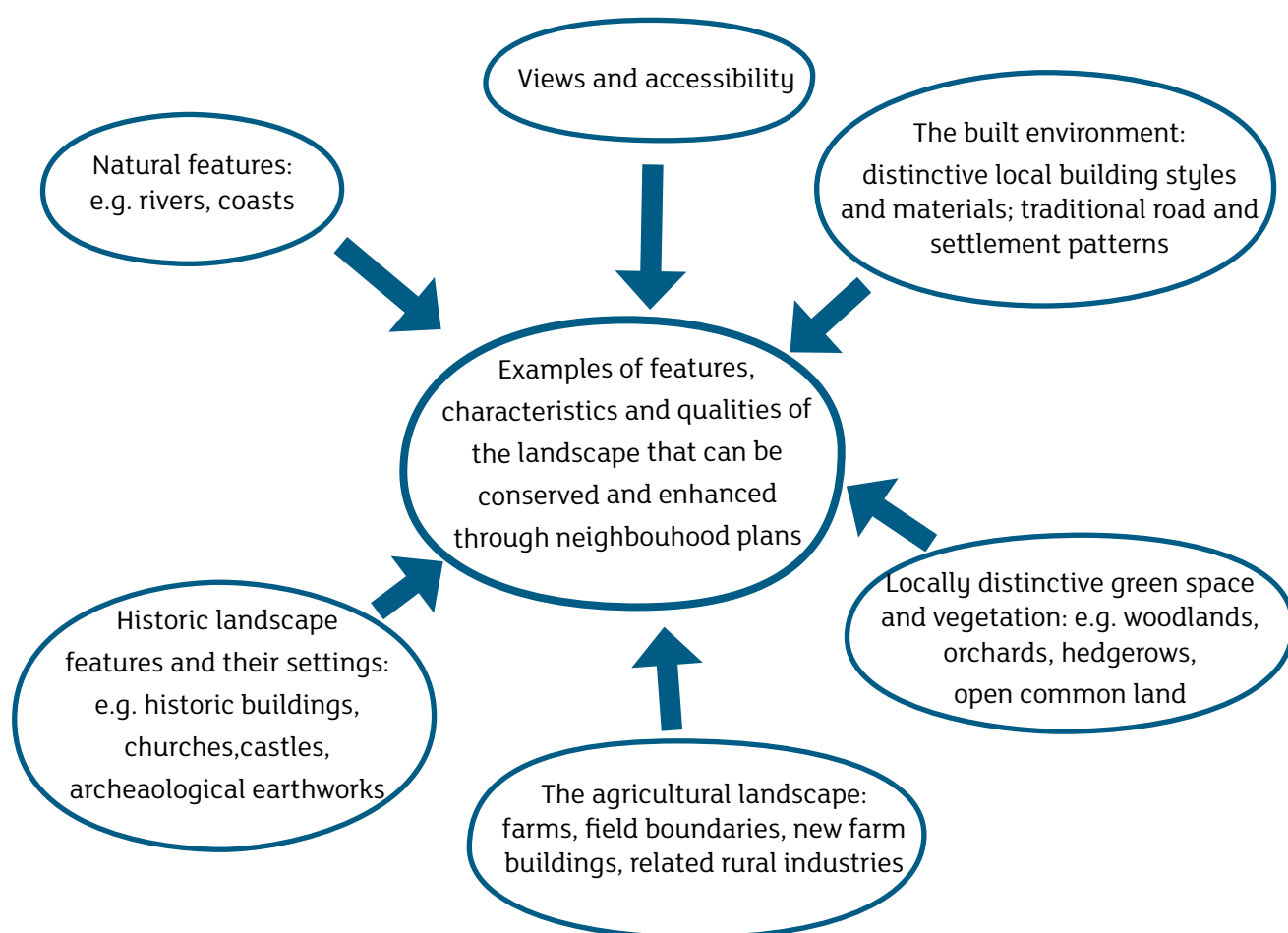


You could also find out if Village Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals exist for your area as they may contain this information.

