

**West Berkshire District Council**  
**Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment  
Screening Report**

**Post Consultation Version**

**August 2020**

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## **Strategic Environmental Screening Report**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This document sets out whether or not the contents of the Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2036 (NDP) require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>1</sup> and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2. The purpose of the Compton NDP is to provide planning policies to guide development in the designated Compton Neighbourhood Area.
- 1.3. SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. A SEA aims to protect the environment at a high level, and ensures the environment is considered during the preparation and adoption of plans. This promotes sustainable development.
- 1.4. Not all neighbourhood plans will require a SEA to be carried out. To decide if a SEA is required, a screening exercise is used to look at the proposals in a neighbourhood plan, and see if a significant effect is likely.
- 1.5. This document also assesses whether a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) to consider potential impacts on sites of European importance for Nature Conservation is necessary. The HRA screening is set out on pages 13-14.
- 1.6. The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. A screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Compton NDP and the need for a full SEA has been undertaken.

### **2. Legislative background**

- 2.1. European Directive 2001/42/EC is the legislative basis for SEA, and it was transposed into UK law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government Publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005)<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.2. Under these requirements, plans that set the framework for future development consent of projects must be subject to an environmental assessment. This is to determine if the plan, in this case the Compton NDP, will have any significant effects on the environment.
- 2.3. There are exceptions to this requirement for plans that determine the use of a small area at local level, and for minor modifications if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- 2.4. In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and Regulation 9 (1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the West

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<sup>1</sup> European Directive 2001/42/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042>

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004:  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made>

<sup>3</sup> A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005):  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

Berkshire District Council must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. If the Council determines that a SEA is not required, then under Regulation 9 (3) it must produce a statement that sets out the reason for this determination. This screening report is the Council's Regulation 9 (3) statement.

### 3. The emerging Compton NDP

- 3.1. West Berkshire District Council designated a Neighbourhood Area for the whole of Compton Parish in January 2017. The Parish and Plan boundaries are the same and that is shown on Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Compton Neighbourhood Area



- 3.2. The NDP will sit alongside, and complement the West Berkshire Local Plan, which comprises of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan

Document<sup>4</sup> (adopted July 2012), the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD)<sup>5</sup> (adopted May 2017), and the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-1996 (Saved Policies 2006) as amended in July 2012 and May 2017<sup>6</sup>.

- 3.3. In the adopted Core Strategy, the village of Compton is identified as a Service Village within the district settlement hierarchy meaning that, along with the other Service Villages, it has a limited range of services and has some limited development potential. However, as identified within Core Strategy policy ADPP5, Compton contains an 'opportunity site', the Pirbright Institute, which has now closed and will come forward for mixed use development during the plan period. The Core Strategy Inspector's report identifies that the site could provide a higher level of growth than is normally expected in a service village, and paragraph 77 of the report notes that: *"There are also 2 large brownfield sites in Compton and Hermitage where substantial redevelopment for housing or mixed use might take place whilst achieving positive outcomes for the landscape. Accordingly, there is evidence to indicate that the scale of development could be delivered in a way likely to meet the aim of ADPP5."*
- 3.4. To this end Compton will have a greater level of growth that would normally be expected in a Service Village in order to respond effectively to this brownfield opportunity. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the site has been prepared and adopted<sup>7</sup>. This SPD sets out West Berkshire District Council's planning guidance for the redevelopment of the site.
- 3.5. During the preparation of the HSA DPD, a daughter document of the Core Strategy which also forms part of the Local Plan, technical work and the outcomes of public consultation confirmed that the Pirbright site should be included as an allocation. In accordance with Core Strategy policy ADPP5, the Council's paramount consideration for the site is that development does not cause harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NWD AONB). The HSA DPD was adopted in 2017, and the Pirbright site is included as an allocation.
- 3.6. The Compton NDP will supplement policies within the West Berkshire Local Plan. The Core Strategy and HSA DPD were both subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and SEA. The SA/SEA for the West Berkshire Core Strategy was produced in order to ensure that sustainability issues were considered throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy. The SA/SEA was an iterative process which identified the likely significant effects of the Core Strategy and the extent to which its implementation would achieve social, environmental and economic objectives.
- 3.7. The SA/SEA was published at key stages of the Core Strategy process and updated as necessary. Each of the stages was assessed against the 11 SA framework objectives and the 29 sub objectives to determine the predicted economic, environmental and social effects of the Core Strategy on the District. At each stage, the findings of the SA/SEA were used to inform the formulation of policies, thereby improving the sustainability of the Core Strategy in the process. The process of the SA/SEA means that the overall spatial strategy and the housing distribution strategy of the Core Strategy have been tested.

