

Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Policy 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

Executive Summary

- 1.1 This guide helps communities within South Oxfordshire District develop effective nature recovery and biodiversity policies within their neighbourhood development plans, also referred to as neighbourhood plans. As our natural and biodiversity states continues to fall, impacting our local environments, economies and societies, it is crucial for communities to integrate sustainable and resilient policies into their planning processes.
- 1.2 The importance of managing our land is clearly highlighted in the [State of Nature report 2023](#), which sets out that across the UK species studied have declined on average by 19% since 1970. In addition, more than half of our flowering plants, mosses etc have been lost in the same time period. The report states: *“The evidence from the last 50 years shows that on land and in freshwater, significant and ongoing changes in the way we manage our land for agriculture, and the effects of climate change, are having the biggest impacts on our wildlife”*.
- 1.3 As the above highlights, as species and habitats continue to decline, it is imperative that we evaluate how our land uses are impacting our local environments, economies and societies. It is crucial for communities to integrate sustainable and resilient policies to promote biodiversity into their neighbourhood plans.
- 1.4 This guide provides practical advice, real-world examples from made neighbourhood plans and user-friendly templates to empower and support communities in creating policies that contribute to emerging and existing local nature recovery strategies, thereby addressing biodiversity decline.
- 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 biodiversity and nature recovery policies tailored to your community’s specific needs and challenges.

Importance of Biodiversity

- 1.6 In addition to the State of Nature report 2023 and the data that is collected, The Royal Society also provides an explanation as to why biodiversity is so important: *“Biodiversity is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. Without a wide range of animals, plants and microorganisms, we cannot have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on to provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat. And people also value nature itself”*.¹

¹ The Royal Society, no date -see the [Royal Society's website](#), for more on biodiversity importance

- 1.7 Whilst to many the benefits of securing the future for species and habitats may be obvious, for others, there may be the need to highlight the wider benefits.
- 1.8 There are a number of threats that can harm our biodiversity, these include:



What is a Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Policy?

- 1.9 A nature recovery and biodiversity policy in a neighbourhood plan sets out clear expectations for how nature and biodiversity issues should be addressed within the community. It provides a structured framework to guide sustainable development, ensuring that future growth supports biodiversity resilience and environmental sustainability.
- 1.10 Including such a policy in a neighbourhood plan empowers and enables communities to take an active role in protecting and enhancing local biodiversity by shaping how development supports protection and enhancement efforts.
- 1.11 Neighbourhood plan nature recovery and biodiversity policies support local nature recovery strategies, foster collaboration within the community and contribute to reversing biodiversity decline, as the below graphic illustrates.



1.12 Policies can be broad in scope, allowing neighbourhood plans to address a wide range of local issues and priorities such as:



Building Design



Energy Use



Transport



Green Infrastructure



Community Resilience

1.13 The level of detail in a neighbourhood plans' nature recovery and biodiversity policy can vary depending on the needs and priorities of the community. Some policies may be brief and straightforward, while others may include detailed explanations supported by contextual information, justification and implementation guidance.

Benefits of Including Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Policies in Neighbourhood Plans

1.14 There are many benefits to integrating nature recovery and biodiversity policies into your neighbourhood plan. The key benefits include:

- planning benefits,
- community benefits, and
- biodiversity and environment benefits.

Planning Benefits

1.15 Embedding local policies in your neighbourhood plan can play a vital role in nature recovery. Such policies can help to protect and restore habitats, strengthen ecological networks, and ensure that development contributes to biodiversity enhancement while remaining in keeping with the local landscape character.



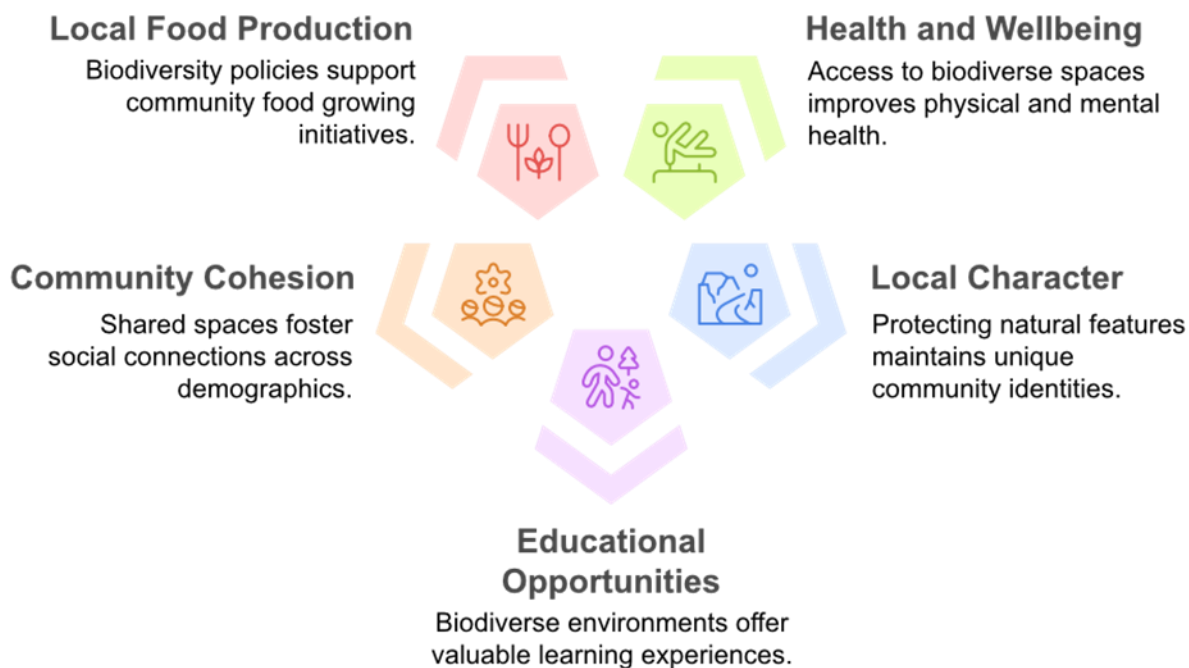
1.1

as:

