

Neighbourhood Planning for the Environment

Find out how to consider the
environment in Neighbourhood
Plans.

This guide has been prepared by the
Environment Agency, the Forestry
Commission, Historic England and Natural
England.

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1. Introduction

The Neighbourhood Planning process provides a role in shaping future communities and developing a sense of place that is unique and valuable. Your historic and natural environment is integral to this, offering huge opportunities to provide attractive places to live, which benefit health and wellbeing, as well as protecting and enhancing your community's most important assets for generations to come.

The conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environment should be about reconnecting people with the places they live in, creating opportunities to improve our lives. The environment we live in should be a fundamental part of everyday life and not separated or a barrier to growth but enjoyed by all. The planning system and local policies are an opportunity to achieve these aims.

Although there are certain legislative and policy requirements that must be met when producing a Neighbourhood Plan, these are set out in separate toolkits on the [Locality Neighbourhood Planning resources pages](#) as well as in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and [National Planning Practice Guidance](#).

Therefore, this toolkit focuses on the opportunities to enhance your environment through plan-making, some important issues to consider, where to find out more, good practice and a handy checklist to use when developing your Plan. The toolkit aims to help:

- Neighbourhood forums, parish councils and other community groups
- Consultants who have been commissioned to prepare Neighbourhood Plans
- Local authorities who are working with communities on Neighbourhood Plans



2. How to use this toolkit

The Environment Agency, Historic England, Forestry Commission and Natural England are statutory environmental bodies that deliver the Government's work to protect and improve the natural, built and historic environment.

This toolkit has been developed by these statutory consultees as a guide to assist Neighbourhood Planning Groups who are developing Neighbourhood Plans. It can be read as a whole or if you need assistance with particular topics you can use the quick links on the contents page to navigate the document. The checklist in section 7 can also be used as a quick guide on the main issues to consider.

3. Overarching principles

As statutory environmental bodies we must focus our resources on those Neighbourhood Plans where the risks and opportunities for the environment are the greatest, but consider that every plan has the opportunity to improve the environment in a positive way.

Although separate bodies with individual responsibilities we have shared principles on what a 'good' environment looks like and we collaborate to achieve this. The environment is an integral part of plan-making and any new development should seek to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, as outlined in paragraph 8 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). This section provides some overarching principles and issues to consider that will be a helpful starting point when thinking about your Neighbourhood Plan.

Evidence is key - what do we have?

A good place to start is to gather evidence about the assets in your local area and the potential opportunities they hold. Your local Council should be able to assist you with evidence sources and there is further information on environmental evidence in [section 5: Key themes](#) of this toolkit.

Neighbourhood Plans can help protect and improve assets and places valued by people such as archaeology, historic buildings, green space and parks and gardens. The development plan for your area, whether adopted or emerging, may have already identified many of these local assets. Consultation with local

people and groups will also provide a clear picture of which assets are important to your neighbourhood.

Seek out opportunities - how can we enhance what we have?



Once you know what assets your local community has, you can look for opportunities to improve and enhance them through the plan process. For example, are there areas where new green space could be provided for residents or could a historic building be reused or repaired? Neighbourhood Plans provide huge opportunities for

recreation and leisure by creating new parks and gardens or designating local green space. Existing green spaces can also be linked to make 'green corridors' to connect people and wildlife and to link historic sites, encouraging walking and cycling as a means of getting around settlements. Neighbourhood planning also provides the opportunity to make smaller scale enhancements, such as tree planting and green roofs, which make a huge difference to the wider environment. Also consider how the valued assets in your place complement each other to help to provide the character and distinctiveness of place.

See the value in our environment - what value does our natural and historic environment provide?

The environment benefits the places we live and combines natural and historic assets. It is the natural attributes of an area (its 'natural capital') that delivers a range of natural goods and services (often referred to as 'ecosystems services') that provide multiple benefits for people, places and nature. A characterful and distinctive landscape with green spaces and historic assets can attract investment and businesses and make our communities attractive and interesting places to live.

A well planned, designed and managed landscape can help provide a robust and resilient place to live, work and visit in the face of a changing climate. Good environmental design can help alleviate flood risk through sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), for example permeable paving, green roofs and retention ponds. Planting trees can provide shade for people and habitat for wildlife. Aim to make gains for your environment rather than just maintaining what you have.

This is a valuable principle to hold on to as you develop your Plan. The development plan for your area may already provide some useful policies on enhancing the environment, which can be expanded in the Neighbourhood Plan. Look for the links and opportunities between your assets, for example important heritage sites can also provide opportunities for access to green space or the wider countryside.

Embed the opportunities in policy - How can you deliver opportunities and enhancements?



Delivery on the ground requires strong evidence linked to robust policies. Neighbourhood Plans can help deliver wider initiatives already established in strategic policies or other strategies, such as Green Infrastructure Strategies or Local Flood Risk Management Plans.

Your policies can help ensure opportunities are delivered through development and seek to make further enhancements at a more local level that can have wider environmental benefits.

The Derwent Valley Heritage Way passes through a World Heritage Site and is also a major recreational resource © Natural England

4. Who we are and what we do

Below is a brief outline of the consultees involved in the production of this toolkit. Further information on when to consult us is provided in [Section 6: When to consult](#).



The Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is a non-ministerial government department. England's trees, woods and forests are a vital national asset providing multiple economic, social and environmental benefits.

Our objective is to enable the forestry sector to **protect, improve and expand** this asset so that these benefits can be maximised now and maintained for the future. Our forestry policy is therefore based on resilience.

Our role in the planning system is specialised and we are a statutory consultee on the restoration of minerals and landfill sites to forestry, and a non-statutory consultee on the impact of development within 500m of ancient woodland.

To help protect Britain's trees, woods and forests, we issue felling licences. Tree felling carried out under FULL planning permission is exempt from requiring a felling licence.

More information is available on our [grants and regulations](#) pages. Enquiries should initially be made to the relevant [Area Office](#) in England.



Historic England

Historic England is a non-departmental public body which champions and protects England's historic places. We are the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England and provide expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

We encourage community groups to consider their local heritage and the historic environment's role in neighbourhood planning and we have prepared an [advice note](#) offering a more detailed guide.

Whilst we target resources on proposals with the potential for major change to nationally important heritage assets and their settings, our local offices may also advise communities where they wish to engage directly with the plan's development subject to local priorities and capacity.

Historic England is a statutory consultee in relation to local plans and neighbourhood plans. We encourage LPAs to notify Historic England when neighbourhood areas have been designated, promoting engagement at an early stage. In most cases Historic England is consulted on the draft stage plan and at the publication stage.



Natural England

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Our [Conservation Strategy](#) for the 21st Century ('Conservation 21') sets out how we work to protect England's nature and landscape for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. Our focus is on an 'outcomes approach' – delivering better long-term outcomes for the environment by understanding people's interests and needs and working towards a shared vision.

We are a statutory consultee on local plans and neighbourhood plans as well as related Habitats Regulations Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment.

We are also a statutory consultee for Development Management consultations that affect our interests and where Environmental Impact Assessment is needed. In addition, we are the regulatory body for protected species [mitigation licences](#), where these are required in connection with development.



Environment Agency

The Environment Agency aims to create great places for people and wildlife by protecting and improving the environment and enabling sustainable development.