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<sup>4</sup> West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document:  
<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/corestrategy>.

<sup>5</sup> Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2006-2026): <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/hsa>.

<sup>6</sup> West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007):  
<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/article/28783>.

<sup>7</sup> Pirbright Institute Site, Compton Supplementary Planning Document:  
<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36532&p=0>.

3.8. The SA/SEA for the HSA DPD considered reasonable alternatives for the scope of the HSA DPD, and for each of the sites and policies included within the DPD. The SA/SEA clearly demonstrates the progression of the preferred strategy from the regulation 18 stage through to the submission stage. The social, economic and environmental dimensions were therefore taken into account throughout the preparation of the DPD to ensure sustainable development.

3.9. The vision statement for the draft Compton NDP is as follows:

*2036 Compton will have enabled self-sustaining development in a way that retains the rural character and beauty of the village, allowing people to live, work and play in the village for the whole of their lives.*

*Development will have been managed to deliver the necessary housing, facilities, and employment opportunities, providing for a diverse population, that is limited to a scale appropriate for a service village within the existing settlement. This will maintain the rural character of the village in the wider landscape control of the North Wessex Downs AONB.*

*The Parish will have responded to the Climate Emergency declared by West Berkshire, providing for long-term sustainability and significant adaptation to low carbon lifestyle.*

3.10. The objectives of the draft NDP are:

- To ensure the village remains small and well contained within its downland valley setting, retaining its feeling of remoteness and the special visual qualities of the AONB in which it sits.
- To support future development at a limited scale within the existing settlement, that will ensure Parish sustainability and a thriving community and business opportunities.
- To support West Berkshire's declaration of a Climate Emergency and ensure that all development in the Parish is built to be carbon neutral, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, through use of low carbon building materials, energy efficient design, renewable energy generation, and low carbon transport measures.
- To ensure that existing employment space within the Parish is retained and to encourage provision of new employment space, in particular for the scientific and technological sectors.
- To enhance the lifestyle of the community by ensuring that the Parish of Compton is well supported with sports, social and education facilities, providing for all age groups and addressing short-term key priorities of the Parish.
- To protect and enhance existing amenities and open space including the Rights of Way network that are valued for recreational and aesthetic value, allowing continued benefits to the physical and mental wellbeing and long-term sustainability of the community.
- To create integrated and safe greenspaces in new developments that are linked to the existing green infrastructure network and wider AONB and to ensure conservation of key habitats with biodiversity net-gain across the Parish.
- To tackle transport problems, including parking, vehicle speed, public transport and necessary improvements to footpaths and pavements. To ensure that new development within the village does not worsen transport sustainability within the Parish.

- To encourage the comprehensive development of the Pirbright Site Allocation HSA DPD Policy HSA23, to deliver an appropriate residential-led scheme with employment floor space, community facilities and green infrastructure, that integrates with the village and addresses the resultant infrastructure challenges that will be faced by the community.
- 3.11. The draft Compton NDP contains a number of policies which are categorised under the following headings:
- Pirbright Institute site;
  - Sustainable design and construction;
  - Housing mix and tenure;
  - Design;
  - Existing employment facilities;
  - Community facilities;
  - Local greenspace;
  - Biodiversity;
  - Sustainable transport;
  - Infrastructure.
- 3.12. No site allocations are proposed in the draft NDP.
- 3.13. Section 5 below provides a summary of the policies proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. It also considers the potential for environmental effects to occur as a result of these policies. It is based on the emerging draft (Draft 9 Pre-Submission Screening Draft) of the NDP as at July 2020.

#### **4. The SEA screening process**

- 4.1. Producing the Compton NDP requires the Council to look at whether a SEA is required; this is known as the screening process. The screening is based on the criteria set out in Annex II of European Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and considers the likely significant environmental effects as a result of the NDP.

#### **5. SEA determination and reasons for determination**

- 5.1. The Council has assessed the Compton NDP against the criteria set out within Annex II of European Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the Regulations (as summarised in Table 5.1).

##### Overview of the plan area

- 5.2. Compton is a rural parish located in the northern part of West Berkshire district. It lies within the NWD AONB, a nationally important and legally protected landscape, and within the upper valley of the River Pang. The main settlement within the parish is the village of Compton.
- 5.3. There are various constraints to development in Compton, not least its location within the NWD AONB. There is a conservation area and many listed buildings, several Local Wildlife Sites, areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and ancient replanted woodland, and parts of Compton lie within Flood Zones 2 and 3. There are issues of groundwater flooding and surface water flooding, and the village was badly affected



in the February 2014 floods. Whilst Compton is located close to the A34 and M4, the local roads are rural in nature and not suitable for heavy traffic.