The information gathered in a Landscape Character Assessment may help decide where development is best accommodated, that areas of land have a particular value or function and should be retained and where new physical connections such as habitat networks or new footpaths should be created. The character assessment may also inform the types of building materials, form and scale of new development.

## DEVELOPING POLICIES THAT INTEGRATE LANDSCAPE

Landscape provides a framework for people to think about what gives their area its 'sense of place', and to manage change in a way which makes a positive contribution to the character of an area. The diagram below gives examples of landscape elements which can be enhanced through Neighbourhood Plans.



The development of policies within Neighbourhood Plans should reflect national and local plan policy. However, the policies in Neighbourhood Plans are more detailed and geographically specific or prescriptive. For example, if one of your objectives is to conserve and enhance the character of the village then it will be necessary to set out what characteristics the village has and to perhaps make the policy more specific, i.e. retaining key views. Policy should relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area but not be restricted to it if there is potential for change outside of the area that may adversely affect the special qualities of the area.

By considering the existing landscape/settlement character and establishing what matters and why, along with development pressure and forces for change, you can start to shape ideas about where and how change should occur. You can also identify what positive environmental initiatives, which support landscape character, should be aimed for in the Neighbourhood Plan. Many existing Neighbourhood Plans have developed landscape policies that have been crafted to protect and enhance local landscape character.

The following table sets out a range of initiatives/policies that may be developed in a Neighbourhood Plan and how landscape can help inform policy drafting and focus.

POLICY/INITIATIVE/ISSUE	HOW TO ADDRESS IT
Conserving and enhancing the character and special quality of the landscape or settlement	Landscape Character Assessments describe the current character of an area, its distinguishing features and patterns, and the way in which it is experienced including its special qualities. This can help in identifying what should be conserved and enhanced and how any new development should be integrated sensitively.
Conserving landscape features such as hedgerows and dry stone walls	The LCA should help identify whether particular features such as hedgerows, hedge banks, dry stone walls or water features are prominent in the local landscape. The Neighbourhood Plan could set out policies to retain and improve these features.
Avoidance of coalescence between settlements	Character assessments classify land between settlements. Settlement studies <sup>9</sup> and further site assessment can reveal key views, character and qualities which should be safeguarded. It may highlight some areas of land which are more sensitive than others.
Accommodating new housing (including affordable)	Settlement studies or further site assessment can reveal what is special about an existing place and where new housing may be accommodated. They can also inform the nature and design of new development so that there is a good fit with existing valued character and that attractive places are created.
Protection of dark skies	Use CPRE's Night Blight <sup>10</sup> maps to identify where the darkest skies are in your Neighbourhood Plan area and to help shape local decisions about lighting, such as street lights owned by parish councils.

<sup>9</sup> Settlement Studies seek to assess the sustainability of a rural settlement/s and recommend a settlement hierarchy. This informs the Council's approach for an overall spatial strategy for development and change within the settlement e.g. to promote sustainable communities by locating new development in proximity to services and facilities. Your county or district council may have developed a settlement study that covers your Neighbourhood Plan area.

<sup>10</sup> <http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk>

Provision of new open space or footpaths

Green Infrastructure Strategies<sup>11</sup> can reveal where there is a need and opportunity for increased open space provision. Settlement studies or Parish Plans may identify the need for footpath/bridleway links.

Improving community facilities and quality of life

Local communities may have a view on what they need. Settlement studies can reveal where these are best located to fit with existing settlement character or reinforce/recreate a local sense of place. Settlement studies may also identify open spaces or trees which are of particular amenity value or have the potential to be. You could also seek to designate local green spaces in your Neighbourhood Plan.

Improving street scenes or the urban edge

Settlement studies can highlight streets or urban edges which lack distinction and could benefit from enhancement through new planting/hard landscaping, as well as addressing issues such as parking or open space.

Reinforcing the importance of existing landscape designations

National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are national landscape designations - you could consider including a policy that sets strict standards for any development. There may also be local landscape designations that you can support in your Neighbourhood Plan e.g. Areas of Great Landscape Value or Areas of Special Local Character.

