

BIODIVERSITY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



**YOUR PLACE
YOUR PLAN.**
Winchester District Local Plan

BACKGROUND

7.1

The council has declared a Climate Emergency and has set an ambition for the wider district to become carbon neutral by 2030. A high quality natural environment is a key contributor to sustainable development and can support a wide range of biodiversity and contributes to human health and wellbeing.

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Access to the countryside / areas of green space, and particularly those within walking distance of residential neighbourhoods and settlements, have become increasingly important during the pandemic when people have sought opportunities for exercise and recreation closer to home. The value of access to the countryside and green space has increased greatly for much of the population and has been linked to good physical and mental health.

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It is one of the aims of the Council Plan is to ensure that “The natural and built environment is protected, maintained, sustained and enhanced” and the Local Plan can help to achieve this aim and also deliver the actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan which focuses on four habitats (species-rich grassland, trees & woodland, chalk rivers, and hedgerow and arable field margins) and 22 species.

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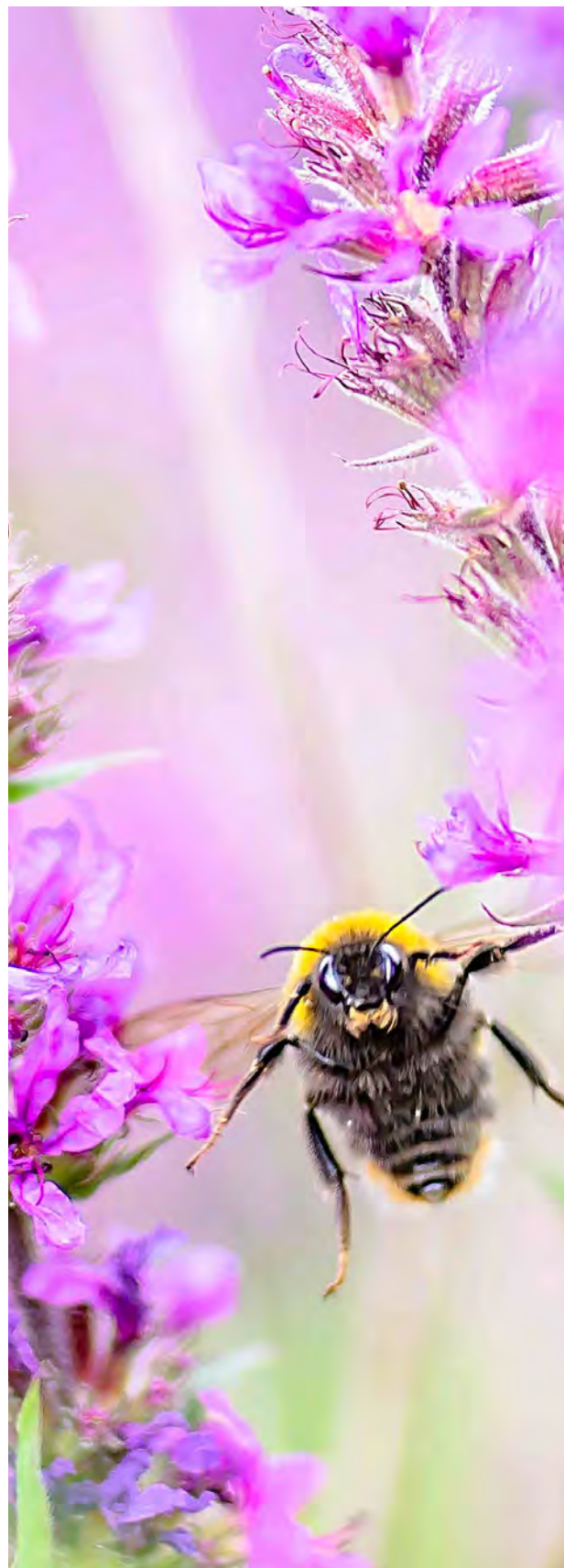
The district has around 250 square miles of rolling Hampshire countryside which is an irreplaceable natural resource supporting biodiversity, the rural economy, including agriculture and recreational uses. Around 40% of the district is within the South Downs National Park that is afforded the highest landscape protection. The district covers a large and diverse area of wildlife habitats, including the Rivers Itchen and Meon, the Forest of Bere and the estuary of the River Hamble some of which are internationally protected sites.

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The district’s countryside is a key natural asset, sustaining biodiversity, offering tranquillity and providing an important resource for carbon storage. It provides for agriculture and rural businesses, as well as tourism and leisure activities. It comprises a range of landscape types including chalk downland, river valleys, and farmed agricultural areas interspersed with villages, hamlets and some larger market towns as well as the city of Winchester.

7.6

The countryside has many benefits for the residents of and visitors to the district including beautiful and distinctive landscape features, natural green spaces and places for recreation. The countryside within the district includes unspoilt landscapes, waterways and landscapes that have been managed in sensitive ways for many decades supporting the rural economy. The need to protect our countryside from unplanned and large-scale development that would change its nature forever is recognised by national policy. The NPPF states that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. To support this, development in the countryside will be managed to resist the spread of development into less sustainable areas and to protect landscape quality. However, development which is in keeping with the countryside and needed in order to support good landscape management and the rural economy will be acceptable in principle.



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BACKGROUND

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One of the key aims of the existing Local Plan is to concentrate development within the most sustainable locations and to protect the countryside from unnecessary development. The remaining area outside defined settlement boundaries are defined as ‘countryside’ and planning policies generally resist built development here, other than for specific needs. These policies have generally worked well in protecting the district’s countryside, while enabling planned growth to meet development requirements and support the rural economy. In addition to the countryside protection policies, the city council has identified ‘Settlement Gaps’ which are a number of areas of undeveloped land which help to define and retain the separate identity of settlements.

7.8

Whilst the current Local Plan has been largely successful in preventing development that adversely affects the countryside and protected sites by restricting the type of development that can take place there, some additional challenges for the next Local Plan have been identified. On one hand, increased levels of development and in particular housing are needed to meet the targets set by government, but there are also changes in legislation (some still awaited) which require more of our district to be safeguarded and used to meet the needs of biodiversity net gain, the multi-use of green infrastructure, open spaces and to help development achieve nutrient neutrality.

7.9

The Environment Act 2021 will introduce (post 2 year transition period) a requirement for developers to submit and have approved as part of their proposals a biodiversity gain plan showing how at least a measurable 10% net gain in biodiversity value will be achieved. This will be the minimum requirement from that point on but it may be that a higher percentage could be justified in the district if it can be evidenced.

7.10

The National Planning Policy Framework (Chapter 15) makes it clear that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural environment, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and provide biodiversity net gain (as well as other matters). The Local Plan should have a clear hierarchy of sites from internationally important down to locally important and ensure they are maintained and enhanced.

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The district contains a range of important natural assets that are valued by residents and visitors. It can be seen from annual monitoring that the current Local Plan policies are working well in protecting the environment and therefore it is suggested that these policy approaches are broadly carried forward to the new Local Plan.

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However, in light of some changes to national planning guidance, and also the introduction of the Environment Act, there is an opportunity to strengthen some policy areas.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL PLAN

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The Local Plan has a key role to play in resolving the many competing demands made on the natural environment and biodiversity and ensure any unavoidable impact caused by development is mitigated on site, or offset as a last resort, or where local conditions indicate that this would be the most beneficial approach.

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The Environment Act 2021 also emphasises the importance of nature in the drive to tackle climate change and sets clear statutory targets for the recovery of the natural world in four priority areas: air quality, biodiversity, water and waste and includes an important new target to reverse the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030.

7.15

The Local Plan has a key role to play in achieving these aims for the natural environment and biodiversity. It is responsible for allocating the sites needed to provide the housing, employment and other requirements of the district up until 2039. It can ensure that new development is focused on sustainable areas using a brownfield land first approach and through policies which ensure that all aspects of the natural environment and biodiversity are protected and enhanced.

7.16

The Local Plan can allocate land for offsetting, mitigation, designate Local Areas of Green Space, settlement gaps and Green Belts. The Environment Act, once the transition period has expired, will make it mandatory for new developments to provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain.

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The Local Plan can allow development that maintains, protects and enhances biodiversity and the landscape. It can promote active travel routes and ecological connectivity across the district and look for ways to link habitats, sites and species to ensure that the ecosystem thrives to benefit both the natural environment and the people living and visiting the district.

7.18

The Local Plan policies can seek to provide open space and easy access to the countryside for health and wellbeing of the resident population and visitors to the district where appropriate.

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The Local Plan can limit the potential for adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity as well as important landscapes including those that are designated and higher value soils. The plan area provides the setting for the South Downs National Park and contains a number of and nationally important statutory and non-statutory designated sites which will need to be protected through planning policy.



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THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL PLAN

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The plan should also take into account non-designated landscapes identified to be particularly sensitive to development and non-designated habitats which form part of wider ecological network. The plan also presents opportunities to promote the requirement for net gain in biodiversity. It can also encourage the re-use of brownfield land and protect more valuable agricultural soils from development. Benefits may also be achieved by directing development to less sensitive locations. The allocation of new sites for development and updated planning policy support habitat connectivity through the provision of new green infrastructure.

7.21

The proposed policies have been developed to protect and enhance the natural capital of the district (this is a term for the collection of the natural resources within the district and includes biodiversity, vegetation, soils, air, water, habitats and geology). Increasing our natural capital and strengthening eco-systems will help to improve long-term adaptability to climate change by reducing and absorbing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to anticipated extremes of weather. The policies support and reinforce each other with Green and Blue Infrastructure and Biodiversity Action Plan requirements for new developments reducing the impact on the environment and providing biodiversity Net Gain. They will also ensure that open space, Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Neutrality are provided in new developments requiring planning permission.



