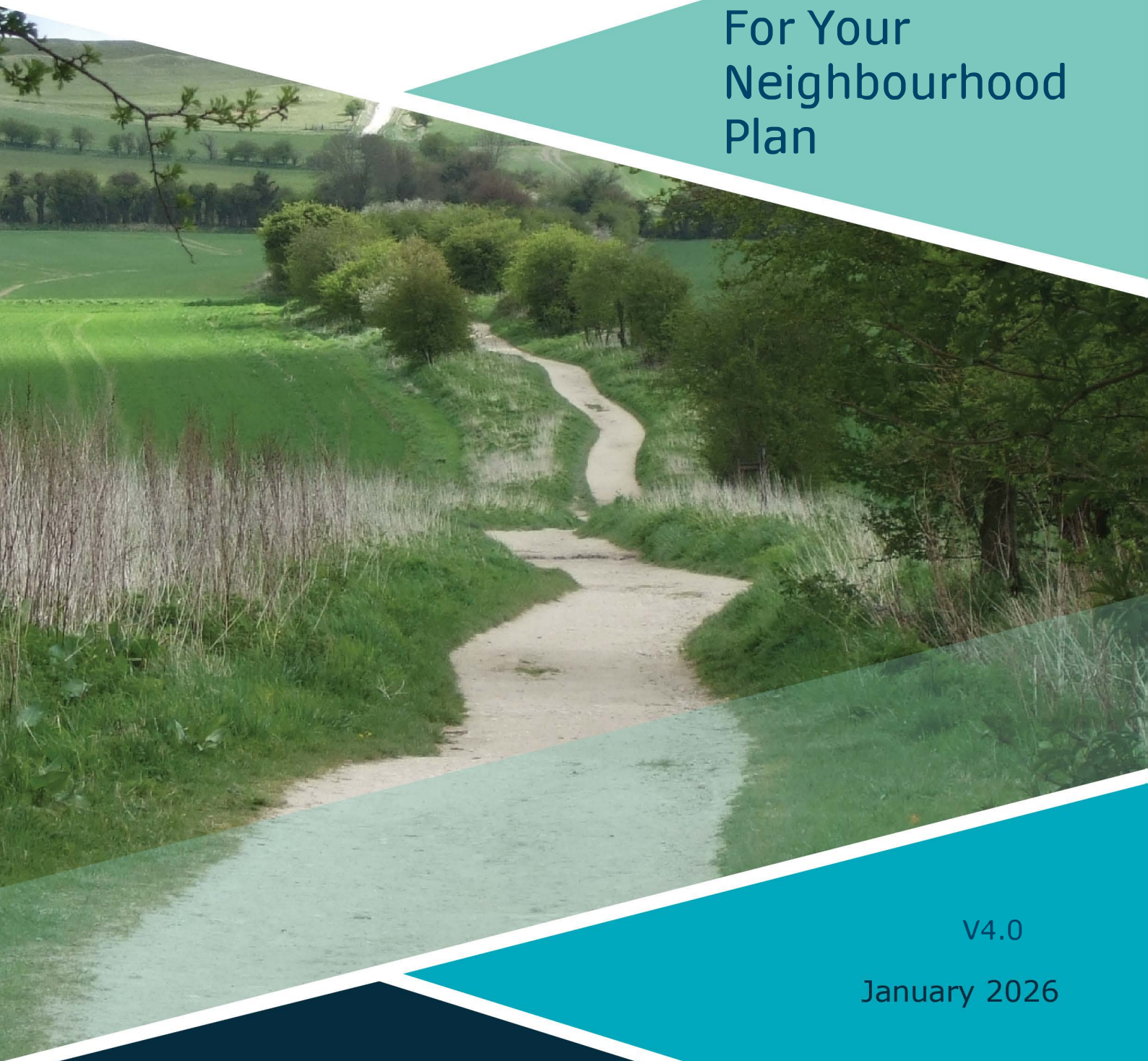
Bluestone Planning

South Oxfordshire District Council

Listening Learning Leading

Landscape Considerations Guidance

For Your Neighbourhood Plan



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Neighbourhood Planning Guides and Templates for Groups in South Oxfordshire

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1 Introduction

1.1. Executive Summary

1.1.1 This guide helps communities within South Oxfordshire develop effective landscape policies within their neighbourhood development plans, also referred to as neighbourhood plans.

1.1.2 Landscapes play a vital role in defining the character and identity of a place, shaping how people experience and interact with their surroundings. This guidance emphasises the importance of protecting, enhancing and sustainably managing local landscapes through the planning process. It provides a clear framework for incorporating landscape considerations into neighbourhood plans, empowering communities to influence local planning decisions.

1.1.3 This guide draws on both national and local policy to provide practical steps for identifying and assessing landscape features. It includes real-world examples from adopted neighbourhood plans, user-friendly templates and policy-writing tips to help communities create robust, legally compliant policies. The guide also offers strategies for effective community engagement throughout the plan-making process.

1.1.4 An appendix is included to address housing or employment allocations within nationally designated landscapes, outlining the specific steps required to ensure successful and appropriate development in these sensitive areas.

1.1.5 By using this document, you will gain insights into different policy types and best practices for policy writing. Whether you are drafting a new plan or updating an existing one, this guide aims to support you in developing robust and actionable landscape policies tailored to your community's specific needs and challenges.

1.2. Importance of Landscape Policies

1.2.1 Neighbourhood plans provide communities with the chance to influence how future development affects their local landscape. This is especially important in South Oxfordshire, which has a varied and distinctive landscape - from the Chilterns escarpment and North Wessex Downs to the Thames River Valley.

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1.2.2 Landscape policies can promote, enhance or protect:

1.2.3 Landscape policies are particularly important if your neighbourhood area includes or borders a designated landscape, such as a National Landscape (formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)). In South Oxfordshire, the designated landscapes are:

- Chilterns National Landscape
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape

1.2.4 These areas are protected by national policy, and your neighbourhood plan should align with the objectives set out in their respective Management Plans. While national and local policies often provide a solid foundation, there are many distinctive local features, views and elements that may require specific identification, protection or enhancement through your plan.

1.3. What is a Landscape Policy?

1.3.1 A landscape policy in a neighbourhood plan is a structured statement that establishes clear expectations for addressing landscape-related issues within a community. These policies provide a framework for guiding sustainable development, ensuring that future growth respects the sensitivity, character and function of the surrounding landscape. They help maintain and enhance visual quality, ecological integrity and local distinctiveness in line with community values and long-term environmental goals.

1.3.2 Neighbourhood plan landscape policies should support local landscape management plans, foster collaboration within the community and help protect and enhance the natural environment.

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1.3.3 Landscape policies can cover a broad range of issues and topics within the neighbourhood area. This guide will touch on a few of these topics, namely:

1.4. Benefits of Including Landscape Policies

1.4.1 There are many benefits to integrating landscape policies into your neighbourhood plan. The key benefits include:

- planning benefits,
- community benefits, and
- environmental benefits.

Planning Benefits

1.4.2 Including landscape policies in your neighbourhood plan can help ensure that development is more sustainable, better integrated with its surroundings and sensitive to the local landscape character.

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1.4.3 As summarised above, these policies offer several key planning benefits, such as:

- **Greater Weight in Planning Decisions:** Once adopted, landscape policies become part of the statutory development plan, meaning they carry full legal weight in planning decisions. This strengthens the position of the local authority over how development should respond to the landscape context.
- **Local Control over Smaller Areas:** Neighbourhood plans allow communities to reflect specific landscape features, views and character that matter locally, filling the gap left by broader district or national policies.
- **Better Integration with Development:** By embedding landscape policies early in the planning process, considerations such as setting, scale and visual impact can be addressed from the outset. This leads to more coherent and landscape-sensitive development outcomes.

Community Benefits

1.4.4 Including landscape policies in your neighbourhood plan can significantly enhance community wellbeing and strengthen local identity by increasing community influence over how surroundings evolve.

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1.4.5 As summarised above, these policies provide several community benefits, including:

- **Protection of Valued Views and Features:** Landscape policies help safeguard the views, green spaces and natural features that are most important to residents, supporting visual amenity and a strong sense of place.
- **Support for Wellbeing and Liveability:** Access to well-managed, attractive green spaces improves quality of life, encourages outdoor activity and supports mental and physical health.
- **Locally Specific Policy Opportunities:** One of the greatest strengths of neighbourhood planning is its ability to address the finer details of a place - elements that broader Local Plan policies may overlook. By including landscape policies, communities can:
    - set out detailed, place-specific criteria for assessing how new development fits into the local landscape;
    - establish management principles for important local green spaces and landscape settings; and
    - bridge the gap between high-level district policies and on-the-ground planning decisions.

Environmental Benefits

1.4.6 Landscape policies can play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. They support ecological health, climate resilience and sustainable land use.

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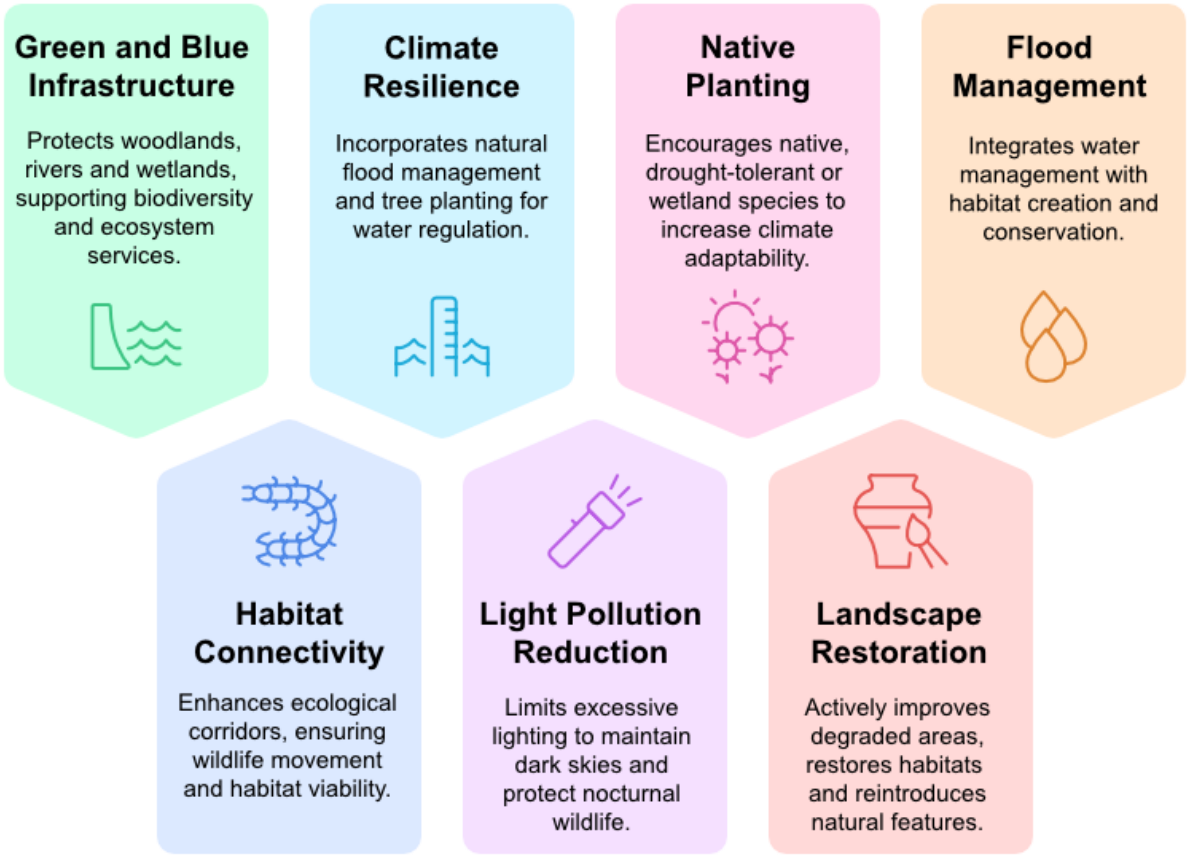

1.4.7 As summarised above, these policies offer several key environmental benefits, such as:

- **Protection and Enhancement of Green and Blue Infrastructure:** Landscape policies can safeguard features such as woodlands, hedgerows, rivers, streams, ponds and wetlands. This supports biodiversity, improves ecosystem services and provides natural cooling and drainage.
- **Improved Habitat Connectivity:** Well-designed policies can protect and enhance ecological corridors, ensuring wildlife movement and the long-term viability of habitats.
- **Support for Climate Resilience:** Landscape-sensitive design can incorporate natural flood management, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and tree planting - supporting water regulation and temperature moderation.
- **Light Pollution Reduction:** Policies can help maintain dark skies and protect nocturnal wildlife by limiting excessive or poorly designed lighting in rural and semi-rural landscapes.
- **Promotion of Native and Resilient Planting:** Encouraging appropriate planting schemes, such as native, drought-tolerant or wetland species,

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can increase climate adaptability and ecological value.

- **Contribution to Landscape Restoration and Enhancement:** Local projects can emerge from landscape policies that actively improve degraded areas, restore habitats and reintroduce natural features.
- **Biodiversity and Natural Flood Management:** Sensitive landscape policies can support ecosystem function by integrating water management with habitat creation and conservation.

2 Policy Conformity

2.1. Compliance with Planning Documents

2.1.1 Landscape policies within a neighbourhood plan must meet the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This means they must:

- have appropriate regard to national policy,
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan,
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and
- be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

2.1.2 Landscape policies may also be shaped by other relevant designations or statutory protections, depending on the location of the neighbourhood plan area. These could include the Green Belt, National Landscapes, Registered Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Ancient Woodlands and more. For detailed definitions and guidance, please refer to the glossary and the relevant sections below.

2.1.3 Neighbourhood plans should complement, not duplicate, higher-level policies. They are an opportunity to add local detail and develop non-strategic policies that reflect the specific priorities, needs and opportunities for the landscape.

2.2. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets the national context within which every neighbourhood plan must have regard to. Below are the most relevant NPPF sections and paragraphs on landscape, together with practical pointers on how neighbourhood planning groups can build locally specific policies that complement, rather than repeat, national guidance.

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Sustainable Development (Section 2)

2.2.2 In the NPPF, Section 2 talks about the concept of achieving sustainable development.

2.2.3 Paragraph 8 highlights that there are three overarching objectives that must be met to achieve sustainable development, one of which is environmental. It states:

> *"Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*
>
> *...an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy".*

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (Section 15)

2.2.4 Section 15 provides more detailed direction on how planning should conserve and enhance the natural environment.

2.2.5 Paragraph 187 states:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*

b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland...*

c) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;*

d) *preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans...".*

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2.2.6 Both Section 2 and Section 15 in the NPPF indicates the importance of landscape related planning policies and how they are a priority, even on the national level.

2.2.7 For further information regarding relevant sections of the NPPF, follow the links below.

- 13. Protecting Green Belt Land
- 16. Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Why These National Policies Matter Locally

2.2.8 Having regard to Section 2 and Section 15 of the NPPF helps to demonstrate that your neighbourhood meets the basic conditions when examined.

2.2.9 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. An adopted neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan, and the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. The relationship between the NPPF and your neighbourhood plan is therefore important, with careful consideration reducing the risk of policy conflict.

2.2.10 Lastly, when you translate national landscape based objectives into place-specific actions, like protecting dark night skies or allocating a green gap, your policies can have a meaningful impact on your local area.

2.3. National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

2.3.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) includes several sections relevant to landscape considerations. National PPG is intended to add further context to the NPPF and should be read alongside the NPPF. The PPG emphasises the importance of recognising the value of natural and cultural features, integrating green infrastructure and safeguarding high-quality agricultural land, soils and brownfield land of environmental value. It provides guidance on the protection, enhancement and sustainable management of landscapes. This guidance helps ensure that development responds appropriately to local landscape context and contributes to long-term improvement in environmental quality.

- Agricultural Land, Soil and Brownfield Land of Environmental Value
- Green Infrastructure
- Landscape

2.4. North Wessex Downs and Chilterns National Landscape

2.4.1 Both the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns National Landscape bodies produce comprehensive supporting documentation and Management Plans,

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which you may want to reference in your neighbourhood plan.

- Chilterns National Landscape – Landscape Character.
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape – Landscape Character.

2.5. Conformity with the Local Plan

2.5.1 Policies in your neighbourhood plan should be specific to the local area and should meet the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. One of these basic conditions is that the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. For South Oxfordshire, this is currently the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.

2.5.2 Neighbourhood planning policies should avoid directly copying and repeating policies from the Local Plan (see Plan Making section of the NPPF[1]). Instead, they should be tailored and crafted to fit the specific needs and demands of the neighbourhood area according to your evidence.

2.5.3 By including locally relevant policies and site-specific actions, your neighbourhood plan can better address the landscape issues that matter most to your community. These policies must relate to the development and use of land.

2.5.4 You can also include non-planning initiatives, such as community awareness campaigns or local landscape projects, but these should be clearly marked as Community Aspirations rather than formal planning policies. More information on this distinction is available in the Neighbourhood Plan Guide.

2.5.5 A neighbourhood plan must be positively prepared and not a vehicle for preventing future development. This is not to say that you cannot protect elements, merely that it needs to be a balanced approach. The diagram below illustrates this.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/3-plan-making

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2.6. South Oxfordshire District Council Adopted Local Plan 2035

2.6.1 The protection and enhancement of landscape character is a key priority in the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2035). Within the Environment chapter, Policy ENV1 – Landscape and Countryside sets out clear expectations for how development should respond to the district's valued landscape assets.

2.6.2 Planning policies in neighbourhood plans should generally conform and support the Local Plan's strategic policies and objectives. The strategic policies are identified in Appendix 14 of the Local Plan 2035.

2.6.3 Policy ENV1 states that:

"South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas will be protected against harmful development. Development will only be permitted where it protects and, where possible enhances, features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's landscapes, in particular:

a) trees (including individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands), hedgerows and field boundaries;

b) irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland;

c) the landscapes, waterscapes, cultural heritage and user enjoyment of the River Thames, its tributaries and flood plains;

d) other watercourse and water bodies;

e) the landscape setting of settlements or the special character and landscape setting of Oxford;

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f) topographical features;

g) areas or features of cultural and historic value;

h) important views and visually sensitive skylines; and

i) aesthetic and perceptual factors such as tranquillity, wildness, intactness, rarity and enclosure".

2.6.4 In addition to ENV1, several other policies in the Local Plan support the protection and enhancement of landscape and countryside character. These include:

- ENV2: Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species,
- ENV3: Biodiversity,
- ENV4: Watercourses,
- ENV5: Green Infrastructure in New Developments, and
- PENV12: Pollution.

2.6.5 Neighbourhood plan policies should align with and support the aspirations and objectives set out in South Oxfordshire's adopted Local Plan.

2.6.6 It is worth keeping an eye on emerging policy documents, such as local plans, as the reasoning and evidence informing them can be relevant to the preparation of your neighbourhood plan.

3 Policy Types

3.1. Types of Policies

3.1.1 Generally, three types of planning policy are included within a neighbourhood plan:

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3.2. General Policies

3.2.1 These policies are often broad in nature and apply to most, if not all, development proposals within the neighbourhood plan area. To avoid simply duplicating the Local Plan, they must strike a balance between complementing existing policies and adding locally specific detail. This requires referencing clear, locally relevant evidence to ensure the policies reflect the unique character and priorities of the area.