Improving highways and infrastructure (utilities inc. internet provision)

Landscape assessments often describe the character of rural lanes and can inform the character and specification of new road or junction development ensuring a good fit.

Where infrastructure creates visual clutter, such as overhead wires, opportunities to remove and/or rationalise should be sought.

Recent analysis by CPRE of adopted Neighbourhood Plans revealed that the protection and enhancement of landscape character is a common policy theme in Neighbourhood Plans, along with associated policies relating to the environment, open spaces and biodiversity. The aim of these policies is to protect and conserve open spaces which are important to local communities and are recognised for their beauty, amenity, wildlife and/or recreational value. Neighbourhood Plans also include policies that identify opportunities which might arise from development for increasing connectivity between green spaces, improving the overall appearance of an area and enhancing green infrastructure, whilst resisting unnecessary and inappropriate development.

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<sup>11</sup> Green infrastructure is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation. Your county or district council may have developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy, and you can find this by searching the internet for your area.

## Examples of Neighbourhood Plan policies about landscape character:

### **Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014) Policy 2**

(<http://tattenhallpc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Tattenhall-Neighbourhood-Plan.pdf>)

*New development will be supported where it:*

- *Respects the local character and historic and natural assets of the surrounding area, and takes every opportunity, through design and materials, to reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place*
- *Incorporates, wherever possible, locally distinctive features such as Cheshire railings and fingerposts*
- *Does not unacceptably erode the important, predominantly undeveloped gaps between the three settlements of Tattenhall, Newton-by-Tattenhall and Gatesheath*
- *Fully accords with the Tattenhall Village Design Statement*
- *Respects local landscape quality ensuring that views and vistas are maintained wherever possible*
- *Takes every opportunity, where practicable and viable, to incorporate features that improves its environmental performance thereby reducing carbon emissions. These can include both energy efficiency measures and green energy generation.*

***Development that does not meet these criteria will not be permitted.***

### **Upper Eden Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2013) Policy UENDP4**

(<https://www.eden.gov.uk/media/2034/upper-eden-neighbourhood-plan-2012-2015.pdf>)

*For housing development within the Upper Eden Area the maintenance of local character has a higher significance than achieving a minimum housing density figure. The appropriate density for a housing site should in every case within the Upper Eden area result in a development that is in character with the local surrounding area.*

### **St Eval Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (adopted 2015) Policy SENDP4 Environment**

(<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/10252223/St-Eval-Neighbourhood-Development-Plan-OCTOBER-2014-2-.pdf>)

1. Development that is likely to have either a direct or indirect adverse impact upon the locally designated sites for nature conservation, priority habitats and/or protected species should demonstrate that appropriate mitigation and/or compensation will be provided.



**Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016)**

**LC1: Landscape Character Policy**

(<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/208405/wr-ndp-final-plan-document.pdf>)

*1. New development will be in keeping with existing settlement patterns, maintaining the shape of the villages within the landscape and protecting their distinctive identity and landscape character.*

*2. Development will be supported where it:*

*- conserves and enhances the landscape and scenic beauty of the parish and the key characteristics of this part of the Cotswold's AONB; and*

*- safeguards open countryside and cherished public views from inside and outside of the parish as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment; and*

*- does not adversely impact on existing green horizons*

*3. Development needs to retain the fields and farmland to the south and west of the parish that serve as a genuine gateway into the Cotswold AONB.*

*4. Development will be expected to conserve landscape features such as hedgerows, dry stone walls, fields, woodlands and water courses.*

**Some Neighbourhood Plan policies focus on the retention of strategic gaps to maintain local landscape character, for example:**

**Ascot, Sunninghill & Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014) Gaps between villages policy NP/EN1**

([https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200414/local\\_development\\_framework/478/ascot\\_sunninghill\\_and\\_sunningdale\\_neighbourhood\\_plan](https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200414/local_development_framework/478/ascot_sunninghill_and_sunningdale_neighbourhood_plan))