- **Legal Weight in Planning Decisions:** When biodiversity policies are incorporated into an adopted neighbourhood plan, they become part of the statutory development plan. This gives them significant weight in planning decisions and provides a stronger basis for protecting and enhancing local natural assets.
- **Local Control Over Environmental Priorities:** Neighbourhood plans allow communities to tailor biodiversity policies to local ecological conditions and priorities, rather than relying solely on broader district or national policies that might not address specific local environmental assets or challenges.
- **Integration with Development:** By including biodiversity policies in neighbourhood plans, environmental considerations can be integrated with other aspects of development from the outset, helping to create more sustainable, resilient places.
- **Supporting National Policy and Legal Compliance:** Neighbourhood plans that include biodiversity and nature recovery policies help demonstrate alignment with national planning policy and legislation. This includes meeting requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting delivery of the Environment Act 2021.
- **Providing Evidence-Based Protection for Nature:** Well-researched biodiversity policies enable neighbourhood plans to identify, protect and enhance locally significant habitats, species and natural features. This strengthens the evidence base used to inform planning decisions, ensuring that environmental assets are recognised and considered from the outset of development proposals.
- **Promoting Meaningful Community Engagement:** Nature recovery is a topic that resonates with many residents. Including biodiversity-related policies in the neighbourhood plan offers a positive and accessible entry point for wider community participation. It encourages local knowledge-sharing, builds support for the plan and helps communities take ownership of protecting and enhancing their natural environment.

Community Benefits

- 1.17 Including nature recovery and biodiversity policies in your neighbourhood plan can significantly enhance community wellbeing and strengthen local identity by increasing community involvement.



1.18 As summarised above, including nature recovery and biodiversity policies in neighbourhood plans delivers several significant community benefits:

- **Strengthening Community Cohesion:** Biodiverse shared spaces, such as community gardens, nature trails and green corridors, provide places where residents from different backgrounds and age groups can come together. These interactions help build stronger social bonds, reduce isolation and foster a greater sense of belonging.
- **Supporting Local Food Production:** Policies that encourage biodiversity can also support community food-growing initiatives, such as allotments or edible landscapes. These spaces contribute to food security, build practical skills and offer opportunities for residents to connect with nature through hands-on experiences.
- **Enhancing Health and Wellbeing:** Access to biodiverse, natural spaces has been shown to improve both physical and mental health. Spending time in green spaces reduces stress, promotes physical activity and offers restorative benefits that support overall wellbeing.
- **Protecting Local Character and Identity:** Nature recovery policies help preserve and enhance the natural features that contribute to a community's unique sense of place. This includes protecting ancient woodlands, local wildlife species and distinct landscape features that shape local identity and pride.

Biodiversity and Environmental Benefits

1.19 By including nature recovery and biodiversity policies in your neighbourhood plan,

you can secure a range of benefits from restoring habitats and improving ecological connectivity to creating healthier, more wildlife-rich places for people to enjoy. A more detailed breakdown of the biodiversity and environmental benefits is set out below:



Habitat Protection

Neighbourhood plans can identify and protect existing valuable habitats while designating areas for habitat creation and restoration, helping to reverse habitat fragmentation and loss.



Wildlife Corridors

Policies can establish or safeguard wildlife corridors between habitat patches, enabling species movement and creating more resilient ecological networks that help species adapt to climate change.



Species Diversity

Targeted policies can support specific threatened or declining species of local importance, creating conditions that allow populations to stabilise or recover.



Water Management

Biodiversity-focused policies typically promote natural drainage solutions that support both wildlife and sustainable water management, reducing flood risk and improving water quality.



Urban Cooling

Increasing vegetation cover helps mitigate urban heat island effects, creating more comfortable microclimates and reducing energy demands for cooling.



Pollinator Support

Neighbourhood plans can include specific measures to support pollinator populations, which are critical for ecosystem function and food production.

2 Policy Conformity

Compliance with Planning Documents

2.1 Nature recovery and biodiversity 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.

- 2.2 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 nature recovery and biodiversity within the community.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.3 The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) sets the national context within which every neighbourhood plan must sit. Below is a concise guide to the most relevant NPPF policies on nature recovery and biodiversity, together with practical pointers on how neighbourhood planning groups can build locally specific policies that complement, rather than repeat, national guidance.

Sustainable Development ([Section 2](#))

- 2.4 In the NPPF, Section 2 talks about the concept of achieving sustainable development.
- 2.5 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](#))

- 2.6 Section 15 provides more detailed direction on how planning should conserve and enhance the natural environment.
- 2.7 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...*
 - d) 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;

- e) *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...*

2.8 Both Section 2 and Section 15 in the NPPF indicate the importance of nature recovery and biodiversity related planning policies.

Why These National Policies Matter Locally

2.9 Referencing Section 2 and Section 15 in your evidence base can help demonstrate that your neighbourhood plan is consistent with national policy – one of the basic conditions that your plan must meet.

2.10 It also helps decision-makers understand how your local requirements relate to the broader planning framework, reducing the risk of policy conflict.

2.11 Lastly, when you translate national objectives into place-specific actions, like protecting a local chalk stream or creating a pollinator corridor, your policies carry greater weight and are more likely to be implemented.

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

2.12 The [National Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\)](#) includes sections relevant to nature recovery and biodiversity, providing advice on how the planning system can support the protection and enhancement of natural habitats. National PPG is intended to add further context to the NPPF and should be read alongside the NPPF. This guidance highlights the importance of integrating biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure and habitat connectivity into the planning process to help reverse nature loss and support ecological resilience.