Example of a General Policy

Dark Night Skies

The neighbourhood plan supports the conservation and enhancement of dark night skies and relative tranquillity across the plan area.

Development proposals should respect and protect the character of the area by avoiding unnecessary light pollution. As far as planning permission is required, proposals involving external lighting should be sensitive to their setting and designed in a way that limits obtrusive light.

The retention of dark skies contributes to the **[rural]** character, biodiversity and visual quality of **[plan area]** and proposals which would lead to a significant deterioration of this resource will not be supported.

Applicants are encouraged to have regard to relevant national and professional guidance on lighting design and light pollution control.

3.3. Site-Specific Policies

3.3.1 Site-specific policies focus on particular parcels of land or defined local areas and are particularly effective in securing positive landscape outcomes within development proposals. These policies can allocate land for development, designate areas for protection or guide enhancements to valued landscape features.

3.3.2 These policies can also be a useful tool for safeguarding distinctive landscape characteristics, such as locally important views or green spaces, and contribute to the area's identity and visual character.

3.3.3 When allocating land for development, site-specific policies offer the opportunity to embed clear expectations around landscape-sensitive design. These may include requirements such as protecting key views, retaining existing trees and boundary features, respecting topography or integrating new green infrastructure to reinforce local character. Such expectations can be built into the policy wording or supported through a tailored design code, landscape

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strategy or masterplan to ensure consistency in implementation.

Example of a Site-Specific Policy

Green Gaps

Development proposals, including the re-use of **[rural]** buildings, should respect and preserve the character, setting and distinct identity of **[plan area]**. Proposals should not result in unacceptable harm, either individually or cumulatively, to the physical or visual separation between **[plan area]** and:

- **[Description of area].**
- **[Description of area].**
- **[Description of area].**

3.4. Criteria Based Policies

3.4.1 Criteria-based policies are a valuable tool for setting out clear, landscape-related requirements that development proposals should meet to be supported. They help ensure a consistent and transparent approach to protecting and enhancing landscape character across a range of development types. For example, a landscape policy might include criteria relating to the retention of existing vegetation, integration with topography or protection of key views.

3.4.2 When drafting landscape-focused criteria, the choice of wording, such as using “and” or “or”, is important for clarity. Use “and” when all listed landscape considerations should be met (e.g. protection of views and integration with existing vegetation) and “or” where multiple, individually acceptable options are allowed (e.g. hedgerow planting or native tree belts for screening). Precision in wording helps applicants and decision-makers interpret and apply the policy consistently.

3.4.3 By using clearly structured and context-sensitive criteria, neighbourhood plans can shape development in a way that contributes positively to landscape character, protects valued features and ensures that proposals are well integrated with their surroundings.

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Example of a Criteria Based Policy

Protection of Dark Night Skies and Control of External Lighting

To protect the character and tranquillity of the area, particularly in rural or edge-of-settlement locations, development proposals that include external lighting should demonstrate that they:

i. Are necessary and provide lighting only at the minimum level required for their intended purpose, avoiding excessive or unnecessary illumination; and
ii. Are designed to minimise light spill, glare and skyglow through appropriate siting, direction, shielding and use of low-intensity, warm-colour lighting; and
iii. Do not have an unacceptable impact on:
    a) the amenity of neighbouring residential properties,
    b) local biodiversity, particularly nocturnal wildlife and sensitive habitats,
    c) the character and visual quality of the surrounding countryside, and
    d) the relative tranquillity of the area, especially with regard to existing levels of light pollution.

Development proposals should also demonstrate compliance with the Institute of Lighting Professionals' Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light or any successor guidance, appropriate to the relevant Environmental Zone classification.

Proposals that conserve or enhance the area's dark night skies, including through the use of timed controls, motion sensors or other mitigating technologies, will be supported.

4 Policy Writing

4.1. Presentation

4.1.1 Planning policies should be formulated and presented in a way that clearly communicates their intentions to readers. They must align with evidence gathered and community engagement, while supporting the vision and objectives established in the neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood plan policies should also be accessible through the use of digital tools, such as publishing the plan on a dedicated neighbourhood plan website where residents can comment and engage with draft content.

4.1.2 Policies must be clear, concise and fit for purpose as they will be used to determine planning applications.

4.1.3 The wording of planning policies must be precise and unambiguous. An individual should be able to understand the policy's intentions without confusion.

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4.1.4 When writing policy, try to always follow these principles:

- **Simplify:** Use plain, accessible language. Avoid overly complex or technical wording that may confuse users of the plan.
- **Justify:** Ensure that each policy is supported by clear evidence, such as landscape assessments, survey data or community engagement findings. Refer to this evidence directly where relevant.
- **Quantify:** Where possible, include measurable criteria. This can help reduce ambiguity and make it easier for development proposals to be assessed consistently.
- **Consistency:** Maintain uniform terminology throughout the plan and across policies. This helps avoid confusion and ensures that the plan reads as a coherent whole.

4.2. Policy Wording and Implications

"Must" vs "Should" vs "Could"

Must – This creates a mandatory requirement. If a policy states that something "must" be done, there is no discretion; planning applications that do not comply should be refused.

Example: Sustainable design features in new developments must be sensitive to their location.

Should – This introduces a strong expectation but allows some flexibility. A decision-maker could approve a proposal that does not fully comply if there are justifiable reasons.

Example: New developments should incorporate green infrastructure to improve biodiversity.

Could – This makes policy requirements optional and therefore weakens the use of the policy in determining applications. However, it can be used to explore options.

Example: This could include, where appropriate, double glazing in Conservation Areas or secondary glazing in listed buildings.

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"Encourage" vs "Require"

Require – This sets a firm obligation. A planning application should comply or risk refusal.

Example: All new housing developments are required to include energy-efficient design features.

Encourage – This suggests an aspiration rather than a firm requirement. Development proposals are not obliged to comply with it.

Example: The use of local materials is encouraged in new developments.

"Will Be Supported" vs "Will Be Permitted"

Will be supported – This provides support for a type of development and means it is likely to be approved unless it conflicts with other policies.

Example: The development of new community facilities will be supported where they meet identified local needs.

Will be permitted – Neighbourhood Plans cannot permit development and therefore this terminology should not be used. Local authorities must have the opportunity to properly consider proposals, ensuring they align with wider planning objectives and regulations.

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4.3. Key Policy Themes and Objectives

4.3.1 The table below is a tool that is intended to help you review the effectiveness of your draft policies against your objectives. Through this exercise you may decide to modify your policies or introduce new policies that better fit with your neighbourhood plan.

How to Use this Table:

1. Define Your Policy Themes

   Start by identifying the key themes for your neighbourhood plan policies. These should be based on the objectives that emerged from earlier community engagement or consultation activities.

2. Complete the Table

   - In the first column, insert the relevant neighbourhood plan objective.
   - In the second column, draft your proposed policy idea related to that objective.

3. Check the Policy Using the Questions

   - Use the 'Decision Aiding Questions' column to critically review your draft policy.
   - Consider what evidence should be supporting the policy.
   - These questions will help you assess whether your policy is likely to be effective and aligned with your plan's aims.

4. Cross-Reference with National and Local Policy

   - Read the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and PPG for your chosen topic.
   - Check the Local Plan to ensure your proposed policy is not duplicating existing policies but instead adds locally specific detail.

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Policy Theme Examples	Objective Examples	Policy Examples	Decision Aiding Questions Will the Policy …	NPPF (Dec 24) Paragraph Reference	Local Plan Policy Local Plan 2011-2035
[Insert your policy theme]	**[Insert your neighbourhood plan objective – relevant to this theme/topic]**	**[Insert your neighbourhood plan draft policy – relevant to this theme/topic].** *The example text in this column is not taken from any specific adopted neighbourhood plan and is provided to show how to use the table.*	**[Insert answer relevant to your plan area]**	**[Insert NPPF paragraphs relevant to this theme/topic]**	**[Insert your Local Plan policies – relevant to this theme/topic]**
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character, quality and accessibility of the local landscape.	Development proposals should maintain and improve the distinctive rural and semi-rural landscape character of the neighbourhood area by protecting key	1. Protect and enhance the landscape character and scenic quality of the countryside within the plan area? 2. Conserve and enhance areas with landscape designations and take account of their management objectives?	20d 135c 151 152 159 162 165a 187a 188	STRAT6 ENV1 ENV6 ENV8 DES1 DES2

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		views, conserving natural features and promoting green infrastructure that enhances both biodiversity and visual amenity.	3. Maintain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the setting of settlements? 4. Protect and enhance natural landscapes within the villages, including recreational open space and green corridors? 5. Protect rights of way, other open space and common land? 6. Avoid loss of tranquillity? 7. Avoid development which results in additional noise and light pollution which would be unacceptable in a particular location? 8. Improve the quality and quantity of access to the wider countryside for recreation? 9. Protect the best and most versatile agricultural land? 10. Protect and enhance soil quality? 11. Maximise reuse of Previously Developed Land where possible/appropriate? 12. Encourage remediation of contaminated land? 13. Maximise efficient use of land within the village centres?	189 190 190c 198c 224a	

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			14. Avoid the loss of natural floodplain?		

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5 Valued Landscapes

5.1. What is a Valued Landscape?

5.1.1 Many neighbourhood planning groups seek to protect open countryside within their plan areas, particularly land outside of designated National Landscapes. A common approach is to identify 'valued landscapes' as recognised in Paragraph 187(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This section explores what constitutes a valued landscape and how to determine whether an area merits policy recognition and protection.

5.1.2 The Landscape Institute[2]defines landscape value as:

"The relative value or importance attached to a landscape (often as a basis for designation or recognition), which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues".

5.1.3 This definition acknowledges both physical characteristics and perceptual or cultural qualities that contribute to a landscape's overall value.

5.1.4 Although a definition exists, identifying a valued landscape in a neighbourhood plan is not always straightforward. A number of planning appeals and legal cases have explored the term in depth. From these, three key considerations have emerged that are relevant to neighbourhood planning:

- **Designation is Not Required:** A landscape does not need to be formally designated (nationally or locally) to be considered 'valued' under the NPPF.
- **Value Must be Demonstrated:** The 'value' must be evidenced in landscape terms. It should be possible to demonstrate that the area possesses *"sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday landscapes".*[3]
- **Extent Matters:** The boundaries and extent of the landscape area should be clearly defined and justified. Very small or isolated parcels of land are unlikely to be accepted as a valued landscape unless they form part of a wider, coherent landscape unit.

5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.2.1 Paragraph 187(a) of the NPPF (2024) states:

[2] The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013)
[3] Landscape Institute Techincal Guidance 02-21 - Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations

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"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);".

5.2.2 By aligning with paragraph 187(a) of the NPPF, a neighbourhood plan can reinforce national policy aims and provide a stronger basis for influencing planning decisions. It also supports the broader objectives of Section 15 of the NPPF - to conserve and enhance the natural environment and to ensure that development responds appropriately to local landscape character and quality.

5.3. Why Identify a Valued Landscape?

5.3.1 For many neighbourhood planning groups, identifying a valued landscape offers an important way to protect the distinctive qualities of their local environment. While not every neighbourhood area will contain landscapes that meet the threshold for formal recognition under national planning policy, where they do exist, identifying these areas can be a powerful part of shaping development in a way that reflects local character and community priorities.

5.3.2 Key benefits of identifying a valued landscape include:

- **Guides Sensitive Development:** Helps ensure new development respects and responds to the character, quality and setting of the local landscape.
- **Highlights Locally Important Areas:** Draws attention to landscapes that may not be nationally designated but are still highly valued by the local community.
- **Supports Planning Decisions with Local Evidence:** Provides a clear, evidence-based rationale for protecting and enhancing specific areas, strengthening policy in the neighbourhood plan.
- **Empowers Community-led Place Shaping:** Gives residents a stronger voice in how their environment is managed and maintained over time.
- **Encourages Environmental Stewardship:** Promotes awareness and appreciation of the local landscape, encouraging long-term conservation and enhancement.

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5.3.3 Neighbourhood plans offer a unique opportunity to reflect local knowledge and priorities in land-use policy. While district councils typically address broader landscape character through strategic documents such as Landscape Character Assessments, neighbourhood plans can provide more detailed, fine-grained insights. These local insights can help identify landscapes that may lack formal designation but nonetheless contribute significantly to a community's identity and well-being.

5.3.4 In largely rural districts such as South Oxfordshire, where parts of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes already receive protection, many neighbourhood areas still contain high-quality landscapes outside these nationally designated boundaries. Identifying and evidencing locally valued landscapes enables communities to influence how these areas are treated in planning decisions and to advocate for development that enhances rather than erodes their character.

5.3.5 Crucially, there is no guarantee that a landscape identified by the community will be accepted during independent examination. Evidence must be consistent, credible and capable of withstanding scrutiny.

5.3.6 Where the threshold is met, however, identifying a valued landscape adds weight to local policies and contributes to better planning outcomes. It helps ensure that decisions are informed by the qualities that make a place distinctive and that these qualities are preserved and enhanced for future generations.

5.4. How to Identify a Valued Landscape?

5.4.1 Undertaking a valued landscape assessment is a vital step in identifying and protecting landscapes that hold special significance for local communities. This

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process can be undertaken by neighbourhood planning groups themselves or with the support of a professional consultant.

5.4.2 Key resources, such as the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute in 2013 and the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations offer nationally recognised methods for assessing landscape value in a consistent and credible way.

5.4.3 To be effective and withstand scrutiny, any assessment must follow a clear, structured and evidence-based approach. South Oxfordshire District Council's Landscape Evidence Base provides a tested methodology that can be readily adapted for use at the neighbourhood level.

5.4.4 The following six steps, outlined overleaf, set out a practical method for conducting a robust assessment, guiding groups from initial research to final reporting. This approach is designed to build a defensible case by layering local insight with professional standards of evidence.

5.4.5 To support this, the diagram *How to Develop a Valued Landscape Methodology* visually maps each stage of the process, from desktop review and fieldwork to community engagement and compilation of findings. While this framework offers structure, the ultimate strength of any assessment will lie in the quality, transparency and relevance of the evidence used to support a valued landscape designation.

Step 1: Desktop Review and Initial Scoping

5.4.6 Start by reviewing existing evidence such as the District's Landscape Character Assessment, Conservation Area Appraisals and any local or historic landscape studies. Use this information, combined with local knowledge and community input, to map potential candidate landscapes. Clearly define boundaries using natural features or visual catchments to guide the focus of further investigation.

Step 2: Establish Assessment Criteria

5.4.7 Using recognised guidance (e.g. GLVIA3 and the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21), evaluate each candidate landscape area against established criteria.

5.4.8 These go beyond visual qualities and should reflect both the physical characteristics of the landscape and the way it is perceived, used or connected to local identity. The commonly accepted factors include:

- **Landscape Quality (Condition):** The intactness and maintenance of landscape elements and structure.
- **Scenic Quality:** The sensory and visual appeal of the landscape.
- **Rarity:** The presence of uncommon features or landscape types in the

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local or regional context.

- **Representativeness:** The extent to which the landscape exemplifies key characteristics of its type.
- **Conservation Interest:** Ecological, geological, archaeological or historical features that enhance its value.
- **Recreational Value:** Opportunities for access, enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape.
- **Perceptual Qualities:** Notable experiences of tranquillity, wildness, remoteness or dark skies.
- **Associations:** Links with historical events, cultural figures or artistic representations.

5.4.9 When applied rigorously and with local insight, these factors can help build a compelling, evidence-based case for designation. A full summary of the Technical Guidance Note's recommended factors is included in Appendix 3, Table 1.

5.4.10 To determine whether a landscape meets the threshold for being considered 'valued', it is important to draw upon a wide range of information sources. These help to evidence the presence of factors such as scenic quality, cultural associations, rarity, and recreational value. Useful sources of information may include:

- National Landscape area guidance and management plans (e.g. for The Chilterns or North Wessex Downs, as applicable).
- Local planning documents, including the Landscape Character Assessment and other evidence base studies.
- Designations and records relating to heritage or environmental features such as Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, historic hedgerows, archaeological sites, registered parks and gardens and historic battlefields (many of which can be viewed via the Joint Interactive Map).
- Local history materials, including books, art, tourism literature and postcards, which may reflect how a landscape is perceived and valued.
- Community-identified features of interest, such as traditional orchards, village greens or longstanding farmed landscapes.
- Local gardens or parklands that contribute to landscape character, particularly where linked to listed or designated heritage assets.

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5.4.11 A full list of example sources is included in Appendix 3, Table 1.

Step 3: Field Survey and Documentation

5.4.12 Conduct systematic fieldwork to document the landscape on the ground. This should include photographic records, mapping of key features such as veteran trees or historic field boundaries and assessments of condition and vulnerability. Observations should be made at different times of day and year to capture variations in character and usage.

Step 4: Community Engagement and Validation

5.4.13 Stakeholder consultation is essential to validate findings and incorporate local perspectives. Engage with residents, landowners, parish councils and community groups to gather insight on how the landscape is valued. Their input may help identify overlooked features, reinforce cultural or recreational associations or highlight areas at risk.

Step 5: Benchmarking and Contextual Analysis

5.4.14 Compare the landscape with similar or nearby designated areas (such as National Landscapes) to assess how it measures up in terms of value and distinctiveness. It is also important to understand how the area relates to the wider district landscape and whether it possesses qualities that elevate it above the ordinary.

Step 6: Evidence Compilation and Reporting

5.4.15 Bring together all findings into a coherent, professionally presented report. This should include maps, photographs and clearly justified conclusions as to why an area meets the threshold for being considered valued. Where appropriate, include recommendations for managing sensitivities and development pressures in the landscape.

5.4.16 For a valued landscape designation to carry weight in a neighbourhood plan, the assessment must be underpinned by clear, objective evidence. It should demonstrate that the landscape in question possesses qualities that distinguish it from more ordinary surroundings and merit special consideration in planning decisions. This methodology, adapted from the district's successful approach, offers neighbourhood planning groups a practical framework for making a strong, defensible case. Such a case will be more likely to pass examination and secure meaningful protection through the planning system.

5.4.17 Without a thorough evidence and a professional assessment, valued landscape policies risk being deemed ineffective, leaving the landscapes that matter most to communities vulnerable to inappropriate development.

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How to Develop a Valued Landscape Methodology

Step 1 --->

1. Desktop Review and Initial Scoping

- **Review existing evidence**: start with the District's Landscape Character Assessment, Conservation Area Appraisals and any local landscape studies.
- **Map potential areas:** identify candidate landscapes based on initial desktop research, local knowledge and community input.
- **Define study boundaries:** establish clear geographical boundaries for each potential valued landscape, considering natural landscape features and visual catchments.

Step 2 --->

2. Establish Assessment Criteria

Following established landscape assessment practice, evaluate each candidate area against the following criteria:

- **Physical attributes**: topography, landform, land cover and settlement pattern.
- **Perceptual qualities**: scenic beauty, tranquillity, wildness and sense of place.
- **Associational aspects**: historical, cultural, artistic or literary associations.
- **Recreational value**: public access, enjoyment and recreational opportunities.
- **Relative rarity**: distinctiveness within the local or regional context.

Step 3 --->

3. Field Survey and Documentation

- **Conduct systematic field surveys:** visit at different times of day and seasons, where possible.
- **Photographic record:** document key views, landscape features and characteristics.
- **Map key features:** Record important elements such as veteran trees, field boundaries, water features and built heritage.
- **Assess condition and vulnerability:** Identify any threats, degradation or development pressures.