*Any development proposals in the identified gaps between villages, as defined on Map 7, should be located and designed to maintain the separation of the villages and to complement the relevant landscape characteristics of the gaps, through:*

*(a) Locating structures where they will be viewed against existing built form*

*(b) Retaining the proportion and scale of built structures and the space between them*

*(c) Reference to the built vernacular of the neighbourhood area*

*(d) Conservation and restoration of traditional boundary treatments; and*

*(e) Use of appropriate plant species in a comprehensive landscape scheme with appropriate boundary treatments to integrate with the rural character*

*Wherever possible, development should deliver enhancements to the landscape character.*

**Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014) Policy ENV1**

([https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Cringleford\\_Neighbourhood\\_Development\\_Plan\\_2013\\_2026\\_0.pdf](https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Cringleford_Neighbourhood_Development_Plan_2013_2026_0.pdf))

*A defined, continuous green landscaped corridor of 145m depth from the edge of the carriageway of the A47 will be provided to maintain the landscape setting of the village, maintain the existing wildlife corridor, mitigate traffic noise (Landscaped Protection Zone) and retain a key strategic gap at the edge of new development. In most cases it is envisaged that this will be a protected strip planted with trees but with pedestrian access. No new built development will be allowed within the zone unless the proposers can demonstrate that it will enhance the landscape and not have an adverse impact on the Strategic Gap between Cringleford and Hethersett, wildlife and buffering traffic noise.*

*The visual impact of new development when viewed from approaching main roads and the surrounding countryside should be minimised by the use of site appropriate landscape bunding, screening and mature tree planting. New and existing protected areas will require an effective management regime to enhance biodiversity.*

**Broughton Astley Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014)****Policy EH2 – Area of Separation**

(<http://www.broughton-astley.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan1.html>)

*Objective: To ensure that the community of Sutton in the Elms maintains its identity and character.*

*An area of separation lying to the north of Broughton Way and east of Sutton Lane, and amounting to approximately 7 ha of agricultural grazing land will be maintained between the two settlements of Broughton Astley and Sutton in the Elms. Development which would detract from the open character of this area or reduce the visual separation of Broughton Astley and Sutton in the Elms should not be permitted.*

- i. *The area of separation is desirable in order to ensure that the identity and distinctiveness of settlements is retained. (Identified on a map)*
- ii. *Development for recreational use such as Community Woodland, Country Park or informal public open space will be supported providing the proposals do not detract from the open and undeveloped character of the area.*

**Many Neighbourhood Plans include policies to continue the current protection provided by national landscape policies, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as conservation designations. Examples are:**

**Kirdford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014) Policy SDNP.2 – Setting of the South Downs National Park**

(<http://www.chichester.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan#kirdford>)

*Intention: To ensure development in land adjoining the South Downs National Park does not detract from the enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities by the public.*

*Policy SDNP.2 – Setting of the South Downs National Park*

*Development (including rural exception sites) within land adjoining the SDNP that contributes to the setting of the Park will only be permitted where it enhances and does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the National Park, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the Park by virtue of its location or design.*

*Assessment of such development proposals should have regard to the South Downs Management Plan and emerging National Park planning documents and strategies.*

*Reasoned Justification: The area of the Parish adjacent to the South Downs National Park makes a contribution to the setting of the Park and enjoyment of its special qualities. Outside the Park boundaries, light pollution, noise and development could have a harmful impact.*

**Fownhope Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) Policy FW2: Safeguarding the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

(<https://sites.google.com/site/fownhopeneighbourhoodplan/>)

*Measures to maintain and reinforce Fownhope Parish's natural environment and landscape character will be promoted wherever possible. New development shall have regard to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and amenity of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and, where appropriate, to respecting the setting, character, appearance and cultural heritage of the Fownhope Conservation Area. Development should contribute positively to the area's rural character should -*