Key Issues:

- i. The council has declared a Climate Emergency and has set an ambition for the wider district to become carbon neutral by 2030. The council recognises that a high quality natural environment is a key contributor to sustainable development and can support a wide range of biodiversity and contributes to human health and wellbeing.
- ii. The Local Plan is an important tool in ensuring that development is planned with minimum impacts on the natural environment and biodiversity and that any adverse impacts are mitigated. It can also give a vital overview of green and blue networks across and beyond the district to help direct offsetting contributions to areas needing intervention. It can direct development to brownfield sites first wherever possible taking into account the availability of such sites in the district.
- iii. The Local Plan can ensure that increases in net gain in biodiversity are achieved by new developments.
- iv. The Local Plan helps to ensure that the landscape and natural environment of the district which is valued so highly is protected and enhanced.
- v. The COVID – 19 pandemic has increased the importance and value of easy access to the countryside and good quality green space in settlements for improving the physical and mental health of the population.
- vi. The need for access to the countryside and green spaces needs to be balanced against the need for some areas to remain undisturbed to allow fauna and flora to thrive.
- vii. The need for new development to achieve nutrient neutrality to avoid harming the quality of the water environment in nationally protected sites, particularly in relation to the potential impacts of nitrogen and phosphorus resulting from the production of wastewater, has become a major issue for the district. This has real potential to constrain the ability to provide housing and certain other types of development that needs to be planned for unless these impacts are avoided or mitigated. This could lead to a requirement to allocate land for these purposes in the Local Plan to allow housing and other development to proceed.
- viii. There is a need to prioritise the use of brownfield land over green field sites whilst accepting that there is unlikely to be sufficient brownfield land in the district to meet its development needs. This reflects the sustainable development aims of the plan.
- ix. The air and water quality in the district must be protected and improved.
- x. There may be a need to consider allocating Local Green Spaces.
- xi. The settlement gaps need to be strengthened to avoid the coalescence of towns and villages and ensure suitable separation is maintained between them and new ones may be needed.
- xii. The matter of allocating a new greenbelt in the district is being examined by the Partnership for South Hampshire and the outcomes of the research is awaited. This would require an allocation designation in the plan if it were evidenced to be justified.



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PROPOSED NEW STRATEGIC POLICY –

Protecting and enhancing Biodiversity and the Natural Environment in the district.

What are we aiming to achieve



A high quality natural environment is a key contributor to sustainable development and can support a wide range of biodiversity and contributes to human health and wellbeing. The Local Plan can promote access to the countryside / areas of green space and particularly those that are within walking distance of residential neighbourhoods and settlements to encourage people to use them for exercise and recreation beneficial which supports good physical and mental health.

It is one of the aims of the Council Plan is to ensure that “The natural and built environment is protected, maintained, sustained and enhanced” and the Local Plan can help to achieve this aim and also deliver the actions in the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity should be at the heart of planning for the district recognising the huge contribution it makes towards the physical and mental health of its residents and visitors.

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The National Planning Policy Framework and associated Planning Policy Guidance makes it clear that:

- Safe and accessible green infrastructure can support and enable healthy lifestyles.
- The designation of Local Green Space allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.
- Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided.
- Planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- Valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils should be protected and enhanced (including trees and woodland).
- The intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services should be recognised.
- Impacts on biodiversity should be minimised and net gains sought.
- Development should not contribute to or be put at risk from soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.
- Degraded, derelict, contaminated land should be mitigated and remediated.
- Biodiversity and geodiversity should be protected and enhanced including looking for opportunities for net gains for biodiversity.

7.23

In order to ensure that the Local Plan accords with the guidance in the NPPF and supports the aims set out in the council's climate emergency declaration the preferred approach is to include an overarching strategic policy that sets out

the council's aspirations in respect of promoting the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and all aspects of the natural environment. Measures could include hedgehog highways, swift bricks, bat bricks / boxes and appropriate planting.

Strategic Policy NE1

Protecting and enhancing Biodiversity and the Natural Environment in the district

Development will only be permitted where it demonstrates that it will protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity including the natural beauty of the landscape, all natural resources, habitats and species; and

- i. Avoids significant harm to the natural environment, biodiversity and geodiversity or can adequately mitigate any harm arising and can clearly demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact on the conservation status of key species, nationally protected designated sites, or locally designated sites and there will be no net loss or deterioration of a key habitat type including irreplaceable habitats and the integrity of linkages between designated sites and key habitats;
- ii. Safeguards features of the natural environment and nature conservation interest and should include measures to retain, conserve and enhance habitats, including, nationally and locally designated sites, priority habitats, networks of ecological interest, ancient woodland, water features, hedgerows and wetland pastures as corridors and stepping-stones for wildlife;

- iii. Does not harm/degrade the Ecological Network or result in its fragmentation;
- iv. Development which would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration and where a suitable compensation strategy exists;
- v. Normally any mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are required to be delivered on-site, unless special circumstances dictate that off-site compensation is more appropriate. A financial contribution - in lieu of on-site mitigation - will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances and where it is demonstrated that the proposed mitigation is deliverable and effective; and
- vi. Protects, conserves and enhances ecology and the air and water environments in the district.

STRATEGIC POLICY



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DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES



POLICY NE2 MAJOR COMMERCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND MOD ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

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Across the district there are a number of large commercial and educational/training establishments set in the wider countryside: IBM (Hursley), Defence establishments (Winchester, Worthy Down and Southwick), Sparsholt College (Sparsholt), and Arqiva (Crawley). These establishments are primarily involved in business and training activities which support the district's economy and it is important that they can continue to thrive. They also employ large numbers of people with a range of skills that the council wishes to retain locally.

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Increasingly these organisations are looking to meet modern business needs through adaptation and expansion of their existing buildings. Often these establishments occupy former country estates outside of any defined settlement, where development would normally be constrained. The city council recognises the value of these organisations and their contribution to the local economy and wish to work with them to plan for their future needs.

What are we aiming to achieve



It is important that the policies in the Local Plan protect the countryside from unnecessary development but the council recognises the very important contribution to the local economy that these large establishments bring and want to accommodate their growth or

development requirements whilst still protecting and enhancing the natural environment. This could be achieved by encouraging the use of masterplans for the establishments and their sites to ensure controlled sensitive growth.



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Policy NE2

Major Commercial, Educational and MOD Establishments in the Countryside

- i. The local planning authority will support the retention and development of existing major commercial, educational and MOD establishments that occupy rural locations in the district, where this will help them continue to contribute to the district's economic prosperity;
- ii. Any application for development is preceded by, and is consistent with, a comprehensive and evidence based site wide masterplan which demonstrates how high quality design will be delivered for the whole site which has involved and engaged with stakeholders and interested parties before it is agreed by the council.

POLICY

POLICY NE3 – OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION

7.26

Open space, sport and recreation play an important role in enabling local communities to live active and healthy lifestyles. The Community Strategy identifies the need to provide opportunities for everyone to become more active, to promote not only healthy lifestyles but also improve general well-being. Local communities place much emphasis on retaining existing open space and recreational provision and the need for adequate provision associated with new development. This has become even more important during and since the COVID – 19 pandemic.

7.27

The ‘Open Space Standards’ set out in this Plan include public landscaped areas, playing fields, parks and play areas, informal recreation sites, and allotments (see Table 1 below) and also built facilities (see Table 2 below). The council has produced locally derived standards following extensive consultations, which are set out in the following Policy CP7. The policy seeks local improvements where deficiencies have been identified in particular types of facility, when measured against the new standards, with new facilities being provided to meet the needs of larger-scale development or the cumulative needs of smaller-scale development.

7.28

Given existing shortfalls in provision, and to achieve the required improvements, it is important that all existing facilities are retained. Therefore all current open space areas and built sports facilities will be protected against development for other uses, unless exceptionally improvements can be achieved by relocating them, it can be shown that they are no longer needed or the benefit of the proposed alternative use to the community outweighs the harm caused by the loss of the facility.

7.29

The Open Space Strategy specifies the amount and type of facilities currently available, by Parish, together with an assessment of deficiency which will be updated and proposals made as necessary in the Local Plan.



Table 1 : Open space standards (quantity and access)

| Parks, Sports and Recreation Grounds | Natural Green Space | Informal Open Space | Equipped Children's and Young People's Space | Allotments |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1.5 ha./1000 population (0.75 ha./1000 for outdoor sport) Access: 650m | 1.0 ha./1000 population Access: 700m | 0.8 ha./1000 population Access: 400m | 0.5 ha./1000 population Access: 480m Toddler and Junior 650m Youth | 0.2 ha./1000 population Access: 480m |

Table 2 : Built Facilities Standards (quantity and access by walking or driving)

| Facility | Standard per 1000 population | Facility/population | Walking distance | Driving catchment |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Sports halls | 1.0 ha./1000 population Access: 700m | 0.8 ha./1000 population Access: 400m | 0.5 ha./1000 population Access: 480m Toddler and Junior 650m Youth | 0.2 ha./1000 population Access: 480m |
| Swimming pools | 13m ² | 1 per 25,000 | 20 minutes | 15 – 20 minutes |
| Fitness gyms | 4 stations – 16m ² | 1 station per 250 | 10 minutes | 10 – 15 minutes |
| Synthetic turf pitches | 330m ² (.05 pitch) | 1 per 20,000 | 20 – 30 minutes | 20 – 30 minutes |
| Outdoor tennis courts | 0.8 courts | 2 per 2,500 | 20 minutes | 15 – 20 minutes |
| Indoor bowls | 0.05 rink | 1 rink per 20,000 | 15 – 20 minutes | 15 – 20 minutes |



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POLICY NE3 – OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION

What are we aiming to achieve



Open space, sport and recreation is important for the physical and mental wellbeing of the residents in the district. Access to high quality open space has become increasingly important during the COVID – 19 pandemic where people have needed to stay closer to home. Less need for travel also has benefits for helping to achieve climate change

targets. High quality open space encourages opportunities for physical activity which has physical and mental health benefits for the population of the district. It is important that current areas of open space, facilities for sport and recreation are protected from loss unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated as set out in this Policy.

Policy NE3

Open Space, Sport and Recreation

The local planning authority will seek improvements in the open space network and in built recreation facilities within the district, to achieve the type of provision, space required and levels of accessibility set out in the council's most up to date open space and built facilities standards. This will be achieved by new and improved provision, or by improving public access for all to existing facilities and educational provision.

New housing development should make provision for public open space and built facilities in accordance with the most up to date standards (currently set out in Tables 1 and 2), preferably through on-site provision of new facilities where feasible or by financial contributions towards off-site improvements.

There will be a presumption against the loss of any open space, sports or recreation facility (including built facilities), except where it can be demonstrated that :-

- i. Alternative facilities will be provided and are at least as accessible to current and potential new users, and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality; or
- ii. The benefit of the development to the community outweighs the harm caused by the loss of the facility
- iii. The facility is no longer required for its purpose or an alternative activity.

POLICY NE4 – GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

7.30

Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI) describes all of the natural and managed green spaces, features and water bodies that together make up a multifunctional network or grid across rural and urban areas. The GI network includes five key elements:- spaces, links and features such as parks and gardens (on private or public land), and green links between spaces such as hedgerows and rights of way, green roofs/walls and ‘blue corridors’ such as rivers and ponds.

7.31

Together these all provide environmental, economic and quality of life benefits which underpin the principles of sustainability. GI has many benefits, from encouraging people to walk or cycle along routes of local significance bringing local communities together, to increasing health and wellbeing, enhancing landscapes and protecting cultural heritage, providing ecosystem services and linking spaces for biodiversity, managing natural resources sustainably and facilitating adaptation to climate change.

7.32

Well designed GI (in accordance with the GI principles set out by Natural England) can also add value to properties and attract investment in an area by enhancing its character and local distinctiveness.