Step 4 --->

4. Community Engagement and Validation

- **Stakeholder consultation:** engage with local residents, landowners, parish councils and relevant organisations.
- **Photographic record:** document key views, landscape features and characteristics.
- **Map key features:** record important elements such as veteran trees, field boundaries, water features and built heritage.
- **Assess condition and vulnerability:** identify any threats, degradation or development pressures.

Step 5 --->

5. Field Survey and Documentation

- **Benchmark against designated landscapes:** compare qualities with nearby National Landscapes or locally designated areas.
- **District-wide context:** consider how the landscape relates to the broader South Oxfordshire landscape character.
- **District-wide context:** determine whether the landscape demonstrates qualities that elevate it are above the ordinary.

Step 6 --->

6. Evidence Compilation and Reporting

- **Prepare detailed profiles:** create comprehensive reports for each valued landscape including maps, photographs and analysis.
- **Justify conclusions:** provide clear evidence-based reasoning for why areas meet the valued landscape threshold.
- **Identify management principles:** outline key sensitivities and development considerations.

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5.5. Policy Examples

5.5.1 The following examples are from adopted neighbourhood plans in South Oxfordshire illustrate different approaches to protecting valued landscapes. These are accompanied by supporting context, highlighting what makes them effective and how evidence was used to support them.

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan - Valued Landscapes Policy

Policy BH1 – Landscape Character and Value

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a number of valued landscapes in Figure 35 (Parish Landscape Character Areas) as follows:

- PLCA1: Crowsley Parkland.
- PLCA2: Crowsley semi-enclosed dipslope.
- PLCA3: Crowsley open dipslope.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:

- Preserve or enhance the relevant Parish Landscape Character Area (PLCA) as set out above in Table 5 and take into consideration specifically the general recommendations of the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes, Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Value Assessment.

Where relevant, maintain the role the PLCAs play in enhancing the character and special qualities of the Chilterns National Landscape and its setting.

- Maintain the openness of the landscape in the Plan area and the important contribution the landscapes make to the distinctive character and identity of the settlements.

Where relevant, reflect the features that define the character of the wider landscape in the Chilterns National Landscape or within its setting.

- Protect the historic pattern of fields, watercourses, copses, ancient woodland, roads, rights of way and boundaries (hedgerows, trees, historic walls etc).

5.5.2 Policy BH1 identifies three parish landscape character areas, Crowsley Parkland, Crowsley Semi-enclosed Dipslope and Crowsley Open Dipslope, as locally valued landscapes within the Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan. The policy sets out criteria to guide development so that it preserves or enhances these areas, recognising their scenic, historic and cultural importance and their contribution to both local identity and the wider setting of the Chilterns National

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Landscape.

5.5.3 Why this approach is effective:

- **Clear, Evidence-led Designation of Valued Landscapes:** The policy is underpinned by a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment which applies recognised professional guidance (GLVIA3 and LI Technical Guidance Note 02/21) to analyse the landscape across the entire parish, including land within and outside the Chilterns National Landscape, ensuring a consistent and transparent approach to identifying valued areas.
- **Focus on Under-recognised Landscapes Outside National Designation:** A particular strength of this policy is its attention to areas outside the Chilterns National Landscape boundary. While these landscapes are not formally designated by the District Council, the evidence demonstrates that they nonetheless meet the threshold for 'valued landscape' status under national planning policy. This fills a policy gap and ensures that high-quality local landscapes are not overlooked.
- **Comprehensive and Nuanced Assessment of Value:** The Landscape Value Assessment assesses each parish local character area using nine GLVIA3 criteria - including scenic quality, perceptual qualities like tranquillity, historic and cultural associations and landscape function. This multidimensional approach ensures that the valuation of landscape goes beyond aesthetics to reflect community importance, cultural heritage, ecological function and recreational use.
- **Alignment with National Guidance and Policy Context:** The policy reflects the Landscape Institute's recognition that the absence of local landscape designations does not imply a lack of value. In fact, the supporting text explicitly addresses the inconsistency of local landscape policy in the adopted Local Plan, making a strong case for the neighbourhood plan to provide appropriate landscape protection where gaps exist.
- **Grounded in Community Priorities and Technical Rigour:** The policy and supporting work are rooted in both local consultation and professional landscape evaluation. The approach demonstrates how neighbourhood plans can reflect community values while meeting the evidentiary standards expected in neighbourhood plan examinations.

5.5.4 Policy BH1 successfully demonstrates how neighbourhood plans can designate and protect valued landscapes without relying on formal district-level designations. Its reliance on recognised national methodologies (GLVIA3) and integration with a bespoke design code enhance its credibility and usability. The

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result is a spatially specific, technically justified and community-driven policy framework that strengthens decision-making in a rural context.

5.5.5 Key takeaways:

- Uses established professional guidance (GLVIA3) to define and justify valued landscapes.
- Includes landscapes outside designated areas to ensure protection is comprehensive.
- Combined character, value and design assessments for a well-rounded policy base.
- Anchors policies in community engagement and local distinctiveness.
- Provides clear spatial definitions (e.g. mapped PLCAs) to support policy application.

Kidmore End Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan - Valued Landscapes Policy

Local Valued Landscape Policy (LPLV)

The Kidmore End Parish Local Valued Landscape is identified in Map 4. Development proposals should protect and where practicable enhance the physical and visual attributes of the character, quality and appearance of this valued landscape.

Where development proposals are in accordance with Local Plan Policy ENV1 and this policy, any landscape mitigation measures should reflect the prevailing local vegetation pattern and where practicable support the landscape, biodiversity and heritage objectives for the parish as set out in this Plan.

5.5.6 Policy LPLV identifies a local valued landscape in the southern part of Kidmore End Parish, highlighted in an accompanying map. The policy seeks to protect and, where practicable, enhance the landscape character, quality and visual attributes of this area. Development is expected to be in accordance with Local Plan Policy ENV1 and should contribute positively to landscape, biodiversity and heritage objectives. Landscape mitigation measures must respect the prevailing landscape character, avoiding suburbanising interventions.

5.5.7 Why this approach is effective:

- **Robust Landscape-led Evidence Base:** The policy is supported by the Kidmore End Landscape Sensitivity Study (2018, updated 2020), a professionally prepared and methodologically accurate landscape assessment. This work was commissioned specifically to assess

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whether the southern part of the parish, which lies outside the Chilterns National Landscape, possesses characteristics that warrant special consideration under national planning policy as a valued landscape.

- **Consistent with National Guidance on Valued Landscapes:** The supporting evidence clearly aligns with the criteria in GLVIA3 Box 5.1, as well as guidance in Paragraph 187(a)) in the NPPF and PPG (Reference ID: 8-036-20190721). The assessment considers eight established factors, including scenic and perceptual qualities, conservation interest and recreational value, that cumulatively elevate the area beyond "everyday countryside". This meets the bar established by inspectors and for identifying non-designated valued landscapes.
- **Addresses Policy Gaps Outside Designated Landscapes:** A key strength of this policy is its recognition that, while the northern part of the parish benefits from the protections afforded by being a National Landscape, the southern rural fringe adjoining Reading does not - despite having similar landscape qualities. Policy LPLV bridges that gap, ensuring that the southern landscape is not left unprotected despite its high quality and sensitivity.
- **Locally Specific and Spatially Defined:** The boundaries of the local valued landscape are carefully drawn to reflect physical ground features, such as tree lines, parish boundaries, roads and urban edges, ensuring clarity and defensibility. The use of clear mapping supports practical policy application and reinforces transparency.
- **Integrates Community Input and Demonstrable Local Value:** The policy is backed not only by technical analysis but also by strong community support, as evidenced by the Household Survey (2018). This dual foundation strengthens the policy's legitimacy and responsiveness to local priorities.
- **Criteria-based Approach to Assessing Development Impact:** The inclusion of detailed assessment criteria provides practical guidance for applicants and decision-makers. These include whether a proposal conserves the local valued landscape's overall integrity and key views and whether mitigation is achievable without undermining landscape character. Suburbanising features (e.g. road widening, street lighting and signage) are explicitly discouraged and small-scale rural uses are conditionally supported. This strikes a thoughtful balance between protection and appropriate development.
- **Effectiveness and Wider Application:** Policy LPLV demonstrates how neighbourhood plans can proactively protect high-quality landscapes outside designated areas using proportionate and evidence-led

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methods. By applying national guidance at the local scale and through the use of clear boundaries, assessment criteria and community evidence, the policy is both robust and implementable. It provides a practical model for other rural-edge parishes facing development pressures near larger urban areas.

5.5.8 Key takeaways:

- Uses GLVIA3 criteria and professional assessments to establish valued landscape status beyond national designations.
- Grounds boundaries in physical features and local character to aid implementation.
- Includes specific criteria for assessing development proposals in valued landscapes.
- Complements technical work with community engagement evidence to strengthen legitimacy.
- Recognises and address policy gaps where district or national designations fall short.

6 Important Views

6.1. What is an Important View?

6.1.1 In the context of neighbourhood planning, an 'important view' is a view or panorama that is considered significant to the character and quality of the area. These views can be either natural or built environment based and should be from public vantage points, usually roads and paths. They must not be from private land with no public access. Important views are often recognised as significant due to their contribution to the sense of place and amenity within a community.

6.2. South Oxfordshire District Council Adopted Local Plan 2035

6.2.1 The adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2035) sets out clear principles for landscape protection and enhancement, in ENV1: Landscape and Countryside, it outlines that:

"South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas will be protected against harmful development. Development will only be permitted where it protects and, where possible enhances, features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's landscapes, in particular:

viii) important views and visually sensitive skylines;".

6.2.2 This is in addition to Policy ENV8: Conservation Areas, which states:

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"Proposals for development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area must conserve or enhance its special interest, character, setting and appearance. Development will be expected to:

ii) take into account important views within, into or out of the Conservation Area and show that these would be retained and unharmed;".

6.3. Why Identify an Important View?

6.3.1 Identifying important views within a neighbourhood plan is a powerful tool for shaping how development responds to local character and landscape. Once the plan is adopted, these views become policy considerations, helping to guide decisions and ensure that change respects the valued visual qualities of a place.

6.3.2 Identifying key views offers multiple benefits, including:

- **Safeguarding Natural Features and Visual Character:** Important views often include significant landscape elements, such as mature trees, hedgerows, ridgelines and open fields, that contribute to local identity and scenic quality. By identifying these views, neighbourhood plans can help protect such features from loss or inappropriate change.
- **Supporting the Protection and Enhancement of Access:** Many valued views are experienced from public vantage points such as footpaths, bridleways or open spaces. Identifying views can help protect these routes and strengthen the case for enhancements, for example through developer contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. This reinforces the connection between people and place.
- **Raising Awareness of Landscape Sensitivity:** The process of identifying and mapping views draws attention to what matters visually in a local context. This not only informs planning decisions but also encourages developers, landowners and the community to better understand and appreciate the visual and cultural importance of these views.
- **Informing Design and Siting of New Development:** View-related policies can require that new proposals assess and respond to their visual impact on key public viewpoints. This ensures that important sight lines, skylines or focal points are preserved or framed sensitively, rather than blocked or disrupted by inappropriate development.
- **Reinforcing a Sense of Place:** Views often connect people with landmarks, heritage assets or wider landscapes such as hills, woodlands or church towers. Recognising these visual connections helps maintain the distinctiveness and legibility of a settlement or landscape.

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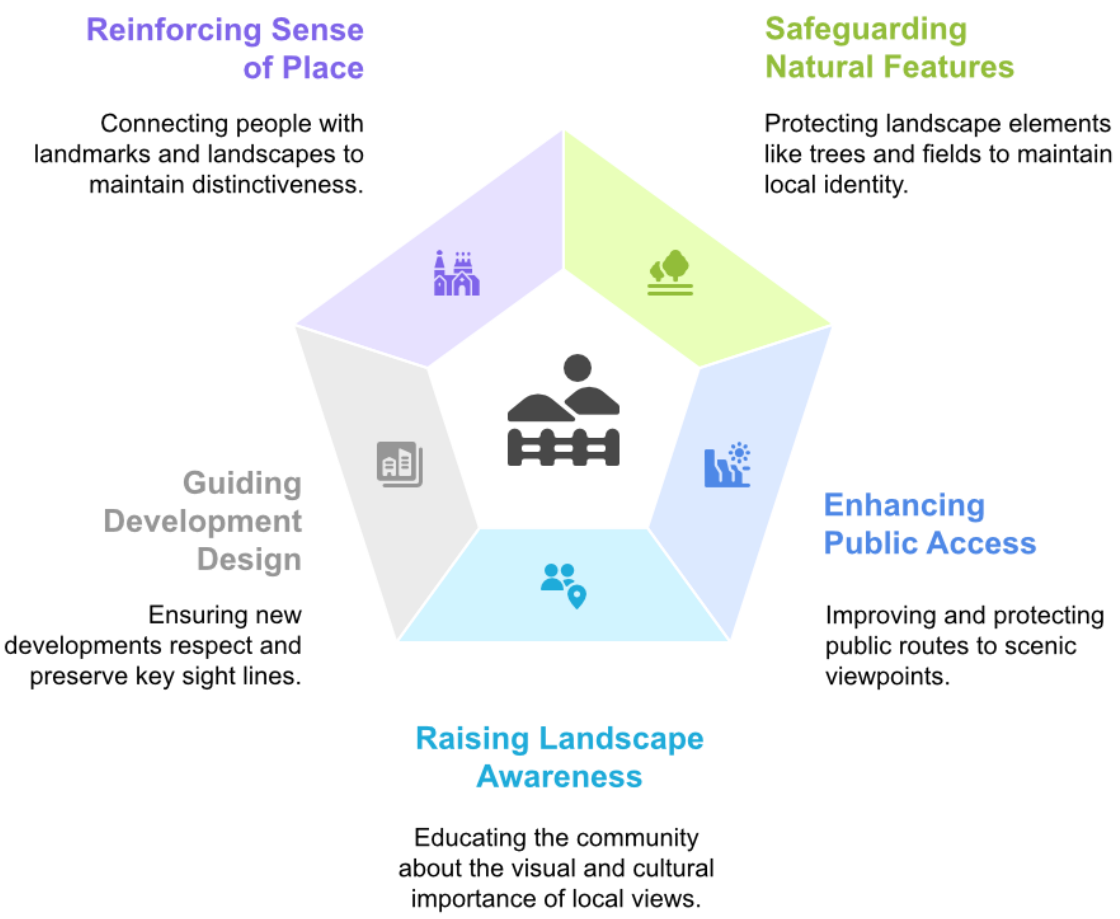

6.4. How to Identify an Important View

6.4.1 Identifying important views in a neighbourhood plan area involves more than simply selecting attractive vistas - it requires a structured and evidence-based approach to justify their inclusion in planning policy. This ensures the views selected are genuinely valued and resilient to challenge, particularly when used to guide development.

6.4.2 Established landscape assessment criteria provides a useful starting point. When assessing views for inclusion, consider the following key factors:

- **Visual Quality:** The view should have clear aesthetic merit, with striking or picturesque qualities that elicit a strong visual response. This might include views of dramatic landforms, harmonious rural scenes or compositions with strong natural or built elements.
- **Distinctiveness:** The view should stand out in the local landscape due to its unique composition, character or associations. This could include landmark buildings, prominent topography or unusual juxtapositions of natural and cultural features.
- **Cultural or Historical Significance:** Some views may be important due to their associations with local heritage. Such as views towards listed

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buildings, historic churches, battlefield sites or landscapes featured in literature, art or folklore.

- **Community Value:** A view that is widely appreciated and valued by local residents, reflected in surveys, consultations or historical records, should be given special attention. Community support lends weight to the inclusion of a view in the neighbourhood plan.
- **Accessibility:** Important views should be experienced from publicly accessible locations, such as public footpaths, bridleways, open spaces or roads.
- **Vulnerability to Change:** Consider how susceptible the view is to visual intrusion, development pressure or cumulative landscape change. This factor is particularly important when selecting views that may require policy protection.

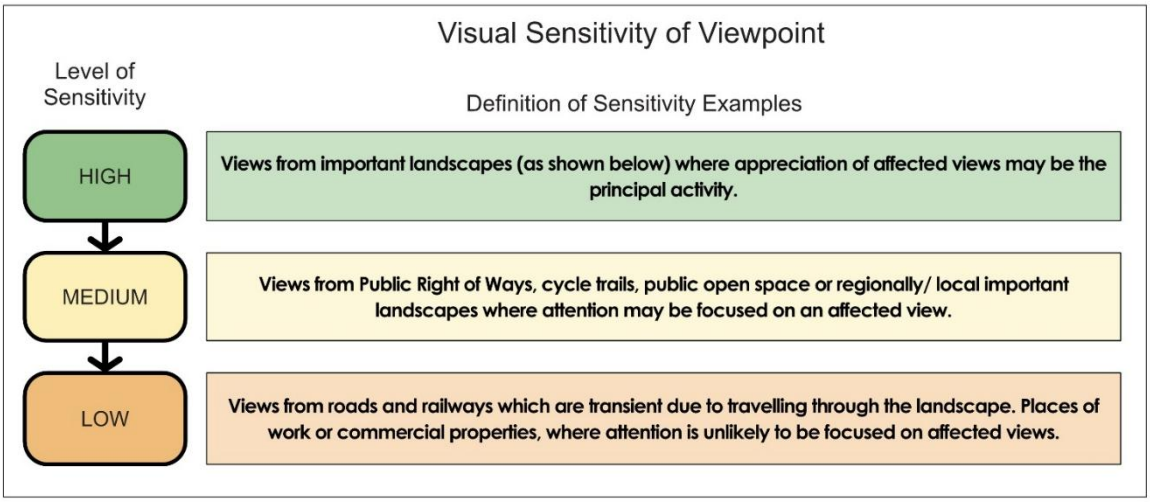
Focusing on Vulnerability and Sensitivity

6.4.3 Among the criteria above, vulnerability is often one of the most practical and relevant considerations for policy. Views that are visually sensitive and under threat from encroaching development can benefit from a level of protection. Assessing sensitivity involves considering both the importance of the view and how easily its quality could be degraded, such as by loss of openness, disruption of sightlines or inappropriate built form in the foreground or background.

6.4.4 You may wish to use a diagram or matrix (as included below) to plot views on a spectrum of sensitivity and value. This can help provide a clear rationale for inclusion and allow comparisons between candidate views.

6.4.5 For example, a view may be:

- Highly sensitive and under pressure – requiring strong policy protection.
- Less sensitive but widely valued – suitable for advisory design guidance.
- Unique but stable – meriting recognition without heavy intervention.



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Who Should Undertake the Assessment?

6.4.6 The identification of important views can either be carried out by a working group formed from the neighbourhood plan steering group or parish council, using a shared framework and consistent approach or with input from a qualified landscape professional who can provide technical expertise, especially where views are contested or require robust justification.

6.4.7 Including community consultation will ensure that the chosen views reflect both objective judgement and local values.

6.5. How to Display Important Views

6.5.1 There is no single correct way to display important views in your neighbourhood plan, but clarity, consistency and justification are essential. Maps should make it easy for both planning officers and members of the public to identify the views being protected and understand why they matter.

Key Mapping Requirements for Important Views

6.5.2 **Stay within the Plan Area Boundary:** Views must originate from within the designated neighbourhood plan area. While the view itself may look beyond the boundary, protection can only be applied to what is seen from within the plan area.