Natural Environment:

1. [Agricultural Land, Soil and Brownfield Land of Environmental Value](#)
2. [Green Infrastructure](#)
3. [Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Ecosystems](#)
4. [Landscape](#)
5. [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#)

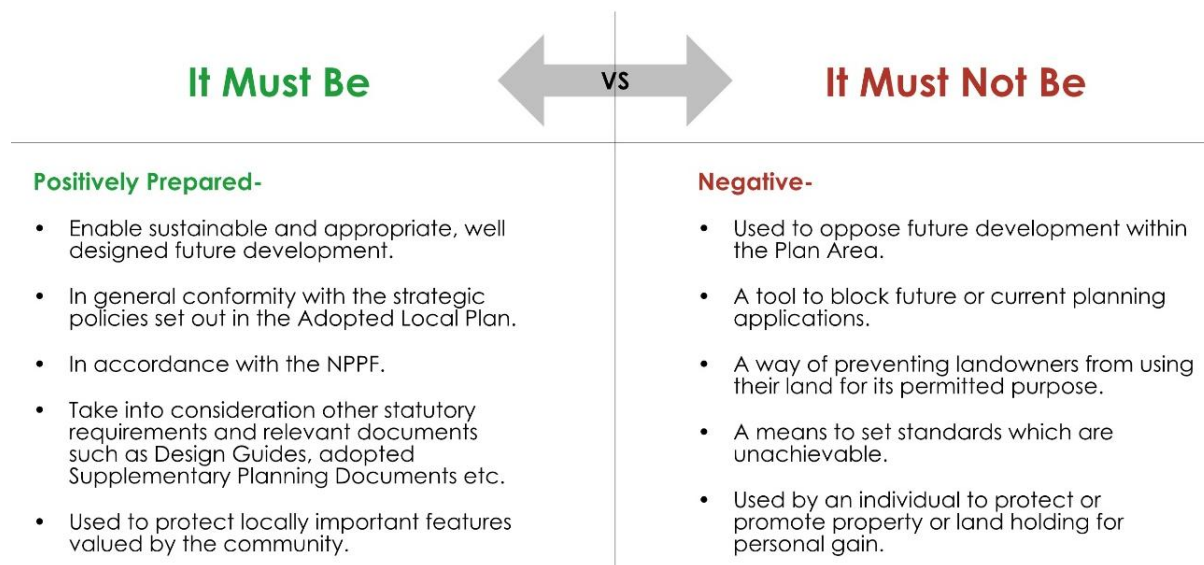
Biodiversity Net Gain

1. [About Biodiversity Gain](#)

Conformity with the Local Plan

- 2.13 It is important to remember that the policies included 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. Neighbourhood planning policies should avoid directly copying and repeating the same policy from the Local Plan². Instead, they should be tailored and crafted to fit the specific needs and demands of the neighbourhood area according to your evidence.
- 2.14 A neighbourhood plan must be positively prepared³ and not a vehicle for preventing future development. This is not to say that you cannot protect elements, only that it needs to be a balanced approach. The diagram below illustrates this.

When Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan



South Oxfordshire District Council Adopted Local Plan 2035

- 2.15 Tackling environmental and biodiversity issues is one of the core objectives of the adopted Local Plan. In the Strategic Objectives section, Strategy 7 – Natural and Built Environment, OBJ 7.1 states *“Protect and enhance the natural environment, including biodiversity, the landscape, green infrastructure and our waterways, placing particular importance on the value of the Oxford Green Belt, our two Areas*

² Paragraph 16(f): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/3-plan-making>

³ Paragraph 16(b): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/3-plan-making>

of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the River Thames”.

2.16 Therefore, planning policies included in neighbourhood plans should be in conformity with and support the Local Plan’s strategic policies and objectives. The strategic policies are identified in Appendix 14 of the Local Plan 2035.

Relevant adopted Local Plan policies include:

- ENV1 Landscape and Countryside.
- ENV2 Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species.
- ENV3 Biodiversity.
- ENV4 Watercourses.
- ENV5 Green Infrastructure in New Developments.

2.17 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.



The district has many waterways and flood plains which present excellent biodiversity habitats

Biodiversity Duty

- 2.18 The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the "biodiversity duty" requiring all public authorities in England, including South Oxfordshire District Council, to consider how they can enhance and preserve biodiversity within their areas of responsibility. For information and guidance on compliance with this duty, please visit [GOV.uk](https://www.gov.uk).
- 2.19 As Parish or Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums developing neighbourhood plans, you play a crucial role in delivering this duty at the local level.
- 2.20 While South Oxfordshire District Council has the primary statutory responsibility for this duty, neighbourhood plans provide a mechanism through which local communities can implement biodiversity protection and enhancement in ways that reflect local priorities and knowledge. Your neighbourhood plan policies on biodiversity also contribute directly to South Oxfordshire District Council's fulfilment of its legal obligations under the Environment Act.
- 2.21 Consequently, by including robust biodiversity policies in your neighbourhood plan, you are not only addressing local environmental priorities but also helping South Oxfordshire meet its statutory biodiversity duty through locally appropriate implementation. This collaborative approach ensures that national biodiversity requirements are met through policies tailored to local ecological conditions and community values.
- 2.22 Actions taken by the local authority should contribute towards achieving the set national targets and goals regarding biodiversity. The published [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP23\)](#) in January 2023 states the government's plans and strategies for significant improvement of the natural environment.
- 2.23 South Oxfordshire states that the council is working to protect and enhance biodiversity through the land use planning system to help ensure the local environment is better protected for the future.
- 2.24 One way it has approached doing this is through [Biodiversity Net Gain \(BNG\)](#):
- "BNG is an approach to development and land management that aims to leave the natural world in a better condition than it was beforehand, after first avoiding and minimising harm".*
- 2.25 Detailed information regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and how it is calculated can be found on the South Oxfordshire website, linked above.



An example could be to include a policy to ensure a careful balance between recreational water uses and potential adverse impacts on biodiversity

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

2.26 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are spatial strategies introduced by the Environment Act 2021 that identify opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and supporting nature recovery. They map existing wildlife habitats and priority locations for habitat creation or improvement, helping to form coherent ecological networks across a local area.