- a) Give highest priority to conservation and enhancement of the amenity, visual quality, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;*
- b) Not adversely affect landscape character but where appropriate include measures to conserve, restore or enhance this;*
- c) Contribute towards the ecological network of the area with measures, in particular, to support the biodiversity value of designated and local sites;*
- d) Maintain and where appropriate extend tree cover;*
- e) Retain important landscape and biodiversity features such as ponds, orchards and hedgerows, adding to the natural assets of the parish where opportunities are available;*
- f) Proposals for schemes which are judged to be 'major development' will, following guidance in NPPF para.116, be resisted except where a proposal is necessary for the public benefit and there are no alternative locations outside the AONB.*

**Climping Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) Policy CPN 9 Protection of Natural Habitats**

(<http://bit.ly/2pSWuNH>)

*Development that results in harm to existing national and locally protected habitats will not normally be permitted. In some circumstances development proposals may be acceptable if accompanied by:*

- *An independent assessment of the overall net environmental impact, and*
- *Acceptable proposals to mitigate harm, or*
- *Acceptable proposals for the provision of equivalent alternative habitats*

**If you have particular countryside features such as hedgerows or dry stone walls in your area then you may want to include a specific policy in your Neighbourhood Plan, for example:**

**Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) Policy WHC2**

(<https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Council/Planning/The-local-plan-and-planning-policy/Neighbourhood-plans/Downloads/Wigginton-Hopwas/WHC-NP-Made-version-13.12.16.pdf>)

*Existing trees and hedges are an integral part of the character of the Neighbourhood Plan area and shall be retained wherever possible. Where removal is proposed due consideration shall be made of the Hedgerows Regulations, and in particular the hedges historic potential, and the Central Rivers Initiative, and where removal is justified the impact of removal shall be mitigated against by the provision of additional appropriate planting.*

**Bradwell Parish Neighbourhood Plan (Passed referendum stage, to be adopted in 2017) Policy E2**

(<http://www.bradda.org/Documents/Plan-Referendum-Version.pdf>)

*New development must contribute to local character by retaining a sense of place appropriate to its location. Developers are strongly encouraged to support proposals with a Building for Life assessment. Development proposals must be designed to retain, or where appropriate, replace, dry stone walls and trees and hedgerows. Where development will affect trees and/or hedgerows, proposals should be accompanied by a survey which establishes the health and longevity of affected trees and/or hedgerows and an appropriate management plan.*



You can also include a policy to protect any **dark skies** in your Neighbourhood Plan area from new sources of light pollution. CPRE has created an interactive map of Britain's night skies, including detailed maps for English counties, districts, National Parks, AONBs and National Character Areas. The maps are based on satellite data captured throughout September 2015 and can be accessed at [nightblight.cpre.org.uk](http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk).

**Examples of Neighbourhood Plans that include a policy to protect *dark skies* are:**

**Long Compton Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) Policy E3 – Dark Skies**

(<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-regeneration/long-compton-neighbourhood-plan.cfm>)

*Development proposals will only be supported if they do not jeopardise the status of Long Compton's dark skies site. Any applications for new development that requires a lighting scheme should show how the status of dark skies will be protected.*

Explanation

*In 2012 the recreation ground in Long Compton (shown on the Natural Environment Map) was designated a dark skies site by the UK Dark Sky Discovery Partnership. Dark Sky Discovery Sites are places that:*

- *are away from the worst of any local light pollution;*
- *provide good sightlines of the sky;*
- *have good public access, including firm ground for wheelchairs.*

*As a darker site in a remote rural area, 14 miles or so distant from any sizeable urban area, Long Compton is a 'Milky Way' site, the highest classification, a site where the Milky Way is visible to the naked eye. There are no street lights in the village, a situation the majority of residents have repeatedly said that they do not wish to change as they greatly value the blanket of stars which cover the area. The recreation ground is a flat area close to the road accessible to all and with the benefit of a small pavilion with facilities. The site is regularly used by astronomers and for education visits.*

*Dark skies are particularly important for rare bat species like the Myotis, long eared and Bechstein bats. These bats fly into the village from Whichford Woods, and are currently being studied by Warwickshire Biological Records Centre.*

*External lighting installations must be designed and maintained to minimise light spillage and, carefully positioned to avoid impact on the dark sky area at the recreation ground.*

**Brighstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) BPNP Policy POE2:  
Tranquillity**

(<https://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/2879-Draft-Brighstone-NDP-v1.pdf>)

*There will be a presumption against proposals that detrimentally affect the tranquillity of the area including through unnecessary lighting that results in the loss of night time dark skies or through the generation of unnecessary noise.*

*Our justification for this policy*

*CPRE tranquillity mapping shows the Isle of Wight as having some of the best tranquil areas in the South East of England. The Isle of Wight map shows Brighstone Parish as being in one of the most tranquil areas on the Isle of Wight particularly in relation to a lack of light pollution and the ability to see dark night skies. This is a valuable asset that is important for wildlife, benefits the health and wellbeing of residents and tourists and in turn is of benefit to the Island's rural economy. In the Residents Survey 718 people responded to a question about having more street lighting and 71.2% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, and 137 people stated that they place particular value on the lack of noise pollution and peace and tranquillity of the area.*

## DESIGNATING LOCAL GREEN SPACE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

In 2012, the Government introduced a 'Local Green Space' (LGS) designation in the NPPF. This enables local communities, through Local and Neighbourhood Plans, to be able to identify for special protection areas of particular importance to them. Paragraph 76 of the NPPF states that: 'By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as LGS should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. LGS should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.'

In line with national planning policy, it is very unlikely that Local Green Space could be designated on land that already has planning permission or is allocated for development in a Local Plan. The best way to protect a locally-important piece of open land through the designation is to ensure that local development needs may be met through the identification of appropriate alternative development sites in the Neighbourhood Plan.

NPPF paragraph 77 opens 'The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used (i) where the green space is in close proximity to the community it serves ii) where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, e.g. because of its beauty, history, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife and iii) where the green area concerned is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.'

It is acceptable to designate as Local Green Space land that is already identified with another conservation designation, such as an SSSI, Local Nature Reserve, registered historic park or garden, or land that forms part of a National Park or AONB, but in doing so it is advisable to be clear why the additional protection is considered necessary. For example, many such designations are intended

to limit developments to those that would not have a significant irreversible impact on the intrinsic value of the designation; but this would not necessarily prevent certain types of development that could be harmful to the value of a specific piece of land. Similarly, it would be advisable to specify types of development that would be acceptable, for example a new pavilion on a sports ground, or the occasional use of the land for local events (which sometimes require planning permission).

Local Green Space is a relatively new designation and its application continues to evolve as more places put it into practice. Further guidance on the designation of Local Green Space can be obtained through the online National Planning Practice Guidance.<sup>12</sup>

Designating Local Green Space through Neighbourhood Plans can be facilitated where criteria for designation are defined at a more strategic level. Good examples of this include Leicestershire County Council, an authority who spearheaded work to designate Local Green Space, and Cotswold District Council.<sup>13</sup>

It is not necessary to have such a strategic framework in place for communities to designate Local Green Space through a Neighbourhood Plan, nor should such a framework necessarily constrain a community from taking a different approach. If you would like to designate Local Green Spaces in your Neighbourhood Plan it would be worth checking whether your local planning authority has developed criteria. A National Park Authority or AONB body may also have prepared guidelines on Local Green Spaces.

## Examples of Neighbourhood Plan policies that designate Local Green Space are:

### **West Haddon Neighbourhood Development Plan (adopted 2016) Policy WH2 protection of Local Green Spaces**

(<https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/made-neighbourhood-development-plans/>)

*The local green spaces, shown on the Proposals Map, are protected from development. New built development on these green spaces will only be permitted when it is for informal or formal outdoor recreation. Identified protected green spaces will be: a) Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves b) Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife c) Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land d) Consistent with paragraph 76 of the NPPF.*

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space#Local-Green-Space-designation>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/880697/Local-Green-Space-toolkit.pdf>

### **Tatenhill and Rangemore Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) Policy LC2 – Local Green Space**

(<http://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/tatenhill>)

*The following areas of land are designated as Local Green Space:*

*In Rangemore:*

- Rangemore Recreation Ground and Bowling Green
- Land to the south of the church and the school
- Land to the rear of the Rangemore Club

*In Tatenhill:*

- Land to the South of Cedars, Main Street
- Land opposite The Old Rectory, Main Street

*Within Local Green Space, development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances.*

*In considering the designation of the Local Green Spaces the community has been mindful of protecting key pieces of land that are either used for recreation or have been identified as being important to the setting and character of the conservation area (within the recent reviews of the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plan for both Rangemore and Tatenhill).*

**The Open Spaces Society has also produced detailed guidance on how to designate *Local Green Space* in a Neighbourhood Plan. You can view the guidance at <http://www.oss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/C21-Neighbourhood-Planning.pdf>.**

## **DEFINING WHAT THE PRESSURES ARE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA**

Having a clear understanding about what makes your landscape special is vital to underpin your Neighbourhood Plan and shape future development in your area. Alongside producing evidence about your local landscape character, your Neighbourhood Planning group will need to establish what the current development pressures are for the area (including existing development allocations) and/or current environmental initiatives, which a Neighbourhood Plan may also support. Drawing together this information will help your group develop a neighbourhood that protects and enhances the local landscape, and influences future developments.

There are a wide range of local sources that you can use to gather information about development pressures:

- adopted and emerging Local Plans covering the area, as well as strategic plans prepared by a combined authority (or in London by the Mayor);
- local evidence-base documents such as Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs), Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments (HELAAs, formerly known as SHLAAs),



Brownfield Registers, etc.;

- where relevant, AONB or National Park Management Plans that cover the area;
- Green Infrastructure Strategies that would be relevant to your neighbourhood area;
- national or local nature strategies that could inform your Neighbourhood Plan;
- landscape sensitivity and capacity studies.

These documents set out housing and business development strategies as well as environmental initiatives which can inform the likely development needs within an area, potential pressures for change, or opportunities for improvements.

## **INFORMING WHERE DEVELOPMENT CAN BEST BE ACCOMMODATED**

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan should identify specific sites for development. Appendix 1 of this guidance contains a checklist which can be used to help determine the best sites for development within the Plan area. Understanding the landscape of potential development sites and how they sit within the wider area and or settlement is particularly important. Information can be drawn from Landscape Character Assessment and other sources of environmental information such as Conservation Area Appraisals to assist in this analysis. Your own site assessment will also be invaluable. The reasons for the identification of a preferred development site over others must be clearly set out.

Useful questions to ask include:

1. What are the special qualities of the landscape and/or settlements where development may be accommodated?
2. Is there a location for development which is more suitable/less sensitive than others - why?

## **DESIGNING NEW DEVELOPMENT THAT FITS WITH LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Once a particular site for development has been identified in the Neighbourhood Plan it is possible to provide guidance on how development should take place, which aspects and characteristics of the site and area should be conserved and enhanced and what opportunities exist for improved environmental initiatives on the back of the development. These may translate into a specific policy which states that proposals will be permitted if certain criteria are adhered to, such as:

- building heights;
- layout and materials;
- provision of open space;
- introduction of natural screening/mitigation planting/boundary treatment;
- protection of setting to listed buildings and other heritage assets;
- protection of existing trees, hedgerows or dry stone walls;
- re-establishment of particular habitat;
- lighting use and design;
- improved public rights of way links or protection and enhancement of key views.

In addition, useful questions to ask include:

1. Can development bring forward environmental initiatives such as habitat creation, watercourse improvement or green infrastructure (the creation of corridors and networks that connect existing wildlife sites or green spaces) and which enhance local character?
2. Can development bring forward new infrastructure such as footpaths and cycle routes or new coastal defences which fit well with local character and reinforce sense of place?
3. Are there particular vernacular (local design) styles, landscape patterns or design cues which can help shape development and make it blend in with the existing character of the

## IN CONCLUSION

This guidance will help you to develop a Neighbourhood Plan with well-evidenced policies that protect and enhance your local landscape, whilst shaping any future developments. There is no doubt that creating a Neighbourhood Plan is a labour of love; but you and your community have the power to make a real difference to the future of your area. We hope that you will use this guidance to help ensure that the landscapes you love now are just as valued and distinctive in the future.