6.5.3 **Be Proportionate and Evidence-Based:** Avoid drawing large or overly generalised view corridors that aim to block development in broad areas. Each view should be selected and mapped based on clear justification, such as visual quality, sensitivity or community value, as described in your evidence base.

6.5.4 **Define Views Clearly and Consistently:** Use arrows, directional lines or shaded wedges to illustrate the direction and extent of each view. The map should distinguish between the viewpoint (where the view is experienced) and the viewed landscape (the key features or areas being protected).

6.5.5 **Link to Supporting Descriptions:** Views shown on the map should correspond to detailed entries in the plan, with each view numbered or named and supported by photographs and short descriptions explaining their value.

Map Elements to Include

6.5.6 When designing your view maps, use a clear, consistent cartographic style. The following components can help present the views effectively:

- **Base Map:** Use a legible base map that fits your plan area. Options include OS maps, parish boundary maps or aerial photography. Choose whichever offers the best context for your local landscape features.
- **Vantage Points:** Mark the exact location from which the view is taken using dots, numbered icons or other symbols.

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- **Direction Arrows or Viewing Cones:** Use arrows or shaded cones to indicate the direction and breadth of the view. This makes it clear which part of the landscape is being experienced.
- **Key Features in the View:** Highlight notable elements such as hills, buildings, treelines or skylines within the viewed landscape. You may also choose to label these on the map or identify them in an accompanying table.
- **View Labels and Text Boxes:** Use text boxes or side annotations to describe each view's key attributes and significance. This can include references to landscape value, historic or cultural associations or vulnerability to change.
- **Symbol Differentiation (Optional):** Use varied symbols to distinguish between types of views - for example:
    - 🌲 Natural or scenic views.
    - 🏰 Views with heritage interest.
    - 🏞️ Panoramic or open countryside views.
- **Legend and Key:** Always include a legend explaining the meaning of your symbols, arrows or shading.
- **Consistency in Presentation:** Ensure all maps and diagrams follow the same layout, symbol usage and colour scheme to avoid confusion and support the professional quality of your submission.

Examples of Effective View Mapping

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan

6.5.7 Binfield Heath's neighbourhood plan provides a compelling example of how locally valued views can be clearly presented on a map and underpinned by a thorough landscape evidence base. The views were identified through both community engagement and a Parish Landscape Character Assessment. This assessment divides the parish into landscape character areas and evaluates the sensitivity, quality and visibility of views both into and out of these areas.

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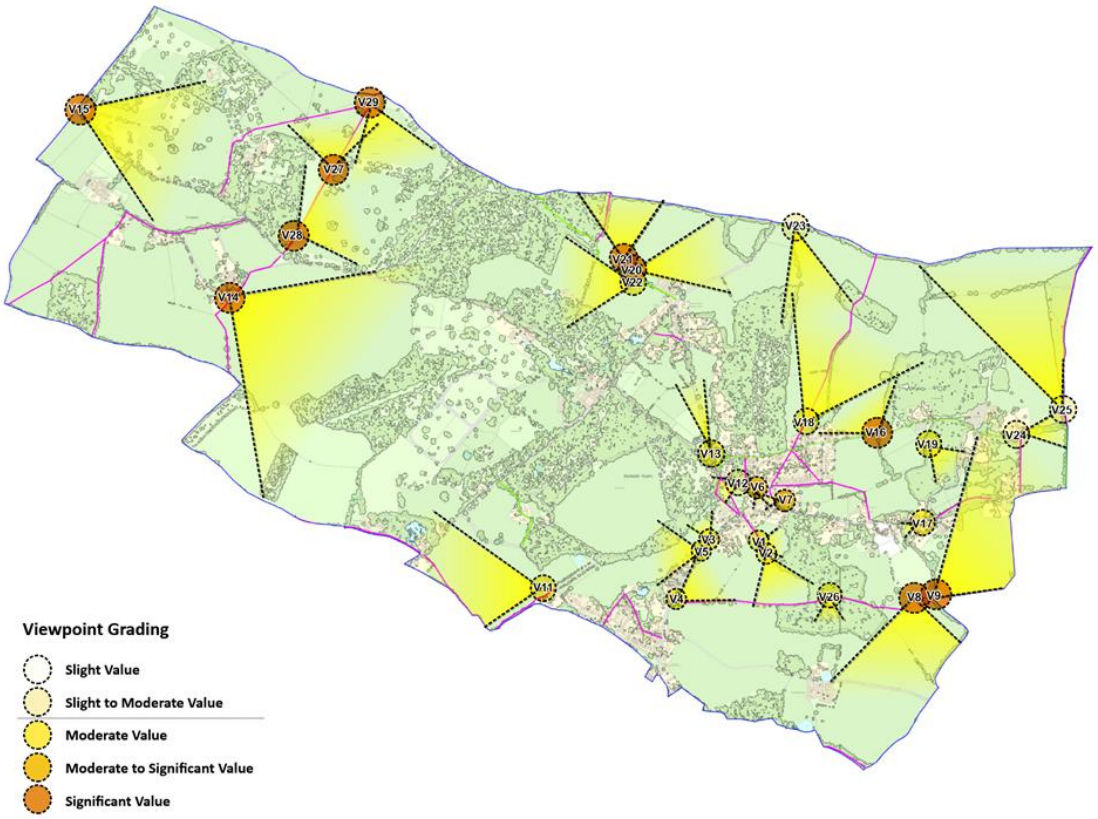

6.5.8 The resulting maps use viewpoint markers and directional indicators to identify:

- Elevated locations providing panoramic or unexpected long views.
- Visual connections to sensitive skylines, particularly those visible from Thames Valley.
- Key landscape features including historic tree-lined avenues, open fields and woodland edges.

6.5.9 Why this approach is effective:

- **Grounded in Professional Evidence:** Key views are drawn directly from the Landscape Character Assessment and include both valued community perspectives and technical landscape analysis.
- **Responsive to Topography:** Binfield Heath's topography enables far-reaching views. These are explicitly referenced in the assessment as visual assets requiring protection.
- **Sensitivity-led Mapping:** Areas where development may intrude on skylines or long views are identified and mapped as sensitive, allowing planning policy to respond proportionately.
- **Landscape-informed Narrative:** Supporting text outlines how development should be sensitively scaled and located to maintain

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openness, preserve long views and retain the visual separation of settlement clusters.

Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan

6.5.10 The Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan offers a strong example of how locally important views can be clearly mapped and supported by detailed landscape evidence. The key views were identified through a combination of community engagement and a professional landscape assessment, which divided the area into distinct character zones, each with unique visual qualities and vantage points. The figure below, drawn from the Shiplake Landscape Character Assessment, illustrates the location and direction of key views using a clear aerial photography base.

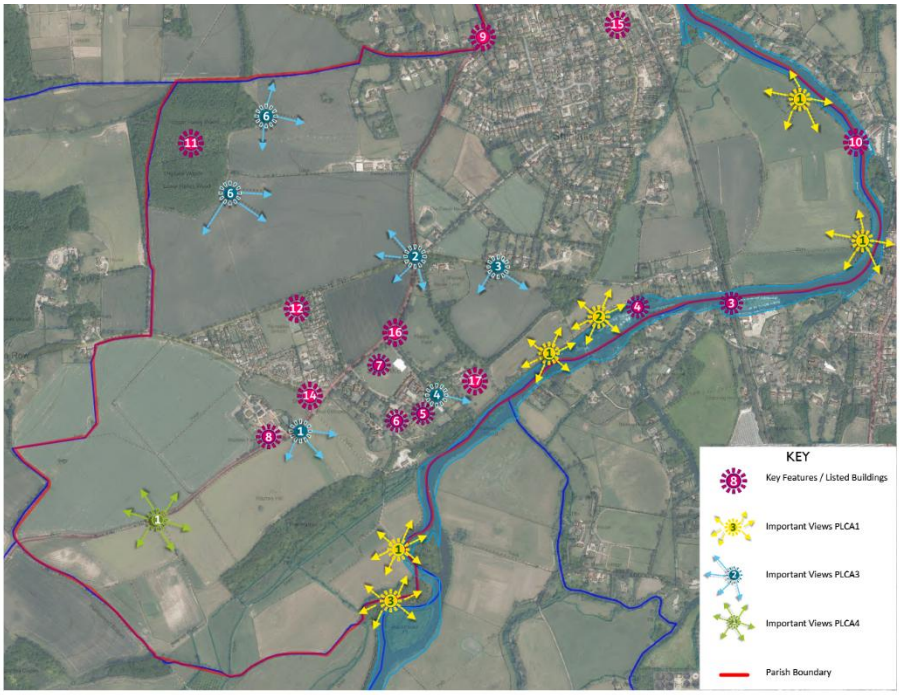

Figure 21 - Key Views, Features and Landmarks (taken from the Character Appraisal based on Landscape Character Assessment)

6.5.11 The resulting maps use directional arrows and viewpoint markers to identify:

- Key vantage points overlooking significant landscape features.
- Important sightlines and panoramic views framed by local topography.
- Visual connections that highlight cultural and historic landmarks integral to the area's character.

6.5.12 Why this approach is effective:

- **Grounded in Professional Evidence:** Views are not selected arbitrarily but are drawn directly from a robust landscape assessment, integrating field photography and local character area analysis.

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- **Clear and Accessible Mapping:** Colour-coded arrows indicate the direction of views, while labels cross-reference photographs and descriptive text to provide a comprehensive understanding.
- **Sensitivity-led Identification:** Each view is linked to broader landscape sensitivity assessments, enabling targeted protection of visually and culturally significant places.
- **Landscape-informed Narrative:** Annotated photographs and detailed descriptions support the mapping, helping planners and the community appreciate the visual importance and rationale for safeguarding these views.

6.5.13 This method demonstrates how to use a professional landscape assessment, clear mapping techniques and visual documentation to provide a credible and persuasive justification for important view policies in a neighbourhood plan.

6.5.14 For a template on how to present important views within the main body of your neighbourhood plan, see Appendix 5.

6.6. Policy Examples

6.6.1 To view examples of important view policies from made neighbourhood plans, refer to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

7 Local Green Spaces

7.1. What is a Local Green Space?

7.1.1 A Local Green Space can take many different forms but must be demonstrably special to the local community. Once formally designated in a neighbourhood plan, it receives protection from development similar to that of Green Belt land, subject to the exceptions outlined in the NPPF.

7.1.2 Examples of local green spaces include woodlands, parks and community gardens.

7.1.3 If a site is already protected under existing legislation or planning policy, consider whether a local green space designation is necessary. It is also important to reflect on the expected lifespan of the neighbourhood plan and whether the existing protections are likely to change during that time.

7.1.4 It should be noted that local green space designation does not grant public access to land where such access does not already exist. This is particularly relevant for privately owned or enclosed sites, including those that are valued for their wildlife or visual amenity.

7.1.5 Additionally, a site cannot be designated as local green space if it has been

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allocated for development or already has planning permission.

7.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7.2.1 The NPPF (December 2024) sets out Local Green Space designation in paragraph 106, 107 and 108 respectively.

7.2.2 The NPPF states that:

"106. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period".

7.2.3 *"107. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land".

7.2.4 It also states that:

"108. Policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts set out in chapter 13 of this Framework[45]

[45] Excluding provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land set out in chapter 13."

7.2.5 Reference to Local Green Spaces (LGS) is also mentioned in paragraph 11b (i):

"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas[6], unless: i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area[7].

[7]The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph

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194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change".

7.2.6 Together, these NPPF provisions offer a strong and clear policy foundation for neighbourhood plans to designate local green spaces as a means of protecting valued local environments.

7.3. Why Identify a Local Green Space?

7.3.1 Identifying local green spaces within a neighbourhood plan is a powerful way to recognise and protect green areas that are of particular value to the community. Once designated, these spaces gain strong protection from development, helping to safeguard the environmental, recreational and cultural qualities that matter most to local people.

7.3.2 Designating local green spaces offers multiple benefits, including:

- **Protecting Community-Valued Land:** Local green space designation secures long-term protection for areas that hold special meaning - whether for their tranquillity, wildlife, beauty or recreational use. This ensures that cherished spaces remain undeveloped and accessible for future generations.
- **Supporting Health and Wellbeing:** Many local green spaces serve as vital places for exercise, relaxation and social interaction. Recognising and protecting these areas contributes to community health, particularly where access to nature is limited.
- **Strengthening Local Identity and Character:** Green spaces often reflect the landscape character, history and layout of a place. Their designation reinforces a settlement's sense of identity and helps maintain its distinctiveness in the face of change.
- **Enhancing Biodiversity and Climate Resilience:** Designated green spaces can play a role in supporting local wildlife, improving ecological networks and contributing to climate adaptation through tree cover, soil permeability and cooling effects.
- **Supporting Sustainable Development:** By clearly identifying green areas that should remain protected, local green space designations can help guide development to more appropriate locations, aligning growth with community values and landscape constraints.
- **Providing Clarity in Planning:** Mapping and describing local green spaces gives planners, developers and the community clear guidance

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on which areas are considered off-limits for development, reducing uncertainty and conflict in the planning process.

7.4. How to Identify a Local Green Space

7.4.1 Identifying local green spaces in a neighbourhood plan requires more than selecting green areas that are simply liked or well-used, it involves a structured and evidence-led process to ensure that each designation meets national planning criteria and can withstand scrutiny during examination. Aligning with the NPPF and relevant planning guidance is essential to making a credible and robust case for protection.

7.4.2 The NPPF sets out clear criteria for local green space designation in Paragraphs 106 and 107. Paragraph 106 states that local green spaces can only be designated through a local or neighbourhood plan when it is being prepared or updated and must be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

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Paragraph 107 outlines three specific tests that a green space must meet to qualify:

- **Proximity:** The green space should be reasonably close to the community it serves.
- **Local Significance:** It must be demonstrably special to the local community, with particular value due to its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or wildlife.
- **Character and Scale:** It should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

7.4.3 In applying the above criteria, it's important to note that 'close proximity' is not formally defined in policy. However, it is generally understood to mean green spaces that are within walking distance or immediately adjacent to the community. The appropriate interpretation of proximity may vary depending on the context and nature of the green space in question.

7.4.4 To determine whether a green space is genuinely special to the community, early and effective engagement with local residents is essential. This not only ensures alignment with the significance test in paragraph 107 of the NPPF but also strengthens the evidence base for your designation. Community feedback can provide insight into how a space is used, valued and perceived, which is critical to justifying its inclusion.

7.4.5 A useful method is to conduct a dedicated community engagement exercise focused on potential local green space sites. This gives residents the chance to express support, raise concerns or suggest additional areas for consideration.

7.4.6 Community engagement also creates an opportunity to consult landowners, which is vital for understanding any constraints, future intentions or objections related to the proposed designation. The PPG is clear in setting out that whilst a local green space does not need to be in public ownership, efforts should be made to contact landowners at an early stage about proposals to designation any part of their land.

7.4.7 In addition to the NPPF, the PPG provides further clarity. It notes that:

"Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented".

7.4.8 To support neighbourhood planning groups in making informed decisions, a Local Green Space Assessment Flowchart is provided below. This step-by-step tool can guide you through the identification and assessment process, helping ensure that proposed LGS sites meet national policy requirements and are

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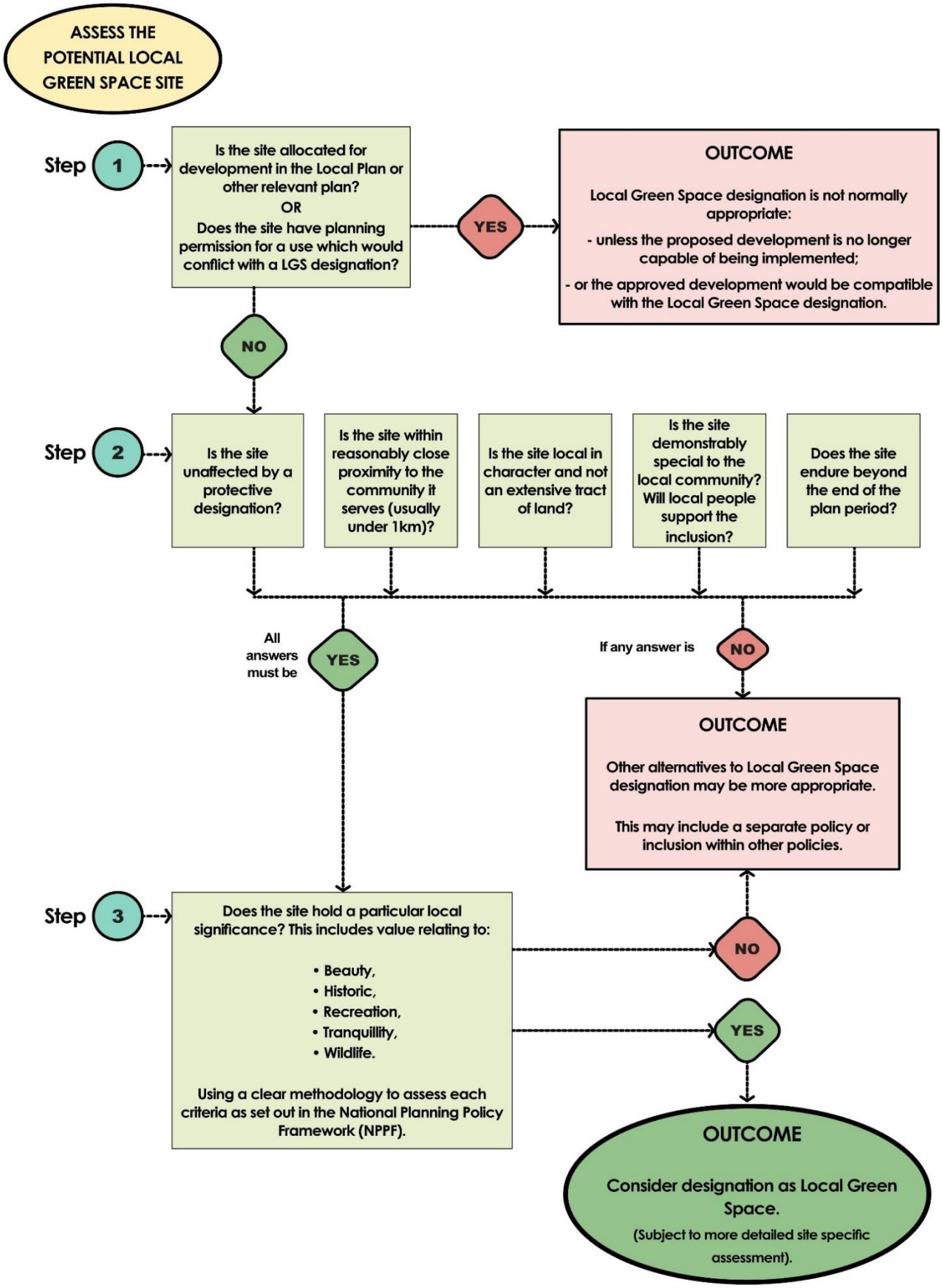
supported by clear, proportionate evidence.



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7.4.9 The table below breaks down the NPPF requirements from paragraphs 106 and 107 into clear assessment categories, providing a structured approach to gathering and presenting evidence. This helps ensure that any proposed designation is both justified and resilient during examination.