2.27 Each local nature recovery strategy will be specific and tailor-made to its own area.

2.28 A local nature recovery strategy must include:



2.29 South Oxfordshire along with other councils, universities, environmental organisations, farmers, businesses and landowners within Oxfordshire are working together under [Oxfordshire's Local Nature Partnership \(LNP\)](#) to bring

nature to the forefront of decision-making. Oxfordshire County Council is the responsible authority for producing the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#) for the whole of Oxfordshire, adhering to the requirement set by the [Environment Act 2021](#).

2.30 The LNRS for Oxfordshire was launched in November 2025 following the approval by local authorities across Oxfordshire. More information can be found on the [Oxfordshire County Council website](#).

2.31 Statutory guidance for responsible authorities (in this case Oxfordshire County Council) can be found on [GOV.uk](#), which explains in detail what a local habitat map and a written statement of biodiversity priorities should contain.

2.32 The Oxfordshire LNRS is made up of four elements:

- 1) Description of Strategy Area
- 2) Statement of Biodiversity Priorities
- 3) Species Priority List
- 4) LNRS Maps

2.33 To effectively build upon the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in your neighbourhood plan the following approach is suggested:

1. Review and Understand the [Oxfordshire LNRS](#) in Detail:

- identify priority habitats, species and opportunity areas within your neighbourhood area boundary,
- note specific recovery targets and goals that apply to your locality, and
- understand how your area fits into the broader ecological network.

2. Map Local Assets Against LNRS Priorities:

- create detailed ecological mapping of your neighbourhood area that identifies:
 - existing wildlife corridors and stepping stones,
 - priority habitats that align with LNRS objectives, and
 - potential restoration areas that could contribute to LNRS goals.
- Include this mapping in your evidence base.

3. Develop Targeted Policies that Explicitly Reference the LNRS:

- draft specific policies that protect identified priority habitats,
- include requirements for developments to contribute to specific LNRS objectives, and
- designate Local Green Spaces that serve as ecological stepping stones (small areas of habitat that help wildlife move between larger habitats).

4. Incorporate Measurable Biodiversity Net Gain Requirements:

- set specific percentage targets for biodiversity net gain that align with LNRS goals,
- identify potential receptor sites for off-site biodiversity net gain contributions, and
- specify native planting requirements, where appropriate, based on LNRS habitat priorities.

5. Include Implementation Mechanisms:

- develop project proposals for community-led habitat restoration that contributes to LNRS goals,
- identify funding opportunities tied to LNRS implementation, and
- establish monitoring frameworks aligned with LNRS metrics.

2.34 This approach ensures your neighbourhood plan actively contributes to LNRS implementation through locally specific, actionable policies that can be delivered through the planning system.

2.35 Any bespoke nature/biodiversity recovery policies need to be underpinned by sufficient evidence, where the above list does not suffice, you may wish to commission further work. Whilst some work can be undertaken by volunteers, there are a number of independent consultants that can be appointed. Equally, the [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](#)'s services can be utilised for key environmental related information to support plans. It must be noted that this is not a free service and will involve costs.



Mature and veteran trees can be specifically identified in a neighbourhood plan and protected as part of a policy

3 Policy Types

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



General Policies

Policies that apply broadly across various contexts.



Criteria Policies

Policies based on specific criteria or standards.



Site Specific Policies

Policies tailored to particular locations or sites.

General Policies

- 3.2 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

Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

1. Development proposals should ensure that:
 - a) existing wildlife habitats are not unacceptably affected and where practicable, enhanced (including providing net gains in biodiversity); and
 - b) existing elements of green and blue infrastructure are preserved and where practicable, enhanced.
2. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should take account of the details set out in the **[Plan Area Name] [Design Code / Character Assessment / Biodiversity / Landscape Assessment]**

Criteria Based Policies

- 3.3 Criteria based policies establish specific requirements that development proposals should meet for approval. These requirements are typically presented as bullet points, with careful attention needed to the connecting words between criteria.
- 3.4 The use of “and” indicates that all criteria must be satisfied, while “or” signals that the criteria are alternatives, with only one needing to be met. The policy wording could also introduce a sequential approach, reflecting community priorities. These distinctions are crucial for both policy writers and users to ensure clear interpretation and proper implementation.
- 3.5 The example below highlights relevant local factors, referring to important views, watercourses and flood risks. As well as identifying biodiversity and good design opportunities.

Example of Criteria-Based Policies

Conserve and Enhance the Natural Environment

Proposals for new development which are in accordance with other policies in the development plan will be supported as appropriate to their scale and nature, where they comply with the following criteria:

- Priority Habitats and Local Wildlife Sites within the Plan Area as shown on **Figure x** are to be protected and where possible enhanced; and
- Watercourses and bodies of water (including ponds, streams and the springs / groundwater sources of the streams) as shown on **Figure x** are to be protected and where possible enhanced; and
- Natural management of water flow, in all areas, but specifically in Flood Zones 2 and 3 will be supported, particularly where it includes the planting of appropriate native species; and
- Proposals which create wildlife corridors and link identified habitats as shown on **Figure x** will be supported; and
- Proposals which include lighting schemes to limit the impact of light pollution, particularly in relation to bat foraging routes and roosts will be supported.

Supporting Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

Proposals for new development will be supported, where appropriate to their scale and context, where they demonstrate a clear contribution to biodiversity or nature recovery through one or more of the following:

- Protecting or enhancing priority habitats and locally important ecological sites, including Local Wildlife Sites and habitats identified on **Figure x**; or
- Safeguarding or improving water-based natural features, such as streams, ponds, and groundwater-fed springs, including those mapped on **Figure x**;
or
- Introducing natural flood management measures, particularly in or adjacent to Flood Zones 2 and 3, such as woodland creation or wetland planting using appropriate native species; or
- Creating or strengthening wildlife corridors that link fragmented habitats and support species movement, as illustrated on **Figure x**; or
- Incorporating sensitive lighting design to minimise disruption to nocturnal wildlife, especially along established bat foraging routes or near known roosting sites.