### Screening analysis

#### *Development strategy*

- 5.4. No allocations are proposed in the draft NDP. The designated Neighbourhood Area includes a settlement boundary around the built up area of the village of Compton. The settlement boundary is identified within the Local Plan. Settlement boundaries identify the main built up area of the settlement within which development is considered acceptable in principle, subject to other policy considerations. While allowing for development, settlement boundaries protect the character of a settlement and prevent unrestricted growth into the countryside.
- 5.5. The draft NDP does however include a policy that supports proposals for infill development within the settlement boundary subject to certain criteria (scale, form, provision of suitable access, provision of services, net biodiversity gain) and compliance with other policies within the development plan.
- 5.6. It is unlikely that this policy will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area.

#### *Housing*

- 5.7. No housing allocations are proposed. Policies proposed in the draft NDP relate to sustainable design and construction, appropriate scale, mix, tenure, and density. It is unlikely that this policy will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area.

#### *Economy and employment*

- 5.8. No new employment allocations are proposed. Draft policies support existing employment facilities, and in particular the diversification of existing farms and equestrian businesses. The policies allow for small-scale expansion, subject to criteria being met (the criteria relates to design and impact upon the landscape and the locality).
- 5.9. A policy is included which allows for the redevelopment of existing employment sites for an alternative use, subject to some criteria including no material harm to the environmental qualities of the site and to the surrounding countryside, and evidence to confirm the property has been marketed.
- 5.10. In addition, there is a policy which requires the redevelopment of the Pirbright site to include a business hub for a range of small-scale employment floorspace. As aforementioned, the Pirbright site is included as an allocation in the adopted HSA DPD and a SPD has been adopted which sets out a detailed framework to guide the redevelopment of the site. Policy HSA23 of the HSA DPD identifies that an element of employment floorspace will be replaced within the site.
- 5.11. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area.



### *Transport*

- 5.12. A number of draft policies are included which seek to ensure the provision of electric charging points in all new dwellings, integrate new development with the current green infrastructure network and provide access to public transport, and ensure that new residential development complies with parking standards set out in policy P1 of the HSA DPD. There is also a policy which seeks to establish new public car parking in the village at a suitable location within the village or support any proposals that improve existing parking areas.
- 5.13. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area.

### *Social infrastructure*

- 5.14. There is a policy in the draft NDP which seeks to restrict against the loss of existing community facilities. The same policy supports the alteration, extension or redevelopment of existing facilities subject to a set of criteria being met (suitable access arrangements and off-street parking, no highways impact, no generation of unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance to neighbouring properties, and consultation with the Parish Council and other significant entities).
- 5.15. There is also a policy which seeks to protect existing community uses on the Pirbright site. Should this not be possible, the policy sets criteria that must be met: proposals must not result in a highways impact, compliance with design policies in the NDP, no adverse impact on the locality or amenities of local residents, and satisfactory provision of access arrangements and off-street parking.
- 5.16. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area.

### *Green spaces and the natural environment*

- 5.17. A draft policy seeks to designate a number of areas within the district as local green spaces. A separate draft policy seeks to restrict against the loss of existing open space and recreational facilities and buildings unless a set of criteria is met (ie. surplus to requirements, the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision, or the development is for alternative sports or recreation provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss).
- 5.18. In addition, there is a policy which seeks to create new Public Rights of Way within new development sites and prevent unacceptable harm to existing Public Rights of Way, and another policy which seeks a measurable net gain for biodiversity and which restricts against the loss or deterioration of existing green infrastructure that supports protected habitats and species.
- 5.19. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area. It is likely that these policies will result in minor improvements to the local environment.

### *Climate change*

- 5.20. There is a policy in the draft NDP which requires the design and standard of new development to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction. There is a separate policy which encourages the infrastructure required for a local district

heating network. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area. It is likely that these policies will result in minor improvements to the local environment.

- 5.21. The Council has assessed the Compton NDP against the criteria set out within Annex II of European Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the Regulations (as summarised in Table 5.1 below).