We are a statutory consultee on Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and provide place-makers with evidence and expert advice on the environment and flood risk that, when used early in the plan-making process, provide more

certainty and clarity about the best locations for development. This, in turn, aids investment and the pace development is delivered.

When undertaking our role, we aim to reduce the risks to people and properties from flooding, ensure there is enough water for people and wildlife, protect and improve air, land and water quality and apply the environmental standards for industry.

We would like place-makers to recognise the natural capital of our environment and enhancing the services it provides to people, such as protection from natural hazards, resilience to climate change and benefits to mental and physical health.

5. Key themes

Where to start

Before starting to prepare a neighbourhood plan, there is value in fully understanding what it is your community values or would like to improve about their local area.

In addition to the formal requirements for consultation, stakeholder participation provides a valuable way of identifying environmental issues for the plan and ensures the local community is part of that process.

Your local community will know what assets are important and what contributes to their sense of place. Consider new and innovative ways to encourage participation and engage local communities.

Take a look...

At this trial of creative methods to engage people in neighbourhood planning, which took place in Startforth, County Durham with the support of Northern Heartlands Great Place Scheme. The neighbourhood planning group hosted an interactive play and community workshop, generating interest in the process and giving the community a novel, enjoyable means by which to consider their priorities. It demonstrated that going beyond newsletters and questionnaires can help to engage more of the community and bring in a wider span of views.

As well as talking to your local community it is also worth engaging with your local planning authority to establish what evidence already exists about your area. Information held and used in preparation of local plans and strategic policies will be particularly helpful, for example the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is the best source of information on future flood risk.

Your local Council may have a Green Infrastructure Strategy highlighting opportunities to connect green space or make enhancements. The local landscape character assessment for your area is extremely useful in terms of understanding sense of place and brings together both natural and cultural information.

Evidence documents underpinning plans, such as the Habitats Regulations Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal and its scoping report, will outline baseline information on the environment along with potential effects that should

be considered when considering new developments. Your local Council will be able to advise you further on this.

Invaluable information may also be available from local record centres, your local Historic Environment Record (HER) or local environment and amenity groups, including Local Nature Partnerships, who bring together local organisations, businesses and people who want to improve their local natural environment.

Nationally, relevant sources of evidence include the [National Heritage List for England](#), the [Heritage at Risk Register](#) and various guidance documents, including information from [Natural England](#) and the [Environment Agency](#).

The value of our historic and natural environment

The environment we live in is fundamental to our sense of place, it determines what makes a town or village special and is therefore crucial in plan-making, both in terms of protecting our natural and historic assets but also the opportunities it presents to create healthy, attractive places to live, which meets the needs of local communities. This section outlines some key themes to consider when developing your Neighbourhood Plan, although not all will be relevant to your plan area.

What is special about your historic environment?

A place's distinctive heritage not only gives local people a sense of belonging or identity and a feeling of pride in a place, but it can help to attract investment to an area.

When reviewing issues relating to the historic environment, many neighbourhood plan groups start by constructing a list of all the designated heritage assets in their area. We recommend referring to the [National Heritage List for England](#) and the relevant local authority website to compile this information.

Such a list can be enhanced by preparing a map that shows where these assets are located, as well as any issues they face, and by adding other non-designated heritage assets also with reference to the Historic Environment Record (HER).

Assessing significance

Heritage assets may include more than just buildings and monuments; they could also include sites, places, areas or landscapes. The unifying factor is that the asset has a degree of significance that merits consideration in planning decisions.

So it is important not only to list the assets themselves, but also to review what is special about them.

When assessing the significance of a heritage asset, a useful starting point is to examine the asset and its setting.

Try to answer questions such as:

- What makes the asset valuable to this and future generations?
- Does it contribute to the architectural or artistic interest of the place?
- Is it an important symbol of the community's historic identity?

Sources of information on heritage assets include the local plan, the main local, county and national records including the HER, [statutory](#) and local lists, the [Heritage Gateway](#), and the [Historic England Archive](#).

Defining local character

If you are writing a policy requiring development to achieve high quality design to make a positive contribution to local character it is important to define the key features of local character, otherwise they may only reiterate the requirements of existing local plan policies.

Whilst at first glance it may appear that an area is typified by the variety of building materials and styles present, careful analysis can help to identify features that are locally distinct or reflect the historic character of a village, town or suburban form of development.

Take a look...

There are case studies on Historic England's website. Drawing from these, as an example Oldham and North Warnborough (ONWARD) Neighbourhood Plan steering group brought design guidance set out in conservation area appraisals into the plan as dedicated design policies for each area. These were rephrased to provide robust design principles for applicants and decision makers to guide proposals in each area. Matters covered included the suitability of particular materials, set-back of buildings from road frontages, boundary treatments and the desired scale and form of new buildings. Similar requirements were set out for individual site allocations. The Neighbourhood Plan examiner described the approach as "exemplary".

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
Assessing significance	<p>Conservation Principles</p> <p>The Setting of Heritage Assets</p> <p>Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment</p>	<p>Ensure that you understand the concept of ‘significance’ and, where required, review the significance of assets and their setting in your area. It is unlikely that the significance of all assets in your area would need to be assessed.</p> <p>Focus on any proposed site allocations or development and the relationship between those proposals and identified heritage assets; the level of detail applied should be proportionate.</p> <p>You may decide that the nature of significance of the affected asset(s) requires assessment by an expert.</p>
Defining local character	<p>There are several examples of different types of tools that neighbourhood plan groups can use to help define local character. Examples are given opposite, but others are available too.</p>	<p>Different toolkits can be used for different purposes. The Community Planning Toolkit (within ‘Your Place Matters’) assists particularly communities in rural areas and has been used extensively in the West Midlands.</p> <p>The Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit has been used for a number of large neighbourhood plan character studies in suburban areas and conservation areas.</p> <p>Know Your Place and Our Place are other options that work especially well at the street level.</p>

Promoting the conservation of heritage assets

Preparing a neighbourhood plan may provide opportunities to promote the conservation of buildings and spaces by identifying their heritage interest as part of evidence-gathering, and, potentially, by developing a list of heritage assets that are locally valued.

As a first step, Historic England recommends contacting the Local Planning Authority (LPA), which may have published a local list of non-designated heritage assets or have other information on non-designated heritage assets in the area. Research undertaken on a neighbourhood plan could help to inform any revision to an existing local list or provide the foundations for a new one.

When preparing a list of non-designated heritage assets, adhering to clearly-defined criteria of eligibility for local listing is recommended, to ensure that a consistent, clear approach is taken.

Conservation Areas are usually designated by LPAs and you may support their management by collecting information and making it available to decision makers through an updated [Conservation Area Appraisal](#).



The first Conservation Area in Stamford, Lincolnshire, which was designated as an area of special architectural and historical interest in 1967, two months after the Civic Amenities Act was passed. © Historic England Archive DP217283'

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
Planning policy and guidance	NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies, and how they are applied. The PPG includes guidance on matters relating to protecting, sustaining and enhancing the historic environment.
Identifying non-designated heritage assets and promoting measures to support their conservation	Historic England has published an advice note on local heritage listing . Historic England has also published an advice note on Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment , which includes a section on evidence gathering.	Informed by relevant guidance and advice, consider and assess the significance of local buildings or sites that may be identified as non-designated heritage assets. This can help to inform planning proposals and decisions affecting those assets and/or their setting.