Site-Specific Policies

- 3.6 Site-specific policies focus on a particular piece of land or defined area. They serve two main purposes: either allocating land for development or protecting the qualities it possesses.
- 3.7 When used to identify land for development, these policies clearly set out the type and amount of development to be delivered, as well as any specific requirements, principles or criteria that must be satisfied before any development proposal can be approved. Requirements, principles or criteria can be set out within the policy itself, or the policy could refer to a supporting document e.g. a design guide/code for the site.

Example of a Site-Specific Policy

- 3.8 Here the policy refers to a specific site within the plan area. A map of the site area with plotted wildlife and biodiversity features should accompany the policy to set out the extent of the area(s) covered.

Natural Environment, Wildlife and Biodiversity

Development proposals on or adjacent to **[insert name of asset such as a watercourse, woodland, priority habitat, local nature reserve or other identified local feature]** should protect and enhance the function and setting of the **[insert name of asset and map identifying asset]** and its biodiversity.

As appropriate to the scale and nature of development, on-site biodiversity enhancements such as **[insert type of enhancement, such as bat boxes, bird boxes, hedgehog fencing etc (be specific where necessary)]** should be incorporated into the fabric of the development.

Where appropriate, fences, walls or hedges should be designed to incorporate features that allow through flow of water / dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens **[amend as appropriate]**.

Subject to the provisions of other policies in this Plan, development proposals will be supported where they:

- Protect or enhance the biodiversity of the **[insert name of asset]**;
- Are located at least 10 metres away from the banks of the **[insert name of watercourse and highlight on a plan]**. Unless otherwise justified with sufficient detail to show how the land will be used to promote biodiversity;
- Preserve the tranquillity and the natural environment of the affected part of the Plan area.

4 Policy Writing

- 4.1 Planning policies should be formulated and presented in a way that clearly communicates their intentions to readers. They must align with evidence gathered during preliminary research and community engagement stages, while supporting the neighbourhood plan’s vision and objectives. 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.
- 4.2 Policies must be clear, concise and fit for purpose as they will be used to determine planning applications.
- 4.3 The wording of planning policies must be precise and unambiguous. An individual should be able to understand the policy’s intentions without confusion.
- 4.4 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.



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.

"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.

Key Policy Themes and Objectives

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.

- For example, you could create a biodiversity theme that covers trees, hedgerows and watercourses etc.
- Alternatively, you might include these elements within a broader theme such as the natural environment.

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.

Policy Theme	Objectives	Policy	Decision Aiding Questions	NPPF (Dec 24)	Local Plan Policy
			Will the Policy ...	Paragraph Reference	Local Plan 2011-2035
[Insert your policy theme]	[Insert your neighbourhood plan objective – relevant to this theme / topic]	<p>[Insert your neighbourhood plan draft policy – relevant to this theme / topic]</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	[Insert question/answer relevant to your plan area]	[Insert NPPF paragraphs relevant to this theme / topic]	[Insert your Local Plan policies – relevant to this theme / topic]
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features and avoid	Development proposals should protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity of the	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and enhance priority habitats and species? 2. Protect and enhance international, national and locally designated biodiversity sites? 3. Avoid habitat fragmentation? 4. Ensure all new developments protect and enhance local biodiversity? 	<p>8c</p> <p>150</p> <p>151</p> <p>176</p> <p>178</p> <p>181-184</p>	<p>ENV2</p> <p>ENV3</p> <p>ENV4 EMV5</p> <p>DES1</p>

	<p>irreversible losses.</p>	<p>Plan area, as shown in Figures [X] and [X].</p> <p>Development proposals should deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10% (except where exemptions apply).</p> <p>As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:</p> <p>i) Protect and enhance existing wildlife habitats, including priority habitats, wildlife corridors and designated biodiversity sites,</p>	<p>5. Contribute to the achievement of objectives and targets within local Priority Habitats and wildlife sites?</p> <p>6. Consider local evidence, such as the Oxfordshire LNRS?</p> <p>7. Maintain the existing extent of ancient woodland sites?</p>		
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		<p>as shown on Figure [X];</p> <p>ii) Integrate wildlife-friendly features into buildings, such as bird, bat or owl boxes in suitable locations;</p> <p>iii) avoid the loss of significant trees and vegetation;</p> <p>iii) where possible, connect fragmented habitats and provide nature highways such as through garden fences; and</p> <p>v) seek to protect and enhance local green and blue</p>			
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		infrastructure, specifically [green or blue infrastructure example] and [green or blue infrastructure example] .			
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5 Other Considerations

Additional Considerations and Documents

- 5.1 The table below shows relevant nature recovery and biodiversity related points from other key documents. You may want to consider these documents when drafting your neighbourhood plan to help understand the biggest picture surrounding these topics. This includes the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire [Joint Design Guide 2022](#), Oxfordshire [Street Design Guide](#) and [Joint Nature and Climate Action Plan 2025-29](#).
- 5.2 A list of climate change relevant policies can be viewed in the [Appendices Section](#) of this document.

Theme	Related Elements from the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide, Oxfordshire Road Design Guide and Joint Nature and Climate Action Plan
Biodiversity	<p>Within the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide 2022 there are several sections which relate to nature recovery and biodiversity.</p> <p>Natural Environment</p> <p><i>“Ensure the scheme:</i></p> <p><i>2.3 implements SuDs (Sustainable Drainage Systems) as an integral part of the development’s open space network. SuDs should be designed into the development from the outset with features such as: wetlands, basins, ponds, scrapes, swales, retention planters (rainwater gardens), combined with good landscaping to make a positive contribution to the biodiversity, character and appearance of a development;**</i></p> <p><i>2.6 provides a variety of natural and designed landscapes for everyone, that is accessible, with different functions to suit a diverse range of needs;***”.</i></p> <p>Planting in a Development Proposal</p>

“Make sure:

2.9 New planting including trees are designed appropriately into the layout. This should be explained in the landscaping strategy, and where applicable, complete and submit the following documents with your application...