Table 5.1: Assessment of likely significant effects (screening)

| Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)   | West Berkshire District Council's Response  |
|--|---|
| <i>1. Characteristics of plans or programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</i>  |   |
| (a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources | <p>The NDP, if adopted, will become part of the development plan for the area. It will not set a framework for other plans or policies outside of the Compton NDP area. It will help inform decisions within the parish relating to development up to 2036.</p> <p>It sets out a local policy framework for development proposals but does not allocate sites for development. It supports the implementation of policies in the Local Plan which have been subject to SEA and assessed as having no significant effects.</p> <p><b>Overall there would be no significant effect</b></p>  |
| (b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy   | <p>The NDP does not influence other plans or programmes in the Local Plan; instead it supplements them. The NDP will form part of the Development Plan for the District and will only apply to the designated Neighbourhood Area, the parish of Compton. Neighbourhood Plans by their nature are locally driven and focused, providing detailed guidance to local development.</p> <p><b>Overall there would be no significant effect</b></p>   |
| (c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development  | <p>A number of policies seek to promote sustainable development that can be considered to be in conformity with the NPPF. This is a 'basic condition'/requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan making process.</p> <p>The draft plan includes support for low carbon developments, electric charging points, public transport improvements, sustainable construction and design, enhancements to biodiversity, sustainable drainage, protection of the local character of the area and conservation of views into the countryside.</p> <p><b>Overall there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor improvements to the local environment.</b></p> |

| Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)  | West Berkshire District Council's Response  |
|---|---|
| (d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme  | <p>The Parish is located within the NWD AONB, and there are several Local Wildlife Sites and areas of ancient woodland within the Parish boundary. There are no Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas, however there are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) close to the Parish boundary, namely Ashridge Wood (c.0.1km to the west), Streatley Warren (c.1.1m to the east), and Aston Upthorpe Downs (c.0.8m to the north).</p> <p>The draft Compton NDP seeks to minimise existing environmental problems in the area. The plan does not allocate sites or propose development that would give rise to environmental problems.</p> <p>The NDP Vision Statement comments that “2036 Compton will have enabled self-sustaining development in a way that retains the rural character and beauty of the village allowing people to live, work and play in the village for the whole of their lives.</p> <p><i>Development will have been managed to deliver the necessary housing, facilities, and employment opportunities, providing for a diverse population, that is limited to a scale appropriate for a service village within the existing settlement. This will maintain the rural character of the village in the wider landscape control of the North Wessex Downs AONB.</i></p> <p><i>The Parish will have responded to the Climate Emergency declared by West Berkshire, providing for long-term sustainability and significant adaptation to low carbon lifestyles.”</i></p> <p>The policies of the NDP will therefore supplement policies within the adopted Core Strategy and relevant policies within the adopted HSA DPD and saved policies of West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007). The NDP proposes policies on energy efficient buildings, district heating networks, sustainable drainage, environmental gain, biodiversity, and green spaces which would supplement relevant Local Plan policies.</p> <p><b>Overall there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor improvements to the local environment.</b></p> |
| (e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (eg. plans and | <p>Strategies relating to waste disposal or water protection, and other community legislation on the environment, are dealt with in higher tier plans which have already been tested in full. The NDP will not impact on EU legislation on the environment.</p>   |

| Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)   | West Berkshire District Council's Response   |
|--|--|
| programmes linked to waste management or water protection)   | <b>Overall there would be no significant effect.</b>   |
| <b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected [by the plan or programme], having regard, in particular, to:</b> |  |
| (a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects  | <p>The NDP will provide a context and framework to guide future development within the Neighbourhood Area and will supplement adopted planning policy. It will guide development up to 2036.</p> <p>The NDP does not allocate sites for development. It includes policies that seek to protect and improve the environment, and to minimise the effects of development on its immediate surroundings and ensure development is delivered to high levels of sustainability.</p> <p><b>No significant effects are envisaged due to the scope and duration of the NDP.</b></p>  |
| (b) The cumulative nature of the effects   | <p>As above.</p> <p><b>No significant effects are envisaged.</b></p>   |
| (c) The transboundary* nature of the effects<br><br><i>* Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States</i>               | <p>Effects will be local with limited effects on neighbouring areas. No transboundary effects are expected.</p> <p>The NDP will supplement adopted policy and <b>is not envisaged, in itself, to have a significant effect.</b></p>  |
| (e) The risks to human health or the environment (eg. due to accidents)  | <p>No risks to human health have been identified as a result of the proposed policies in the NDP. Policies relating to environmental nuisance, pollution control and noise pollution are included in higher tier planning documents.</p> <p><b>Overall there would be no significant effect.</b></p>   |
| (f) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)                     | <p>The Neighbourhood Area is just over 1500 hectares in size. At the last census in 2011, the population was 1,571.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Plans cover small geographical areas and their policies must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. As such they contain non-strategic development plan policies to address specific local issues. (NPPF paragraph 18).</p> <p>The NDP will provide a context and framework to guide future sustainable development in the area. The majority of effects would be focused within or immediately adjacent to Compton village.</p> <p><b>Overall there would be no significant effect.</b></p> |

| Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)  | West Berkshire District Council's Response  |
|---|---|
| <p>(g) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</li> <li>• exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</li> <li>• intensive land-use</li> </ul> <p>And</p> <p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status</p> | <p>The built and natural environmental designations within or adjacent to the Neighbourhood Area, along with the proposed NDP policies to protect these are considered below.</p> <p>Compton Parish has the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listed Buildings</li> <li>• Conservation Area</li> <li>• Local Wildlife Sites</li> <li>• Biodiversity Opportunity Area</li> <li>• Areas of Ancient Woodland</li> <li>• Tree Preservation Orders</li> <li>• NWD AONB</li> </ul> <p>Within the NDP area there are no known:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International or national conservation designations (or adjacent to it), including SSSIs or other ecological or wildlife designations outside of those listed above;</li> <li>• World or National Heritage Sites;</li> <li>• Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;</li> <li>• Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) or Local Geological Sites</li> </ul> <p>The NDP will protect the above with a vision of “2036 Compton will have enabled self-sustaining development in a way that retains the rural character and beauty of the village...development will have been managed to deliver the necessary housing, facilities, and employment opportunities...that is limited to a scale appropriate for a service village within the existing settlement...this will maintain the rural character of the village in the wider landscape control of the North Wessex Downs AONB...the Parish will have responded to the climate emergency declared by West Berkshire, providing for long-term sustainability and significant adaptation to low carbon lifestyles.”</p> <p>The draft plan includes support for low carbon developments, electric charging points, public transport improvements, sustainable construction and design, enhancements to biodiversity, sustainable drainage, protection of the local character of the area and conservation of views into the countryside.</p> <p><b>It is not considered that the NDP is likely to have any significant effects on local heritage assets or nature conservation interests and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor</b></p> |

| Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations) | West Berkshire District Council's Response   |
|--|--|
|  | <b>improvements to the local environment. As such, an SEA of the plan is not considered necessary.</b> |

- 5.22. Based on these findings, the Council's initial conclusion is that a SEA of the Compton NDP is not necessary under the SEA Directive and Regulations because it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant environmental effects as a result of the NDP.

## Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening Report

- 6.1. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required to determine if a neighbourhood plan would have a significant impact upon the integrity of nature conservation sites of international importance, ie. Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and Special Protection Areas (SPA). The principal aim of this part of the document is to 'screen' the potential of the Compton NDP for its likely effect, either alone or in combination, on these sites.
- 6.2. This is a requirement under EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC<sup>8</sup>, and has been transposed into British law by Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010<sup>9</sup>. The Directive states that any plan or project not connected or necessary to a sites management, but likely to have significant effects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment. An Appropriate Assessment determines the impact that plans and projects would have on internationally important nature conservation sites.
- 6.3. Within West Berkshire there are three SACs (River Lambourn, Kennet and Lambourn floodplain and Kennet Valley Alderwoods), and no Ramsar sites or SPAs. However, a very small area of the district around Beech Hill falls within the 5km buffer area of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA which Natural England has determined as being needed to regulate development near the SPA. This is illustrated in Figure 6.1 below.