Making positive use of heritage

Careful consideration of the opportunities that heritage can provide, including how best to integrate new development into an existing place, can encourage people to be innovative, stimulating investment, entrepreneurship, tourism and employment.

Through consultation and discussions you may identify preferred [economic and social outcomes](#) for a site and its surrounding area, and use neighbourhood planning policy and supporting guidance to steer future development.

A neighbourhood plan may be well placed to acknowledge the benefits of heritage assets to health and well-being. Planning policies and decisions can achieve places which promote high quality public spaces and enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

To give one example, it may be that your neighbourhood includes an historic building or street that is a popular destination for tourists. A neighbourhood plan can provide the detail on access measures such as a parish heritage trail, suitable car parking or signage, which could over time support the regeneration of an area.

Top tips on making the most of your heritage assets

- Could your neighbourhood plan provide the stimulus for tackling a heritage site at risk? Not only could this help to bring a site back to use, it could also help to deliver other benefits by promoting change.
- If funding is needed to support identified infrastructure outcomes, one route to consider is using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). More information on CIL is available via the Planning Practice Guidance.
- Planning policies and decisions can achieve places which promote high quality public spaces and enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. Don't forget that a neighbourhood plan may also be well placed to acknowledge the benefits of heritage assets to health and well-being. Refer to Historic England's advice note on neighbourhood planning and the historic environment for more on making the most of your heritage assets.

The natural environment and its benefits

Evidence gathering, communicating with your Local Council, key stakeholders and residents is crucial in developing a picture of what is valued in the local community and where enhancements could be made. If your local Council has an up to date local plan or has prepared their strategic policies (post 2018 NPPF) then these policies are the place to start to understand the existing environmental context and what is expected from developers.

There may be established strategic solutions in place that need to be followed, for example the creation of new greenspace to avoid recreational impacts on important designated sites, or established approaches requiring developers to provide net gains in biodiversity. Every neighbourhood area will have its own characteristics and opportunities.

If you intend to allocate sites for development seek out opportunities to enhance as well as protect, considering whether net gain for biodiversity can be incorporated, see [paragraph 174\(b\) of the NPPF](#). In a nutshell net gain is an approach that uses the planning process to leave biodiversity in a better state than it was before the development started, securing wider benefits for people and the environment. Consider net gain approaches in your neighbourhood

plan, including opportunities to deliver aspirations set in higher tier strategic policies. It's also worth taking a look at the Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#), which outlines aspirations to improve the environment within a generation. It outlines that the environment should be at the heart of planning. Neighbourhood plans can offer a huge contribution to this by engaging locally and creating gains that really enhance the local area and are of benefit to its residents and visitors.

The following information on the natural environment provides some key issues to consider when developing policies for your Neighbourhood Plan.

Landscape character

Your Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to enhance locally valued landscapes. The local plan and/or the strategic policies for your area may have mapped key characteristics of the landscape and the Neighbourhood Plan provides the chance to identify, protect and enhance distinctive local landscape features or characteristics at a more local level, for example pond features, woodland and dry-stone walking.

Views are also important; does your plan area have important views that contribute to local distinctiveness that should be protected? Landscape considerations will be important in deciding where and how to accommodate development. Any proposed allocations should be informed by evidence on landscape impacts.

If your Neighbourhood Plan area lies within or close to a protected landscape, such as a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, you should comply with these policies in the NPPF.

The assessment of potential development allocations in or near these areas should include an assessment of each site's landscape sensitivity. Such an assessment can help to ensure the most appropriate sites are selected for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts through careful siting, design and landscaping. Reference to the Local Authority's Landscape Character Assessment should also be made, to highlight important characteristics that should be protected.

Take a look...

Take a look at the work undertaken by [Local Authorities in Devon](#) to inform Neighbourhood Planning and ensure landscape is given due consideration. This helpful advice note provides useful tips for Neighbourhood Planning Groups. It highlights the importance of the evidence base and the need to fully understand what makes the local landscape special. There is no need to repeat policy contained in the Local Plan but the Neighbourhood Plan can usefully provide more detail or target particular features for enhancement, for example hedgerows.

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
Landscape	<p>MAGIC online mapping tool shows protected landscapes</p> <p>Natural England's National Character Areas Profiles for the 159 character areas in England and the Local Council's Landscape Character Assessment where available</p> <p>NPPF sections on landscape, including Paragraph 172 relating to development in protected landscapes National Planning Practice Guidance on landscape character</p>	Gather information on protected landscapes, build a picture of what characteristics are important and identify any local features or views that are important to your community through consultation.

Nature conservation sites, habitats and species



Some proposals, even those at some distance, can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites, such as European protected sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), [ancient woodland](#), or other [priority habitats](#).

If there are likely to be any impacts, you'll need to think about how these can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for in line with the NPPF.

Protected species should also be considered. Natural England has produced [standing advice](#) for development proposals. [Protected species licenses](#)

may also be required from Natural England for individual development proposals.

As well as protecting sites and species, your Plan could also promote opportunities for wildlife, for example incorporating swift or bat boxes into the design of new development, considering design and lighting to encourage wildlife, creating new ponds or restoring a neglected hedgerow. Small scale enhancements can make a huge difference to the wider environment.

There may be sites in your community which are locally important for wildlife, biodiversity or geodiversity. These may already be locally designated. There may be opportunities to enhance or improve connections between these or there may be opportunities to designate new wildlife sites.

A useful starting point is to consider how members of the community use and value green spaces - that will help you identify opportunities, and there should be scope to build in enhancements for wildlife too.

We often imagine important wildlife sites as green, natural spaces but it's also important to consider the value and opportunity provided by brownfield sites (previously developed land).

Brownfield sites can be of high biodiversity or geological value, supporting Priority Habitats, protected or Priority Species. They can also be important components of ecological networks. You'll need to consider how any impacts can be avoided or whether features could be incorporated into development.

Top tips

- Discuss Environmental Assessments with your Local Planning Authority. Neighbourhood plans may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and all plans should be screened for likely significant effects on the environment.
- Where a Neighbourhood Plan could potentially lead to significant effects on a European wildlife sites it will also be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Habitats Regulations (2017). Consider any potential impacts early to ensure effects can be avoided. Note that an impact may still occur at some distance from a protected site (e.g. diffuse pollution impacts)
- Further information on environmental assessments is available in Planning Practice Guidance.

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
Nature conservation sites, habitats and species	<p>MAGIC online mapping tool shows protected sites, including SSSIs, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.</p> <p>Natural England's Impact Risk Zones -to help assess potential for impacts on Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites</p> <p>Open Mosaic Habitat Inventory of Brownfield land published by Natural England - to help identify brownfield sites of biodiversity or geological value.</p> <p>See relevant sections of the NPPF and NPPG on nature conservation in relation to sites and species.</p> <p>Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available.</p>	<p>Gather information on the location of protected sites, priority species and habitats, including those on brownfield sites.</p> <p>Talk to your local Council and the local community to understand which sites are important in the local community, consider how these can be enhanced as well as protected.</p>

Soils and Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution.

If you are proposing development in your Neighbourhood Plan you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), see para 171.

For more information, see Natural England's publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#).