*2.11 the planting scheme including tree planting scheme uses a range of species and sizes, appropriately spaced to correspond to the nature and hierarchy of the street or open space and suited to the site’s soil type. A mix of species is required with no more than 20% of any genus and no more than 10% of a particular species on the site. This is to improve the biosecurity, wayfinding, and seasonal interest;**”*

Biodiversity

“Ensure the scheme:

2.14 retains and enhances existing important habitats, creates new habitats and aims to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (Environment Act 2021)¹;

¹Mandatory biodiversity net gain is scheduled to come into force in November 2023.

2.15 provides comprehensive and up-to-date ecological surveys, undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and in accordance with industry best practice. Results of surveys should be used to inform the design proposal;

2.16 where impacts on ecological receptors (designated sites, protected species, priority habitats, etc.) are predicted, explains what those impacts are and how the design process has complied with the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy. This means firstly avoid impacts where possible, mitigate unavoidable impacts and finally compensate residual impacts to deliver a net gain. Make sure that integrated measures are clearly shown on plans;

2.17 demonstrates that your development will deliver a net gain for biodiversity using a biodiversity metric;

2.18 demonstrates biodiversity enhancement proposals are compatible with the site design including the landscape and drainage strategy”.

Note: All design principles are applicable to all scales of development unless otherwise specified.

*minor applications.

**major applications.

Within the Oxfordshire [Street Design Guide](#) relevant elements to biodiversity can be found.

Part 1.5 (page 17) highlights key street design objectives. One additional objective says “*use land efficiently whilst respecting the existing landscape character, enhances biodiversity and as a minimum, leads to no net loss of habitat*”.

Part 3.3 (page 45) discusses drainage. Here it states “*how we deal with foul and surface water drainage, particularly surface water, can influence how our streets look and feel. It can also help to increase green space, wildlife and biodiversity*”.

Part 3.4 (page 46) talks about landscaping. Here it mentions a point about biodiversity:

“Landscaping within streets and developments plays multiple roles... Can contribute towards a biodiversity, ecology and wildlife strategy...”.

The South Oxfordshire District Council produced a [Joint Nature and Climate Action Plan 2025-29](#) which outlines the Council's long-term strategy to reduce carbon emissions. The plan highlights relevant actions relating to nature recovery and biodiversity. Below are some examples:

“NR1 - Provide resources, funding, advice and expertise to Town and Parish Councils, landowners, community and nature groups, to support nature recovery projects and delivery of the LNRS.

NR2 - Promote the development of Habitat Banks in appropriate locations in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse as a key mechanism to drive nature recovery.

NR3 - Seek opportunities to increase support for, and the profile of the Local Wildlife Sites Project as a key mechanism to help deliver nature recovery.

NR4 - Drive improvements to the ecological health of our river systems for people and wildlife. In part, delivered through support for and active engagement in the catchment partnerships.

NR5 - A) Aim to eliminate the use of peat in grounds maintenance on our land by the end of 2025/26.

B) Reduce the use of harmful herbicides.

NR6 - Review the use of annual bedding plants in grounds maintenance operations in favour of locally grown, sustainable alternatives.

NR7 - Undertake biodiversity audit of corporate land and develop proposals to put nature recovery at the heart of our grounds' maintenance operations.

NR9 - Work with partners to produce an Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and identify actions for South and Vale councils to deliver following adoption of the Strategy”.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1: Policy Examples in Made Neighbourhood Plans

6.1 The tables below list a number of nature recovery and biodiversity planning policies found in made neighbourhood plans from across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts. These tables serve only to provide examples, for an up to date list of the policies across the districts please refer to our [Neighbourhood Development Plan Policy Table](#).

Local Green Spaces

Benson (March 2023)	Policy NP21 – Protection of 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

Biodiversity

Beckley and Stowood (October 2024)	Policy E.1 - Biodiversity
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Benson (March 2023)	Policy NP23 – Biodiversity Policy NP24 – Wildlife Corridors Policy NP25 – Green Infrastructure Management Plans
Berinsfield (February 2025)	Policy BERIN4 - Biodiversity
Clifton Hampden (October 2024)	BCH9 - Green Infrastructure
East Hagbourne (April 2024)	Policy E2 – Protect and Enhance Biodiversity and the Natural Environment Policy E2a – Wildlife Buffers Policy E2b – Enhance Wildlife Habitats
East Hanney (May 2024)	Policy EHNP 6 – Retention of Trees and Hedgerows Policy EHNP 9 – Nature Recovery Network and Biodiversity
Garsington (October 2024)	Policy GARS8 - Biodiversity
Lewknor (December 2023)	Policy EN1 – Wildlife and Biodiversity Policy EN2 – Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve
Steventon (October 2024)	Policy 4 (b) - Landscape and Environment - Biodiversity
Thame (February 2025)	Policy NEB1 - Biodiversity
Tiddington with Albury (June 2023)	Policy TwA1 – Nature Recovery
Towersey (December 2023)	Policy TOW7 – Green Infrastructure and biodiversity
Wallingford (February 2025)	Policy EV1 –Green Spaces and Green Corridors Policy EV2 – Protect Existing Amenity Spaces and Wallingford Green Network
Wantage (May 2025)	Policy 6: Green Infrastructure Network

Appendix 2: Policy Examples Expanded

6.2 The table showcases a number of made neighbourhood plan nature recovery and biodiversity policies in their entirety.

Policy Title and Detail⁴

Policy CUL7 – Nature Recovery and Climate Change Culham Neighbourhood Plan (June 2023)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

- i. The Parish contains a variety of green and blue infrastructure that provides an environmental support system for the community and wildlife. The Neighbourhood Plan designates this as a Network, as shown on the Policies Map, for the purpose of promoting nature recovery and for mitigating climate change. The Network comprises the Water Meadows between the village and Sutton Pools, Andersey Island Water Meadows, woodland, trees, hedgerows, Culham Brook SSSI and other land of biodiversity value.
- ii. Development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network are required to have full regard maintaining and improving the functionality of the Network, including delivering a net gain to biodiversity, in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes. Proposals that will harm the functionality or connectivity of the Network will not be supported.
- iii. Development proposals that will lead to the extension of the Network, which includes the delivery of allotments for the use of the village, will be supported, provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.