7.4.10 Each site considered for designation should be assessed using the table. Groups are encouraged to reference supporting evidence (e.g. maps, photos, community surveys) and provide clear justification for each criterion.

Local Green Space Assessment Table

Assessment Criterion	Description	Evidence/Notes	Meets Criterion? (Yes/No)
Plan Status	Is the designation being made as part of a new or updated neighbourhood plan? (Required under Para 106).	E.g. plan version, stage of preparation.	
Long-Term Protection	Can the space remain protected beyond the plan period? (Required under Para 106).	E.g. site not subject to temporary use or actively managed for long-term use.	
Consistency with Sustainable Development	Does the designation align with wider local planning objectives, including meeting housing and infrastructure needs? (Para 106).	E.g. check against local plan policies and growth areas.	
Proximity to Community	Is the site in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves? (Para 107a).	Describe walking distance or physical relationship to settlement.	
Demonstrably Special	Is the site clearly valued by the local community? (Para 107b).	Evidence from surveys, consultations and community events.	
Local Significance - Beauty	Does the site have aesthetic or scenic value? (Para 107b).	E.g. photographs or landscape	

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		character assessment.	
Local Significance – Historic Significance	Does the site have historical associations or heritage value? (Para 107b).	E.g. listed features, archaeological interest and local history.	
Local Significance – Recreational Value	Is the site used for formal/informal recreation? (Para 107b).	E.g. playing fields, walking routes and events.	
Local Significance – Tranquillity	Does the site offer peace, quiet or a sense of retreat? (Para 107b).	E.g. separation from roads, natural setting and user testimony.	
Local Significance – Wildlife	Does the site support notable or locally important biodiversity? (Para 107b).	E.g. wildlife surveys and local ecological designations.	
Character and Scale	Is the site local in character and not an extensive tract of land? (Para 107c).	Consider visual containment and scale relative to settlement.	
Planning Constraints	Does the site already have planning permission? If so, is it compatible with the designation? (Per NPPG).	E.g. planning history and extant permissions.	
Landowner Engagement	Have landowners been informed or consulted about the proposed designation?	Summarise feedback or note if pending.	

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7.5. How to Display Local Green Spaces

7.5.1 There is no single correct method for mapping local green spaces in a neighbourhood plan. However, clarity, accuracy and ease of interpretation are essential. Each designated local green space must be clearly defined on a map to ensure planning officers, examiners and the public can confidently understand its exact location and boundaries.

7.5.2 While it is not necessary for full maps to be included within the policy text itself, the policy should list the name and/or reference number of each designated local green space and clearly direct readers to where the corresponding maps or diagrams can be found.

7.5.3 Maps should be at an appropriate scale, show clear site boundaries and cross-reference policy text and supporting evidence. Local green spaces can be presented individually on a composite map or ideally through a combination of both for maximum clarity.

Key Mapping Requirements for Local Green Spaces

- **Use an Appropriate Map Scale:** The NPPF does not prescribe a specific mapping method but it is essential that the entire boundary of each local green space is legible and unambiguous. For simple, small sites, a 1:5,000 scale may suffice. For complex boundaries or urban locations, larger scales such as 1:2,500, 1:1,250 or even 1:500 may be required.
- **Define Boundaries Precisely:** Ensure that the local green space boundary is clearly marked and tightly drawn to match the area intended for designation. Avoid vague or general outlines.
- **Map Individually and Collectively:**
    - Individual site maps allow for precise boundary definitions and the inclusion of supporting site-specific information (e.g., site name, size and land use). You may want to include this in the appendix of your neighbourhood plan.
    - Composite maps illustrate the spatial distribution of all local green space designations across the neighbourhood area and their relationship to settlements and other land uses.
    - Using both provides the most complete picture, supporting implementation, public understanding and examination.
- **Name or Number Each Site:** Assign a unique name or reference number to every local green space. This should be consistent across maps, policy text and appendices.

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- **Show Relationship to Other Designations:** Where relevant, include nearby features such as public rights of way, conservation areas, listed buildings, flood zones or wildlife sites to demonstrate context and significance.
- **Ensure Print Legibility:** Maps should remain legible when printed in black and white. Use distinct boundary lines, hatching or patterns rather than relying on colour alone.
- **Add Key Cartographic Elements:**
    - Include a north arrow, scale bar and map title on all mapping outputs.
    - Provide a legend to explain symbols, colours or line styles used.
    - Credit your map source and copyright information, as appropriate (e.g., Ordnance Survey).
- **Cross-Reference Clearly in the Plan:**
    - Within the policy, you may list local green space sites by name/number, refer to mapped boundaries (e.g. "See Map 4" or "Refer to Appendix B"), or do both.
    - Ensure every map or figure is directly referenced in the supporting text so that readers can easily locate and interpret the designated spaces.
- **Differentiate Existing and New Designations (For Plan Reviews):** If updating a plan, clearly distinguish between local green spaces already designated in the made plan and any newly proposed sites.
- **Consider Using Different Symbols or Colours:** If helpful, use varied map symbols or colours to indicate different types of local green spaces (e.g., natural spaces, formal parks or community gardens), while ensuring clarity and consistency.

Examples of Effective Local Green Space Mapping

Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review

7.5.4 The Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II offers a clear and accessible model for how local green spaces can be mapped at site-specific levels. Each designated site is accompanied by a high-resolution inset map, such as the below example for Local Green Space 14 (Greenwood Meadow Open Greens), which uses detailed Ordnance Survey base mapping to ensure boundary precision and ease of interpretation.

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7.5.5 The mapping approach demonstrates best practice through the following features:

- **Detailed Site Mapping:** For each local green space, an individual map is provided using a sufficiently large scale (e.g. 1:500 or 1:1250) to show surrounding street patterns, built form and land use boundaries.
- **Clear Boundaries and Labelling:** Local Green Space 14 is shown with clean, solid green shading and a clear title block. The space is also referenced by both name and number.
- **Effective Use of Map Elements:** Key elements such as scale bars, a north arrow and surrounding context.
- **Cartographic Elements:** The use of consistent design elements and high-contrast shading.

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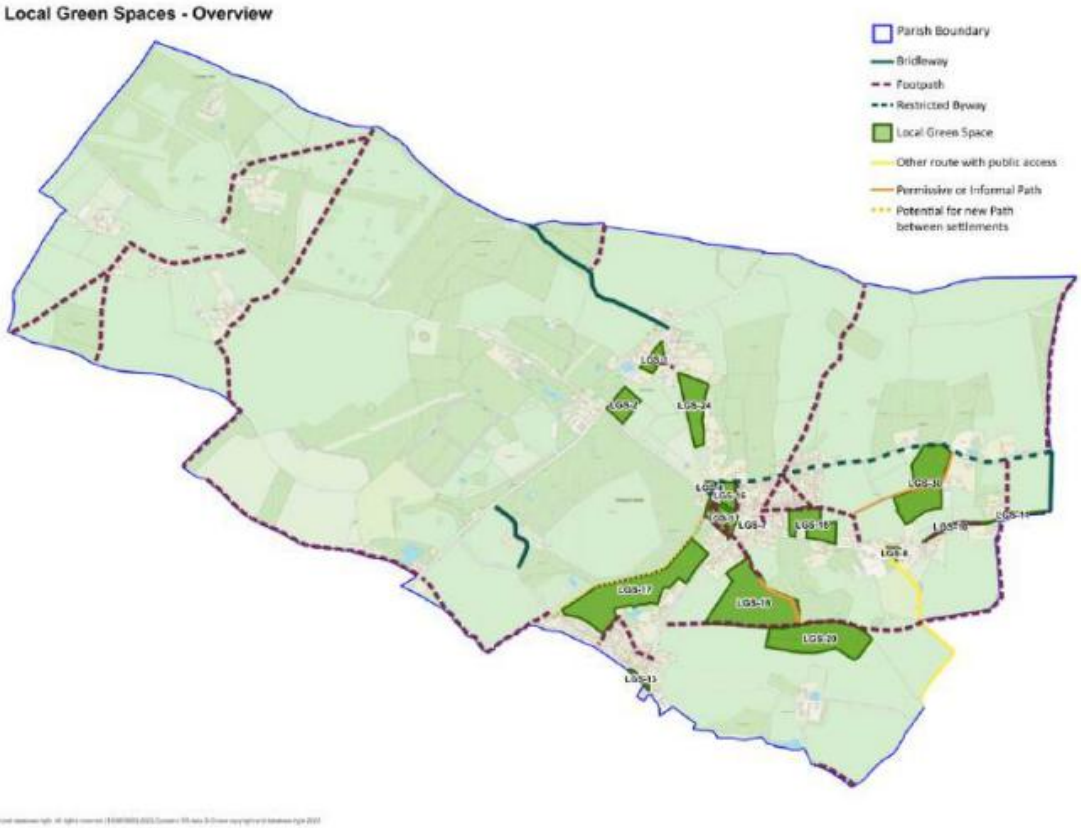
7.5.6 Why this approach is effective:

- **Precision for Implementation:** By showing the site boundary with fine detail and a defined map base this format aids community understanding, enables effective policy enforcement and reduces ambiguity during decision-making.
- **Clear Link to Policy:** The inclusion of a unique site reference (14) allows the map to be cross-referenced with the local green space policy text, ensuring consistency across the plan.
- **Professional Presentation:** The map includes all essential components - north arrow, scale, title and legend, reflecting good practice in map design and meeting the expectations of planning inspectors and users.
- **Accessibility and Visual Clarity:** The cartographic design ensures that the map remains legible even when printed in black and white.

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan

7.5.7 The Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan provides an exemplary model for how multiple local green spaces can be presented in a cohesive, parish-wide map that supports both strategic clarity and site-specific accuracy. The overview map displays all designated green spaces across the neighbourhood area, using distinct colours and symbols to distinguish local green spaces from other features such as footpaths, byways and parish boundaries.



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7.5.8 This approach illustrates several strong mapping practices, including:

- **Parish-Wide Composite Mapping:** A single, well-structured map shows all local green space designations in relation to each other, local settlements and the wider movement network.
- **Integrated Legend and Symbology:** The map uses consistent symbols and colours (e.g. green shading for local green spaces, dashed lines for footpaths and solid lines for bridleways) with a clearly presented legend.
- **Unique Site References:** Each local green space is labelled with a unique identifier (e.g. LGS1, LGS2 etc.).
- **Cartographic Elements:** The parish boundary is outlined in blue, key movement routes are visible and local green space sites are presented with high contrast and consistent formatting.

7.5.9 Why this approach is effective:

- **Strategic Context:** By showing all local green space designations on one composite map, the plan communicates how green spaces contribute collectively to landscape character, ecological connectivity and settlement separation.
- **Ease of Use for Planners and Communities:** Unique local green space codes make it easy to cross-reference with the policy test and evidence base. This strengthens the policy and helps residents understand what is being protected and why.
- **Clarity of Purpose:** The map also shows the relationship between designated green spaces and other local assets, such as public rights of way and potential future paths, helping to link local green space policy with wider movement and landscape objectives.
- **Accessibility and Visual Clarity:** The cartographic design ensures that the map remains legible even when printed in black and white.

7.5.10 For a template on how to present local green spaces within the main body of your neighbourhood plan, see Appendix 6.

7.6. Policy Examples

7.6.1 To view examples of local green space policies from made neighbourhood plans, refer to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

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8 Local/Green Gaps or Buffers

8.1. What is a Local Gap?

8.1.1 A Local Gap, also known as a 'Green Gap' or 'Green Buffer' refers to the land between two settlements that if developed would result in physical or visual coalescence. In such circumstances, these gaps play a vital role in preserving the distinct character, identity and structure of settlements by preventing urban sprawl and maintaining clear boundaries between communities.

8.1.2 However, it is important to clarify that designating a gap does not automatically provide public access or recreational use.

8.1.3 The extent of land designated as a local gap should be carefully considered. The amount of space designated as a gap between two settlement areas should not be extensive and only sufficient to prevent visual or cumulative coalescence. A number of neighbourhood plans have tried to propose extensive areas for gaps comprising multiple large fields and open spaces. These are almost always reduced or removed at examination. A proposed local gap should be the minimum amount of land necessary to secure the gap. Settlement gaps also cannot be used to encircle the built-up area like a de facto Green Belt, as this would undermine the strategic role of Green Belt and conflict with the plan-led system.

8.1.4 To justify a local gap designation, robust evidence must be provided to demonstrate why it is necessary and how it meets the planning purpose of preventing settlement coalescence.

8.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

8.2.1 Many neighbourhood plan groups would like to designate gaps between settlements or buffers on the edges of developed locations. While the NPPF (December 2024) does not explicitly refer to gaps, it provides a strong strategic basis for their inclusion where appropriately evidenced and justified.

8.2.2 Paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments *"are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting". This is reinforced by Paragraph 135(d), which emphasises that developments should "establish or maintain a strong sense of place".*

8.2.3 Moreover, paragraph 139(b) also mentions the importance of well-designed development that *"fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings".*

8.2.4 Together, these design-focused policies provide a clear basis for neighbourhood plans to include well-justified local gap policies that reinforce character, maintain settlement identity and guide high-quality place-based development.

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8.3. Why Identify a Local Gap?

8.3.1 Designating local gaps in a neighbourhood plan is an effective way to maintain the character, identity and spatial integrity of nearby settlements. These areas help prevent the physical or visual merging of distinct communities, thereby protecting settlement patterns.

8.3.2 Gaps can also offer valuable access to the countryside for residents of urban areas where they are publicly accessible, helping to maintain a balance between development and natural spaces.

8.3.3 Establishing local gaps can deliver a range of planning and environmental benefits. While not all reasons will apply to every context, communities should identify those most relevant to their local area and provide proportionate evidence, such as:

8.3.4 **Preventing Settlement Merging and Urban Sprawl:** Local gaps act as buffers between built-up areas, preventing the physical or visual merging of neighbouring settlements. This helps maintain well-defined settlement boundaries and avoids the creeping expansion of development into open countryside.

- **Maintaining Landscape Openness and Visual Amenity:** Local gaps contribute to the visual quality of the area by retaining open, undeveloped land that enhances rural views, landscape setting and the experience of moving between places.
- **Supporting Biodiversity and Ecological Networks:** Where appropriately managed, gaps can provide habitat corridors, hedgerow connectivity and open foraging areas that support local wildlife and ecosystem health.
- **Managing Flood Risk and Environmental Capacity:** In locations prone to surface or groundwater flooding, local gaps can offer natural flood storage or permeable land that helps reduce water runoff and the impact of extreme weather events.
- **Buffering Noise and Pollution:** Green infrastructure within gaps, such as tree belts or hedgerows, can help reduce noise, filter air pollution and provide a visual screen from roads or development.

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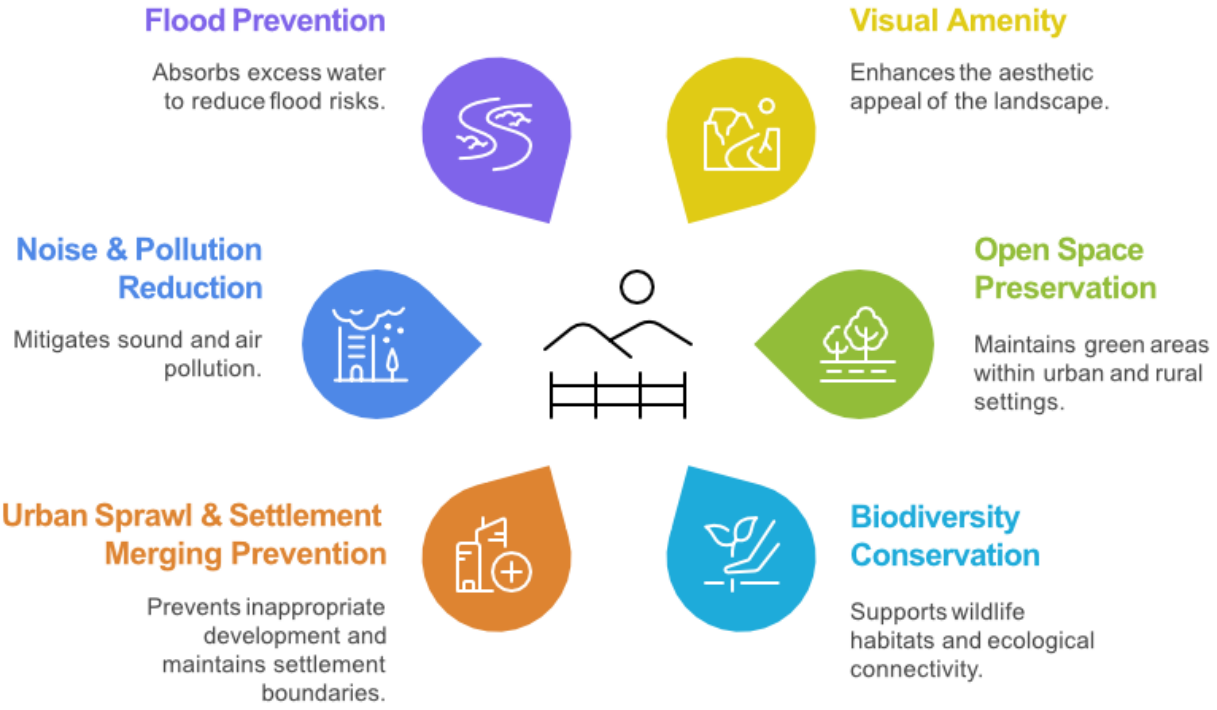

8.4. How to Identify a Potential Gap

8.4.1 To effectively identify local gaps in your neighbourhood plan, you should follow a structured process that sets out your initial assessment, community engagement and subsequent analysis. This will help ensure your policy addresses genuine issues and reflects the current situation.

8.4.2 Local gap policies should be supported by clear mapping and robust local evidence, including analysis of settlement patterns, views, historic separation and land function. Designated areas should not be excessive in size, nor used to encircle development or act as a substitute for Green Belt designation. Rather, they should focus on retaining the essential open qualities that justify the separation between settlements and contribute meaningfully to the overall spatial strategy of the plan.

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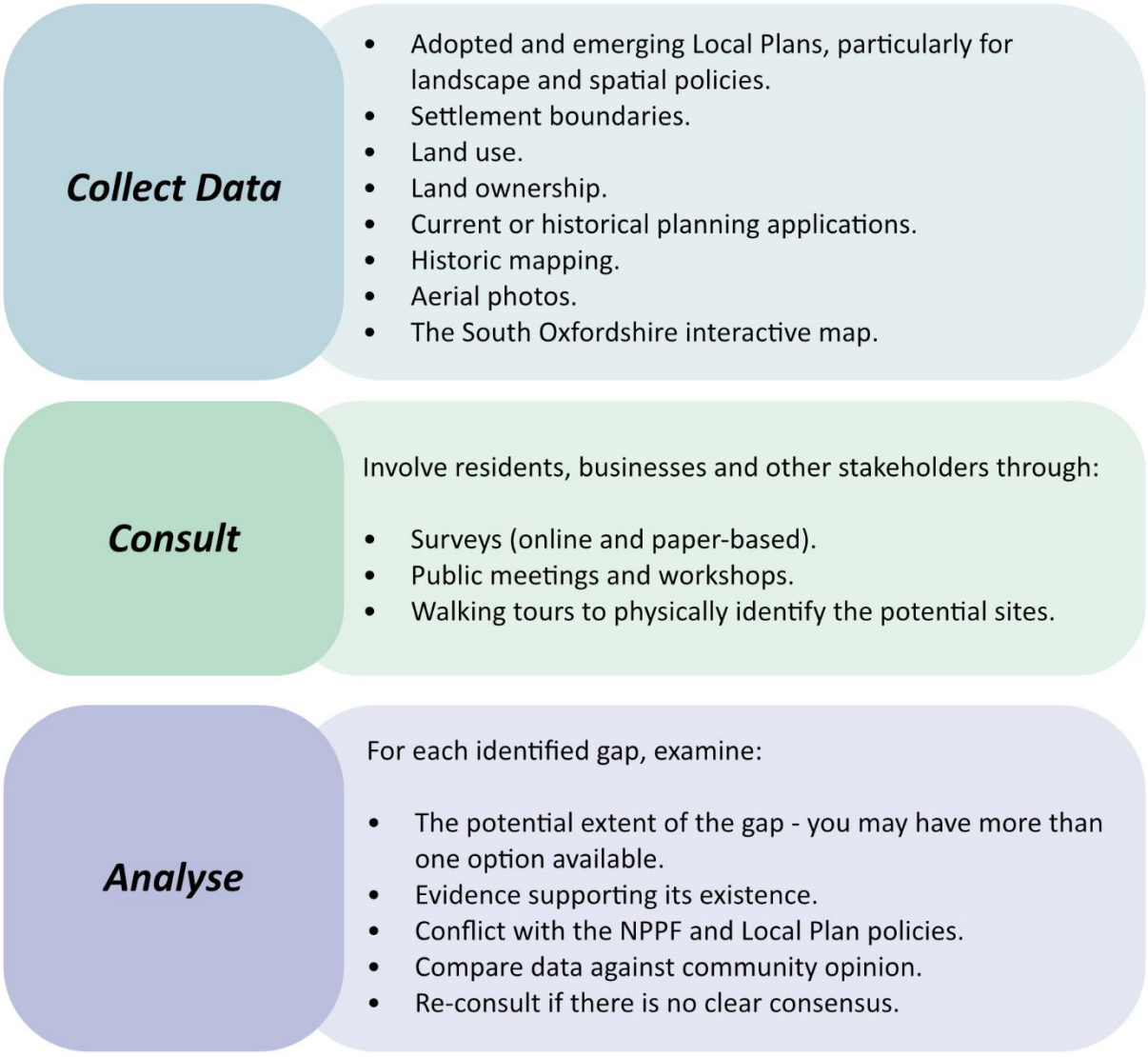

8.5. How to Display Local Gaps

8.5.1 There is no single correct method for mapping local gaps but as with local green spaces, clarity, accuracy and ease of interpretation are essential. Each local gap designation must be clearly defined on a map to enable planning officers, examiners and the public to confidently understand the extent and purpose of the designation.

8.5.2 It is not necessary to include full-scale maps within the policy text itself but the policy should list the name, reference number or descriptive location of each proposed gap and clearly direct readers to where maps or figures can be found within the plan or its appendices.

8.5.3 Mapping should be proportionate to the scale and purpose of the designation and reflect the limited spatial extent appropriate for local gaps.

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Key Mapping Requirements for Local Gaps

- **Use an Appropriate Map Scale:** Choose a map scale that allows the entire boundary of the proposed local gap to be shown clearly and unambiguously.
- **Define Boundaries Precisely:** Boundaries should be tightly drawn to include only the land necessary to prevent coalescence between specific settlements. Avoid overgeneralising by including large fields or open areas that do not serve a coalescence prevention function.
- **Provide Individual and Contextual Maps:**
    - Individual site maps should illustrate the proposed local gap boundary in detail.
    - Composite maps help show the spatial relationship between all proposed local gaps, built-up areas and settlement boundaries across the plan area.
- **Label Each Designation Clearly:** Assign a unique name, reference number or descriptive title to each gap (e.g., "Gap between Village A and Village B") and ensure this is used consistently in all maps, policies and appendices.
- **Illustrate Functional Relationships:** Where appropriate, show surrounding features such as settlement boundaries, public rights of way, landscape designations, flood zones or wildlife corridors. This helps communicate the role of the gap in managing growth, preserving character or supporting ecological function.
- **Ensure Visual Accessibility:** Maps should be legible when printed in black and white. Use contrasting hatching, dotted lines or shading to define gap boundaries instead of relying on colour alone.
- **Include Standard Map Features:**
    - Add a north arrow, scale bar and title to all mapping outputs.
    - Provide a legend to explain any symbols, boundary lines or shading used.
    - Credit the source and copyright of all base maps (e.g., Ordnance Survey).
- **Cross-Reference Clearly in the Plan:**
    - In the policy text, list local gaps by name or reference and direct readers to the relevant figure (e.g., “See Map 5” or “Refer to Appendix C”).
    - Ensure that each map or diagram is easily located and directly referenced within the main body of the neighbourhood plan.

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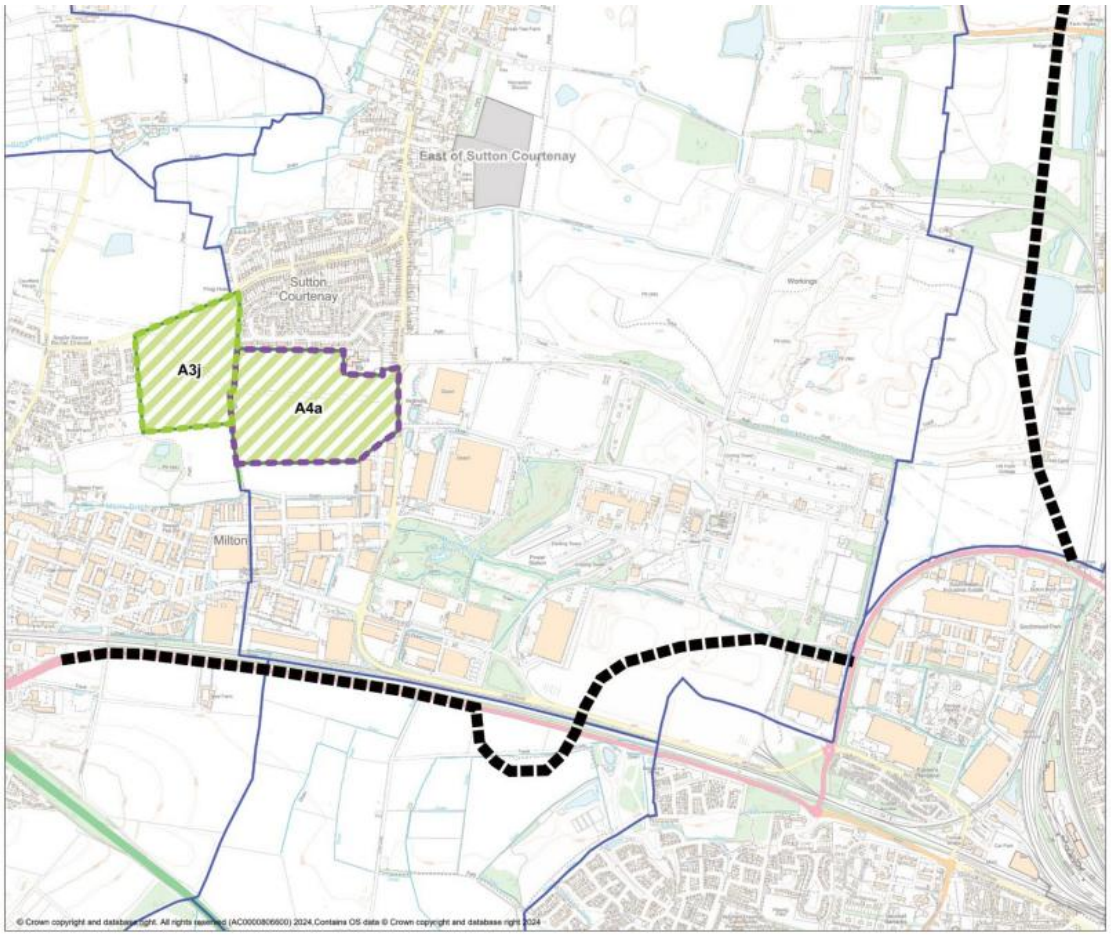
Examples of Effective Local Gap Mapping

Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan

8.5.4 The Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan provides a well-structured and visually accessible example of how green gaps can be effectively mapped to support a spatial separation policy. Figure 6.3 of the plan (see below) illustrates the proposed green gaps A3j and A4a using detailed Ordnance Survey base mapping, labelled boundaries, consistent symbology and a clear title and legend, helping users understand the role of each designated gap in maintaining settlement separation.



8.5.5 This approach illustrates several strong mapping practices:

- **Appropriate Map Scale:** The map is produced at a scale that allows the

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full extent of each local gap to be shown clearly, with boundaries unambiguously defined in relation to settlement edges and surrounding land.

- **Boundaries Defined Precisely:** Gap boundaries are tightly drawn in relation to settlement edges and surrounding land. Boundaries include only the land necessary to prevent visual or physical coalescence.
- **Clear Designation Labels:** Each gap is given a unique reference number used consistently across maps, policies and the supporting Countryside and Green Gap Assessment (February 2024).
- **Illustrate Functional Relationships:** The map includes contextual features such as settlement boundaries, proposed infrastructure (e.g., relief road) and strategic development areas.
- **Visual Accessibility:** The use of hatching and bold boundary lines ensures the map is legible in both colour and black-and-white print. Labels are also clearly visible and contrasting to hatching.
- **Standard Map Features:** A legend and appropriate copyright credit (e.g., Ordnance Survey) are present.

8.5.6 Why this approach is effective:

- **Appropriate Map Scale:** Using a scale that captures the entire extent of each local gap ensures that planners, stakeholders and examiners can clearly understand how the gap functions in its landscape context. It avoids confusion about the spatial relationship between settlements and the land intended to remain open, which is crucial for assessing whether the policy intent is being met.
- **Boundaries Defined Precisely:** Tightly drawn boundaries that only include essential land help to demonstrate proportionality. This increases the defensibility of the designation by showing that it is based on a specific and justified need to maintain separation, rather than a blanket protection of open countryside.
- **Clear Designation Labels:** Using consistent and unique reference numbers for each local gap across maps and supporting documents enhances transparency and makes it easier for readers to navigate between evidence, mapping and policy wording. This reduces the risk of misinterpretation and strengthens the internal coherence of the plan.
- **Illustrate Functional Relationships:** Including relevant contextual features, such as strategic housing allocations and proposed infrastructure, demonstrates how local gaps operate within a wider spatial strategy. It helps communicate why certain areas are critical for

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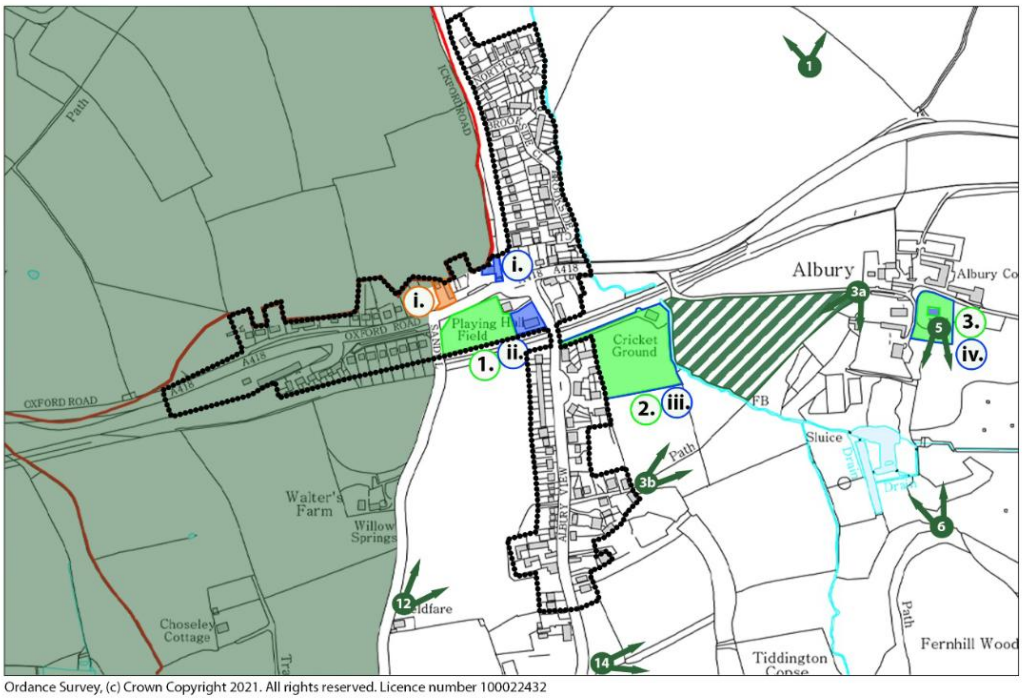
maintaining settlement identity or preventing coalescence, supporting more holistic decision-making.

- **Visual Accessibility:** Ensuring the map remains legible in both colour and monochrome formats increases usability for a range of audiences, including during formal consultations and hearings where printed materials are common. Clear labelling and visual contrast also help avoid misreading boundaries or designations.
- **Standard Map Features:** Including elements like a legend and copyright credits ensures compliance with cartographic conventions and intellectual property laws. It also provides essential interpretive tools that make the map easier to understand, particularly for non-specialist audiences.

Tiddington-with-Albury Neighbourhood Plan

8.5.7 The Tiddington-with-Albury Neighbourhood Plan provides a clear and effective example of how a local gap can be mapped to support a policy of settlement separation and protect rural character. Policies Map Inset 1 illustrates the TwA7 local gap designation between the villages of Tiddington and Albury using consistent hatching, a clear legend and base mapping that shows parish boundaries, village boundaries and key landscape features. The map supports Policy TwA7, which seeks to preserve the openness and visual integrity of the pastureland separating the two settlements and is further reinforced by accompanying analysis in Appendix 3.8.



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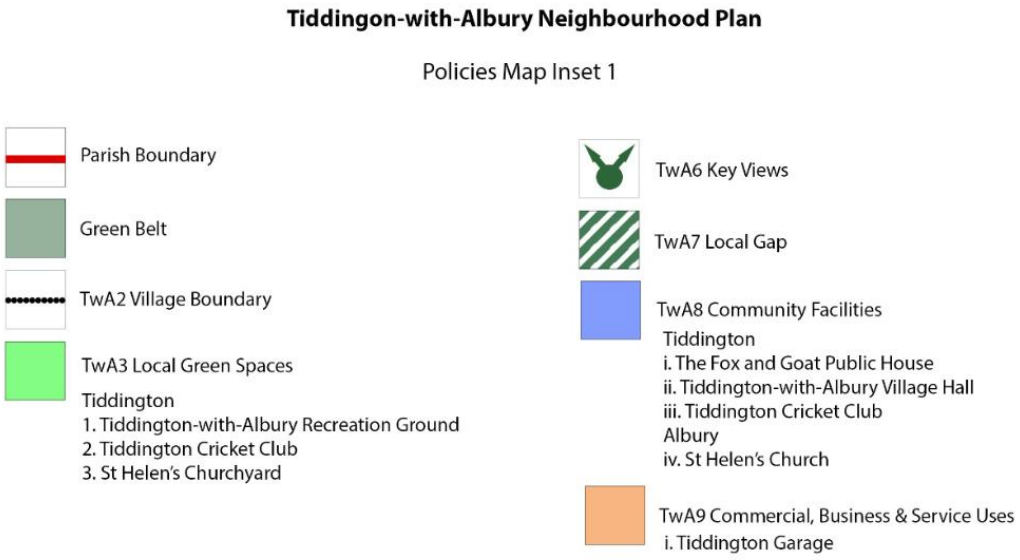

8.5.8 This approach illustrates several strong mapping practices:

- **Appropriate Map Scale:** The map is produced at a scale that captures the spatial relationship between Tiddington and Albury in sufficient detail, showing the narrowness of the undeveloped land between them and the role this plays in maintaining separation.
- **Boundaries Defined Precisely:** The local gap area is tightly defined using green hatching. Boundaries include only the land necessary to prevent visual or physical coalescence.
- **Clear Designation Labels:** The local gap is clearly labelled as TwA7 Local Gap both on the map and in the legend. This designation is used consistently across policies and supporting text, ensuring clarity and traceability throughout the plan.
- **Illustrate Functional Relationships:** The map contextualises the local gap in relation to nearby local green spaces, community facilities, key views (TwA6) and the TwA2 village boundary. These references help to explain why the gap is important to the character and identity of each settlement.
- **Visual Accessibility:** The use of bold hatching for the local gap, paired with contrasting colour blocks for other designations (e.g., Local Green Spaces in light green, community facilities in blue), improves legibility. Symbology is distinct and labels are placed to avoid clutter.
- **Standard Map Features:** The map includes a title, legend and base features such as roads, field boundaries and watercourses. An Ordnance Survey copyright is clearly displayed, ensuring the map meets formal standards for use in planning documentation.

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8.5.9 Why this approach is effective:

- **Appropriate Map Scale:** Using a scale that shows the spatial proximity and narrowness of undeveloped land between Tiddington and Albury makes the purpose of the local gap immediately clear. It visually reinforces the case for separation by highlighting how little land exists to maintain settlement distinction, which helps justify the need for protection.
- **Boundaries Defined Precisely:** Defining the local gap tightly ensures the policy is focused and evidence-led. By including only the land essential to preventing visual or physical coalescence, the map avoids accusations of overreach or unjustified countryside protection, strengthening its credibility in the plan-making process.
- **Clear Designation Labels:** Labelling the area as 'TwA7 Local Gap' on both the map and in the legend, and using this label consistently throughout the plan, improves traceability and integration across different sections of the document. This makes it easier for users to understand the relationship between the mapped designation, its supporting evidence and the written policies.
- **Illustrate Functional Relationships:** Showing the local gap in relation to local green spaces, key views (e.g., TwA6), the village boundary (TwA2) and community facilities adds important contextual information. This helps users understand not just where the gap is, but why it matters. For example, how it contributes to landscape character, visual amenity or the perceived identity of each settlement.
- **Visual Accessibility:** The use of bold hatching for the local gap and contrasting colours for other designations ensures the map remains readable even when printed or viewed at smaller sizes. Clear symbology and thoughtful label placement avoids clutter, making it easy to interpret at a glance. This is a key feature for both public engagement and formal examination.
- **Standard Map Features:** Including core cartographic elements like a legend and base features (e.g., roads and field boundaries), along with proper Ordnance Survey attribution, ensures the map is professional, complete and compliant with licensing requirements. This lends the map greater authority and usability in both formal planning and community settings.

8.6. Policy Examples

8.6.1 To view examples of green gap policies from made neighbourhood plans, refer to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

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9 Dark Night Skies

9.1. What is a Dark Night Sky?

9.1.1 A dark night sky is one with minimal light pollution, where stars, the Milky Way and other celestial features can be seen clearly. It represents a natural nighttime environment largely undisturbed by artificial lighting.

9.1.2 In the context of neighbourhood planning, dark night skies refer to policies aimed at protecting and preserving naturally dark nighttime environments. These efforts recognise the value of darkness not only for stargazing, but also for wildlife, human health and the overall character of rural and semi-rural landscapes.

9.1.3 Dark night sky policies within neighbourhood plans aim to protect and enhance naturally dark nighttime conditions by guiding how and where artificial lighting is used in new development.