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
Soils and best and most versatile agricultural land	<p>The provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) map and coverage of post 1988 MAFF ALC surveys on MAGIC and post 1988 MAFF ALC survey reports and maps at gov.uk to help determine impacts on best and most versatile agricultural land.</p> <p>Various references in the NPPF, including paragraphs 170 and 171 and guidance in NPPG on soils and best and most versatile agricultural land.</p>	<p>Your LPA may be able to provide further detail on the location of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land in your plan area, along with ALC data.</p> <p>Avoid development sites in areas of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land.</p>

Green infrastructure, including local parks and green space

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities ([NPPF definition in glossary section](#)).

As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments but also street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls (see [National Planning Practice Guidance](#)).

Consider what GI assets you have in your neighbourhood and how they link to the wider GI network, could improvements be made? Are there any gaps in the network and can your Neighbourhood Plan help to enhance and create new GI for its residents and visitors?

Your local Council may have a Green Infrastructure Strategy, which maps existing assets and opportunity areas. Could your plan take forward proposals? By consulting your local community, you will be able to understand what is important to them and how existing GI could be improved by introducing new uses or creating better access points. For some it may be reducing flood risk, for others it may be about increasing access to nature or reducing air pollution.

Local parks and green space are often the most natural and accessible places closest to where people live and are at the heart of an area's green infrastructure. Communities can highlight spaces that are important to them as Assets of Community Value and by designating those as Local Green Space in their Neighbourhood Plans (see para 99 of the [NPPF](#)).

When designing new or improving existing space, consider using recognised criteria and standards - such as the [Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard](#) and the national quality standard for Green Space, the [Green Flag Award](#).

Take a look....

Take a look at this [local example](#) of the application of Local Green Space Designation in the Cotswolds. This guide was put together by Cotswold District Council to support local communities in putting forward their local open spaces for designation as Local Green Space.

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
<p>Green infrastructure, green spaces and parks</p>	<p>Improving culture, arts and sporting opportunities through planning (2013) Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA). Chapter 6.4 considers how to approach these themes through planning and the application of standards and other tools to improve open and green space.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Planning Local Greenspace (2016) Locality guide on the application of local greenspace designation in neighbourhood planning.</p> <p>Assets of Community Value – guide for communities wishing to highlight their interest in community assets, including green space.</p> <p>See the NPPF and NPPG for further policy context and guidance.</p>	<p>The TCPA document provides useful information in Chapter 6.4 on how to consider culture, arts and sports.</p> <p>Further dedicated guide exists on Locality’s website.</p> <p>Speak to your Local Council, find out what evidence exists in relation to GI and speak to local residents about what is important to them or what is lacking.</p>

Connectivity and seeking opportunities to enhance

As discussed throughout this toolkit, the relationship with the adopted or emerging development plan and its strategic policies is important to understand the wider environmental context and better understand what contribution the Neighbourhood Plan can make to enhancing the natural environment.

This might include larger initiatives, such as creating new areas of green space or providing a green corridor to connect areas of existing green infrastructure, to smaller scale enhancements such as tree planting. Every enhancement makes a difference and understanding the existing environmental context helps to ensure the right gains are made in the right places.

Neighbourhood plans can sometimes focus on allocation of land and setting policies to influence development; you may find it helpful to draw up a parish

green infrastructure or nature strategy to set out your wider aims, aspirations and activities for people and nature in your parish.

Top tips

Although not an exhaustive list some examples of enhancement opportunities might include:

- Provide new footpaths, improving links to the existing right of way network or providing new access points to existing areas of green space, promoting sustainable means of getting around a settlement.
- Restore or create features which are important in your landscape, e.g. hedgerows, ponds, tree planting.
- Increasing the diversity of native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporate swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Add a green roof to new buildings.
- Contribute to wider Green Infrastructure, can your Neighbourhood Plan take forward any aims and objectives from the Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists)?
- Identify areas of importance for special protection through a Local Green Space designation. Can these areas be enhanced?
- Manage public spaces so that they are more wildlife friendly, for example by sowing wild flower strips, or introducing vegetation to streets and other pedestrian areas.
- Plant street trees.
- Identify improvements to the existing public rights of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving surfaces, cleaning litter, installing kissing gates or highlighting areas that could be extended or missing links to the network.

Small scale enhancements can make a big difference...



Small scale enhancements to pedestrian areas can result in huge benefits to the urban environment

© Natural England

Take a look...

Take a look at the [Yoxall's Neighbourhood Plan \(East Staffordshire\)](#). The Neighbourhood Planning Group undertook a 'character analysis' of their plan area, looking at development constraints but crucially opportunities too. This approach was underpinned by excellent community involvement, which included feedback that local residents wanted to see green space improvement through the introduction of new uses and making them more accessible. The result was dedicated policies on Green Infrastructure and design, requiring enhancement as well as protection and a need for new development to introduce new uses to existing public open spaces.

Trees and woods



Trees and woods provide a wide range of benefits to people and wildlife. They contribute to local beauty, store carbon and help intercept air pollution. They are a place for business and jobs, recreation, play and a wide range of wildlife. They also help reduce flood impacts, provide timber and renewable energy and are a part of our culture and tradition.

Walkers enjoying Ruislip Woods in London. © Natural England

Ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees are irreplaceable and Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [Standing Advice](#), which sets out how ancient woodlands, and ancient and veteran trees should be considered in development proposals in line with the [NPPF](#) (See Para 175c and footnote 58) . Your plan is an opportunity to help identify whether there are any ancient woodlands, ancient or veteran trees and how they can be protected and improved, helping create a natural legacy for the area.

By being more aware about trees and woods in your area you can help protect, improve and expand them. New trees and woods alongside development can help make communities more resilient to climate change by providing shade and reducing temperatures. They provide many other benefits and uses, for example community orchards.

Take a look...

The [Monkton Heathfield and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan](#) in Somerset proposes to support the creation of a community woodland on a site already identified in the Local Plan.

“The SADMP makes one new land allocation relevant to this section which is Policy TAU11. This allocates 16 hectares of land at the former Priorswood landfill site for community woodland and other recreational uses.

“The allocation will positively add to the green open space network within the NP area with a linking bridge from the canal towpath and a ramped access to the A38. As such this plan is supported by the parishes.”

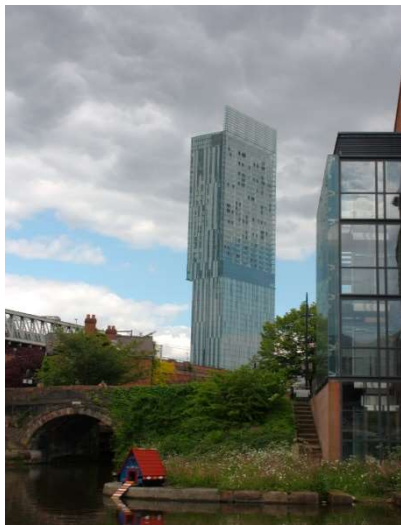
Top tips

When considering trees and woods in your plan, try to find out:

- Whether your local council has a Tree and Woodland Strategy?
- What type and number of trees and woods have you got?
- What condition are they in?
- Where might you want new trees and woods or to increase resilience of your existing stock?
- What types of trees and woods might be appropriate?
- When planting new trees and woods it is important that the right tree is planted in the right place so that the benefits from trees are long lasting. Advice is available on [planting and managing trees in urban areas](#) and to help ensure [resilience in the face of climate change](#).