Policy E1 – Biodiversity Beckley Stowood Neighbourhood Plan (October 2024)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

Development proposals which show a biodiversity net gain and conserve and enhance the environmental and landscape assets, including areas of designated Ancient Woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, RSPB reserves, Conservation Target Areas, Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Local Wildlife Sites (including BBOWT reserves) will be supported.

⁴ Please note that in some cases these policies have been slightly modified so that the criterion within the policy fits the example theme.

Development proposals should demonstrate how they will conserve local assets such as mature trees, hedgerows, grass verges along the roads and woodland edges, and where possible secure the provision of additional habitat areas for wildlife.

Proposals which encourage and promote additions and enhancements to wildlife corridors and air quality improvements as identified within the treescape project map will be supported.

Policy BCS13: Local Nature Recovery

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Neighbourhood Plan (October 2023)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should contribute to the recovery of local nature in the Parish and respond positively to the following matters:

1. Avoid the unnecessary loss of mature trees, hedgerows or other form of wildlife corridor, either as part of a landscape scheme and layout or as part of the construction works of a development scheme;
2. Where the loss of a mature tree or hedgerow is unavoidable, the proposals must make provision on site for replacements that are of a similar type to those lost and preferably native species having full regard to the design code of Policy BCS6;
3. Wherever possible developments should seek to have a biodiversity net gain for the parish as part of a validated approach to local nature recovery using the latest biodiversity metric;
4. Where the loss of scrubland is unavoidable, the proposals must retain one or more wildlife strips of scrub linked to adjacent areas of open space wherever possible;
5. For new or replacement lighting schemes, ensure no unacceptable impact upon wildlife habitats, migration and feeding behaviour;
6. For new homes, an owl box, bat box and/or bird boxes (particularly suited to their use by swifts, swallows and house martins) should be installed as an integral part of any house design;
7. Wherever possible, piped water courses should be re-opened in new developments linked to wetland creation; and
8. Proposals that result in run off of surface water into the stream network of the village should ensure the water flows through an appropriate sustainable drainage system.

Policy EN1 – Wildlife and Biodiversity

Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan (December 2023)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should comply with the following biodiversity principles:

- i. Loss of mature trees, hedgerows or other form of wildlife corridor should be avoided, either as part of a landscape scheme and layout or as part of the construction works of a development scheme. Where the loss of a mature tree or hedgerow is unavoidable, the proposals should make the provision on site for species appropriate to the site's growing conditions. Development Proposals affecting trees and woodlands should, where appropriate, be supported by adequate tree survey information; tree constraints should be identified by a qualified arboricultural consultant, based on a Tree Survey completed in accordance with the current edition of British Standard 5837. Development proposals are encouraged to replace trees which are not being retained as a result of the development at a ratio of at least 2:1 or in an approved alternative location in accordance with a compensation scheme provided as a condition of planning permission.
- ii. Where appropriate, incorporate landscape schemes which use species appropriate to the site's growing conditions.
- iii. On-site biodiversity enhancements such as a new roosting features for bats or nesting features for birds (including for use by swifts, swallows and house martins) should be incorporated into the fabric of the development.
- iv. Fences, walls or hedges should be designed to incorporate features which allow safe dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens.
- v. Development proposals should be planned so as to avoid deterioration in the ecological status of the Parish's chalk streams.
- vi. Development should retain or provide a buffer adjacent to the watercourse of natural or semi-natural habitat, free from built development and parking areas.
- vii. Wherever possible, piped water courses shall be re-opened and existing open water courses retained.
- viii. Any flood attenuation ponds and new areas of recreational green space required as part of any new development shall be designed to encourage nature conservation and biodiversity.
- ix. Proposals for new development must include details of how the biodiversity and wildlife environment of the site would be enhanced.
- x. Development on land within or adjacent to the Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Parish, the areas of Ancient Woodland and the Special Area of Conservation, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it any of them (either individually or in combination with other developments), will not be supported. The only exception is where benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Policy E2b - Enhance Wildlife Habitat

East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan (April 2024)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should contribute towards the protection and enhancement of wildlife and biodiversity and should

positively respond to the relevant guidance within the Strategy for People and Nature (Appendix 12) including:

- Tree planting where it provides biodiversity and respects the scenic landscape and views.
- Repair and improvement of existing hedge lines and new hedge planting where it is sympathetic to the landscape.
- Enhancement or creation of grassland for native grassland flora and to provide habitat for invertebrates and small mammals in gardens and the wider countryside.
- Retention and care of relict orchard trees where they still exist and the planting of new orchards, particularly in publicly accessible locations.
- Protection and enhancement of the vegetation along all footpaths to increase diversity and enhancement of selected routes to provide new and expanded habitats and wildlife corridors.

Policy NEB1: Biodiversity

Thame Neighbourhood Plan (February 2025)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

1. Development proposals will be assessed in terms of the mitigation hierarchy in the Local Plan and must secure a minimum net biodiversity gain of 10% on-site, as demonstrated through use of the most up-to-date version of the Natural England biodiversity metric (or any successor document to this) and submission of a biodiversity net gain plan submitted as part of planning application material. This will be informed by current site conditions and with any proposed habitat creation being appropriate to the site and immediately surrounding area. This policy applies large and small sites, except householder developments. Proposals for small sites should make use of the Small Sites Toolkit published by Natural England as part of the biodiversity metric. The management plan should show how biodiversity net gains shall be managed for a period of at least 30 years.
2. Wherever practicable, biodiversity net gain should be delivered on the site concerned. Where this demonstrably cannot be achieved, the net gain should then be sought within the Thame Neighbourhood Area boundary (as identified in Figure 1) or, as a last resort, as close as possible to Thame.
3. Wherever practicable, development proposals should safeguard existing trees and hedgerows in their layouts and, where appropriate, incorporate them within green areas, open spaces and alongside walking and cycling routes.
4. New green infrastructure should provide functional permeability for wildlife through and around development. The width of wildlife corridors should be proportionate to the requirements of target species. These should allow for movement of nocturnal

wildlife, with the impact of lighting and glare minimised, having regard to Guidance Note 08/18 published by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.