Key green infrastructure assets and opportunities within the district include:-

- River corridors, tributaries and valleys of the Itchen, Meon, Hamble, Wallington and Dever which are of considerable biodiversity, landscape and recreation value;

- Disused railway corridors (e.g. at Bishops Waltham, Meon Valley, Winchester);
- Important public rights of way such as the South Downs Way, Itchen Navigation Heritage Project, and Keats Walk, Winchester;
- Natural and semi-natural greenspaces such as chalk downlands e.g. at Whiteshute Ridge and Shawford Down.
- Areas of accessible and/or ancient woodland, including the those of the Forest of Bere (e.g. West Walk, Creech Woods, Whiteley Pastures);
- Farmland which makes up around 73% of the district, which is predominantly arable land in the north, downlands and pasture in the south along the river valleys;
- Historic parks and landscape features such as park pales, veteran trees, and sunken lanes;
- Formal and informal recreation areas such as Farley Mount.

7.33

Some communities within the district currently do not have access to enough quality natural green spaces, particularly close to settlements for casual walking and dog exercise. This is also hindered by gaps in the Rights of Way network, for example to the west and north of Winchester, which prevent easy access to many areas. There is also a deficit in informal greenspaces within the district such as Local Nature Reserves, and there is some deficit in formal greenspace provision, for example in the Kings Worthy, Waltham Chase and Denmead areas. The cumulative effect of development could also result in an additional requirement for new open space and recreation areas.



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POLICY NE4 – GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

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Well-planned green infrastructure should be incorporated into development proposals integrating and building upon the existing green network. It should contribute to high quality development and economic prosperity by making places attractive to residents and businesses and improving the health and well-being of the local and wider community. It should respect and respond to local landscape character and integrate with sustainable transport and green tourism initiatives, expanding upon existing provision.

7.35

Green infrastructure also forms a valuable contribution to the setting of Winchester Town, through extensive tree coverage and areas of open land such as the Water Meadows, which come into heart of the town providing public access to the wider

countryside. Some of this countryside is within the South Downs National Park. The River Itchen also passes through the Town and is protected by national designation recognising the exceptional quality of this chalk river and its environs.

7.36

This policy supports provision of suitable and sufficient green infrastructure incorporating green spaces and features for recreation, amenity and biodiversity and provision of routes and pathways to link with the existing network, thereby contributing to sustainable transport provision. The aim is to deliver both sufficient quality and quantity of green infrastructure supported by the standards set out in NE3 in association with proposed development.

What are we aiming to achieve



Green and blue infrastructure is a well-established planning concept but it needs to become more central to the design of new places.

The aim of GI planning is not just the creation of new green spaces, but also the protection, enhancement and improved connectivity of existing green and blue infrastructure assets.

The positive contribution that GI makes to creating sustainable communities, health and wellbeing and tackling climate change is becoming increasingly important.

Green and blue infrastructure is important for biodiversity to ensure that habitats are well connected to each other. The intention is to identify, enhance and protect networks of interconnected habitats to benefit biodiversity in the long term.

GI also helps with other environmental benefits such as assisting natural drainage to reduce flooding and help us adapt to climate change.

GI can be multi functional in many instances to meet a variety of needs.

Policy NE4**Green and Blue Infrastructure**

The local planning authority will support development proposals that :-

maintain, protect and enhance the function or the integrity of the existing green infrastructure network identified at a district and sub district level, including strategic blue and green corridors and spaces, as illustrated on Map 9 particularly where the proposal allows for the enhancement of GI both on-site and in the immediate area using important local character features, including existing planting, trees, groups of trees, copses, wetland, hedgerows and opportunities for wild food foraging;

Provide a measurable net gain of well managed, multifunctional green infrastructure, in accordance with the categories and standards specified in Policy NE3 and appropriate for the scale of development, through on-site provision which :-

- i. Addresses deficits in local green infrastructure provision where appropriate;
- ii. Incorporates in landscaping schemes natural planting of at least 50% pollinator friendly planting of predominantly native species;
- iii. Integrates with the green network/ grid identified at the district and sub-regional level (as illustrated on Map 9);
- iv. Provides a high quality natural environment with biodiversity interest;

The green infrastructure shall be accessible for all with high levels of accessibility in primary areas, and promote health, wellbeing, community and cohesion and active living; encourages public access to and within the natural environment where appropriate;

- i. Allows for adaptation to climate change;
- ii. Is well planned to allow cost effective ongoing management of the GI;
- iii. Is accompanied by a management plan;
- iv. Links areas of biodiversity;
- v. Is provided at the earliest feasible stage;
- vi. Includes proposals for walking, cycling and equestrian routes provided they contribute to a network of attractive and functional non-motorised travel routes, with appropriate signage, throughout the district;
- vii. Protect the following disused railway line routes and associated infrastructure including the access routes to them, (Bishops Waltham, Meon Valley and Winchester) within the district as shown on the Policies Map, so they are safeguarded for existing, and potential future use as non-motorised travel routes.
- viii. Watercourses are safeguarded and improved for quality, amenity, biodiversity and quantity.

Where it can be established that on-site provision is not possible financial contributions will be required for the provision and management of GI sites and will be negotiated on a site by site basis.



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ILLUSTRATIVE GREEN LINKS AND BLUE CORRIDORS

Map 9



Key:

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|---|-------------------------|
| —●— Long Distance Routes | Winchester District |
| Blue Corridors | National Parks |
| Designated Sites | Main built up areas |
| South Downs Way Nature Improvement Area | Strategic Allocations |
| | Other Large Settlements |



Map 9

POLICY NE 5 – BIODIVERSITY

7.37

Whilst the current Local Plan has been successful in protecting biodiversity and it is considered that relevant policies should generally be retained. The new Local Plan is an opportunity to reflect new national requirements for biodiversity net gain in The Environment Act and also reflect the council's proactive approach to protecting, enhancing and restoring biodiversity across the district.

7.38

Winchester District has many areas which are noted for their natural beauty and biodiversity value. These areas also support a wide variety of species and habitats, and form an important part of the network of biodiversity sites within the wider environment. They include the Itchen chalk river, the Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods and coastal habitats of the Solent and Southampton Water. The importance of these areas is recognised by the statutory and policy protection afforded to nationally protected sites including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA), as well as to Ramsar wetland sites and the Bird Aware Solent. Plans or projects proposing development that is not directly connected with the management of these sites, but that is likely to have a significant effect on them, will require Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ensure that effects are avoided or adequately mitigated. If adverse effects on site integrity cannot be avoided or mitigated then reasons of overriding public interest must be demonstrated and compensation measures provided.

7.39

Winchester is a predominantly rural district with around 40% of the area forming part of the South Downs National Park (SDNP). Wildlife sites and habitats within this area and across the district that are of regional and local importance include 17 SSSIs, almost 600 Sites of Nature Conservation (SINCs) and 9 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). These sites support important natural assets, such as ancient woodlands, grasslands and chalk rivers. These sites will be protected, with opportunities for enhancement encouraged.

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Sites that lie outside designated areas provide valuable corridors and networks for habitats and species and can include irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodlands. These are key to the overall integrity of the district's biodiversity interest. Maintaining and enhancing the network of natural sites, and the linkages between them, is integral to supporting the aims of the district's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The Winchester BAP identifies that 14% of the area covered by the plan supports BAP priority habitats that include broadleaved woodland, pasture woodland, wetlands and unimproved calcareous neutral grassland. The Local Ecological Network Biodiversity Opportunity identifies the areas with the greatest potential for enhancing biodiversity within Hampshire.

7.41

The Community Strategy identifies the protection and enhancement of the district's rich biodiversity and habitats as a strategic outcome for Winchester. The strategy aims to maintain, protect and enhance the biodiversity within the district, working in partnership with neighbouring authorities and other relevant bodies.

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In addition, the Habitats Regulation Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal advise that a strategic approach to air quality management is required. This is to ensure the continued protection of sites of national importance, as well as local nature conservation sites given the planned level of growth. The location of air quality monitoring sites and the setting of thresholds to trigger further investigation should be determined through lower level assessments and, where appropriate, be applied as a condition on planning permissions.

