

# Screening Assessment Whaley Bridge Draft Neighbourhood Plan - Strategic Environmental Assessment Final Report



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# 1 Introduction

**1.1** The Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by residents, stakeholders and members of the Whaley Bridge Town Council working as part of a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group. The Neighbourhood Area covers Whaley Bridge parish which includes the town of Whaley Bridge and the smaller settlements of Furness Vale, Taxal and Fernilee. The development of the plan has involved several key steps and is based on extensive research and influenced by robust engagement with local residents and stakeholders. Preparation of the plan began in 2018 and has involved community engagement, appraisal of options and the development of policies.

**1.2** Following determination as to whether Strategic Environmental Assessment of the draft Plan is required, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a period of "pre-submission" public consultation. Following this consultation, the Whaley Bridge Town Council will prepare to submit the draft Neighbourhood Plan to the Borough Council in order that it might proceed to independent Examination and subsequent Referendum.

**1.3** Only a draft Neighbourhood Plan or Order that meets each of a set of basic conditions can be put to a referendum and be "made" (adopted). The basic conditions are set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**1.4** The Borough Council will need to be satisfied that the basic conditions have been met. A Neighbourhood Plan or Order must:

- have regard to national policy and guidance;
- have special regard to listed buildings (this applies only to Orders);
- have special regard to conservation areas (this also applies only to Orders);
- contribute to sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan;
- not breach EU obligations.
- comply with other prescribed matters.

**1.5** (i)

**1.6** Whaley Bridge Town Council will be required to prepare a Basic Conditions Statement alongside the submitted Plan, in order to demonstrate how the Plan meets the basic conditions set out above.

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i Regulations 32 and 33 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) prescribe 2 basic conditions in addition to those set out in the primary legislation. These are (1) that the making of a Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017; and (2) having regard to all material considerations, it is appropriate that a Neighbourhood Development Order is made where the development described in an Order is Environmental Impact Assessment development.

## 2 Legislative Background

**2.1** The High Peak Borough Council has prepared this screening assessment to help determine whether the policies and proposals set out in the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

**2.2** The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 explain the process to be followed in undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment in respect of plans and programmes. They require an SEA to be undertaken on any land use plan or programme "which sets the framework for future development consent of projects".

**2.3** A strategic environmental assessment is unlikely to be required where a planning document deals only with a small area at a local level (regulation 5(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004), unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects. Screening is used to determine whether significant environmental effects are likely.

**2.4** The National Planning Practice Guidance offers further guidance on when an SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan <sup>(ii)</sup> SEA is more likely to be necessary if:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the local plan or other strategic policies for the area.

**2.5** When determining whether a neighbourhood plan requires SEA, the SEA Regulations require that the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations be considered. These are the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. The criteria are split into two categories: those relating to the characteristics of the plan and those to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected.

**2.6** The results of the screening process must be detailed in a Screening Statement, available to the public and the findings must be subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

**2.7** Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 require submission either of a statement of reasons as to why SEA was not required, or an environmental report (a key output of the SEA process) to accompany a Neighbourhood Plan when it is submitted to the local planning authority.

**2.8** Providing there are no significant changes to the proposals and the policies of the current draft Neighbourhood Plan, this screening assessment undertaken by High Peak Borough Council helps fulfil this requirement to accompany submission of the Neighbourhood Plan.

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ii Paragraph: 046 Reference ID: 11-046-20150209.

## 3 Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan

### Planning Context

#### National

**3.1** Paragraph 29 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) clarifies that neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.

#### Local

**3.2** The High Peak Local Plan was adopted in April 2016. The Local Plan was subject to Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The Plan and its assessments can be seen at:

**3.3** [High Peak Local Plan](#)

**3.4** The HRA assessed the Local Plan during its preparation process for potential effects on the integrity of the following European designated sites which were agreed with Natural England.

- The South Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA;
- Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA and the South Pennine Moors SAC; and
- Peak District Dales SAC

**3.5** There were three HRA reports published during the preparation of the Local Plan the final report concluded the High Peak Local Plan would result in no adverse effects on European designated sites , both alone and in combination with other plans.