5. Any landscaping should consist of species appropriate for the site's growing conditions wherever practicable.
6. Wherever practicable, swift and bat boxes should be integrated into new buildings and extensions to homes and other buildings.

Policy EV2 – Protecting Existing Amenity Spaces and Wallingford Green Network Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan (February 2025)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

EV1.1 As appropriate to their scale and nature new development proposals should incorporate new public and private amenity green spaces and wildlife corridors that:

EV1.1(a) improve and enhance biodiversity by:

- creating new permeable green corridors that allow wildlife to move from one area of habitat to another. Traditional barriers to movement, such as fences and walls should incorporate features that will allow the dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens.
- creating new habitats e.g. ponds, urban meadows and hedgerows and enhance existing biodiversity assets.
- ensuring new development provides a measurable net gain for biodiversity using the most up-to-date information available.

EV1.1(b) connect new public and private amenity green spaces and wildlife corridors with the Wallingford Green Network to benefit wildlife and people having regard to the South and Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy.

EV1.1(c) respect and restore blue infrastructure, especially creating a minimum of 10m wildlife buffer to Bradford's Book and the River Thames, except where existing development prevents this

EV1.1(d) respect and protect the setting of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes, the River Thames and its floodplain, to enhance:

- the water quality for human health;
- the ecological and natural capital value of the river, its banks, the Thames Path
- National Trail; and
- the use of the river for formal and informal recreation and to promote tourism.

EV1.1(e) explore opportunities for positive management of wetland habitats, such as linking up and expanding small isolated wet woodlands within the Thames Wallingford to Goring CTA to contribute to the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Network and meet Oxfordshire BAP Targets.

Policy TwA1 – Nature Recovery

Tiddington-with-Albury Neighbourhood Plan (June 2023)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

The Parish contains a variety of green and blue infrastructure that provides an environmental support system for communities and wildlife. The Neighbourhood Plan designated this Network, as shown on the Policies Map, for the purpose of promoting nature recovery, sustainable movement and for mitigating climate change. The Network comprises Local Green Spaces, footpaths, woodland, trees, hedgerows, ponds, and land of biodiversity value.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network should maintain and where practicable improve the functionality of the Network, including delivering a net gain to general biodiversity assets in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes.

Development proposals that would lead to the extension of the Network, including delivery of the Tiddington Nature Recovery Corridor, will be supported, where they are consistent with other relevant policies of the development plan.

Proposals that would unacceptably harm the functionality or connectivity of the Network, including the Tiddington Nature Recovery Corridor, will not be supported.

Policy TOW7 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

Towersey Neighbourhood Plan (December 2023)

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

Development proposals should have full regard to maintaining and, where practicable, improving the functionality of the green infrastructure and biodiversity assets including Local Green Spaces, public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways), woodland, trees, hedgerows, ponds, and land of biodiversity value, in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes, including delivering a net gain to general biodiversity assets.

Development proposals that would lead to an increase of green infrastructure and biodiversity assets will be supported where they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.

Proposals that would lead to an unacceptable loss of green infrastructure or biodiversity assets will not be supported.

Policy EHNP9 – Nature Recovery Network and Biodiversity East Hanney Neighbourhood Plan

To view this neighbourhood plan: [Click here](#)

The Parish contains a variety of green and blue infrastructure that provides an environmental support system for both the community and wildlife. The Neighbourhood Plan designates this as a Network as shown on the Policies Map, for the purpose of promoting nature recovery and enhancement of biodiversity.

The Network comprises of the Letcombe Brook green corridor, the watercourses in the north of the Parish, the area associated with the route of the old Wilts and Berks canal along the eastern boundary, woodland, trees, hedgerows, and other land of biodiversity value. Wherever practicable, development proposals should be designed to connect to this network.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should respond positively to the following matters:

- i. Development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network to have full regard to maintaining and improving the functionality of the Network in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes. Proposals that will harm the functionality or connectivity of the Network will not be supported.
- ii. Development proposals that will lead to extension of the Network, including the delivery of allotments and orchards and enhancing hedgerows for the use of the village, will be supported provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.
- iii. All proposals should seek to achieve a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity, having regard to the requirements of section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework to be implemented within the site, or where this is evidenced as not possible, implement local delivery of this biodiversity compensation.
- iv. Any proposals outside of the settlement within the countryside to the north of the village, are encouraged to achieve a 20% net gain in biodiversity.

7 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 ([NPPE](#)) Glossary (2024).

A

- **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).

C

- **Carbon Footprint** – The total greenhouse gas emissions caused by an individual, event, organisation, service, or product.

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 Rural Areas** – National Parks, National Landscapes and areas designated as ‘rural’ under section 157 of the Housing Act 1985.

G

- **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.

H

- **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.

- **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

- **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

- **Local Nature Partnership** – A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, established for the purposes of protecting and improving the natural environment in an area and the benefits derived from it.
- **Local Plan** – A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.
- **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.

M

- **Major Development** – For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

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.
- **Natural Flood Management** – Managing flood and coastal erosion risk by protecting, restoring and emulating the natural ‘regulating’ function of

catchments, rivers, floodplains and coasts.

- **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 and landscape or catchment scale recovery areas where there is coordinated action for species and habitats.
- **Neighbourhood Plan** – A plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law, this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- **Non-Strategic Policies** – Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** – Sets out government’s planning policies for England.

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.

P

- **Planning Condition** – A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.
- **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.

S

- **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** – Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- **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.

- **Stepping Stones** – Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.
- **Strategic Policies** – Policies and site allocations which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of Section 19 (1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- **Sustainable Drainage Systems** – 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.

W

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

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

If you would like to discuss neighbourhood planning with a member of the team, please call us on 01235 422600 or email planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk