

Date: 23 March 2021
Our ref: 346541
Your ref: East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan - Regulation 16



Spatial Planning
Development Services
Regeneration and Environment
South Tyneside Council
Town Hall & Civic Offices
Westoe Road
South Shields
NE33 2RL



local.plan@southtyneside.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Consultation: Submission Draft of the East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan: Regulation 16 consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 10 March 2021 , which was received by Natural England on the same day.

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

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

Natural England have the following comments on this neighbourhood plan:

In line with our previous comments in regards to this Plan (1st December 2020), we do not have any objections to the East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan, and generally welcome and support its environmental aspirations.

Policies EB1 Sustainable development, EB17: Local Green Space and EB18: Protected open space - Natural England support the inclusion of these policies to identify and protect green spaces and the rural setting of East Boldon from the encroachment of new development.

Policy EB5: Green and blue infrastructure – We support the inclusion of this policy to protect and improve green and blue infrastructure.

Policy EB6: Landscape – We support the inclusion of this policy to maintain and enhance the landscape character of East Boldon.

Policy EB7: Biodiversity - We support the specific reference to biodiversity being protected and enhanced through development. We also welcome the strengthening of this policy following the previous regulation 14 consultation, to include in this policy that proposals should 'demonstrate how a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gains will be achieved. Please find additional advice in Annex 1 below, for information regarding Biodiversity Net Gain and wider environmental gains that can be afforded through development plan policies.

Policies EB11: Cleadon Lane Industrial Estate and EB13: The Delivery of new housing - Natural England support the reference in these policies that mitigation measures required as a result of new developments should be outlined and secured. In general, we also support the principle of allocating non-greenfield sites for future mixed development. These policies could be strengthened by outlining specific designated sites that developers should consider when formulating proposals. For example, any future housing development of more than 10 units may be required to contribute to coastal mitigation in order to protect the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area and Ramsar (European designated sites) from recreational disturbance. Boldon Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is within the Neighbourhood Plan area and West Farm Meadow, Boldon SSSI is less than a kilometre from the Cleadon Lane Industrial Estate. Both of these sites are also vulnerable to additional recreational pressure.

The lack of further comment from Natural England should not be interpreted as a statement that there are no impacts on the natural environment. Other bodies and individuals may wish to make comments that might help the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to fully take account of any environmental risks and opportunities relating to this document.

If you disagree with our assessment of this proposal as low risk, or should the proposal be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then in accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, please consult Natural England again.

However, we also refer you to the attached Annex 1 which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Cameron Chandler
Northumbria Area Team

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

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

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

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

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

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

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](#)⁵ website and also from the [LandIS website](#)⁶, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#)⁷ sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](#)⁸ sets out supporting guidance.

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

¹ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

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

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

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

⁵ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

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

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807247/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

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

Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

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

Wildlife habitats

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

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)¹¹) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)¹² to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 171. For more information, see our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#)¹³.

Improving your natural environment

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>

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

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance on this](#) ¹⁴).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

Biodiversity net gain

General advice and benefits of embedding biodiversity net gain

Biodiversity net gain is a key tool to help nature's recovery and is also fundamental to health and wellbeing as well as creating attractive and sustainable places to live and work in. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the role of 'policies and decision making to minimise impacts and provide net gains for biodiversity' (para 170).

Planning Practice Guidance describes net gain as an 'approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand' and applies to both biodiversity net gain and wider environmental net gains. For biodiversity net gain, the Biodiversity Metric 2.0, can be used to measure gains and losses to biodiversity resulting from development. We advise you to use this metric to implement development plan policies on biodiversity net gain. Any action, as a result of development, that creates or enhances habitat features can be measured using the metric and as a result count towards biodiversity net gain.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, along with partners, has developed 'good practice principles' for biodiversity net gain, which can assist plan-making authorities in gathering evidence and developing policy.

Advice on wider environmental gains

Natural England focusses our advice on embedding biodiversity net gain in development plans, since the approach is better developed than for wider environmental gains. However your authority should consider the requirements of the NPPF (paragraph 72, 102, 118 and 170) and seek opportunities for wider environmental net gain wherever possible. This can be achieved by considering how policies and proposed allocations can contribute to wider environment enhancement, help adapt to the impacts of climate change and/or take forward elements of existing green infrastructure, open space of biodiversity strategies. Opportunities for environmental gains, including nature based solutions to help adapt to climate change, might include.

- Identifying opportunities for new multi-functional green and blue infrastructure.
- Managing existing and new public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips) and climate resilient
- Planting trees, including street trees, characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Improving access and links to existing greenspace, identifying improvements to the existing public

¹⁴ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

right of way network or extending the network to create missing footpath or cycleway links.

- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. a hedgerow or stone wall or clearing away an eyesore)
- Designing a scheme to encourage wildlife, for example by ensuring lighting does not pollute areas of open space or existing habitats.

Any habitat creation and/or enhancement as a result of the above may also deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain.

Evidence gathering

Existing environmental evidence can be gathered from various sources including online data sources like MAGIC, Local Environmental Record Centres (LERCs) and strategies for green infrastructure, open space provision, landscape character, climate and ecosystem services and biodiversity opportunity mapping. Biodiversity data can also be obtained from developments that were subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Monitoring, the discharge of conditions or monitoring information from legal agreements with a biodiversity element. This can help establish a baseline to understand what assets exist and how they may relate to wider objectives in the plan area. Cross boundary environmental opportunities can also be considered by working with neighbouring authorities, local nature partnership and/or the local enterprise partnership.

The relationship between environmental assets and key strategic growth areas may help to highlight potential opportunities that development could bring for the natural environment. The following may also be useful when considering biodiversity priorities in your plan area:

- What biodiversity currently exists, what is vulnerable or declining?
- How are existing assets connected, are there opportunities to fill gaps and improve connectivity?
- How does the above relate to neighbouring authority areas, can you work collaboratively to improve links between assets or take strategic approaches to address issues or opportunities?