9.1.4 These policies typically include clear requirements for lighting in planning applications. Developers may be required to submit lighting designs or technical specifications that demonstrate how proposals minimise light spill, glare and skyglow and align with the standards set in the neighbourhood plan.

9.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

9.2.1 Dark night skies policies support the NPPF requirement under paragraph 198(c) to limit the impacts of light pollution. These policies are especially important in areas near National Parks, National Landscapes and other sensitive designations where the preservation of dark skies is highly valued.

9.2.2 The NPPF December 2024 provides clear guidance on mitigating light pollution, stating that planning policies and decisions should:

"limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation".

9.2.3 This guidance is particularly relevant to rural communities and areas adjacent to sensitive landscapes, where maintaining natural nightscapes is essential for environmental, cultural and recreational reasons.

9.3. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

9.3.1 Further details are offered in the PPG on light pollution, which encourages communities to identify intrinsically dark landscapes and carefully consider the cumulative effects of artificial lighting.

9.3.2 The PPG also advises assessing whether proposed lighting is necessary, adequately controlled and designed to minimise sky glow, glare and light spill.

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9.3.3 For neighbourhood planning groups, both the NPPF and PPG provide a starting point for developing effective dark night sky policies. By aligning neighbourhood plan policies with national guidance, communities can safeguard their natural night environments, enhance local character, support biodiversity and improve residents' quality of life through reduced light pollution.

9.4. National Landscape Management Plans

9.4.1 While your area may not fall within designated National Landscape, it can still be beneficial to understand the broader landscape objectives that are referenced within each area's landscape management plan:

- **The Management Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape** highlights the importance of dark skies as a 'special quality' of the landscape, advocating for planning policies that control light pollution and support dark sky initiatives.
- Similarly, the **North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan** emphasises maintaining tranquillity and protecting dark skies, suggesting that neighbourhood plans can play a role in local-scale protection.

9.4.2 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan states that:

> *"Light pollution of all types should be first prevented, by avoiding light where it is not needed, and where it is, by designing lighting to mitigate harm, through shading, height of fixings, beam orientation, LUX, colour temperature and the proposed hours of use. For example, downward pointing, shielded, operated on timer, and with a 'warm white' colour temperature of 2700-Kelvin maximum.*
>
> *Traditional Chilterns vernacular buildings have small windows. Moderns designs with large areas of glazing should be avoided so that buildings do not appear as boxes of light in the countryside at night, and glinting glazing in the daytime".*

9.4.3 In addition to this, in 2021 the North Wessex AONB Partnership published the North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light which offers a wealth of valuable information on protecting night skies.

9.4.4 Even if your neighbourhood plan area is outside this National Landscape, many of the recommendations in the statement can still provide useful guidance when developing your own dark night skies policies.

9.5. Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

9.5.1 The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) offers valuable data on light pollution, helping communities understand its scope and impact.

9.5.2 CPRE's **Night Blight Mapping Tool** illustrates the extent of light pollution across

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England, helping communities identify areas where dark skies are at risk.

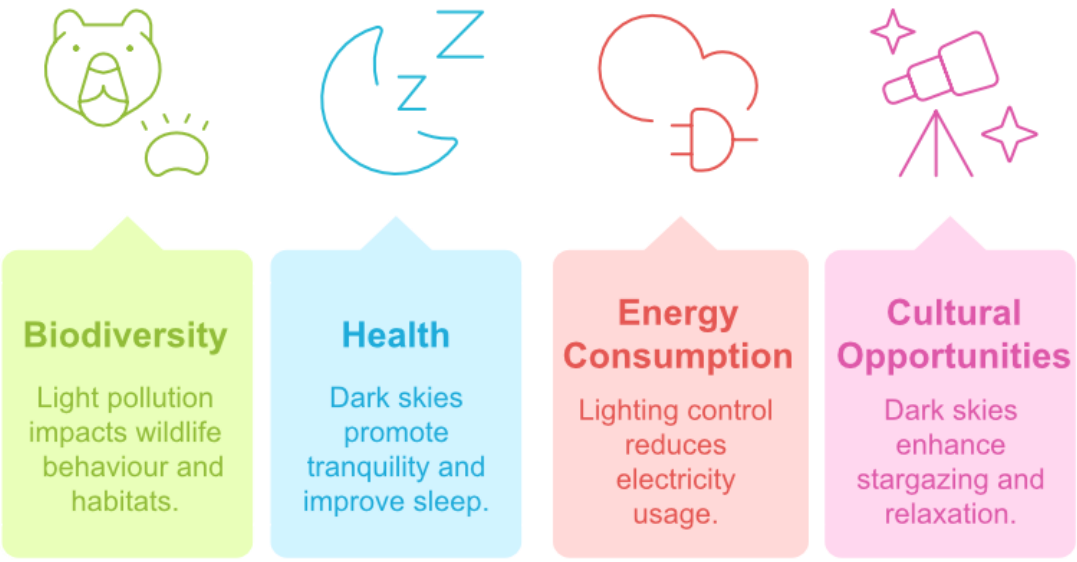
9.5.3 Their research indicates that light pollution is increasing annually, affecting both rural and urban areas and that even minor developments or poorly designed lighting can cumulatively degrade nightscapes.

9.5.4 As with any policy, neighbourhood planning groups will need robust evidence to support its inclusions. The data and guidance referenced here have been successfully used by many groups and accepted through examination.

9.6. Why Include a Dark Night Skies Policy?

9.6.1 Implementing a Dark Night Skies policy offers multiple benefits for your community and environment, including:

- **Biodiversity Protection:** Light pollution disrupts nocturnal wildlife, including bats and their foraging routes, confuses migrating birds and alters natural behaviours and habitats. Reducing artificial light helps preserve these essential ecosystems.
- **Health and Well-being:** Dark skies contribute to a sense of tranquillity and calm. Minimising artificial light exposure, particularly blue light, can improve sleep quality and overall health for residents.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Controlling street lighting and other artificial light sources reduces electricity consumption, leading to cost savings and lower carbon emissions.
- **Cultural and Recreational Value:** Preserved dark skies create opportunities for relaxation, mindfulness, stargazing, wildlife watching and other outdoor activities that benefit from minimal light pollution.



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9.6.2 Therefore, whether your neighbourhood plan area currently enjoys naturally dark skies or faces potential threats from increasing artificial light, including a dark night skies policy can be a valuable tool to protect and enhance your local environment and community well-being.

9.7. How to Identify a Dark Night Sky

9.7.1 Recognising areas with a dark night sky is a crucial first step in developing effective policies to protect them. A dark night sky is one where light pollution is minimal and natural celestial features are clearly visible to the naked eye. These areas are typically free from intrusive artificial lighting and represent a natural nighttime environment.

9.7.2 When identifying dark night skies in your neighbourhood plan area, consider the following:

- **Visual Observation:** One of the simplest ways to identify a dark sky is through direct observation. If a wide array of celestial features are visible, the area is likely to have low levels of skyglow and light intrusion.
- **Mapping Light Pollution:** Use data sources such as CPRE's Night Blight Mapping Tool, which illustrates the distribution and intensity of artificial light across England. This can help locate existing dark sky areas or pinpoint where darkness is being eroded.
- **Contextual Landscape Sensitivity:** Dark skies are often found in or adjacent to rural, semi-rural, or undeveloped areas, especially those near National Parks, National Landscapes or other sensitive landscape designations. These areas often value darkness as a component of their scenic quality, tranquillity, and biodiversity.
- **Local Experience and Knowledge:** Local residents can provide invaluable insights. Ask community members whether they experience glare or excessive lighting at night and where the best stargazing spots are. These observations can complement technical data.
- **Existing Environmental and Planning Designations:** Locations already identified in local green space designations, conservation areas or tranquillity maps may also coincide with areas of dark skies and merit further investigation.
- **Field Surveys and Assessments:** For more technical analysis, neighbourhood planning groups can adopt methodologies such as those found in the CEQ06 Light Impact Assessment used in the emerging Joint Local Plan for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. These provide structured ways to measure and assess existing light levels.

9.7.3 Identifying your area's dark sky assets can help build the evidence base for

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appropriate policy interventions. This may include designating areas as particularly sensitive to light, identifying zones where stricter lighting controls should apply or guiding where dark sky protection aligns with broader landscape and environmental objectives.

9.8. How to Display Dark Night Skies

9.8.1 Once areas of dark night sky have been identified, it is important to clearly display them in your neighbourhood plan's evidence base and policies map. Effective visual representation helps demonstrate the extent and significance of naturally dark areas, supports transparency and strengthens your policy's justification during consultation and examination.

Key Mapping Requirements for Dark Night Skies

9.8.2 When mapping and displaying dark night skies, consider the following good practices:

1. Use of Light Pollution Data

9.8.3 Incorporate spatial data that illustrates levels of light pollution across your area. Tools such as CPRE's Night Blight Mapping Tool and the Light Pollution Map can help visualise the intensity of artificial lighting using graded shading or colour ramps. This allows you to:

- Highlight the darkest areas in your plan area.
- Show zones at risk from encroaching development or lighting.
- Provide a baseline for future monitoring.

2. Overlay with Key Environmental and Planning Layers

9.8.4 Dark night skies are rarely a standalone issue - they often relate to tranquillity, biodiversity corridors, heritage assets or sensitive landscapes. Enhance your maps by layering:

- Local Green Spaces.
- Village boundaries and settlement edges.
- Conservation areas or heritage designations.
- Priority habitats or wildlife corridors.
- Existing or proposed development allocations.

9.8.5 These overlays help show how dark skies interact with other policy considerations and provide context for why certain areas should be protected.

3. Use Distinctive and Legible Symbology

9.8.6 Represent dark night skies using a clear, consistent visual symbol, such as:

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- A starry night texture or stippled shading.
- Deep blue or purple tones to contrast with built-up, lit areas.
- Contour lines or boundaries around areas with the lowest light levels.

9.8.7 Ensure your symbology is distinguishable from other features on the policies map and remains legible in both colour and black-and-white print formats.

4. Reference Technical Lighting Zones (If Available)

9.8.8 Use lighting environmental zones (E1–E4) as per Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance, these can be shown on your maps. Set out in the Joint Local Plan evidence base document - 2024 Dark Skies/Light Impact Assessment. For example:

- E1: Intrinsically dark areas (e.g. open countryside, national landscapes).
- E2: Low district brightness areas (e.g. rural villages).

9.8.9 Highlighting E1 zones can reinforce the need for stricter lighting control policies.

5. Include Titles, Legends and Sources

9.8.10 Ensure your map includes:

- A clear title (e.g., “Dark Night Skies and Light Pollution Context Map”).
- A legend explaining colours, symbols and data sources.
- Attribution for any basemaps or third-party data (e.g., Ordnance Survey, CPRE).

9.8.11 This supports map readability and ensures compliance with mapping standards.

6. Integrate with Policy Text and Assessments

9.8.12 Your map should be directly referenced in the supporting text and policy wording. Where possible:

- Use consistent terminology (e.g., “Dark Sky Area 1” or “Low Light Zone A”).
- Link mapped areas to evidence in your supporting documents (e.g., light impact assessments, consultation responses).
- Cross-reference with lighting design requirements in the plan.

Examples of Effective Dark Night Sky Mapping

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan

9.8.13 The Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan provides a clear and well-executed example of how to map dark night skies using light pollution data. Figure 52 from

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the plan (see below) visualises the relative darkness of the local area using national CPRE Night Blight mapping. The map is embedded directly in the plan's evidence section, accompanied by interpretive text that clearly explains its policy relevance. This ensures the map is not only technically accurate but also communicatively effective, supporting the plan's objective to protect local tranquillity and character.

9.8.14 This approach illustrates several strong mapping practices, including:

- **Use of Light Pollution Data:** The map visualises light levels using CPRE's Night Blight dataset.
- **Overlay with Key Environmental and Planning Layers:** Settlement names and local reference points are included to ground the map in its policy context.
- **Use of Distinctive and Legible Symbology:** Light levels are represented with intuitive colours that distinguish bright zones from darker ones.
- **Include Legends and Sources:** The map includes a detailed legend with quantitative categories and source attribution.

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9.8.15 **Integrate with Policy Text and Assessments:** The map is embedded in the supporting narrative, helping readers understand its relevance to development pressures and landscape protection.

9.8.16 Why this approach is effective:

- **Clearly Communicates Light Pollution Levels (Use of Light Pollution Data):** The map uses CPRE's trusted Night Blight dataset, which enables planners and the public to immediately understand where light pollution is most and least intense, providing a strong evidence base for policy decisions.
- **Grounds the Map in Real-World Context (Overlay with Key Environmental and Planning Layers):** By including named settlements and local landmarks, the map helps users connect light pollution patterns with recognisable places, making it easier to assess the potential impact of development on local tranquillity and dark sky value.
- **Improves Visual Interpretation (Use of Distinctive and Legible Symbology):** The intuitive use of colour, from deep blue (darkest) to yellow (brightest), helps distinguish between areas of high and low light pollution. This visual clarity is essential for meaningful interpretation, even for non-specialists.
- **Supports Transparency and Accuracy (Include Legends and Sources):** A well-defined legend with radiance values in nanowatts per cm^2/sr, along with source attribution, ensures that the data is both traceable and suitable for use in formal planning documents, including examinations and consultations.
- **Enhances Policy Integration and Clarity (Integrate with Policy Text and Assessments):** The map is embedded directly into the policy narrative, ensuring it is not an isolated visual but a key piece of evidence that reinforces the justification for protective measures in development management.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Neighbourhood Plan

9.8.17 The Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Neighbourhood Plan offers a clear and informative example of how to integrate dark night sky mapping into a local policy context. Drawing on CPRE's Night Blight data and using an interactive format, the mapping supports the plan's emphasis on protecting rural character and tranquillity. The use of radiance values, colour gradients and associated data timelines offers a compelling visual and evidence-based tool for understanding light pollution.

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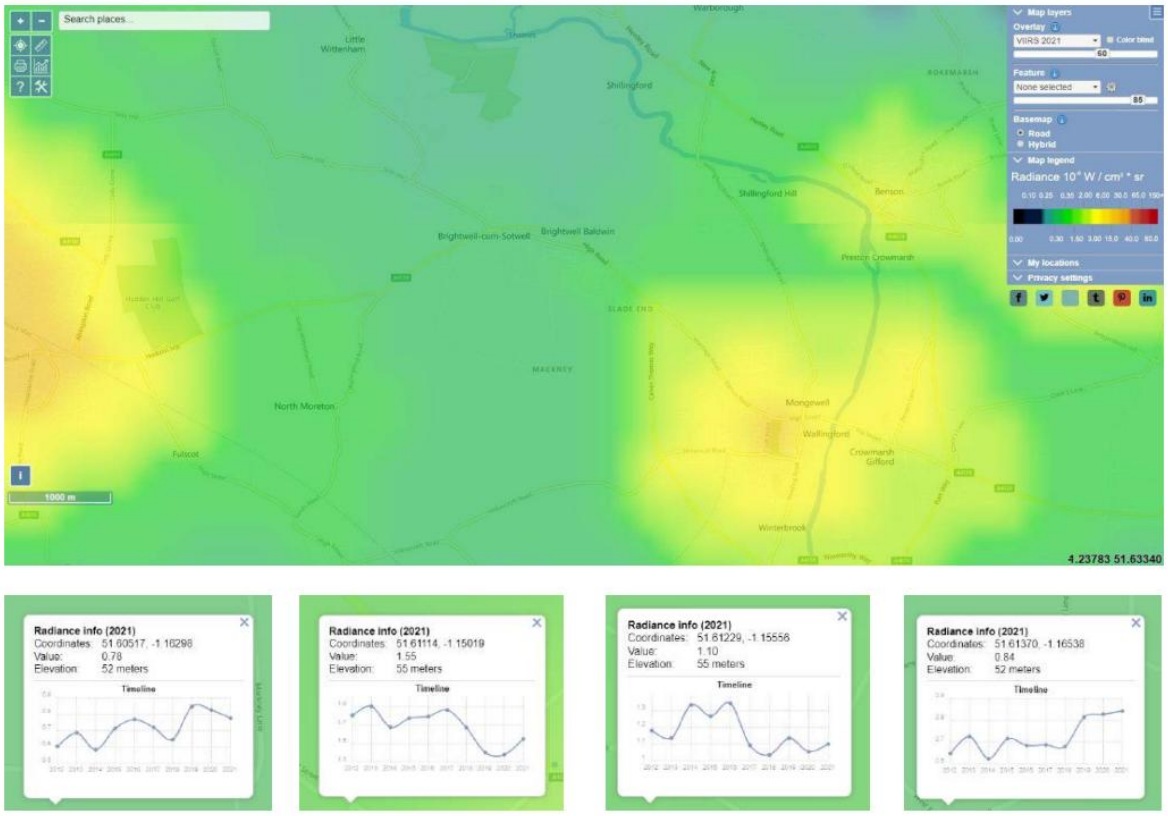

9.8.18 This approach illustrates several strong mapping practices, including:

- **Use of Light Pollution Data:** The map uses VIIRS data, visualised with a colour ramp that indicates varying levels of radiance (in 10^{-6} W/cm^2/sr). This clearly differentiates brighter areas such as Wallingford from darker rural surroundings.
- **Overlay with Key Environmental and Planning Layers:** The map includes identifiable place names (e.g., Brightwell Baldwin, Benson and Wallingford), roads and watercourses to root the data in the local landscape and provide context for how lighting relates to development patterns.
- **Use of Distinctive and Legible Symbology:** A gradient from dark green (darker skies) to bright yellow (high light pollution) effectively communicates relative brightness. The visual scheme is intuitive and supports interpretation even without specialist knowledge.
- **Include Legends and Sources:** A clear legend is included in the interface, showing quantitative values for radiance categories and units of measurement. Map sources and overlays are credited and selectable in the side panel.
- **Integrate with Policy Text and Assessments:** The map is accompanied by individual site-based data points with radiance values and trend lines, allowing deeper integration with policy evidence and future monitoring frameworks.

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9.8.19 Why this approach is effective:

- **Provides Evidence-Based Light Pollution Context:** By using national radiance datasets, the map offers a credible and spatially detailed understanding of light levels, supporting stronger environmental protection policies in low-light zones.
- **Connects Data to Local Geography:** Settlement labels, road networks and local features ensure that the map can be readily interpreted in relation to local development pressures and planning boundaries.
- **Supports Easy Interpretation and Communication:** The clear colour ramp helps both technical and non-technical audiences distinguish darker rural areas from more developed or illuminated locations.
- **Ensures Clarity and Credibility through Legend and Attribution:** The map interface provides both a numerical scale and a descriptive legend, ensuring the information is transparent and traceable, in line with good mapping standards.
- **Links Visual Data with Supporting Evidence:** The inclusion of site-specific radiance timelines enables users to track trends and use this data as part of the plan's evidence base, including when justifying future lighting controls.

9.9. Policy Examples

9.9.1 To view examples of dark night sky policies from made neighbourhood plans, refer to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

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10 Appendices

10.1. Appendix 1: Policy Examples in Made Neighbourhood Plans

10.1.1 The tables below list a number of landscape planning policies found in made neighbourhood plans from across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts.

Local Green Spaces

Binfield Heath (October 2024)	Policy BH3 - Local Green Spaces
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (October 2023)	Policy BCS8 - Local Green Spaces
Chinnor (November 2023)	Policy CH GP1 – Local Green Spaces
East Hagbourne (April 2024)	Policy E1 – Local Green Spaces
Lewknor (December 2023)	Policy FI1 – Local Green Spaces
Sonning Common (March 2023)	Policy RENV6
Tiddington with Albury (June 2023)	Policy TwA3 – Local Green Spaces
Towersey (December 2023)	Policy TOW6 – Designation of Local Green Spaces
Wallingford (February 2025)	Policy CF2 – Local Green Spaces
East Hanney (May 2024)	Policy EHNP 8 – Local Green Spaces
Sutton Courtenay (May 2024)	Policy SC5: Local Green Spaces
Wantage (May 2025)	Policy 8: Green Infrastructure – Local Green Spaces

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Important Views

Beckley and Stowood (October 2024)	Policy DS 1 – Important Views
Benson (March 2023)	Policy NP28 – Landscape and Views
Binfield Heath (October 2024)	Policy BH4 – Important Views
East Challow (June 2023)	Policy L3 - Important Views and Vistas
East Hagbourne (Reviewed April 2024)	Policy VC2 – Conserving and Enhancing Important Views
Garsington (October 2024)	Policy GARS3 – Important Views
Steventon (October 2024)	Policy 4 (c) Landscape and Environment - Views and Vistas
Sutton Courtenay (May 2024)	Policy SC3 – Key Views and Vistas
Wallingford (February 2025)	Policy HA3 – Views and Vistas

Green Gaps/Buffers

Benson (March 2023)	Policy NP27 – Distinctiveness of Settlements
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (October 2023)	Policy BCS9 – Local Gaps
East Hagbourne (April 2024)	Policy VC1a – Lower End Field Local Gap Policy VC1b – Coscote Fields Local Gap Policy VC1c – The Green Corridor Local Gap
East Hanney (May 2024)	Policy EHNP 4 – Coalescence
Sutton Courtenay (May 2024)	Policy SC1 – Green Gaps

Dark Night Skies

Binfield Heath (October 2024)	Policy BH16 – Dark Night Skies

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Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (October 2023)	Policy BCS11 – Dark Skies
Tiddington with Albury (June 2023)	Policy TwA11 – Dark Skies

10.2. Appendix 2: Policy Examples Expanded

10.1.2 The table showcases a number of made neighbourhood plan landscape policies in their entirety.

Policy Title and Detail[4]
Policy BH16 – Dark Night Skies **Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan (October 2024)** To view this neighbourhood plan: Click here Development proposals should conserve and enhance relative tranquillity in relation to light pollution and dark night skies. Development proposals should also demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and other relevant standards or guidance (CIE 150:2017 Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations), or any equivalent replacement/updated guidance for lighting within environmental zones. Development proposals which include lighting should ensure that: i. Adverse effects from the installed lighting should be avoided. ii. If it is demonstrated that the above is not achievable, then adverse impacts are appropriately mitigated e.g. activated by sensors and turned off by timers. iii. The measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not reduced. iv. Lighting is not unnecessarily visible in nearby designated areas and key habitats. v. The visibility of lighting from the surrounding landscape is avoided. vi. Building designs should avoid large areas of glazing which would result in light spillage into rural and unlit areas. vii. Glazing should be screened at night to avoid light spillage into rural and unlit areas where possible.
Policy SC1: Green Gaps **Sutton Courtnenay Neighbourhood Plan (May 2024)** To view this neighbourhood plan: Click here

[4] Please note that these policies may have been slightly modified for clarity and consistency.

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The Plan identifies two Greens Gaps between Sutton Courtenay and Didcot/Milton as shown in Figure 6.3:

- Green Gap 3j, and
- Green Gap 4a.

Development proposals within the identified Green Gaps which would either individually or cumulatively, affect the integrity of the gap and the physical and visual separation between Sutton Courtenay and Didcot/Milton will not be supported.

Policy VC1c – The Green Corridor Local Gap

East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan (April 2024)

To view this neighbourhood plan: Click here

Outside the local green space designations within this Local Gap (as shown on the Policies Map), any proposals for development within the Green Corridor Local Gap should maintain the soft transition between East Hagbourne and Didcot, and should preserve the setting of the village in its wider rural landscape.

Development proposals on land designated as local green spaces within the Green Gap will be determined in accordance with the provisions of Policy E1 of this Plan.

Policy L3 – Important Views and Vistas

East Challow Neighbourhood Plan (June 2023)

To view this neighbourhood plan: Click here

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following important views which are drawn from the Landscape Character Assessment and Parish Character Appraisal and are shown at Figure 30:

1. Views from the B4507 north over the Vale of the White Horse and south across the AONB towards the Ridgeway, across the Letcombe Brook valley (Landscape Character Assessment, photographs 2-4).
2. Views from Segsbury Camp and Gramps/Smith's Hill and the Ridgeway northwards across the land either side of the B4507 and towards the northern parts of the Plan area (Landscape Character Assessment, photographs 5 and 6, respectively).
3. Views from the Wilts and Berks Canal corridor towards East Challow village (Landscape Character Assessment, photograph 7, 8).
4. View from the Wilts and Berks Canal corridor towards Wantage village (Landscape Character Assessment, photograph 13).
5. Views from the Wilts and Berks Canal corridor southwards towards the AONB and Ridgeway (Landscape Character Assessment, photograph 9, 12).
6. Views from the rights of way north / north-west of East Challow southwards towards

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the AONB and Ridgeway (Landscape Character Assessment, photograph 14-16).
7. Views of the rural landscape from Circourt Road (Landscape Character Assessment, photographs 18-21).
8. Views of the agricultural landscape south from Woodhill Lane (Landscape Character Assessment, photographs 16 and 17).
9. Views from the A417 north across parkland (LCA 3) towards the vale and south towards the North Wessex Downs (Landscape Character Assessment, photographs 10 and 11 respectively).
10. Views from the A417 and associated footways west to the historic village green area (Parish Character Appraisal Area 1).

The design, height, massing, and layout of development proposals should acknowledge and respond positively to the identified important views. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on an identified important view will not be supported.

Policy 4 (c) - Landscape and Environment - Views and Vistas
Steventon Parish Neighbourhood Plan (October 2024)

To view this neighbourhood plan: Click here

The layout, design, and massing of development proposals should respond positively to identified important views (as set out in Appendix 5). Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the local character of an identified important view (as set out in Appendix 5) will not be supported.

Policy EHNP 8 – Local Green Spaces
East Hanney Neighbourhood Plan (May 2024)

To view this neighbourhood plan: Click here

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations as Local Green Space, as shown in Figure 15:

- Letcombe Brook Green corridor, land to the west bank of the Brook, from the iron bridge extending northwards toward Ploughly Farm. Area A.
- Chapel Site, at Ploughly Farm, alongside Letcombe Brook. Area B.
- Land north of Philberds alongside the East Bank of Letcombe Brook. Area C.
- Kingsleases, the area of land north of the sports fields which links through to land along the Letcombe Brook Green corridor. Area D.
- Parcel of land adjacent to the right bank of Letcombe Brook to the rear of the British Legion, known as Garstane Paddocks. Area E.

New development will not be supported on land designated as Local Green Space except in very special circumstances.

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10.3. Appendix 3: Identifying Landscape Value Table

Table 1: Range of Factors that can be Considered when Identifying Landscape Value

Factor	Definition	Examples of Indicators of Landscape Value	Examples of Evidence
Natural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place. Extent and survival of seminatural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type. Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features. Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks. Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/green infrastructure network.	Landscape character assessment. LANDMAP Geological Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects (in Wales). Ecological and geological designations. SSSI citations and condition assessments. Geological Conservation Review. Habitat surveys. Priority habitats. Nature recovery networks/nature pathways. Habitat network opportunity mapping/ green infrastructure mapping.

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			Catchment management plans. Ecosystem services assessment/ schemes. Specialist ecological studies.
Cultural Heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels). Presence of historic parks and gardens and designed landscapes. Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies). Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth (e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth) or presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways or tracks associated with past industrial activity).	Landscape character Assessment. LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape Services Aspect (in Wales). Historic environment and archaeological designations. Conservation Area appraisals, Village Design Statements. Historic maps. Historic landscape character. Assessments, Historic Land Use Assessment and Historic Area Assessments. Place names. Specialist heritage studies.

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Landscape Condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.	Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees). Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health. Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns). Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence).	Landscape character assessment. LANDMAP condition and trend questions (in Wales). Hedgerow/tree surveys. Observations about intactness/ condition made in the field by the assessor. SSSI condition assessments. Historic landscape character assessments/map regression analysis.
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.	Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape. Associations with science or other technical achievements. Links to a notable historical event. Associations with a famous person or people.	Information about arts and science relating to a place. Historical accounts, cultural traditions and folklore. Guidebooks/ published cultural trails LANDMAP Cultural Landscape Services aspect (in Wales).
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity.	Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of	Landscape Character Assessment.

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		expression of landscape characteristics). Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place. Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity. Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement. Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic).	LANDMAP Visual & Sensory question 3 and 25, – Historic Landscape question 4 (in Wales). Guidebooks. Observations about identity/ distinctiveness made in the field by the assessor.
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.	Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature. Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/inspiration. Presence of town and village greens. Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is	Definitive public rights of way mapping/ OS map data. National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths, Core Paths. Open access land (including registered common land). Database of registered town or village greens. Visitor surveys/ studies

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		important. Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity.	Observations about recreational use/enjoyment made in the field by the assessor.
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.	Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover. Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture. Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges). Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape. Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks.	Landscape Character Assessment. LANDMAP Visual and Sensory scenic quality question 46 (in Wales). Protected views, views studies. Areas frequently photographed or used in images used for tourism/ visitor/promotional purposes or views described or praised in literature. Observations about scenic qualities made in the field by the assessor. Conservation Area Appraisals. Village Design Statements or similar.
Perceptual (Wildness and Tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies.	High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet.	Tranquillity mapping and factors which contribute to and detract from tranquillity.

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		Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts). Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness Dark Night Skies. A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting.	Dark Skies mapping Wildness mapping and Wild Land Areas in Scotland Land cover mapping. Field survey LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect.
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.	Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows. Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network. Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the	Land cover and habitat maps. Ecosystem services assessments and mapping (particularly supporting and regulating services). Green infrastructure studies/strategies Development and management plans for nationally-designated landscapes, Local Plans and SPDs. Landscape Character Assessments.

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		appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities.	

Extract from The Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations

10.4. Appendix 4: Valued Landscapes Policy Checklist

Step/Action	Question(s)	Completed?	Notes
Decide Whether to Identify a Valued Landscape	1. Have you identified a landscape or area that is distinctive, valued by the community and potentially vulnerable to development? 2. Have you considered whether this area falls outside existing designations (e.g. National Landscapes) but still holds local significance? 3. Are you aware that not all attractive or green spaces will meet the 'valued landscape' threshold in planning terms?		
Understand the Purpose and Benefits	1. Are you clear about the benefits of identifying a valued landscape? For example: • Influencing development to respond to local character. • Highlighting non-designated but important local areas. • Strengthening policy through local evidence.		

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	• Reflecting community identity and priorities. • Promoting stewardship and awareness of the local landscape.		
Assemble the Right Resources	1. Have you reviewed key guidance (e.g. GLVIA3, LI TGN 02/21)? 2. Have you accessed local evidence (e.g. Landscape Character Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals, Joint Local Plan studies)? 3. Have you considered bringing in a professional landscape consultant if needed?		
Follow a Structured Methodology	Ensure you apply a clear, evidence-based six-step process: 1. Step 1: Desktop Review: • Have you mapped potential candidate landscapes using local knowledge and existing studies? • Are boundaries based on natural features or visual catchments? 2. Step 2: Establish Assessment Criteria: • Have you assessed candidate areas using recognised criteria (e.g. scenic quality, rarity, conservation interest etc.)?		

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	• Have you used locally specific information and GLVIA3 guidance to inform your assessment? 3. Step 3: Fieldwork: • Have you conducted systematic surveys, taken photographs and recorded landscape features? • Have you observed the area in different seasons and times? 4. Step 4: Community Engagement: • Have you consulted with residents, parish councils, landowners and local groups? • Have you incorporated their insights into your assessment? 5. Step 5: Benchmark and Contextualise: • Have you compared your area with nearby designated landscapes? • Have you shown how the landscape is distinct or exemplary? 6. Step 6: Reporting: • Have you compiled a clear, evidence-led report with maps,		

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	photographs and justifications? • Have you included recommendations for managing change and development?		
Develop the Policy	1. Is your policy clear, concise and enforceable? 2. Does it: • Reference the evidence base directly? • Include a map showing spatial boundaries? • Contain specific criteria for assessing planning applications? • Use plain language and consistent terminology? • Avoid ambiguous or subjective phrases?		
Test Against Best Practice	1. Does your policy reflect examples from successful neighbourhood plans? 2. Have you addressed local policy gaps, especially for landscapes outside formal designations? 3. Does it meet national planning policy expectations and follow Planning Practice Guidance?		
Prepare for Examination	1. Can the evidence and policy withstand scrutiny by an independent examiner? 2. Is the landscape's value clearly distinguished from ordinary countryside?		

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	3. Have you demonstrated both technical robustness and strong community support?		
Publish and Engage	1. Have you made the draft policy available online (e.g. via a neighbourhood plan website)? 2. Have you invited public comment and responded to feedback?		

10.5. Appendix 5: Important Views Table

Below is a template important views table for you to use in your neighbourhood plan.

View Name/Reference	Image of View	Assessment of View	Sensitivity of View
IV1 -			
IV2 -			
IV3 -			
IV4 -			
IV5 -			

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10.6. Appendix 6: Local Green Spaces Table

Below is a template local green spaces table for you to use in your neighbourhood plan.

Local Green Space Name/Reference	Image of Local Green Space	Assessment of Local Green Space
LGS1 -		
LGS2 -		
LGS3 -		
LGS4 -		
LGS5 -		

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11 Glossary of Technical Terms

This section presents a list of technical terms and phrases frequently used in planning policy and neighbourhood planning. Each entry includes a brief definition to support understanding and promote clarity. Where possible, definitions have been sourced from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Glossary (2024).

A

- **Accessibility** - The ease with which people of all abilities can reach, enter, and use landscape spaces and facilities. Can also refer to the availability of documents.
- **Ancient or Veteran Tree** - A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.
- **Ancient Woodland** - An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- **Archaeological Interest** - There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

B

- **Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land** - Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.
- **Biodiversity** - The variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat or ecosystem, essential for ecological resilience.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain** – A way of creating and improving biodiversity by requiring development to have a positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity.
- **Brownfield Land** - See Previously developed land.
- **Built Environment** - The human-made surroundings including buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces.

C

- **Character Area** - A distinct geographical area with unique landscape, built form, or cultural characteristics.

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- **Climate Change Adaptation** - Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change, to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.
- **Climate Change Mitigation** - Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Conservation** (for heritage policy)- The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
- **Conservation Area** - Areas designated for their special architectural or historic interest, where development is carefully controlled.

D

- **Design Code** - A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.
- **Design Guide** - A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice, often produced by a local authority.
- **Designated Heritage Asset** - A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
- **Designated Rural Areas** - National Parks, National Landscapes and areas designated as 'rural' under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.
- **Drainage Hierarchy** - A system prioritising natural drainage solutions before engineered systems (source control, permeable surfaces, swales, ponds).

E

- **Ecological Corridor -** Linear landscape features that connect habitats and allow wildlife movement between areas.
- **Existing Vegetation -** Plants already present on a site, which may be retained and integrated into new development.

G

- **Green Belt** - Protected land, defined in section 13 of the NPPF.
- **Green Corridor** - Linear green spaces that provide ecological connectivity and recreational routes through urban areas.

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- **Green Infrastructure** - A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.
- **Green Space** - Any area covered by vegetation, including parks, gardens, woodlands, and green corridors.

H

- **Habitat** - The natural environment where plants and animals live and find resources for survival.
- **Habitats Site** - Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.
- **Heritage Asset** - A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- **Historic Environment** - All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

I

- **Infrastructure** – All the ancillary works and services that are necessary to support human activities, including roads, sewers, schools, hospitals, etc.
- **International, National and Locally Designated Sites of Importance for Biodiversity** - All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.
- **Irreplaceable Habitat** - Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen.

L

- **Landscape Character Assessment** - Systematic evaluation of landscape

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features, qualities, and sensitivity to change.

- **Landscape Impact Assessment** - Analysis of how proposed development would affect landscape character and visual amenity.
- **Local Distinctiveness** - The positive features of a place that contribute to its particular identity and sense of place.
- **Local Green Space** – Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular important to local communities.
- **Local Planning Authority** - The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

N

- **National Landscapes** - Areas legally designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- **National Trails** - Long distance routes for walking, cycling and horse riding.
- **Natural Flood Management** – Natural flood management uses natural processes to reduce the risk of flooding by protecting, restoring, and/or mimicking the natural functions of catchments, floodplains and the coasts to slow and store water. Natural flood management can also provide wider environmental benefits.
- **Nature Recovery Network** - An expanding, increasingly connected, network of wildlife-rich habitats supporting species recovery, alongside wider benefits such as carbon capture, water quality improvements, natural flood risk management and recreation. It includes the existing network of protected sites and other wildlife rich habitats as well as landscape or catchment scale recovery areas where there is coordinated action for species and habitats.
- **Nature-based Solutions** - Sustainable planning approaches that use natural processes to address challenges like flooding or air quality.

O

- **Open Space** - all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

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- **Orientation** - the positioning of buildings and spaces to optimise daylight, views, and microclimatic conditions.

P

- **Parkland** - Large areas of open space designed for recreation and enjoyment, often with formal or informal landscaping.
- **Permeable Surfaces** - Materials that allow water to pass through, reducing surface runoff and supporting sustainable drainage.
- **Previously Developed Land** - Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed. Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.
- **Priority Habitats and Species** - Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Q

- **Quality of Place** - The overall environmental, social, and economic characteristics that make a location attractive and liveable.

R

- **Ramsar Sites** - Wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.
- **Resilience** - The capacity of landscape systems to recover from disturbances and adapt to changing conditions.

S

- **Sense of Place** - The distinctive identity and character of a location that makes it recognisable and meaningful to people.
- **Significance (for Heritage Policy)** – The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be

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archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

- **Site of Special Scientific Interest** - Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- **Skyline** - The outline of buildings, trees, and landforms against the sky, important for visual character.
- **Special Areas of Conservation** – Areas defined by regulation 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been given special protection as important conservation sites.
- **Special Protection Areas** - Areas classified under regulation 15 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds.
- **Sustainable Drainage System** – A sustainable drainage system controls surface water run off close to where it falls, combining a mixture of built and nature-based techniques to mimic natural drainage as closely as possible, and accounting for the predicted impacts of climate change. The type of system that would be appropriate will vary from small scale interventions such as permeable paving and soakaways that can be used in very small developments to larger integrated schemes in major developments.

T

- **Topography** - The natural and artificial physical features of an area including elevation, slope, and landform.
- **Tree Preservation Order** - Legal protection for specific trees or woodland areas considered important for amenity.

V

- **Valued Landscape** - Areas recognised for their scenic quality, tranquillity, cultural associations, or recreation value.
- **Views and Vistas** - Important sight lines within and across landscapes that contribute to visual amenity and orientation.
- **Visual Amenity** - The attractiveness of an area in terms of its visual appearance and the pleasure derived from viewing it.

W

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- **Wildlife corridor** – Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

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Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio, email, easy read and alternative languages.

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