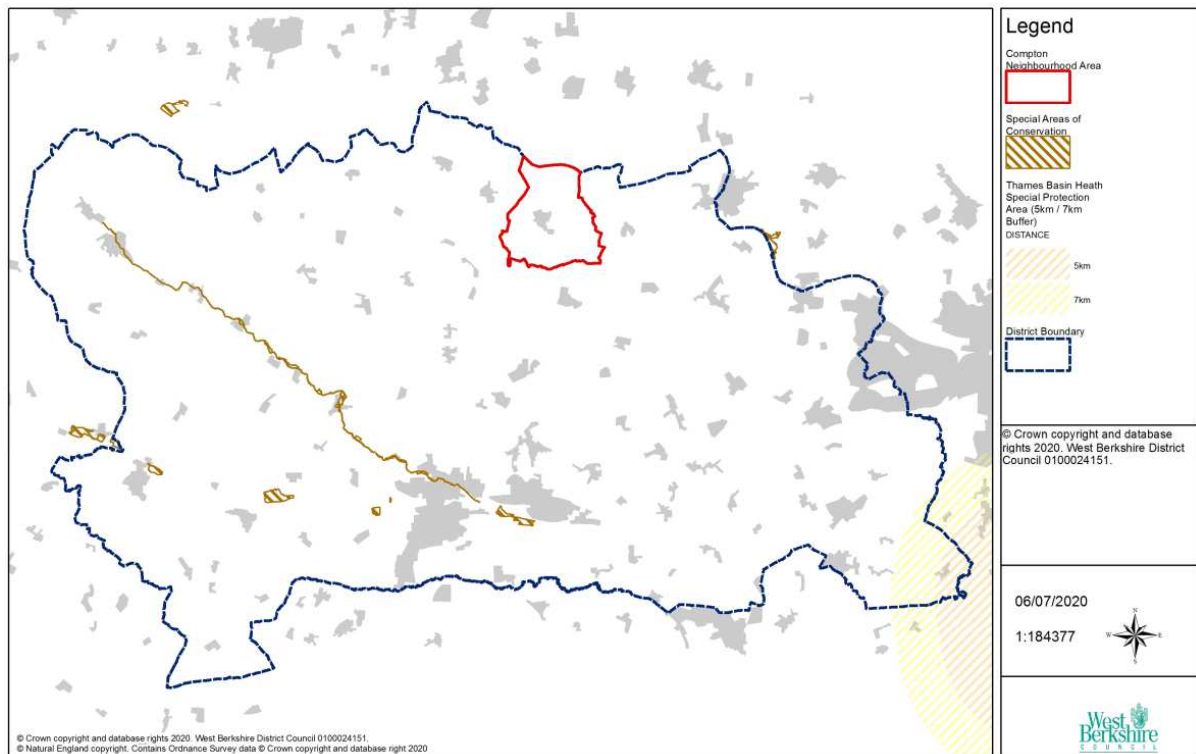
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<sup>8</sup> EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1992L0043:20070101:EN:PDF>

<sup>9</sup> Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010:  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi\\_20100490\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/pdfs/uksi_20100490_en.pdf)



Figure 6.1: Location of SACs and Thames Basin Heaths SPA buffer within West Berkshire District



- 6.4. An Appropriate Assessment of all Core Strategy policies has been undertaken to ensure that either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, the policies do not adversely affect any of the SACs or the buffer area for the Thames Basin Heath SPA.
- 6.5. In addition, a HRA screening was undertaken on the HSA DPD and this concluded that an Appropriate Assessment was not required because the allocations and policies would not result in impacts and effects divergent to those assessed in the Core Strategy. The screening also concluded that there would be no negative effects on nature conservation sites of international importance.
- 6.6. The Neighbourhood Area is not in any close proximity to the SPAs or the Thames Basin Heaths SPA buffer area. The Compton NDP is therefore unlikely to have significant effects on nature conservation sites of international importance, and therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Compton NDP is not required.

## **Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment - Conclusions of West Berkshire District Council**

- 7.1. Based on the findings in Sections A and B, WBDC's initial conclusion was that a SEA of the Compton NDP is not necessary under the SEA Directive and Regulations because it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant environmental effects as a result of the NDP.
- 7.2. It was also WBDC's initial conclusion that a HRA is not required because there are no internationally designated sites within or adjacent to the Neighbourhood Area.
- 7.3. Nonetheless, a final determination cannot be made until the three statutory bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency, and Natural England) have commented on this SEA Screening Report. This SEA Screening Report was subject to such consultation for a five week period commencing on **Monday 20 July 2020** and running through **until 5pm on Monday 24 August 2020**.
- 7.4. Responses from all three statutory bodies were received by 7 August 2020.

## Consultation

- 8.1. The consultation responses from the three statutory bodies to the SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report are detailed below and are also included in full in Appendix 1:

Table 8.1: Responses from the statutory bodies

| Consultation body  | Comments   | Action  |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Environment Agency | Based on our review of the draft scoping report, we agree with the environmental issues that have been included and do not have any further comments to make   | No further action necessary   |
| Historic England   | I am happy to confirm our agreement that the plan should not merit completion of SEA due to any likely significant effects within areas of interest to Historic England.   | No further action necessary   |
| Natural England    | <p>In our review of the Compton Neighbourhood Plan SEA and HRA screening we note that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there are no allocations for housing or for new employment use proposed in the draft NDP;</li> <li>there are no sites of international importance within or adjacent to the NDP area.</li> </ul> <p>As a result we agree with the assessment that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require an SEA or HRA.</p> <p>However, we would like to draw your attention to the requirement to conserve biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy (Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and section 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework). Please ensure that any development policy in your plan includes wording to ensure “all development results in a biodiversity net gain for the parish”.</p> <p>The recently produced Neighbourhood Plan for Benson, in South Oxfordshire provides an excellent example. We are of the opinion that the policy wording around the Environment, Green Space and Biodiversity is exemplar. We would</p> | <p>No further action necessary in respect of SEA/HRA.</p> <p>Advice given in respect of biodiversity and Green Infrastructure policies should be considered by Compton Parish Council when preparing the NDP.</p> |

| Consultation body | Comments   | Action |
|-------------------|--|--------|
|                   | <p>recommend you considering this document, when reviewing yours.</p> <p>Natural England would also like to highlight that removal of green space in favour of development may have serious impacts on biodiversity and connected habitat and therefore species ability to adapt to climate change. We recommend that the final neighbourhood plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies around connected Green Infrastructure (GI) within the parish. Elements of GI such as open green space, wild green space, allotments, and green walls and roofs can all be used to create connected habitats suitable for species adaptation to climate change. Green infrastructure also provides multiple benefits for people including recreation, health and wellbeing, access to nature, opportunities for food growing, and resilience to climate change. Annex A provides examples of Green Infrastructure;</li> <li>• Policies around Biodiversity Net Gain should propose the use of a biodiversity measure for development proposals. Examples of calculation methods are included in Annex A [see Appendix A to this Screening Report].</li> </ul> |        |

### **Conclusions following consultation with the statutory bodies**

- 9.1. On the basis of the screening process detailed in this report, it is the Council's opinion that the NDP is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and as such does not require an SEA under EU Directive 2001/42/EC and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), or a Habitats Regulations Assessment under EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 9.2. This determination has been made on 12 August 2020.

## **Appendix 1 Responses from the three statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England)**

## PlanningPolicy

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**From:** Planning\_THM <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 07 August 2020 11:49  
**To:** PlanningPolicy  
**Subject:** RE: Consultation on the SEA and HRA Screening Report for the Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

### Categories:

This is an **EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP. THINK** before you **CLICK** links or **OPEN** attachments.

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Dear Laila Bassett,

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the scoping report for the Compton Neighbourhood Plan. We are a statutory consultee in the SEA process and aim to reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the water environment. Based on our review of the draft scoping report, we agree with the environmental issues that have been included and do not have any further comments to make.

For your information we have published joint advice with Natural England, English Heritage and the Forestry Commission on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans.

This is available at:

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT\\_6524\\_7da381.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT_6524_7da381.pdf)

Please note that the Local Authority can advise if there are areas at risk from surface water flood risk (including groundwater and sewerage flood risk) in your neighbourhood plan area. The Surface Water Management Plan is the evidence base for this and contains recommendations and actions to reduce the risk of flooding. This may be useful when gathering baseline data and drafting key sustainability issues and objectives on which to appraise the neighbourhood plan.

Kind regards,

**Alex Swann**

Planning Advisor - Thames Sustainable Places Team

**Environment Agency** | Red Kite House, Wallingford, OX10 8BD

[Planning\\_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk)

External: [REDACTED]

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## PlanningPolicy

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**From:** Lloyd Sweet, Robert <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 28 July 2020 20:18  
**To:** PlanningPolicy  
**Subject:** Fw: Consultation on the SEA and HRA Screening Report for the Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

### Categories:

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP. THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.

---

Dear Ms. Basset

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the draft screening opinion for the Compton Neighbourhood Plan.

I am happy to confirm our agreement that the plan should not merit completion of SEA due to any likely significant effects within areas of interest to Historic England.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lloyd-Sweet

Robert Lloyd-Sweet | Historic Places Adviser | South East England | Historic England  
Cannon Bridge House | 25 Dowgate Hill | London | EC4R 2YA  
Mobile: [REDACTED]

Date: 06 August 2020  
Our ref: 323726



West Berkshire District Council

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Laila Bassett,

**Planning Consultation: Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 20 July 2020.

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.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

In our review of the Birtton with the Compton Neighbourhood Plan SEA and HRA screening we note that;

- there are no allocations for housing or for new employment use proposed in the draft NDP;
- there are no sites of international importance within or adjacent to the NDP area.

As a result we agree with the assessment that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require an SEA or HRA.

However, we would like to draw your attention to the requirement to conserve biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy (Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and section 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework). Please ensure that any development policy in your plan includes wording to ensure "all development results in a biodiversity net gain for the parish".

The recently produced [Neighbourhood Plan for Benson](#), in South Oxfordshire provides an excellent example. We are of the opinion that the policy wording around the Environment, Green Space and Biodiversity is exemplar. We would recommend you considering this document, when reviewing yours.

Further Recommendations

Natural England would also like to highlight that removal of green space in favour of development may have serious impacts on biodiversity and connected habitat and therefore species ability to adapt to climate change. We recommend that the final neighbourhood plan include:

- Policies around connected Green Infrastructure (GI) within the parish. Elements of GI such as open green space, wild green space, allotments, and green walls and roofs can all be used to create connected habitats suitable for species adaptation to climate change. Green infrastructure also provides multiple benefits for people including recreation, health and well-being, access to nature, opportunities for food growing, and resilience to climate change. Annex A provides examples of Green Infrastructure;
- Policies around Biodiversity Net Gain should propose the use of a biodiversity measure for development proposals. Examples of calculation methods are included in Annex A;

Annex A provides information on the natural environment and issues and opportunities for your Neighbourhood planning.

Yours sincerely,

Eleanor Sweet-Escott  
Lead Adviser  
Sustainable Development  
Thames Solent Team

# Annex A - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

## Natural Environment Information Sources

The [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)<sup>1</sup> website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification**, **Ancient Woodland**, **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, **Local Nature Reserves**, **National Parks (England)**, **National Trails**, **Priority Habitat Inventory**, **public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map)** and **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available [here](#)<sup>2</sup>.

**Priority habitats** are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)<sup>3</sup>. Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

**National Character Areas** (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)<sup>4</sup>.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)<sup>5</sup> website and also from the [LandIS website](http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm)<sup>6</sup>, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

## Natural Environment Issues to Consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)<sup>7</sup> sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/)<sup>8</sup> sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nbn-nfbr.org.uk/nfbr.php>

<sup>3</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

<sup>5</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>8</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

## Landscape

Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. Your plan may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

## Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)<sup>9</sup>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)<sup>10</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

## Priority and protected species and habitat

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)<sup>11</sup>) or protected species. Natural England has produced advice [here](#)<sup>12</sup> to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

## Ancient woodland and veteran trees-link to standing advice

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and veteran trees in line with paragraph 175 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forest Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland/veteran trees where they form part of a SSSI or in exceptional circumstances.

## Biodiversity net gain

Under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Local Planning Authorities are required to conserve biodiversity. The NPPF section 170 states the requirement for *"minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity"*. Suitable methods for calculating biodiversity net gain can include the Defra biodiversity offsetting metric<sup>13</sup> and the environment bank biodiversity impact calculator<sup>14</sup>. Natural England would expect a policy within the Neighbourhood Plan to include wording to ensure that net biodiversity gain is achieved.

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<sup>9</sup><http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

<sup>11</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-offsetting#guidance-for-offset-providers-developers-and-local-authorities-in-the-pilot-areas> Note; the 'Guidance for developers' and 'Guidance for offset providers' documents provide a calculation method.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.environmentbank.com/impact-calculator.php> , and [http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwj7vcbl0aDQAhVMDcAKHb8IDEUQFggsMAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fconsult.welhat.gov.uk%2Ffile%2F4184236&usq=AFQjCNFkbJJQ\\_UN0044Qe6rmiLffxckg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwj7vcbl0aDQAhVMDcAKHb8IDEUQFggsMAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fconsult.welhat.gov.uk%2Ffile%2F4184236&usq=AFQjCNFkbJJQ_UN0044Qe6rmiLffxckg)

## 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, 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 para 170. For more information, see our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#)<sup>15</sup>.

## **Green Infrastructure, Improving Your Natural Environment.**

Inclusion of Green Infrastructure (GI) in to development plans can provide multifunctional benefits to the area. These can include opportunities for recreation, health and wellbeing and access to nature as well as providing connected habitats for wildlife.

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment through inclusion of GI. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained, connected, enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development. Examples might include:

- Providing a new footpath with landscaping through the new development to link into existing rights of way or other green spaces.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow or creating new ones.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Considering how lighting can be best managed to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof or walls to new or existing buildings.

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance on this](#)<sup>16</sup>).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition or clearing away an eyesore).

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<sup>15</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>

<sup>16</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

### Green Roofs

Natural England is supportive of the inclusion of living roofs in all appropriate development. Research indicates that the benefits of green roofs include reducing run-off and thereby the risk of surface water flooding; reducing the requirement for heating and air-conditioning; and providing habitat for wildlife.

We would advise your council that some living roofs, such as sedum matting, can have limited biodiversity value in terms of the range of species that grow on them and habitats they provide. Natural England would encourage you to consider the use of bespoke solutions based on the needs of the wildlife specific to the site and adjacent area. I would refer you to <http://livingroofs.org/> for a range of innovative solutions.