Topic area	Source of information	How to use this information
<p>Trees and woods</p>	<p>See Natural England’s ancient woodland inventory - download the data or view it on the Magic map system. See the ancient tree inventory for data on the location of ancient trees.</p> <p>The Forestry Commission and Natural England standing advice on ancient woodlands, and ancient and veteran trees</p> <p>See NPPF para 175 and footnote 58 and definitions of irreplaceable habitats, ancient woodland and combined definition of ancient and veteran trees included in the glossary of the NPPF.</p> <p>Supporting guidance in the PPG.</p> <p>See if your Council has a Tree and Woodland Strategy (See PPG Plan-making Paragraph 36)</p> <p>Consider working out what the tree canopy cover is in your area</p> <p>Trees and Biosecurity</p> <p>Urban Tree Manual</p>	<p>Gather evidence on the location of important wood and trees. Consider how these should be protected. Think about planting new trees and woodland based on the character of your area.</p> <p>Look at useful websites on trees and woods, including the Urban Tree Manual. Aimed at local authorities, charities and community groups, the manual provides advice on selecting the right tree for the right place in towns and cities.</p> <p>It ensures the views of local communities are at the heart of decision-making and residents are properly consulted before street trees are felled.</p>

Managing the risk of flooding



Green Infrastructure in Manchester: The provision of vegetation including trees can support urban wildlife, help keep urban environments cooler, provide green routes across the urban fabric, help manage surface water and contribute to people's health and wellbeing.

© Natural England

Flooding can cause serious damage and have devastating effects. One in six properties in England currently face the threat of flooding and the risk is set to increase with climate change. Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in avoiding, mitigating and managing flood risk through careful planning and development. By thinking about flood risk early, you may be able to avoid it, manage it more efficiently, or manage it in a way that adds value.

When producing your plan, all sources of flood risk should be considered, along with the impacts that climate change may have. You should avoid development in flood risk areas wherever possible. If not, you'll need to demonstrate development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

If your plan proposes development in flood risk areas, you'll need to show that you've attempted to avoid this by undertaking the Sequential Test, see para 157 of the [NPPF](#) and all relevant guidance in [PPG](#), which sets out the process of a sequential test.

This should be informed by an up-to-date Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (SFRA's are produced by Local Planning Authorities) which provide information on all sources of flooding and the impacts of climate change. Where there is no SFRA or where it is out-of-date, it will be necessary for you to produce the flood risk information needed to support your plan. The Environment Agency (EA) holds a great deal of flood risk information such as detailed flood models, which can be made available to you.

When undertaking the Sequential Test, you may need to look beyond your Neighbourhood Plan area. The starting point should be the Local Authority

boundary. Only when there is specific local justification to reduce the search area should this be considered.

Where the test identifies lower risk sites to which development could be steered, your plan may need to be amended. Where no lower risk sites are identified, or where application of the policies in the NPPF would provide a clear reason for refusing development in any alternative locations identified, then you may need to apply the Exception Test, as set out in paragraph 159 of the NPPF and dedicated neighbourhood planning guidance in [PPG](#).

Your plan will also need to be supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment to demonstrate that proposals will be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Your Flood Risk Assessment should also demonstrate how the Exception Test has been satisfied, should it apply. Both components of the test must be passed for land to be allocated. Policies in your plan should ensure the necessary flood risk mitigation measures are included in any development. In all cases, your plan should make space for water.

The provision of green infrastructure, particularly along rivers, and the inclusion of sustainable drainage techniques can all help to slow the flow of water and reduce the risk of flooding. You should ensure that sufficient space is left around rivers and flood defences to allow access for maintenance or future improvements, this can also provide recreational and wildlife benefits. In some cases, we may be able to work together on flood defence schemes, so between us we can produce a better solution and share the costs.

Top Tips

- Check your Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to see if your proposed development is at risk of flooding.
- Check our [flood map for planning service](#) to understand the likelihood of flooding from rivers or sea in your location and our long term flood risk information [service](#) to understand the risk of flooding from all sources.
- Think about location before designing any development. Keep vulnerable development out of harm's way. Instead allocate land in flood risk areas for things like public open space and green infrastructure.
- Consider how to make development resistant and resilient to flooding.
- Contact your Lead Local Flood Authority. They will have useful information on local sources of flooding, and can advise on the management of surface water run-off from new development and SuDS.
- Consider contacting your local emergency planning staff if flood warning and evacuation plans are important issues for your plan.
- Contact your local water company to discuss sewer capacity and flooding.
- Contact your local highways authority to understand historic flooding affecting roads.
- Contact your local Internal Drainage Board where relevant for more information on local flood risk and drainage.
- If your plan might affect a river or other watercourse, see our guidance for riparian landowners. Work affecting rivers or flood defences might need a permit from us or the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- Assess how climate change will affect the site during the lifetime of the development, and how you can improve resilience to future impacts. The '[Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances](#)' provides further details. SFRAs should already include info on how climate change will impact on flood risk.
- Incorporate green infrastructure to reduce the risk of flooding, e.g. by designing green space that serves as both a floodplain and a recreational area for the local community.

Topic Area	Source of information	How to use this information.
<p>Managing the risk of flooding</p>	<p>Guidance on dealing with flood risk in Neighbourhood Plans is contained in the Planning Practice Guidance.</p> <p>LPA Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.</p> <p>EA's Flood Map for Planning.</p> <p>Contact your relevant Lead Local Flood Authority, Internal Drainage Board and local water company for information about local sources of flood risk, where relevant.</p> <p>Paras 155 - 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) deals with planning and flood risk.</p> <p>Planning Practice Guidance on the Sequential Test.</p> <p>Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances.</p> <p>Guidance on site-specific Flood Risk Assessments.</p> <p>Local flood action groups, where they exist.</p>	<p>Gather information on all sources of flood risk and the impacts of climate change. Existing SFRA's should be the best source, but check they're up-to-date.</p> <p>Consider the search area for the Sequential Test - this may be beyond your Neighbourhood Plan area. The starting point should be the Local Authority boundary.</p> <p>Assess whether any development proposed in flood risk areas could be steered elsewhere.</p> <p>If risk can't be avoided, more detailed flood risk information may be needed for the Exception Test.</p>

Groundwater protection

Groundwater is a vital resource. It supplies about one third of mains drinking water in England, although the proportion of drinking water supplied by groundwater varies regionally. Over lowland England, where the pressures on land use are greatest, half our supplies come from groundwater; this rises to more than 70 per cent in the south-east. It also supports numerous private supplies.

In rural areas, groundwater may be the only viable water source for isolated properties. Groundwater provides water for rivers and wetlands, and is the primary source of water for rivers, wetlands and lakes in summer or at times of drought, making it vital to wildlife. It provides essential water for industry and agriculture. If groundwater is abstracted or diverted, this can affect river flow and surface water levels, and consequently the associated habitats and ecology.

Mining, quarrying and civil engineering can increase the risks to groundwater by removing aquifer material or the overlying protective cover of soil and rock. This can cause changes in groundwater flow and increase the risk from pollution and flooding.