**3.6** Most of the Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the boundary of the High Peak Local Plan however a small part is within the Peak District National Park. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and the Development Management Policies document was adopted in 2019. Both documents were subject to Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The HRAs concluded the the plans would not lead to any adverse impacts on European sites. The Plan and its assessments can be seen at:

**3.7** [Peak District National Park LDF](#)

#### Neighbourhood Plan

**3.8** The parish of Whaley Bridge was designated as a Neighbourhood Area on 24th October 2013.

**3.9** Whaley Bridge Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. A range of consultation events have taken place to support preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. As part of the work on the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan a steering group has been established, a number of community engagement events including public consultations on the emerging plan

## 3 Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan

have been carried out. There have been meetings with local residents and businesses and a consultation was carried out on potential local green space sites including the criteria for site selection. Work has been carried out with Urban Vision Enterprise and AECOM

### Plan Vision, Aims and Policies

**3.10** The draft Neighbourhood Plan covers the time period 2022-2032 and sets out the following vision:

**3.11** *Whaley Bridge in 2032 will be a sustainable and thriving local community meeting the needs of all generations. The distinctive local environment, unique character and naturally beautiful surrounding countryside will be preserved and enhanced.*

**3.12** The aims of the neighbourhood plan are as follows:

- *To meet the diverse needs and aspirations of all of the community in terms of housing, local facilities and economic opportunity.*
- *To attract investment, visitors, employment and sustainable development, to meet the needs of local residents and businesses.*
- *To maintain or enhance the unique historic, built and natural character of different parts of the area.*
- *To promote creative and sustainable design.*
- *To preserve or enhance habitats, wildlife and biodiversity.*

**3.13** The Plan seeks to achieve sustainable physical and economic development and growth. The AECOM 'Design Guidance and Code for Whaley Bridge' has informed most of the policies, including specific policies for key settlements. The aim is to create sustainable mixed-use neighbourhoods, with local facilities and good connections, including for pedestrians and cyclists. The policies are intended to augment those in the adopted High Peak Local Plan and Peak District LDF, setting requirements more specific to Whaley Bridge.

**3.14** The draft Plan proposes to designate a number of Local Green Spaces. It does not allocate any sites for residential or employment development.

**3.15** The Plan includes 14 policies which are grouped in 4 sections;

#### Employment and Housing

- WB-G1 Town Centre and Economy
- WB-G2 Community Facilities
- WB-G3 Residential Development

#### Heritage-led Regeneration and Conservation

- WB-H1 Heritage
- WB-H2 Peak Forest Canal
- WB-H3 Transshipment Shed and Canal Basin

#### Environment and Climate Change

## 3 Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan

- WB-E1 Sustainable Design
- WB-E2 Minor Villages and Rural Settlements
- WB-E3 Natural Environment
- WB-E4 Rural and Landscape Character
- WB-E5 Green Infrastructure
- WB-E6 Local Green Space

### Transport and Infrastructure

- WB-T1 Transport and Movement
- WB-T2 Paths

**3.16** The housing and employment policies seek to support local growth, to meet the social and economic needs of Whaley Bridge's local community.

**3.17** There is an emphasis on maintaining a vital and viable town centre in Whaley Bridge to meet the needs of people within the town and neighbourhood area. The policies seek to support Whaley Bridge town centre and encourage a range of uses including retail, restaurants, cafes, cultural uses, visitor facilities, recreational uses, community facilities and other uses open to the public. Such uses/facilities will be supported outside the Town Centre, only where it can be demonstrated that they cannot be accommodated within the Town Centre. Existing community facilities will be protected with the loss of facilities only being supported where the use is no longer viable or there is a suitable alternative nearby. A number of outdoor spaces that support outdoor community events are protected. The policy on residential development recognises the opportunities for more urban development around the town and identifies design parameters for small scale infill. It also supports community-led development and self-build.

**3.18** The heritage led and conservation policies seek to protect Whaley Bridge's historic environment and support heritage-led regeneration and to realise the economic and community potential of the historic environment, whilst protecting it for future generations. The policies promote heritage-led regeneration of significant heritage assets and support the diversity and sustainability of the high street and its uses. The neighbourhood plan identifies the Transshipment Canal and Basin as an opportunity to deliver this strategic aim of the neighbourhood plan. There are site specific policies for the Transshipment Canal and Basin and the Peak Forest Canal. The policies support extensions to historic buildings where they are of high quality and complement the character of the original building.

**3.19** The environment and climate change policies seek to protect Whaley Bridge's environment and promote high quality, sustainable and creative design. The policies provide design criteria which states development must be well designed and locally distinctive and places an emphasis on sustainable design, quality green infrastructure, pedestrian permeability and the public realm. The policy for the minor villages and rural settlements provides design criteria for development to compliment the character of these areas. The policies seek to ensure any negative impacts on the natural environment are minimised and balanced by positive features in the development. It seeks to encourage opportunities to enhance ecology and wildlife habitats and promotes biodiversity net gain. The rural landscape and character is protected and green infrastructure is protected and enhanced. The policies also propose to designate a number of Local Green Spaces within the neighbourhood area.

## 3 Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan

**3.20** The transport and infrastructure policies seek to ensure that development is served by a balanced and sustainable mix of transport options.

## 4 Assessment

### Methodology

**4.1** To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, its potential scope should be assessed at an early stage against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. (These regulations implement the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive in England.)

**4.2** The criteria set out Schedule 1 of the Regulations are shown in the table below, alongside an assessment finding in relation to the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan.

### Assessment

Significance Criteria set out in SEA Directive (Annex ii) and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Impact of the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan
<b>1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Neighbourhood Plan would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan sits within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted High Peak Local Plan and Peak District National Park LDF. In addition, the projects for which this Plan helps to set a framework are local in nature and have limited resource implications.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The Neighbourhood Plan is considered to be in general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework. The policies within the document conform with the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the Statutory Development Plan.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	The Neighbourhood Plan will work to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Parish of Whaley Bridge and ensure that natural resources are used prudently. The draft Plan protects a number of areas through designation as Local Green Space. The Plan supports development to meet local needs in sustainable locations and seeks to ensure the delivery of housing identified in the strategic policies of the Local Plan. It seeks to focus residential development within sustainable locations - within the town centre, on brownfield and infill sites. The Plan promotes the re-use of existing buildings, maintaining existing community facilities and focusing the development of new

## 4 Assessment

Significance Criteria set out in SEA Directive (Annex ii) and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Impact of the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan
	<p>facilities within the town centre. It seeks to protect and enhance green infrastructure and encourages the development of high quality green infrastructure in new developments. The Plan supports the delivery of strategic policies in the Local Plan and aims to support the delivery of sustainable growth through policies on tourism, the local economy, infrastructure, community facilities, natural environment, housing and design. It is therefore considered that the Neighbourhood Plan will promote sustainable development.</p>
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	<p>Environmental concerns relevant to the Plan include loss of countryside and biodiversity through development and impacts on air quality and climate change associated with growth. The Neighbourhood Plan will help to address all these issues in a positive manner. The Plan seeks to protect biodiversity and the rural character of the area and encourages development designed to meet the challenges of climate change.</p>
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing development specifically related to waste management or water management.</p>
<p><b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b></p>	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects achieved in particular through policies for design criteria and the protection of natural environment features, biodiversity and local green spaces. Policies on the reuse of existing buildings and to encourage provision for pedestrians and cyclists and to alleviate traffic congestion are designed to bring modest positive effects in relation to natural resources and air quality.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	<p>It is intended that the environmental effects will have positive, cumulative benefits for the area, for example</p>

## 4 Assessment

Significance Criteria set out in SEA Directive (Annex ii) and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Impact of the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan
	through protection of natural environment features and the designation of local green spaces.
(c) the trans boundary nature of the effects;	There are no trans boundary issues across member states. Any effects on adjoining parishes are likely to be positive. For example through protection of natural environment features, biodiversity and through support for community infrastructure.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	No significant risks to human health or the environment have been identified. The Plan is likely to improve human health by improving access to green spaces and the countryside.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the Parish of Whaley Bridge which is comprised of the Whaley Bridge and the smaller settlements of Furness Vale, Taxal, Fernilee and Bridgemont. It is a largely rural parish part of which is in the Peak District National Park. The Parish has a population of 6,455 in the 2011 census. <sup>0</sup> The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects are therefore comparatively small.
<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</li> <li>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</li> <li>(iii) intensive land-use; and</li> </ul>	The Neighbourhood Plan includes sites of environmental and heritage importance. There are 30 heritage assets recorded for the Plan area on the National Heritage List for England. Most of these are grade II listed buildings. There were no records on the Heritage at Risk Register 2020 (Historic England). The Plan area contains a number of ancient woodlands and areas covered by tree preservation orders, local nature reserves and a number non-statutorily protected local wildlife sites. The Roosedyche regionally important geological site (RIGS) is also located in the plan area. The High Peak Local Plan and Peak District National Park LDF include policies for the protection of landscape character, biodiversity and the built and historic environment and the Neighbourhood Plan will reinforce these policies with no expected adverse effects.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	There is one SSSI within the Neighbourhood Plan Area Toddbrook Reservoir. There are no European sites within the Plan area. The HRA of the High Peak Local Plan considered the following European sites (South

## 4 Assessment

Significance Criteria set out in SEA Directive (Annex ii) and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Impact of the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan
	<p>Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA, Peak District Moors South Pennine Moors Phase 1 SPA &amp; South Pennine Moors SAC and Peak District Dales SAC) and concluded there would be no adverse effects on these sites. The High Peak Local Plan and Peak District National Park LDF include policies for the protection of landscape character, the natural environment and sites of European importance and the Neighbourhood Plan will reinforce these policies with no expected adverse effects.</p>

**Table 1 Determination of the likely significance of environmental effects**

## 5 Consultation

**5.1** Prior to a determination being made this screening report has been sent to the relevant consultation bodies to seek their opinion.

**5.2** The SEA consultation bodies are Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, all agree with the conclusions of this report that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required.

## 6 Conclusions

**6.1** Having taken into account the results of the assessment above and the responses of the consultation bodies it is considered that the draft Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to lead to any significant environmental effects beyond those already assessed through the environmental assessments (SEA/SA and HRA) of the High Peak Local Plan and Peak District National Park LDF. In line with regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, it is therefore considered that no further environmental assessment is required.

**6.2** If the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan subsequently changes, the LPA reserves the right to reassess this screening opinion.

## 7 Appendix



Ms Pippa Home  
High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire  
Moorlands District Council

Direct Dial: 0121 625 6870

Our ref: PL00767222  
21 March 2022

Dear Ms Home

### WHALEY BRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - SEA SCREENING REQUEST

Thank you for your consultation of 25 February 2022 and the request for a Screening Opinion in respect of the Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage. Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request.

On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England is of the view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not likely to be required.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

Should it be concluded that, overall, a SEA will be required for the Plan, Historic England would be pleased to discuss the scope of the assessment in relation to the historic environment in due course.

I hope that this information is of use to you at this time. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

C. Fletcher



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888  
HistoricEngland.org.uk



*Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.*

## 7 Appendix

Date: 31 March 2022  
Our ref: 385345



High Peak Borough Council

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

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Pippa Home

### **SEA/HRA screening assessments of Whaley Bridge draft Neighbourhood Plan**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 25 February 2021

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.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening**

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the [planning practice guidance](#).

Planning practice guidance also outlines that if an appropriate assessment is required for your neighbourhood plan this will also engage the need for a SEA. One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European obligations, including those under the SEA Directive. Where a SEA is required it should be prepared in accordance with [regulation 12](#) of the SEA Regulations

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment – screening and appropriate assessment requirements**

Where a neighbourhood plan could potentially affect a '[habitats site](#)', it will be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Where likely significant effects are identified, it will be necessary to undertake an appropriate assessment of the neighbourhood plan and, if needed, identify and secure appropriate mitigation measures to ensure the plan does not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats site.

**In accordance with Schedule 2 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), a neighbourhood plan cannot be made if it breaches the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).**

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A screening exercise should be undertaken if there is any doubt about the possible effects of the plan on the habitats site(s). This will be particularly important if a neighbourhood plan is to progress **before** a local plan and/or the neighbourhood plan proposes development which has not been assessed and/or included in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the local plan. Where mitigation is necessary to ensure no effects then this will need to be properly assessed via an appropriate assessment.

**Natural England agrees with your conclusions and does not have any other specific comments on this draft neighbourhood plan.**

However, we refer you to the attached annex 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](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Gregory Shaw  
Lead Adviser – Sustainable Development  
East Midlands Area Team

## 7 Appendix

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

#### Natural environment information sources

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Natural environment issues to consider

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/807247/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807247/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf)

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

## 7 Appendix

### 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](#)<sup>9</sup>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)<sup>10</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

### Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)<sup>11</sup>) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)<sup>12</sup> 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](#)<sup>13</sup>.

## 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.

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

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

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

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

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

## 7 Appendix

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](#) <sup>14</sup>).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

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

## 7 Appendix

**From:** [Planning, Lower Trent](#)  
**To:** [Home, Pippa](#)  
**Subject:** FW: SEA/HRA screening assessments of Whaley Bridge draft Neighbourhood Plan  
**Date:** 06 April 2022 10:02:30

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Hi Pippa,  
Given High Peak have determined a SEA is not required, we are happy with that decision.  
Kind Regards,  
Joe Drewry  
Planning Specialist  
Sustainable Places – East Midlands  
Email : [joe.drewry@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:joe.drewry@environment-agency.gov.uk)  
External : 02030 253277, Internal: 33277

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