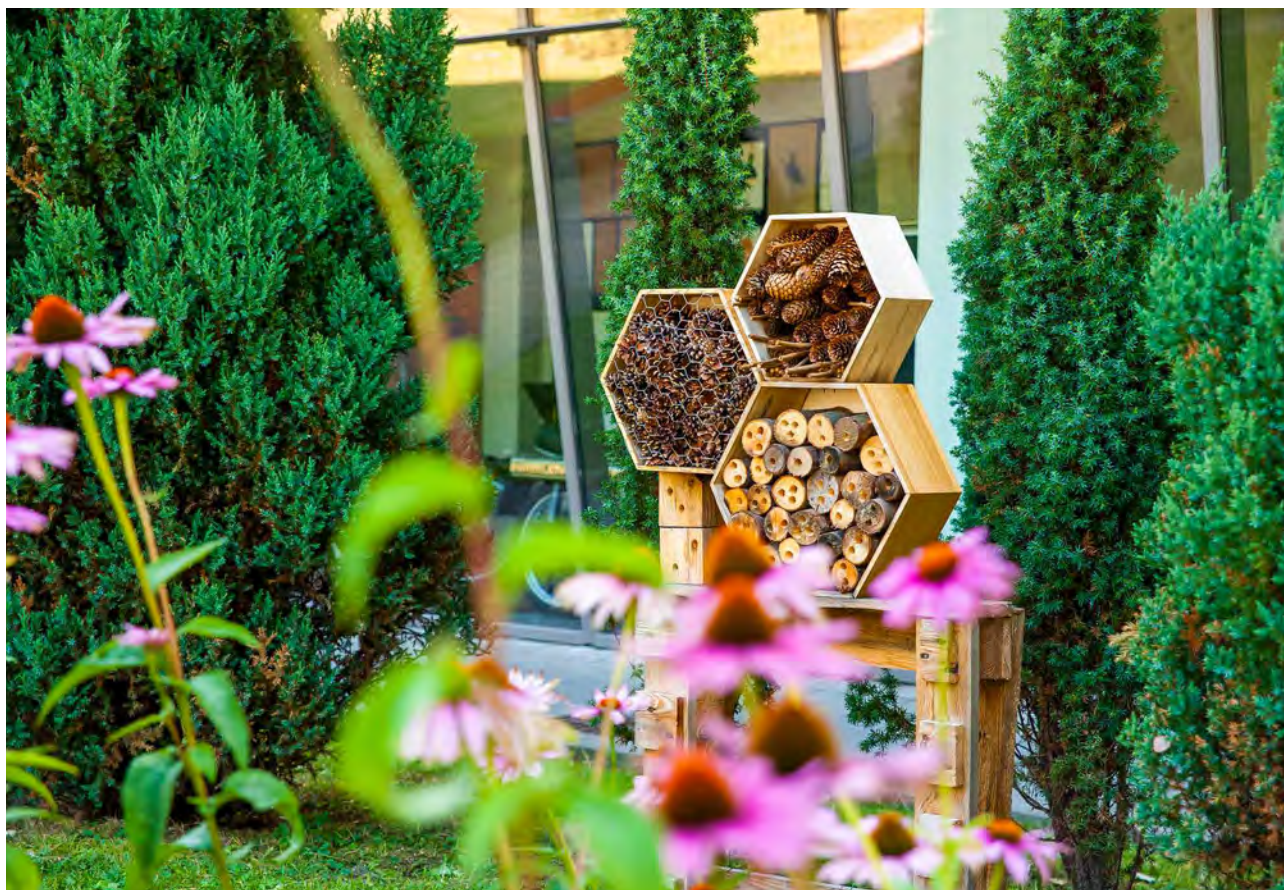
Biodiversity Net Gain

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Biodiversity Net Gain is a process whereby existing biodiversity within a site boundary is protected and enhanced as a result of the development process. The council wishes to see biodiversity thrive as a result of development. The DEFRA Biodiversity Metric calculator allows a qualified ecologist to measure the onsite pre-development and post-development biodiversity. Using Biodiversity Units this demonstrates whether the development will harm or enhance biodiversity. All development proposals will be required to provide a measurable increase in biodiversity. The Environment Act (post transitional period) will require development proposals to secure a minimum 10% measurable biodiversity net gain over the pre-development Biodiversity Unit score using the latest DEFRA Biodiversity Metric or any subsequently approved metric.



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What are we aiming to achieve



The district has many areas which are noted for their natural beauty and biodiversity value. These areas also support a wide variety of species and habitats, and form an important part of the network of biodiversity sites within the wider environment. It is very important that the existing biodiversity

in the district is protected and enhanced where possible and this policy seeks to ensure that biodiversity is considered at the early stages of planning and that opportunities are taken to provide improvements in particular to the network of habitats.



Policy NE5**Biodiversity****POLICY**

The Local Planning Authority will permit development that maintains, protects and enhances biodiversity across the district, delivering a minimum of 10% measurable net gain in biodiversity to be maintained for a period of 30 years in accordance with the Environment Act; and

- i. Protects sites of international, European, and national importance, and local nature conservation sites and SINCS, from inappropriate development;
- ii. Supports habitats that are important to maintain the integrity of European sites;
- iii. Shows how biodiversity can be retained, protected and enhanced through its design and implementation, for example by designing for wildlife, delivering measurable BNG and BAP targets and enhancing Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, Local Ecological Networks/Local Nature Recovery Areas and include a management plan for a period of 30 years;
- iv. New development will be required to avoid adverse impacts, or if unavoidable ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with compensation measures used only as a last resort. Development proposals will only be supported if the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm to the habitat and/or species;
- v. Maintains a district wide network of local wildlife sites and corridors to support the integrity of the biodiversity network, prevent fragmentation, or prevents and reverses fragmentation and enable biodiversity to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- vi. Supports and contributes to the targets set out in the district's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for priority habitats and species;
- vii. Provides up to date information, evidence and relevant assessments or surveys (in line with CIEEM guidance);
- viii. Where there is evidence of the deliberate clearing of habitats before the application process or the deliberate neglect or damage to any of the habitats and species on the site the subsequently reduced biodiversity value the deteriorated condition will not be taken as the baseline for the purposes of calculating BNG and the previous ecological status of the site will be used to decide the acceptability of any development proposals and mitigation.



Policy
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NE5

POLICY NE6 – FLOODING, FLOOD RISK AND THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

7.44

The water environment within Winchester District is hugely important as a natural resource and recreational facility, and plays a key part in shaping the district's historic and natural landscape. The geology of the district means that the area plays an essential role in supplying water for the district and neighbouring areas, not only for public use but also for many local economic sectors which rely heavily on the water environment. These include farming, watercress production, fisheries, tourism and water based recreation activities. The water environment is not only a key element of the wider eco-system of the district, it is also a key part of the green infrastructure network providing links and space for recreation and leisure (as well as other functions, as set out in policy NE4).

7.45

Water for commercial uses and to supply domestic properties comes mainly from the district's underground aquifers, but also from surface waters such as the Rivers Itchen and Test. These rivers and the Meon, which originate from the chalk ridges, are of high ecological importance, as are the upper reaches of the Hamble Estuary which flows through the district (as set out in policy CP16 biodiversity). The River Itchen and the Upper Hamble form part of the Natura 2000 network of sites designated under the Birds and Habitats Directives which are also covered by the Water Framework Directive (WFD), with the main objective of bringing all water bodies up to 'good ecological (surface waters), quantitative (groundwater) and chemical (all) status' through the sustainable use of water as a natural resource.

7.46

The most important groundwater resources in the district are currently at 'poor' status under the WFD. Ground water resources in the district are amongst the most sensitive in the region and are highly vulnerable to pollution. 80% of the district is underlain by principal aquifer and 46% of the district is within Source Protection Zones (covering the abstraction points). These zones exist to protect public drinking water supplies and suitable pollution prevention measures are focused in these areas.

7.47

Policy NE16 seeks to ensure that development and changes in land use within the district will:-

- Protect and use opportunities to enhance the water environment;
- Protect the quality and quantity of drinking water;
- ensure that development is permitted only where there is adequate infrastructure to provide and treat water; and
- Protect people and properties from flood risk,

Recognising that development may also have an impact on the water environment which reaches beyond district boundaries.

7.48

Like much of the South East and East of England, both Portsmouth Water and Southern Water abstraction areas which cover Winchester District are “seriously water-stressed”¹. This Local Plan therefore seeks to ensure that there is adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage treatment capacity to serve all new developments and encourages high standards of water efficiency, to reduce water use (policy CP11 Sustainable Development²) to protect the district’s role in supplying water within and to neighbouring districts.

7.49

It is important that there is adequate capacity both on and off the site to serve a development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users³. Where there is a capacity problem and no improvements are programmed by the water company, the council will require the developer to fund appropriate improvements which must be completed prior to occupation of the development.

7.50

The district is affected by fluvial flooding from the many rivers and tributaries flowing through the district, groundwater flooding from natural springs and winterbournes fed by the underground aquifers, and surface water flooding where water can not drain away quickly enough. The relevant Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) and the updated fluvial and coastal flood risk maps from the Environment Agency show the flood risk across the district from these sources. Hampshire County Council is the designated Lead Local Flood Authority for Hampshire under the Flood and Water Management Act and, along with district councils, must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development when carrying out flood risk management functions. Together these local authorities are developing a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Hampshire.

7.51

Policy NE16 therefore seeks to avoid flood risk to people and property where possible, and manage any residual risk through location, layout and design, taking account of the impacts of climate change on changing flood risk as identified in the SFRA. This includes making space for water by directing development to areas at lowest flood risk first, protecting sites required for flood risk management and the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) where appropriate.



7.44
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7.51

¹ This means that the amount of water available per person is low and the water demand per person is a high proportion of effective rainfall Areas of water stress: final classification. Environment Agency 2007

² Currently this requires Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 for water

³ In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing infrastructure.

POLICY NE6 – FLOODING, FLOOD RISK AND THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

7.52

All planning applications, except those within Zone 1, on sites less than 1 hectare and not in a critical drainage area⁴ will require a flood risk assessment. Applications will be assessed using the sequential test in national policy which requires new development to be located in zones of the lowest probability of flooding first (Zone 1)⁵. Alternative sites with higher probability of flooding (Zone 2 and then Zone 3) will only be considered where there are no reasonably available alternative sites. The vulnerability of the proposed land use to the flood risk will then also be taken into consideration by applying the 'Exceptions Test' if required. This will consider proposals for vulnerable development usually inappropriate to the flood zone. These proposals will need to demonstrate: that there are no suitable alternative sites; that the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; and that the development will be safe for its lifetime, taking account of the vulnerability of its users without increasing flood risk elsewhere, where possible reducing flood risk overall.

7.53

Within each Flood Zone, new development should be directed to areas of lowest probability of flooding first and then to areas suited to the vulnerability of the proposed use (the most vulnerable development must be located in areas of lowest flood risk unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location). Development within the functional floodplain must be avoided to retain access for maintenance and a suitable buffer to watercourses and flood defence structures, as well as for transferring and storing flood water. The SFRA considers the impact of climate change on flooding events

and sets the criteria to be used to identify areas where flood risk may increase. Within these areas, the future vulnerability of the proposed use should be considered.

Nitrogen and Phosphorus.

7.54

The council has for some time needed to consider the impacts of nitrogen in the wastewater produced by certain types of residential development across the district on nationally protected sites including the Solent SAC and River Itchen SAC.

In these freshwater habitats and estuaries poor water quality by nutrient enrichment from elevated levels of nutrients is one of the primary reasons for habitats being in an unfavourable condition. Excessive levels of nutrients can cause rapid growth in certain plants through the process of eutrophication leading to a loss of wildlife and sites being in an unfavourable condition. In such areas, where there is development pressure, mitigation solutions are likely to be needed to enable development to proceed without causing further harm.

7.55

Unless it is possible to exclude that development will have significant effects on the sites concerned, in terms of the impact on the water quality, proposals will need to be subject of an appropriate assessment under the Habitat Regulations. Approval for development can be agreed by the planning authority only when it can be ascertained that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of nationally protected sites.

4 which has been notified to the local planning authority by the Environment Agency

5 As defined by the Environment Agency or in an area with drainage problems identified through a SFRA.

6 land with an annual probability of flooding of 0.5% (or 1 in 20) in any one year

7.56

One approach supported by Natural England which can allow development to proceed is to achieve ‘nutrient neutrality’. This is where the council is able to assess and quantify the mitigation requirements of new developments and is possible by following guidance provided by Natural England. It allows development to be permitted if it can be demonstrated that there will be no net increase in nutrient loading in the catchments of the affected nationally protected sites. There are now a number of strategic mitigation sites that have been brought forward over the last year or so by landowners both in the district and neighbouring areas. Developers can acquire nutrient credits from these land owners, which equate to and ‘offset’ the amount of mitigation required for a development, to ensure that any adverse impact upon the quality of the water environment of protected sites is avoided.

7.57

However, on the 16 March 2022, the council received new guidance from Natural England which will affect the way that the council has to assess new proposals across the whole district in terms of calculating the impact of nutrients caused by the wastewater they produce. The Local Plan needs to reflect this guidance in its policies and strategic development proposals.

7.58

The position changed significantly in the district when the up-dated guidance was issued by Natural England. In addition to considering the impact of development in terms of nitrogen in wastewater it is now necessary to assess potential effects from phosphorus in respect of development affecting the River Itchen catchment. Unlike nitrogen, where mitigation solutions exist which allow development to achieve nutrient neutrality, there are currently no strategic mitigation sites available offering credits for phosphorus.

7.59

Identifying such solutions is a priority for the council but, in the meantime, it is not possible to give permission for development affecting the water quality of the protected River Itchen catchment unless the developer can show, on a case by case basis, how any adverse effect can be avoided. However, experience of the nitrogen issue within the district, and wider Solent area, shows that it is feasible for strategic solutions to be brought forward within a reasonable time frame which will enable the development set out in this plan to be delivered.

7.60

The Local Plan may also be able to help delivery of development by allocating land for mitigation use which could include setting aside agriculture land, planting woodland or creating wetland habitat in appropriate locations.



7.52
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7.60

POLICY NE6 – FLOODING, FLOOD RISK AND THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

What are we aiming to achieve



Delivering new residential and other types of development is important to meet local housing needs, achieve good quality place making and to support communities and the district's economy.

However, the water environment of nationally protected sites is a valuable resource for the district the quality and amount of which needs to be protected from adverse impacts arising from development.

A high quality water environment also makes valuable contributions to recreation, leisure, human consumption, farming and eco systems in the district.

People and properties also need to be protected from flood risk as well as ensuring new development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

The outcome required therefore is to ensure that the growth set out in the plan can be delivered in way which avoids any adverse impacts upon the quality of the water environment of protected sites as well as only planning new development in locations which address flood risk in accordance with national planning guidance including avoiding exacerbating risk elsewhere."



Policy NE6**Flooding, Flood Risk and the Water Environment****POLICY**

The local planning authority will permit development provided it avoids flood risk to people and property and complies with the following:-

- i. Applies a Sequential Test to the location, and the Exception Test if required, and applying the sequential approach at the site level⁷;
- ii. Manages flood risk from new development to ensure risk is not increased elsewhere and that opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding within the district through development are taken;
- iii. Manages flood risk from new development by ensuring drainage off site has enough capacity to service the new development;
- iv. Safeguards land and designated structures and features from development that is required for current and future flood management;
- v. Includes sustainable water management systems such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which must be considered at the outset and should be designed to meet the relevant standards and accompanied by a management plan;

vi. Is located at a sufficient distance from existing wastewater treatment works to allow adequate odour dispersion, or takes appropriate odour control measures.

vii. Ensures that water supply, surface water drainage and wastewater infrastructure to service new development are provided and connect to the nearest point of adequate capacity where feasible.

The local planning authority will support the development or expansion of water supply, surface water drainage and wastewater treatment facilities where they are needed to serve existing or new development or in the interests of securing long term supply, provided that the need for such facilities is consistent with other policies such as the development strategy, flood risk, contamination and protection of the natural and built environment and water supply.

If there is an overriding reason why SuDS is not achievable this must be evidenced with justification for the alternative approach being taken.



Policy
NE6

7 As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework

POLICY NE7 – SETTLEMENT GAPS

7.61

Across the district there are a number of areas of generally undeveloped and open land which help to define and retain the separate identity of settlements, an aspect highly valued by many communities, and the concept of gaps is an established spatial planning tool locally with policy included in the current Local Plan. It is also an important element sub-regionally and the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) has specifically produced guidance to ensure a consistent approach is taken across the sub-region in terms of criteria for designation - 'Policy Framework for Gaps' PUSH, December 2008 (www.push.gov.uk).

7.62

In summary, the PfSH Framework advocates the following criteria for use by local planning authorities to select locations for the designation of gaps:-

- The open nature/sense of separation between settlements cannot be retained by other policy designations;
- The land to be included within the gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence;
- In defining the extent of a gap, no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements should be included having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation.

7.63

The Framework states that it will be individual Local Plans that will identify the location of gaps and include policies to set out the types of development which will be permitted, based on the following principles:-

- It would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation of settlements; and
- It would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.

7.64

Within the district, there are a number of Local Gaps already defined by the adopted Local Plan Review, in accordance with criteria similar to those above:-

- Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath
- Denmead – Waterloooville
- Kings Worthy - Abbots Worthy
- Otterbourne – Southdown
- Winchester – Compton Street
- Winchester – Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy
- Winchester – Littleton
- Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')
- Knowle, Wickham and Welborne

7.65

Because of the pattern of development in the southern part of the district, there is a need to consider the potential coalescence of settlements with those in Fareham Borough. The adopted local plans for both Winchester and Fareham identify a 'Meon Strategic Gap' between Whiteley and Fareham, and this approach is retained in the submitted draft Local Plan for Fareham Borough, which is currently the subject of an ongoing Examination .

7.66

In addition, it is proposed to retain a gap between Wickham, Knowle and the proposed Welborne development in Fareham and following adoption of the Welborne Plan by Fareham Borough Council in 2015 the boundaries of the gap within Winchester are confirmed. Further detail on this is set out in policy WK3.

7.67

Gaps provide a key opportunity to provide green infrastructure around the district, in addition to shaping and maintaining the settlement pattern. They are a valuable tool and the principle of maintaining gaps in these locations is retained. Any detailed review of the boundaries of these gaps will be undertaken as part of a Neighbourhood Plan, in accordance with the principles contained in the PfSH Policy Framework for Gaps.

What are we aiming to achieve



Settlement gaps are an important tool in identifying and protecting areas which could potentially be at risk of coalescence and help settlements maintain their separate identities. Development within

areas identified as gaps must retain the open and undeveloped nature of the gap and ensure that settlements retain their identity and do not join up.



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Policy NE7**Settlement Gaps**

The local planning authority will retain the generally open and undeveloped nature of the following defined settlement gaps:

- i. Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath
- ii. Denmead – Waterlooville
- iii. Kings Worthy - Abbots Worthy
- iv. Otterbourne – Southdown
- v. Winchester – Compton Street
- vi. Winchester – Kings Worthy/ Headbourne Worthy
- vii. Winchester – Littleton
- viii. Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')
- ix. Knowle, Wickham and Welborne

Within these areas only development that does not undermine the function of the gap and its intended role to define and retain the separate identity of settlements will be permitted.

To protect the individual character and identity of those settlements adjoining the proposed SDA at North Fareham, an area of open land is identified as a Gap to be maintained between the SDA and Knowle and Wickham. Development which would threaten the open and undeveloped character of this area will be resisted and the land should be managed to secure the long-term retention of its rural character.

POLICY



7.68

Approximately 40% of the area of Winchester District falls within the South Downs National Park. Within this area the landscape is characterised by rolling downland, notably large grass and arable fields, and small pockets of woodland. The chalk Rivers Itchen and Meon flow through the area adding to the variety and form of the landscape.

7.69

The settlements within the area have developed in a way which follows the natural forms of the landscape. The traditional vernacular buildings reflect local building styles and materials of the area. The National Park's boundary is adjacent to a number of urban areas, most notably Winchester itself and the larger settlements of New Alresford and Bishops Waltham. Development in these areas has the potential to impact on the landscape and amenity of the National Park and must be carefully managed and potential adverse effects mitigated.

7.70

The two statutory purposes of the South Downs National Park are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

In delivering the National Park's purposes the National Park Authority has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.

7.71

The NPPF states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and that development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. A considerable amount of land within the district is immediately adjacent to the boundary of the SDNP and development there could have the potential to cause adverse impacts if this is not considered early in the planning stage. It is therefore considered to have a plan which is silent on impacts on the national park is not a suitable alternative policy approach.

What are we aiming to achieve



The South Downs National Park boundary is close to several settlements in the district including Winchester town, where significant new development is planned, and it is important that this area which has the highest landscape protection

is not adversely impacted upon by development taking place close to the boundary. The SDNP is its own planning authority and has its own Local Plan but it is important that this Local Plan respects the proximity of the park in its own policy."



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7.71

Policy NE8**South Downs National Park**

Development adjoining the South Downs National Park will only be permitted where it would be in accordance with the statutory purposes and duty for National Parks as specified in the National Parks

and Access to Countryside Act 1949, as amended by the Environment Act 1995 and where they conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies and the setting of the National Park.

POLICY

POLICY NE9 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

7.72

The district has a diverse landscape character which underpins its special character. The retention and enhancement of these landscape assets is essential for the conservation of the district's unique sense of place and character and can bring wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

7.73

In this regard, the local planning authority has and will continue to undertake a proactive approach to the conservation and enhancement of the district's landscape. This approach will include the production of management plans and any other necessary studies and strategies to support the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the district's landscape. In addition, the district's distinctive landscape character, which derives from a combination of natural and man-made assets, contributes to its special qualities. The importance of the landscape, both as a whole and locally-important features as identified in the Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment 2022 and the Winchester City and its Setting study 1998, highlight the necessity for these special qualities to be retained and respected in planning for growth and change.

7.74

Designated and protected features should not be seen as a constraint to change, but as a catalyst for regeneration and diversification, bringing economic, cultural and educational benefits. It is critical that, when development proposals are considered, these assets are given due consideration at the design stage to ensure that any adverse impacts are either avoided or can be fully mitigated.



What are we aiming to achieve



The landscape of the district is very important to its character and function. It attracts residents and visitors alike and provides settings for our towns and villages. It is highly valued by residents and should be taken into account at

early stages of planning to ensure that this valuable asset is not adversely impacted upon by development and any opportunities to provide enhancements are taken.

Policy NE9

Landscape Character

The Local Planning Authority will permit new development where it protects and enhances the district's distinctive landscape character as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment 2022. Development proposals may be permitted where they conserve and enhance landscape character by evidencing;

- i. They are informed by the existing landscape character and respond positively to the landscape type within which they are located;
- ii. Local distinctiveness, especially in terms of trees, other landscape features, tranquillity, sense of place and setting has been taken into account;
- iii. New planting is consistent with local character, enhances biodiversity, contributes to the delivery of green infrastructure and uses native species, unless there are appropriate and justified reasons to select non-native species;

- iv. Development proposals within designed landscapes, or the setting of designed landscapes, (including those on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens and Locally Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (Hampshire Gardens Trust) are based on a demonstrable understanding of the design principles of the landscape and should be complementary to it.
- v. The settlement pattern and individual identity of settlements and the integrity of predominantly open and undeveloped land between settlements will not be undermined.
- vi. Green and blue corridors will be safeguarded. Development proposals should identify and take opportunities to create and connect green and blue corridors.

POLICY



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7.74

POLICY NE10 – PROTECTING OPEN AREAS

7.75

The Plan aims to concentrate development within the most sustainable locations in existing towns and villages, while retaining their green spaces where they have a recognised recreational, biodiversity, heritage or amenity value.

7.76

Open areas with an important amenity, biodiversity or heritage value contribute substantially to the appearance and local distinctiveness of the area and help define the character of towns and villages. These spaces may also be performing other important environmental functions, such as ecosystem services. The local planning authority will continue to protect these important open areas both within and outside settlements. Many of the important parks and recreation grounds serving the settlements are outside the settlement boundaries, in the countryside, where they are protected by policies such as Policy SP3.

7.77

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides for local communities to identify ‘Local Green Space’ of particular importance to them. The importance of retaining open spaces has been highlighted through the process of consulting local communities on their needs and aspirations, but no Local Green Space designations have been suggested. In preparing the revised Open Space Assessment in 2020 parishes were asked to put forward all the green spaces of particular importance to them for consideration. Most if not all of these green spaces are now in the Open Space Assessment 2022 and will be afforded protection by the ‘protecting open areas’ policy. The NPPF is clear that this designation will not be appropriate for most green or open spaces and that particular

criteria will need to be met. Therefore, this Plan does not seek to designate any Local Green Spaces, but will protect important open areas through other policies, such as Policy NE3, NE7, NE10 and the policies relating to development in the countryside.

7.78

Policy NE10 identifies and protects open areas that are important for one or more of the criteria listed in the policy. In relation to biodiversity, spaces are only included where they have a recognised nature designation (e.g. SINC or SSSI) and only areas with scheduled monuments are included in relation to heritage. Policy NE10 also does not identify all areas that may be considered to contribute to green infrastructure, which are covered under Policy NE4. Not all the areas covered by Policy NE10 will necessarily have public access, but still merit designation for other reasons, such as contributing to visual amenity, or cultural significance. Some private sports grounds fall within this category.

7.79

The Open Space Assessment which is a background document to the Local Plan, lists the important open areas, whether they are within defined settlement boundaries or not, with an explanation of the role they are performing and why they are important, including the extent of public accessibility where known. The Strategy goes on to identify specific needs, deficits and surpluses of publically accessible open space. The Open Space Strategy therefore refers to some spaces that will not be subject to Policy NE10 but are nonetheless important when considering the extent and nature of provision and needs in an area, including sites outside settlement boundaries.

7.80

Policy NE3 requires that where important open areas, including hard surfaced areas such as courts, are proposed to be lost in part or completely, replacement open space should be provided nearby. Where this is not possible, then the community benefit of the development should be shown to clearly outweigh the harm caused by the loss of the open space. However, many forms of development are seen in planning terms to 'benefit the community' and this can leave open space in a vulnerable position.

7.81

Therefore, the harm caused by the loss or the reduction of the important open area,

both individually and cumulatively, should be fully understood with regard to the benefits or 'services' the open space is providing. These benefits and services can be economic, environmental or social and can include:

- Character and local distinctiveness;
- Biodiversity;
- Heritage value;
- Water and flood management;
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Opportunities for improving health and well being e.g. through informal or formal physical activity, etc.

What are we aiming to achieve



The opportunity to access good quality open space has become increasingly important for the physical and mental wellbeing of the residents in the district particularly since the COVID – 19 pandemic. The Plan aims to concentrate development within the most sustainable locations in existing towns and villages, while retaining their green spaces where

they have a recognised recreational, biodiversity, heritage or amenity value. These open areas are important for amenity, biodiversity or heritage value & contribute substantially to the appearance and local distinctiveness of the area. It is important that they are protected from loss to new development proposals.



7.75
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7.81

Policy NE10

Protecting Open Areas

Open areas within defined settlement boundaries which have an important amenity, biodiversity, heritage or recreational value, as shown on the Policies Map and detailed in the Open Space Assessment, will be protected from development. Built development will only be permitted on these spaces where it accords with the Development Plan and:

- The proposal is for a facility which is ancillary to the function of the open space; and

- The contribution of the open area to the character of the wider area is maintained or enhanced.

Development may exceptionally be permitted where it is demonstrated that the benefit to the community clearly outweighs the harm caused by the loss of all or part of the facility, and options for developing elsewhere have been explored.

POLICY

POLICY NE 11 – OPEN SPACE PROVISION FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

7.82

The council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in 2014 to help ensure that new development makes provision for the infrastructure needed to support it. However, this does not obviate the need for sufficient on-site open space to be provided on residential and other development sites, as this is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

7.83

New development should provide sufficient open space to both meet the needs of its residents or users and enhance the visual and environmental character of the area. Improved access to existing nearby open space facilities or countryside will also be sought where feasible. Provision of open space should be an integral part of the development, wherever possible. For residential development of 10 dwellings and above, the detailed requirements for the provision of open space on or adjacent to the site will be based on Table 1 of Policy NE3 taking into account the specific requirements and priorities in the local area.

7.84

Open space needs will vary according to the type of housing proposed. Housing for the elderly will differ from housing for young families for example, and not all types of open space will be appropriate in every case.

7.85

A considerable amount of housing development in the district takes place on small sites. On sites accommodating fewer than 10 dwellings, it is often not feasible or appropriate to provide useable recreational open space. In these instances and on all other forms of development, for example business parks or residential care homes, the city council will require the provision of sufficient on-site amenity open space and landscaping. This should be located and laid out in such a way as to enhance the local environment, incorporating existing natural vegetation and natural or historic features wherever possible.

7.86

In submitting detailed drawings and specifications, planting plans should clearly indicate retained vegetation; the position, species, density and size of proposed planting; means of protection; and management intentions. Services such as water supply, drainage, electricity supply, etc, should also be indicated on landscape drawings.

7.87

Where open space is provided on site, it should be positively planned for and not relegated to areas of undevelopable or left-over space. Utilities, e.g. sewage treatment plants, liquid petroleum gas tanks, electricity substations or gas governors, should avoid occupying areas identified as open space.

7.88

In residential situations, open space provided on site may be publically accessible to the wider community, or communal, serving only those residents on site. The design of both needs attention to detail. Exceptionally if the open space is considered to be strategically important then it may be adopted by the council.

7.89

When land is transferred to the parish council or city council it involves the payment of a commuted sum by the developer.

7.90

Where open space is likely to serve only the residents on site, transfer to the local authority will not be appropriate and other arrangements should be made for on-going maintenance.

What are we aiming to achieve



Open space is important for the physical and mental wellbeing of the residents in the district. Access to high quality open space has become increasingly important during the COVID – 19 pandemic where

people have needed to stay closer to home and travel less. It is important that new developments provide open space to meet the needs of the future residents.

**Policy NE11**

Open Space Provision for New Developments

Residential development of 10 dwellings and above should provide useable open space on site, in accordance with the council's open space standard for quantity and type.

The exact form and type of open space should take into account the nature and size of the development and the specific needs in the local area, including quantitative and qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space and recreational facilities.

All sites, including those below 10 dwellings and other forms of development, such as business parks or residential care homes, should provide adequate amenity space which should:

- i. Be of a high standard of design, appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location, and allow use by less mobile residents including those using wheelchairs;
- ii. Contribute to maintaining or enhancing the visual and environmental character of the area and supporting increase permeability and connection to existing areas of open space and wildlife corridors;
- iii. Incorporate appropriate hard landscaping and planting; and
- iv. Include arrangements for the future management and maintenance of the area. The period of management and maintenance to be agreed prior to permission being granted.

POLICY

7.82
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7.90

POLICY NE 12 – EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT (DM12)

7.91

Equestrian enterprises and horse-activities are now an integral part of the rural landscape. Their operation contributes to the rural economy and can have important tourism and leisure benefits. However, the unrestricted development of such facilities can be detrimental to the local environment, in terms of visual impact and the effect on local amenity.

7.92

Developments should aim to reduce their visual impact by minimising the need for additional buildings, structures and other associated development, including hard standing, parking or manure storage areas, fencing, jumps, horse boxes and other paraphernalia, and landscape re-modelling. Generally new buildings should be located adjacent to existing buildings to avoid isolated or scattered development, although occasionally it may be preferable to locate new development away from existing development to minimise impacts on local landscape character. Each site will be considered on its merits, having regard to other possible site layout options and the impact on the wider context, including the existence of other equestrian development in the area. External lighting should be kept to a minimum and of a type which does not contribute to light pollution.

7.93

Equestrian development should maintain and enhance the rural character of the area, by careful design of the development and the materials used, including fencing. The sub-division of paddocks can be particularly harmful if inappropriate materials are used, such as coloured tape. Landscaping schemes will be required as part of the proposals and screening may need to be provided in order to secure satisfactory visual appearance. Existing and proposed boundary treatments will be assessed to ensure that they are appropriate to the countryside.

7.94

Proposals will need to comply with all other relevant policies of the Plan and attention is drawn in particular to Policy NE14 Rural Character, and Policies D5, T2, T3 and T4 which set out site design and layout considerations. Proposals within the Settlement Gaps identified in Policy NE7 should have regard to the requirements of that policy.

7.95

Residential accommodation will not generally be permitted in association with equestrian development, unless an essential operational need as set out in policy H11 can be demonstrated. The criteria in policy H11 will apply in such cases, including the imposition of occupancy restrictions on any residential accommodation permitted.

7.96

Equestrian developments may have traffic implications and these will be taken into account regarding impacts on amenity and the local environment. Some equestrian developments may be near to residential properties or the access to the development may pass such properties. Amenity impacts caused by the operation of the development, including the storage and disposal of waste, will therefore also be taken into account when considering proposals.



7.91
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7.96

What are we aiming to achieve



Open Equestrian development is part of the rural character of the district but can potentially be harmful to the landscape with inappropriate development, buildings, fences, access roads and storage of

vehicles, jumps and other paraphernalia. It is important that this can be controlled in the interests of the environment but also to allow such activities to thrive in the countryside and provide certainty for applicants.

POLICY NE 12 – EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT (DM12)

Policy NE12

Equestrian Development

Horse related facilities and development related to grazing and equestrian enterprises, including stables, training areas, riding centres or studs, will be permitted where a countryside location is necessary, provided they comply with the other policies of the Development Plan and:

- i. Make best use of existing infrastructure most notably existing vehicular and field access, tracks, bridleways, utilities and buildings;
- ii. Respect existing landscape character and minimise visual impact, by means of location, scale, appearance and design;
- iii. Do not involve the erection of new buildings, or associated features such as hard standing, parking or manure storage sites, where they would harm the existing landscape through isolated or scattered development;
- iv. Do not harm the character of the area by reason of the cumulative impact when considered with other similar enterprises in the area;
- v. Do not involve the use of construction materials, boundary treatments, floodlighting, siting of areas of hard-standing, new or extended access routes, or other infrastructure related to the equestrian development that would have an adverse impact on the appearance of the landscape;

- vi. Artificial lighting will only be permitted where visually acceptable and essential to support the operation of the use. Its design and operation may be limited by condition in order to minimise light pollution in the countryside;

- vii. Do not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenities in the vicinity;

- viii. Include a satisfactory landscaping scheme, providing screening, boundary treatment and provision for future maintenance;

- ix. Includes details for the storage and removal of manure from the site;

- x. Do not cause material harm to hedgerows and arable field margins and where appropriate enhance existing hedgerows.

The development of residential accommodation in connection with equestrian development will not generally be permitted unless it is in accordance with the requirements of policy H11. The development of visitor accommodation in association with equestrian development will be considered in relation to the criteria of policy SP3.



Policy
NE12

POLICY NE13 – LEISURE AND RECREATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

7.97

Recreation uses are most sustainably located in or adjacent to existing settlements. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where this is not possible, particularly for uses requiring extensive areas of land, and sites are required outside of settlements. Examples of these uses are golf, fishing, motor sports, war games, and air, water, gun sports and dog exercise areas.

7.98

Whatever the form of leisure and recreation proposed, the effect on the countryside will need to be minimised. Therefore the number and size of buildings, structures and ancillary development such as car parking, fences and notices, should be kept to a minimum and limited to those for which a countryside location is essential. Development will need to be carefully designed, sited and screened in order to minimise its impact and landscaping schemes will be required in order to secure the acceptable appearance of the site and its surroundings.

7.99

As well as visual intrusion, there may be issues of noise and light pollution, or disruption to the rural setting caused by increases in the amount and type of traffic and patterns of travel. In these cases, detailed information will be required as to the nature and degree of the effects. Built structures and the operation of the site may need to be controlled by conditions or planning obligations to make the development acceptable in its rural location.



What are we aiming to achieve



A wide variety of recreational opportunities is important for the health and wellbeing of the population but this

must be balanced against potential harm arising from such uses that would be detrimental to the countryside.

Policy NE13

Leisure and Recreation in the Countryside

Outside defined settlement boundaries, the development of new leisure and recreational facilities for which a countryside location is necessary, the expansion of established facilities, and the use of land for leisure and recreational activities will be permitted, where it accords with the Development Plan and:

- i. The development does not create unacceptable visual or noise intrusion in the countryside, either by itself or when viewed cumulatively with other developments;
- ii. Additional buildings, structures and ancillary developments are the minimum required for the operation of the site;

- iii. The operation of the site will not cause unacceptable harm to the character of the area, including by all forms of pollution, or harm biodiversity, heritage assets, tranquillity or public safety;
- iv. Appropriate landscaping schemes and screening are provided.

Artificial lighting will only be permitted where visually acceptable and essential to support the operation of the use. Its design and operation may be limited by condition in order to minimise light pollution in the countryside.

POLICY



7.97
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7.99

POLICY NE 14 – RURAL CHARACTER

7.100

Developments in or adjoining rural areas need to take account of their location. If the principle of the development is acceptable, the main consideration is the impact on the rural character. There may be impacts from visual intrusion, physical effects on the landscape and effects on the tranquillity of the area.

7.101

Policy D1 details the need to take account of the local qualities and features that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the area. This includes characteristics of the surrounding landscape and features such as green and blue infrastructure. The Winchester District Landscape Character Assessment sets out the key characteristics and strategies for the landscape character areas in the district. In the rural area, proposals may need to be subject to landscape sensitivity assessment, in terms of their impact on the rural character of the landscape and the key local qualities that provide the sense of place.

7.102

The introduction of urban and domestic elements, such as large gates and forms of enclosure, significant areas of hard landscaping, structures for lighting and security measures can detract from the special qualities of the countryside. Similarly, the removal of particular features or elements of landscaping such as walls, fences or other structures constructed in the local vernacular, or landscape features such as bunds and ditches, water features, hedgerows and trees can detract from the rural character.

7.103

The nature of the development may lead to intensification of uncharacteristic use in the area. Noise and lighting pollution may be more noticeable in rural areas due to the relative tranquillity of the surroundings. The rural character and tranquillity of the area will be taken into account when assessing the appropriateness of developments that may give rise to pollution.

7.104

Traffic intrusion may adversely affect the character of the area due to numbers of trips and the type of vehicles (e.g. heavy goods vehicles). The suitability as well as the capacity of rural lanes should also be considered, as physical re-modelling of rural roads and introduction of signage, visibility splays and entrances necessary for the development may have an unacceptable impact on the landscape and rural character. Rural lanes are a particular characteristic of the district that have historic as well as landscape significance.

7.105

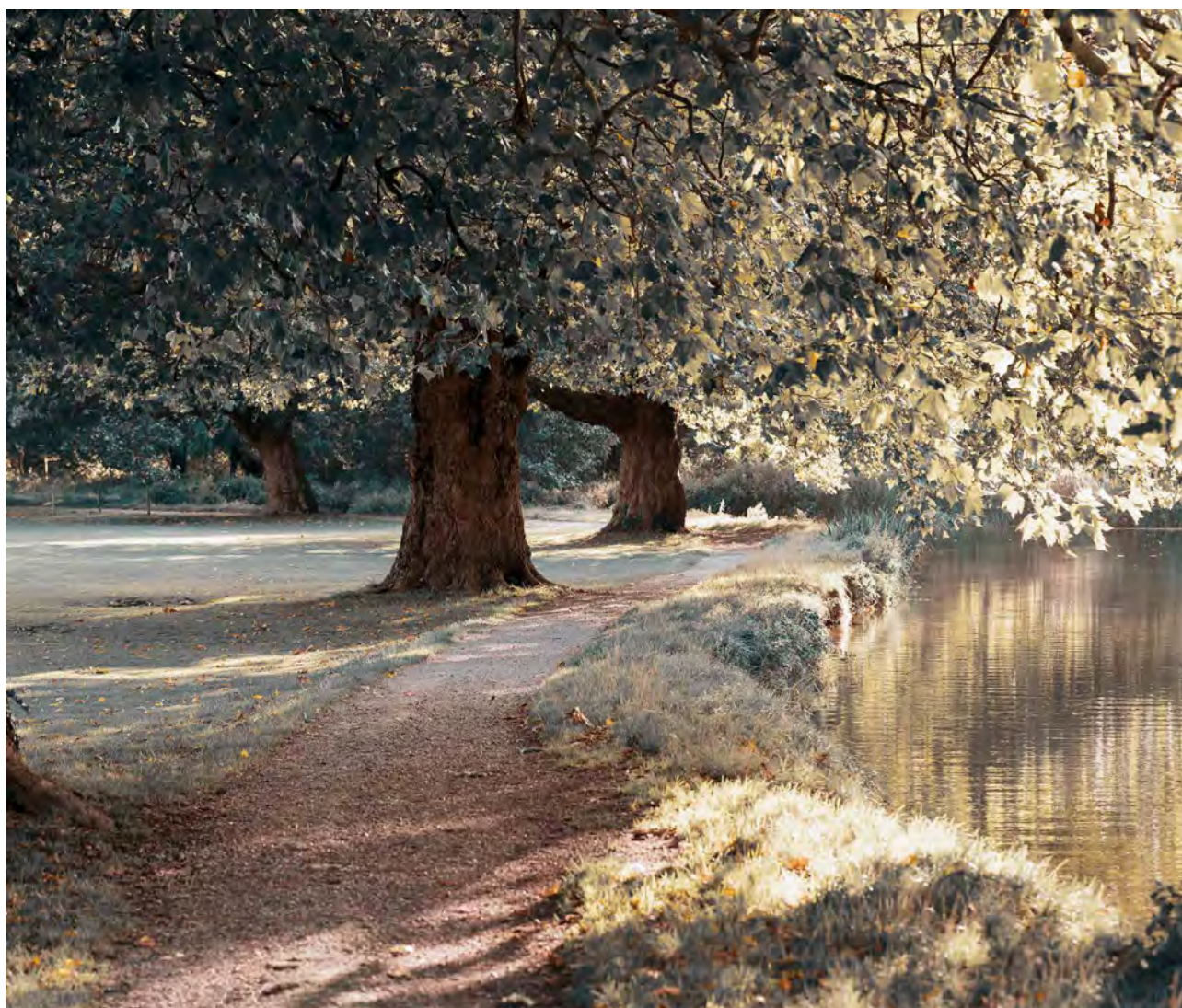
Domestic extensions and ancillary buildings should be well related to the existing building. Extensions should generally follow the style of or complement the original building in respect of proportions and positioning of features such as windows and doors, and may replicate features of the original building in their size, position and use of materials (unless it's existing character is not worthy of retention). Proposals for annexes or other ancillary buildings which could be subject to future proposals for conversion to independent dwellings will be determined having regard to Policies SP3 and H11, which resist housing development outside settlement boundaries other than for essential rural workers.

What are we aiming to achieve



It is a primary aim of the Local Plan to protect the countryside from unnecessary new development. It is equally important that where new development is justified it does not harm the character and appearance of the countryside. This includes impacts not only just of the building or use but associated issues

such lighting, traffic, rights of way etc. This policy sets out those issues which will need to be considered in such applications to ensure that no unintended adverse impacts are caused by new development or uses and that they are considered and mitigated through the application process.



7.100
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7.105

POLICY NE 14 – RURAL CHARACTER

Policy NE14

Rural Character

Outside defined settlement boundaries, development proposals which accord with the Development Plan will be permitted where they do not have an unacceptable effect on the rural character of the area, by means of visual intrusion, the introduction of incongruous features, the destruction of locally characteristic rural assets, or by impacts on the tranquillity of the environment.

The following factors will be taken into account when considering the effect on the rural character and sense of place:

Visual - intrusion should be minimised, including the effect on the setting of settlements, key features in the landscape, or heritage assets. The cumulative impact of developments will be considered, including any ancillary or minor development that may occur as a result of the main proposal.

Physical – developments will be encouraged to protect and enhance the key characteristics of the landscape and should avoid the loss of key features or the introduction of elements that detract from the special qualities of the place. Any re-modelling of the landscape will also be taken into account.

Tranquillity – developments should not have an unacceptable effect on the rural tranquillity of the area, including the introduction of lighting or noise occurring as a result of the development, taking account of the relative remoteness and tranquillity of the location. New lighting will generally not be permitted in unlit areas and the type, size, design and operation of any lighting may be controlled where necessary by the use of conditions.

It should be demonstrated that all opportunities to reduce light pollution have been taken, having due regard to the following hierarchy:

- i. The installation of lighting is avoided or minimised; and
- ii. If lighting cannot be avoided, it is demonstrated to be necessary and appropriate, for its intended purpose or use;
- iii. Any adverse impacts are mitigated with details of the mitigation scheme to be agreed prior to planning permission being granted.

Developments should not detract from the enjoyment of the countryside from the public realm or public rights of way.

The impact resulting from the volume and type of traffic generated by the development will be assessed along with the ability of rural roads to accept increased levels of traffic without alterations that would harm their rural character.