Groundwater, once polluted, can be difficult and expensive to clean up. Protecting groundwater is essential. The development of potentially polluting uses such as new industry needs to be carefully considered.

If you are considering the promotion of potentially polluting development in your plan, such as new industry, or activities that may change groundwater flow, you should consider the sensitivity of the surrounding water environment. Some uses may pose an unacceptable risk. Our document [The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection](#) offers advice on how to protect groundwater. Read more guidance on [pollution prevention](#).

Top Tips

- Speak to your Local Authority Environmental Health team. They hold useful information about contaminated sites and advise on risks to human health and the environment.
- Check our maps to establish the sensitivity of the water environment in your area. Source Protection Zones are areas where groundwater is used for human consumption.
- Our document [The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection](#) offers advice on how to protect groundwater.
- Check your River basin management plan. It highlights the main issues for the water environment and the actions we all need to take to deal with them. You can find out about the condition of your local environment [here](#). Use your plan to encourage development which will protect the water environment and its associated wildlife and help to deliver actions to improve it.

Topic Area	Source of information	How to use this information.
Groundwater protection	<p>Check Source Protection Zone Maps.</p> <p>A list of potentially polluting land uses.</p> <p>Read the EA's approach to groundwater protection along with their approach to protecting groundwater and preventing groundwater pollution.</p> <p>Policy on ground conditions and pollution is set in 178 - 183 of the NPPF.</p>	<p>Gather information on the sensitivity of the water environment.</p> <p>Development in sensitive areas which previously accommodated a potentially polluting use or which propose a potentially polluting use as part of the development, may pose significant risks to drinking water supplies.</p> <p>You may need to assemble more detailed information to show that your plan will be deliverable without having unacceptable impacts.</p>

Land Contamination

Thousands of sites have been contaminated in the past through industry or mining, waste disposal, chemical leaks and spills. Contamination can cause pollution of the water environment and pose a risk to people and wildlife. Managing it during development is key to addressing past contamination and preventing further impacts during development.

You must consider land contamination when preparing your plan. Development on land affected by contamination can be an excellent way to facilitate the clean-up of sites, so don't be put off considering sites you think may be contaminated. However, the remediation of contamination can sometimes be complicated and costly as well posing risks to the wider environment, so it's important that you think about it early in the process.

You can establish if a site may be contaminated in several ways. Your Local Authority may hold a register of sites it knows to be contaminated. Maps, especially old maps, can provide useful insight into historic land uses, and give an indication about the potential presence of contamination. Read through a list of [potentially contaminating land uses](#).

Depending on the extent and scale of any contamination and the sensitivity of the environment, you may need to assemble some information to demonstrate that contamination won't affect the sustainability or deliverability of the plan. We've produced some guiding principles which provide advice and the answers to common questions on land contamination. We also have model procedures for the management of land contamination that give details on the types of measures which may be needed to tackle contamination.

Top Tips

- Speak to your Local Authority Environmental Health team. They hold useful information about contaminated sites and advise on risks to human health and the environment.
- Check our maps to establish the sensitivity of the water environment in your area. Source Protection Zones are areas where groundwater is used for human consumption.
- If you don't intend to promote development on contaminated sites, consider promoting the planting of trees, woodland or reed beds instead. These can help remove some contamination and help reduce the pollution entering water on and below the ground. The Forestry Commission has published best practice notes about developing greenspace on contaminated land.
- Assess the ecological value of sites early on so you can avoid damaging important wildlife and habitats and stay within the law.
- Check your River basin management plan. It highlights the main issues for the water environment and the actions we all need to take to deal with them. [Find out about the condition of your local environment](#). Use your plan to encourage development which will protect the water environment and its associated wildlife and help to deliver actions to improve it.

Topic Area	Source of information	How to use this information
Land contamination	<p>A list of potentially polluting land uses can be found here.</p> <p>The EA's approach to groundwater protection can be found here.</p> <p>Use the guiding principles and model procedures for the management of land contamination.</p> <p>Policy on ground conditions and pollution is set in 178 - 183 of the NPPF.</p>	<p>Development in sensitive areas which previously accommodated potentially polluting uses may pose significant risks to people and the environment.</p> <p>Remediation is sometimes costly and complex, so you may need to assemble more detailed information to show that your plan will be deliverable without having unacceptable impacts.</p>

Water supply and foul drainage

There is increasing pressure on water supplies and foul drainage infrastructure. The EA regulate abstractions from and discharges to the water environment, including those for drinking water supply and foul drainage. The EA works with developers, local authorities and water companies to make sure the right infrastructure is available at the right time.

When allocating sites in you Plan, you will need to consider if the water supply and foul drainage infrastructure can accommodate the development. Your local water company can provide further information about water supply and sewerage capacity.

Refer to the section on sustainable construction and design for advice on encouraging water efficiency, and the managing surface water section for advice on Sustainable Drainage Systems that encourage groundwater recharge, promote water quality and reduce pressure on sewers.

Top Tips

- Talk to your LPA authority and local water company to make sure the water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure needed to sustain the development promoted in your plan, will be available.
- Refer to the relevant Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy. These provide information on how water supply is being managed in your catchment.

Topic Area	Source of information	How to use this information
<p>Water supply and foul drainage</p>	<p>Contact your local water company for information about water supply and foul drainage capacity.</p> <p>Refer to the relevant Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy. This provide information on how water supply is being managed in your catchment.</p> <p>Para 20 of the NPPF outlines that higher tier strategic policies should consider water supply and infrastructure requirements. Ensure your neighbourhood plan considers higher tier policies. Guidance on water supply, wastewater and water quality is available in the PPG, including guidance for neighbourhood planning.</p>	<p>Ensure the infrastructure needed to support any new development will be in place.</p> <p>Promote water efficiency and SuDS to minimise water use, maximise groundwater recharge and reduce pressure on sewers.</p>

Managing surface water



Sustainable Drainage, Attenuation pond housing scheme, Oxfordshire © Environment Agency

Developments create hard surfaces from which rainwater runs-off more quickly than from natural land. This can lead to flooding and pollution, damaging wildlife and habitats.

With a changing climate and more intense storms, it's essential that all new developments plan to deal with surface water runoff.

Incorporating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) is an effective way of reducing the rate of runoff and can also deliver wider benefits to biodiversity, water quality and public amenity.

Lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) are responsible for advising on the management of surface water from new development and for producing local flood risk management strategies. These show the extent of flood risk from ordinary watercourses and other sources of flooding such as surface water and set out how this risk will be managed in partnership.

SuDS are designed to control surface water run-off close to the source and to mimic natural drainage patterns as closely as possible. Designed effectively, SuDS can not only reduce flood risk, but also remove pollutants from run-off, improve biodiversity, increase infiltration and enhance amenity and recreation for people.

LLFAs encourage the use of SuDS and often produce their own policy and guidance. There is also a non-statutory national [technical standard](#) for SuDS. Paragraph 163 of the [NPPF](#) gives priority to the use of SuDS and many local plans include policies to encourage their use. Your plan could further support their use by including aspirational policies that ensure they will be considered early and designed to take a holistic, integrated approach to sensitive water management.

Top Tips

- Speak to your Local Authority for information about its policies and guidance on surface water management and to obtain any information they may hold on local sources of flood risk.
- Include policies which encourage the use of SuDS that mimic natural processes and take climate change into account. Further guidance can be found in [CIRIA's SuDS guidance](#) and from the [British Geological Survey](#).
- Plan holistically for the use of SuDS so they provide multiple benefits.
- Think about how SuDS will be maintained in the long term. Steps are being taken nationally to provide more certainty around the adoption and maintenance of SuDS.
- Development promoted through your plan must not increase the risk of flooding for other people. That might mean designing the site so that the rate of run-off is the same as (or lower than) it was before the development.
- Consider the impacts of SuDS on the water quality, including groundwater. Not all types of SuDS are suitable for brownfield sites due to the presence of land contamination.

Topic Area	Source of information	How to use this information.
Managing surface water	<p>Contact your relevant Lead Local Flood Authority, Internal Drainage Board, highway authority and local water company for information about local sources of flood risk, and policies and guidance on the management of surface water.</p> <p>Non-statutory national SuDS technical standard.</p> <p>Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances. CIRIA SuDS Manual.</p>	<p>Understand if SuDS are feasible in your area. Promote their use in your plan where appropriate.</p> <p>Ensure your plan follows any local policy and guidance on SuDS.</p> <p>Consideration of SuDS early as part of an integrated water management approach, to provide multiple benefits to your area. Consider existing risks from surface water and how SuDS in new development could contribute towards reducing flood risks.</p>

Sustainable construction and design

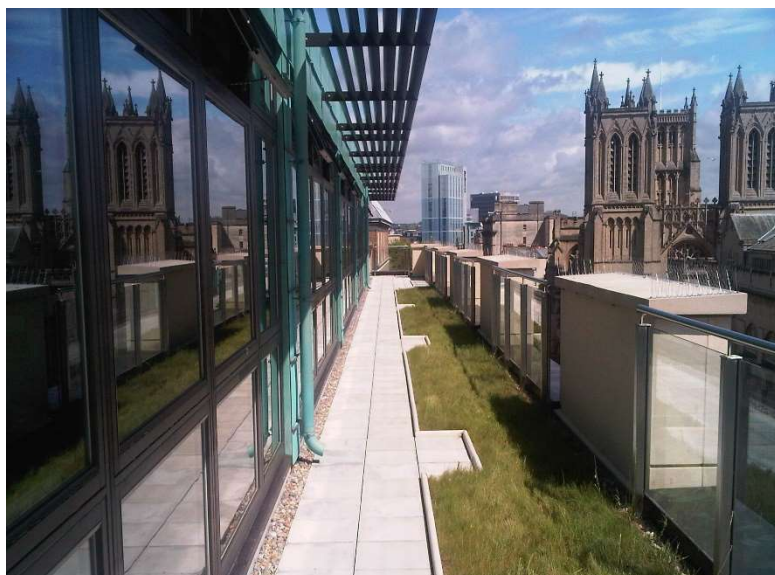
It makes economic and environmental sense to design and construct buildings and their surroundings using resources efficiently and considering the effects of a changing climate. Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in promoting high standards and co-ordinating coherent approaches to sustainable construction and design.

Consider the inclusion of policies in your plan that are supportive of sustainable construction and design and are the best they can be for those who'll be living in, visiting or working.

Design your plan to take account of and adapt to the effects of climate change. Damage to property caused by flooding and coastal erosion, having enough water available, overheating and subsidence are all challenges to consider. Take a look at the [UK Green Building Council](#) for guidance and support on how to tackle climate change issues, including the role of good design to ensure new development is resilient to future climate change.

Consider any development sites being promoted in your plan and the opportunities offered by their location. Promote green infrastructure as part of sustainable design and construction, for example green roofs and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Also see the section on surface water management.

Where a relevant local plan policy supports this, consider the inclusion of policies which promote or require the [optional requirements](#) on access, water and space. [BREEAM](#) standards could be promoted for non-residential schemes.



Green roof
© Environment Agency

Consider the inclusion of policies which would reduce the lifetime carbon costs of any development by using renewable energy technologies. The EA can advise you on how to manage the impact on the water environment of small-scale hydropower and biomass schemes, and ground source heating and cooling. Also consider the use of a [local heat network](#) to provide heat and/or power to your community.

Management of waste

Consider the principles of the waste hierarchy (in priority order, Prevention, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Dispose) both in relation to the design and construction of any development promoted in your plan and to any necessary waste-related infrastructure.

Where relevant, your plan could also promote co-ordination between development sites to reduce the amount of waste having to be disposed to landfill. Your plan should also consider the potential impacts of any proposed development on existing waste management facilities.

You should also work with the relevant waste planning authority to identify and protect any sites needed for waste management and recycling facilities. You should also consider if your development can be done in a way that helps to prevent litter becoming an issue.

Top Tips




- The Home Builders' Federation together with WRAP have published '[A blueprint for reducing waste and cutting costs](#)'. It includes 10 quick wins home builders take to reduce waste costs. Promote and follow the waste hierarchy.
- Use your plan to promote the use of leak detection, rainwater harvesting and greywater re-use systems. However, you must also consider how they will be managed and maintained, as well as the carbon produced and ongoing costs.
- Use your plan to promote the use of water butts and encourage the use of drought-resistant landscaping to keep your neighbourhood looking good without increasing the amount of water it uses.
- Use your plan to promote sustainable drainage to support landscaping features that may otherwise need mains water supply.
- We have worked with WRAP to support the construction industry in coming up with good practice to [reduce water consumption](#).
- Explore and encourage the use of green infrastructure to help use water wisely, for example using storage ponds to hold water for watering green spaces rather than mains water supply.
- Check your [river basin management plan](#). They highlight the main issues for the water environment and actions to take to deal with them. Use your plan to encourage development that will protect the water environment and its associated wildlife and help deliver improvements.


Topic Area	Source of information	How to use this information.
<p>Sustainable construction and design</p>	<p><u>Optional requirements</u> on access, water and space.</p> <p><u>BREEAM</u> standards.</p> <p>The Home Builders' Federation together with WRAP have published '<u>A blueprint for reducing waste and cutting costs</u>'.</p> <p><u>PPG</u> provides further guidance on good design and the efficient use of resources.</p> <p>The following links provide advice and guidance on the use of wood and timber in construction:</p> <p>Wood fuel guidance prepared by the <u>Forestry Commission</u> and on <u>gov.uk</u>. Further sources of information available online at <u>growninbritain.org</u></p>	<p>Think early and holistically about sustainable construction and design. Understand your existing environment and think about how your plan could protect, enhance and better connect it.</p> <p>Consider the inclusion of policies and sites which would promote sustainable construction and design from landscape scale green infrastructure to the detailed design of buildings and drainage systems.</p>

6. When to consult

The consultees for the environment have a formal role in providing advice at the statutory stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process (the Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 stages).

We must be consulted where the plan affects our interests (see table below). Notwithstanding these formal requirements we understand the importance of early engagement in plan making and encourage communication to discuss evidence base and issues affecting our interests.

 <p>Environment Agency</p>	<p>Please refer to the environmental guidance on gov.uk when determining whether you should consult us.</p> <p>We focus our involvement on neighbourhood plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are greatest. Where risks and opportunities are low, we may not be able to get involved. Where there are high risks or opportunities, we'd strongly encourage you to speak to us early, when we can most positively influence your plan. We'll be able to discuss with you the need for our detailed involvement and the recovery of our costs.</p>
 <p>Historic England</p>	<p>Historic England has a statutory role in the neighbourhood development plan process and in most cases, we are consulted at Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 stages.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this statutory role, experience has shown that we can be most helpful to you early on, especially if you envisage including site allocations. It's helpful for us to be consulted earlier in the process, even before the statutory stages.</p> <p>LPA's are encouraged to notify Historic England when neighbourhood areas have been designated and this helps to promote engagement at an early stage. More information on when we are consulted about a planning proposal is available on the Historic England website.</p>
 <p>NATURAL ENGLAND</p>	<p>Advice on when to consult Natural England is provided on the gov.uk website, Natural England should also be consulted if your Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment.</p>

	<p>We also advise early consultation if your plan may affect European designated site and in such cases, it will be necessary to undertake a screening assessment. We will prioritise our detailed involvement in those plans which have the greatest risks and/or opportunities for the natural environment. Other plans are likely to receive standard advice.</p> <p>Natural England offers a Discretionary Advice Service (DAS), which falls outside our statutory remit and allows us to offer enhanced additional advice and support. Further information is provided in the guidance on gov.uk</p>
	<p>You are advised to consult the Forestry Commission about development proposals that contain or are likely to affect ancient woodlands including proposals where any part of the development site is within 500 metres of an ancient woodland and where the development would involve erecting new buildings, or extending the footprint of existing buildings.</p> <p>You are advised to consult the Forestry Commission about any woodland creation or deforestation proposals to see if these fall within the EIA (Forestry) Regulations.</p>

7. The checklist

Below we've developed a handy checklist to act as prompt when developing your Neighbourhood Plan. Although not all of these issues will be relevant to your particular plan it helps to bear them in mind to ensure you've considered all aspects of the natural and historic environment and sought opportunities to enhance through the plan making process.

Theme	✓
Have you <u>gathered evidence on the environment</u> in your neighbourhood plan area? Also see evidence boxes in <u>section 5: Key themes</u>	
Have you <u>gathered information about your local heritage</u> ?	
Have you considered <u>defining local character in detail</u> , so that you promote development that makes a positive contribution to local character?	
Have you <u>considered your local heritage</u> and how its designated and non-designated assets can be used positively to deliver economic and other benefits?	
Do you have any <u>designated landscapes</u> ? Have you considered what makes your local landscape special and how these characteristics can be protected and enhanced?	
Have you gathered <u>information on protected sites, habitats and species</u> ? If European sites are affected have you contacted your Local Council? Have you considered opportunities for wildlife?	
If you are allocating sites for development, have you considered <u>impacts on soils and Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land</u> ?	
Have you gathered evidence on <u>Green Infrastructure, including local green spaces</u> , could you designate new green space or improve GI networks in your Neighbourhood Plan?	
Have you sought to <u>enhance the environment</u> as well as protect it? Can net gains for biodiversity be incorporated?	
Have you considered the importance of <u>trees and woods in your neighbourhood area</u> ? Are there opportunities to enhance through additional tree planting?	

Are you allocating <u>sites that may be at risk from flooding</u> ?	
Have you considered <u>contamination and the need to protect groundwater</u> ?	
Have you considered whether existing <u>water supply and foul drainage infrastructure</u> can accommodate new development in your area?	
If you are allocating sites have you considered how <u>surface water</u> will be managed? Could new develop incorporate SuDS?	
Have you considered <u>sustainable construction and design principles</u> , including incorporating measures to adapt to a changing climate?	
Have you considered the <u>arrangements for the management of waste</u> (following principles of the hierarchy) and recycling and how littering might be avoided?	

9. Glossary

Ancient woodland	An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	An area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) is land protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act). It protects the land to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.
Best and most versatile agricultural land	Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.
Biodiversity net gain	An approach that uses the development process to leave biodiversity in a better state than it was before the development started and secures wider benefits for people and the environment.
Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies	The Environment Agency is responsible for managing water resources through a licensing system, to ensure there is enough water for people and the environment. CAMS set out the approach to doing this for a particular catchment.
Designated Heritage Asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Ecological networks	These link sites of biodiversity importance.
Ecosystem services	The benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as, food, water, flood and disease control and recreation.

European site	This includes candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, and is defined in regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
Flood resilience measures	Measures which allow flood water into buildings but which speed the rate of recovery after a flood.
Flood resistance measures	Measures which aim to keep flood water out of buildings.
Flood risk	A combination of the probability and consequences of flooding occurring.
Geodiversity	The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.
Green infrastructure	A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Groundwater	Water held within the geology underground. Around a third of the water supply in England and Wales comes for groundwater. Groundwater also feeds many rivers and water-related habitats.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human

	activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Internal Drainage Boards	Dependent public bodies responsible for water level management in low lying areas
Lead Local Flood Authority	Unitary authorities or county councils are responsible for developing, maintaining and applying a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas and for maintaining a register of flood risk assets. They also have lead responsibility for managing the risk of flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses.
Local Nature Partnership	A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, established for the purpose of protecting and improving the natural environment in an area and the benefits derived from it.
Local Planning Authority	The local council with the powers to exercise statutory planning functions over a particular area. This is often the local borough, district or unitary council. National Park authorities and the Broads Authority are also LPAs. County Councils are the LPAs for minerals and waste applications.
National Park	The National Parks are a landscape designation, they are designated for their natural beauty and the recreational opportunities that they offer.
Nationally Protected Species	Nationally Protected Species are all of the European Protected Species and also a large number of species which are specially protected under The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981). These are listed in Schedules 1, 5, 7 and 8 of the Act or in other legislation such as the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
Natural Capital	This refers to the stock of our physical natural resources (e.g. soil, forests, rivers, parks) and the services these

	resources provide to us all, for example pollinating crops, natural hazard protection, climate regulation and health and wellbeing benefits
Open space	All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.
Priority habitats and species	Species and Habitats of Principle Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
Ramsar sites	Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.
River Basin Management Plans	Produced by the Environment Agency, these set out how organisations, stakeholders and communities will work together to improve the water environment, ensuring water bodies are not deteriorated, and actions are planned to improve them.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

Special Areas of Conservation	Areas given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive, which is transposed into UK law by the Habitats and Conservation of Species Regulations 2010.
Special Protection Areas	Areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries. They are European designated sites, classified under the Birds Directive.
Statutory Consultee	A statutory consultee is a body who must be consulted at certain points during the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.
Strategic Environmental Assessment	A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	Produced by LPAs, they set out information on flood risk from all sources to inform local plan and planning applications.
Surface water	Water which falls on the ground, including onto buildings and other development, during rainfall.
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	An approach to the management of surface water that seeks to mimic nature and manage rainfall close to where it falls. SuDS measures often have wider benefits for water quality, biodiversity and amenity.
Veteran Trees	Veteran trees are trees which, because of their age, size or condition are of cultural, historical, landscape and nature conservation value.

Waste hierarchy	A way of thinking about waste management. The preference is to manage waste as close to the top of the hierarchy as possible. The hierarchy is prevention, preparation for re-use, recycle, recover, and dispose. More info can be found on gov.uk
Wildlife corridor	Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

Neighbourhood Planning

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