## GLOSSARY

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Nationally important landscape where planning control is based on the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.
Conservation Area	An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Conservation Area Appraisal	The purpose of a conservation area appraisal is to define the 'special architectural and historic interest' that warrants Conservation Area designation and to identify what it is about the character or appearance of the area that should be preserved or enhanced. Such appraisals may be supported with a management plan.
European Landscape Convention	<p>The European Landscape Convention is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. It is dedicated exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The Convention was signed by the UK government on 24th February 2006, ratified on the 21st November 2006, and became binding in this country on 1st March 2007.</p> <p>The ELC provides a people-centred and forward-looking way to reconcile environmental management with the socio-economic challenges of the 21st century and to help people and communities to re-connect with place.</p>

Green infrastructure	A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Historic park or garden	A designed landscape on the statutory Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England. Such landscapes can include public parks, gardens and recreation grounds, the grounds of stately homes or castles (even where the original building has been lost), and other open spaces such as cemeteries, town squares and the grounds of municipal buildings such as hospitals; they can be found in urban and rural settings, may be public or private, and are graded I (the highest), II* or II.
Landscape policies	General principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes.
Landscape Character Assessment	A process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain why an area is distinctive.
Listed building	Any building or structure which is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.
National Character Areas	National Character Areas (NCAs) integrate a wide range of environmental information to create a 'profile' for each of England's 159 major landscape areas. These provide both a strong evidence base to underpin local planning policy and a summary of opportunities for the future management of an area.
Neighbourhood Development Order	An order introduced by a parish or town council, or a neighbourhood forum, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process, which grants planning permission for a specific development or type of development that will fulfil the vision and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan for the neighbourhood area.

## Neighbourhood Plan

A planning document created by a Parish or town council or a neighbourhood forum, which sets out a vision for the neighbourhood area, and contains policies for the development and use of the land in the area. Neighbourhood Plans must be subject to an independent examination to confirm that they meet legal requirements, and then to a local referendum. If approved by a majority vote of the local community, the Neighbourhood Plan will then form part of the statutory development plan.

## Sense of Place

A term used in relation to those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging.

## Settlement Study

Settlement Studies seek to assess the sustainability of a rural settlement/s and recommend a settlement hierarchy. This informs the Council's approach for an overall spatial strategy for development and change within the settlement e.g. to promote sustainable communities by locating new development in proximity to services and facilities. Your county or district council may have developed a settlement study that covers your Neighbourhood Plan area.

## Village Design Statement

A document that identifies and defines the distinctive characteristics of a locality, and provides design guidance to influence its future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Village design statements have generally been produced for rural areas often by parish councils.



# APPENDIX

**The following is a landscape checklist for assessing individual potential development sites.**

- 1.** Name of site
- 2.** Area of site
- 3.** Greenfield/brownfield
- 4.** Adjacent/surrounding land uses
- 5.** Relevant policy covering the site
- 6.** Is the site within the settlement boundary or built form, adjacent to settlement boundary or in open countryside?
- 7.** Describe the topography of the site
- 8.** Describe the views into and out of the site
- 9.** Describe the boundaries of the site
- 10.** Describe the internal landscape features of the site and current land use
- 11.** Describe any hydrological features
- 12.** Does the site perform a particular function in relation to an existing settlement e/g/ part of gateway experience, important role in providing local distinctiveness etc?
- 13.** Note any public right of way
- 14.** Is access into the site likely to result in change to any landscape features?
- 15.** Relevant character area or type
- 16.** Height and character of surrounding buildings
- 17.** If site is appropriate for development can the whole site be developed?
- 18.** Is the site totally inappropriate, has significant constraints, has minor constraints is unconstrained?
- 19.** How soon could the site be developed?
- 20.** How could development be integrated with the surrounding landscape/settlement? For example, if external lighting is required how can this be sensitively designed to minimise light pollution?
- 21.** What other environmental gains could development on this site deliver?