Domestic extensions should be proportionate in size to the existing dwelling and generally be subordinate to it, as should annexes and other ancillary development. Extensions should generally reflect the character of the existing dwelling or contemporary design if it is sympathetic to the existing building and its setting unless the existing character is not considered worthy of retention. Replacement dwellings should not be disproportionately larger than the one being replaced (see policy H8).

POLICY NE15 – SPECIAL TREES, IMPORTANT HEDGEROWS AND ANCIENT WOODLANDS

7.106

Developments should not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodlands and the loss of aged or veteran trees found in ancient woodland. Proposals should indicate how they will safeguard the quality and appearance of special natural features and their setting, to retain visual amenity, biodiversity and heritage value.

7.107

‘Special trees’ include ancient or veteran trees, those which are outstanding because they provide important habitat, are the biggest of the species, or are notable trees in their local environment (e.g. because they are large by comparison with other trees around them). Trees may also be considered as special where they are linked with an important historic event or have cultural significance, or support protected species.

7.108

Ancient trees - including hollow and pollarded trees - have biodiversity, heritage, cultural or amenity value which cannot be replaced by new planting. Similarly, important hedgerows are identified as those of significant archaeological, historical, wildlife or landscape value that form an intrinsic part of local landscape and townscape character.



Ancient tree



7.106

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7.108

ANCIENT OR VETERAN TREES HOLD OUTSTANDING VALUE

HABITAT | BIODIVERSITY | HERITAGE | HISTORIC | CULTURAL | LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



POLICY NE15 – SPECIAL TREES, IMPORTANT HEDGEROWS AND ANCIENT WOODLANDS

7.109

Where development may impact on the features outlined in this policy, applicants should undertake surveys to identify the extent and condition of the features and demonstrate how their proposals enhance these features or minimise impact upon them, via adequate mitigation. Conditions and/or planning agreements may be sought in order to preserve the special qualities of these features in the long term.

What are we aiming to achieve



Ancient woodlands, important hedgerows, special trees, distinctive ground flora are all very important contributors to the value of the natural environment within the district. Some of them such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats where it would be technically

very difficult or take a very significant time to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed. It is important that such features are identified at an early stage of planning and protected throughout the development process.

POLICY NE15 – SPECIAL TREES, IMPORTANT HEDGEROWS AND ANCIENT WOODLANDS

Policy NE15

Special Trees, Important Hedgerows and Ancient Woodlands

Development which would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable ancient woodlands, important hedgerows, special trees, distinctive ground flora and the space required to support them in the long term will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration and where a suitable compensation strategy exists;

- i. The removal of protected trees, groups of trees woodland or hedgerows will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with the relevant legislation, policy and good practice recommendations and where it has been demonstrated to be unavoidable. Where protected trees are subject to felling, a replacement of an appropriate number, species and size in an appropriate location will be required.
- ii. Development proposals that could affect trees, hedgerows and woodland must demonstrate that they have been informed by a full site survey, including an Ecological Survey, Arboricultural Method Statement and associated Tree Protection Plan, and include a management plan Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction (in accordance with BS5837:2012 or subsequent edition) and will include a tree survey and an arboricultural impact assessment.
- iii. Development proposals must provide adequate protection zones and buffers around hedgerows and other woodland and trees to prevent damage to root systems and taking account of future growth. A minimum buffer of 15 metres will be required between the development and ancient woodland or veteran trees.
- iv. Development proposals must demonstrate that appropriate protection measures are in place prior to any work on site throughout the development process as part of a comprehensive landscaping plan, and that suitable opportunities for the restoration, enhancement or planting of trees, woodland, and hedgerows are identified and incorporated.
- v. Opportunities should be identified and incorporated for planting of new trees, woodlands and hedgerows. New planting should be suitable for the site conditions, use native species and be informed by and contribute to local character, and enhance or create new habitat linkages.

POLICY



7.109

POLICY NE 16 – NUTRIENT ENRICHMENT AND NEUTRALITY

7.110

The need for development to be ‘nutrient neutral’ (this term includes both nitrogen and phosphates) so as not to exacerbate the problem of nutrient enrichment in sensitive habitats is an important issue in the district and the wider South Hampshire area around the Solent. There is a need to plan for ways in which we can deliver the growth we need in our district in a way which is ‘nutrient neutral’.

7.111

There is a need to strategically address the impact of nutrients from new development on the River Itchen SAC and Solent marine designated sites, which are currently showing levels of eutrophication with consequential effects on protected species and habitats.

7.112

The Local Plan may be able to help by allocating land for use in mitigation which could include planting woodland or creating wetland habitat in appropriate locations.

7.113

The council received new guidance from Natural England which will affect the way that the council has to assess new proposals across the whole district in terms of calculating the impact caused by the wastewater they produce. The Local Plan needs to reflect this guidance in its policies and strategic development proposals.

7.114

The council already needs to consider the impacts of nitrogen on the Solent SAC which covers more sites in the south of the district. The issues with phosphorus draining into the catchment for the River Itchen covers a significant part of the district including areas to the north and east of Winchester and Natural England advises that phosphorus and nitrogen are causing adverse environmental effects on the quality of the river which is a Special Area for Conservation (SAC). This is a very significant change in guidance and will mean that the council will only be able to grant planning permission for new residential development, which potentially affects this catchment area, where the phosphate as well as the nitrogen impact are neutral or can be appropriately addressed through offsetting.

7.115

Nutrient neutrality is mandatory and there is no other policy approach that could be recommended other than no policy and rely on the Environment Act and Natural England in the discharge of their statutory duties. The inclusion of a policy has been supported by Natural England and so is considered to be the preferred approach.

What are we aiming to achieve



The council is committed to ensuring that development across the district does not harm the integrity of nationally protected sites.

Unless it is possible to exclude effects on nationally protected sites from certain types of residential and other forms of development here will be a need to ensure that all new development permitted within the catchment areas of

the Solent SAC and the River Itchen SAC are nutrient neutral. This is in order to avoid adverse effects upon the quality of the water environment caused at these sites resulting from nitrogen and phosphorus in wastewater produced by development. . This is a requirement of the Habitat Regulations and the Local Plan should contain a policy to reflect this.

Policy NE16

Nutrient Neutrality Water Quality Effects on the Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites of the Solent and the River Itchen

- i. Planning permission will only be granted where the integrity of nationally protected sites is not adversely affected by new development. When making planning decisions which may affect these sites the requirements of the Habitat Regulations will be met including the carrying out appropriate assessments.
- ii. When assessing applications for development the impacts of increased nutrients from these sites will be considered. Permission will be granted only where effects can either be excluded or, if that is not possible, mitigation by nutrient neutrality is achieved following the guidance provided by Natural England thereby avoiding any adverse impact upon the quality of the water environment of the sites.
- iii. Development proposals for mitigation schemes such as tree planting or wetlands will be supported where they are located in appropriate areas in relation to the development they are to serve and the nature of the mitigation would not have adverse impacts on the character, function and appearance of the area in which they are to be located.

POLICY



7.110
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7.115

POLICY NE 17 – RIVERS AND THEIR SETTINGS

7.116

Water plays an important role in the special qualities of the district and is important to biodiversity, flora and landscape character.

7.117

Groundwater is a key part of the water cycle: it provides an important source for rivers, sustaining flows in dry periods, and thus supporting wildlife habitats. Water for commercial uses and to supply domestic properties comes mainly from the district's underground aquifers, but also from surface waters such as the Rivers Itchen and Test. These rivers and the Meon which originate from the chalk ridges are of high ecological importance as are the upper reaches of the Hamble Estuary which flows through the district. The River Itchen and the Upper Hamble form part of the Natura 2000 network of sites designated under the Birds and Habitats Directives which are also covered by the Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the main objective of bringing all water bodies up to "good ecological (surface waters) quantitative (groundwater) and chemical (all) status" through the sustainable use of water as a natural resource.

7.118

The quality of ground water is easily polluted directly and indirectly. It is therefore better to prevent or reduce the amount of contamination at source rather than treat it afterwards.

7.119

The corridor of a watercourse can be defined as the width of the channel in which water flows, plus its extensive influence on its surrounding landscape that is necessary for its natural functioning. Any development which could impact upon a watercourses in any way (pollution, abstraction, visual impact etc) must ensure that the watercourse corridor is protected and must positively respond to the natural character and appearance, setting and functions, making the most of opportunities to enhance the watercourse environment, including public access where this is possible and appropriate. Opportunities to access and enjoy rivers is important for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors with the possibility of various recreational activities such as canoeing, fishing, walking or observing their wildlife. All development proposals alongside watercourses should maximise opportunities to enhance recreational public access, whilst ensuring biodiversity is conserved.

7.120

Hampshire county council take a holistic and joined up approach to managing flood risk. This approach seeks to provide a more joined up and integrated approach to flood risk management by all authorities, agencies and communities. This is known as the catchment approach and;

- Aims to look at a whole river catchment, or sub-catchment and identify areas that are at risk and that have experienced flooding in recent events
- Provides an understanding of how the catchment floods, which has not been based on administrative boundaries or flooding sources
- It makes clear that, when considering flood risk measures, there are likely to be a range of measures and options of varying in size, scale and complexity that may be appropriate
- Acknowledges that a number of authorities, agencies and communities need to come together to mitigate future flood risk
- <https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/flooding/strategies/catchment-management-plans>
- Proposals that have the potential to impact on rivers, watercourses and their settings should be in accordance with the Hampshire County Council Strategy.



7.116
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7.120

POLICY NE 17 – RIVERS AND THEIR SETTINGS

What are we aiming to achieve



Rivers and their settings are an essential part in the special character and appearance of the district which is so highly valued by its residents and visitors. It is also important to the economy and in particular the famous Hampshire trout and watercress industries as well as sustaining varied wildlife and flora. The

main rivers in the district are the Itchen, Meon, Hamble and Dever although there are many smaller watercourses all of which are important to the special character of the district. It is important that these valuable natural resources are protected and enhanced.

Policy NE17

Rivers, watercourses and their settings

Development proposals that affect rivers, watercourses or their settings will be permitted where they conserve and enhance the following;

- i. Water quality and quantity, and help achieve requirements of the European Water Framework Directive, or its replacement;
- ii. Ability of groundwater, surface water features and watercourse corridors to function by natural processes throughout seasonal variations, within the immediate vicinity, and both upstream and downstream of the site of the proposal including for flood risk management purposes; and

Specifically for surface water features and watercourse corridors;

- iii. Biodiversity;
- iv. Character, appearance and setting;
- v. Public access to and along the waterway for recreational opportunities;
- vi. Include measures to eliminate risk of pollution to groundwater, surface water and watercourse corridor features which would harm their ecological and/or chemical status.