Landscape, trees and wildlife

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Where appropriate, the following symbols are used:

- Practice or Example generally acceptable
- Practice or Example not recommended
- Aspects of Practice or Example may be acceptable in specific circumstances
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Fig 1.1 Map of Wealden District Showing Designated Areas
1 Background

1.1 Over two-thirds of Wealden is designated as being of national or international importance because of its character, quality or wildlife value. In addition to the High Weald and South Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the District includes such internationally important wildlife habitats as the heathland of the Ashdown Forest Special Conservation Areas and the wetlands of the Coastal and Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site, both of which are also Special Protection Areas.

1.2 In addition to such ‘natural’ elements, the District shows ample evidence of its landscape having been shaped by man over many thousands of years. This evidence includes:
- The wealth of ancient woodland and hedges
- Established parks and gardens, many of them registered
- Sites and areas of archeological interest
- Designated Conservation Areas within the towns and villages
- Listed buildings and their settings, both rural and within settlements

1.3 Such sensitive landscapes are easily affected by development. It is all too easy for new development to have an adverse effect on what is still, essentially, tranquil countryside.

This is particularly likely to be the case where ‘standard’ solutions, which fail to address the specific issues of the site and its setting, are imposed.

1.4 However, there is the potential for well-designed development to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the District’s essential character.

1.5 To this end, the Council seeks to ensure that new developments should enhance both landscapes and wildlife habitats within the District. Where appropriate, this will require the preparation and implementation of long-term management plans to accompany proposals. Conditions and planning agreements attached to approvals will be used to ensure that schemes are implemented to an acceptable standard.

1.6 Whilst the detail of new landscaping works will vary with the type and function of the associated development, landscape design should be considered as an integral and iterative part of the development process. A development and its landscape should form part of the same integrated approach to design. Consideration must be given to the present and proposed character, quality and uses of all spaces from the earliest stage of development.

1.7 The nature of landscapes and provision and responsibility for the future long-term management and maintenance, is expected to be an important factor in development design. The Council will expect landscape restoration, enhancement and management plans to accompany planning applications for major developments with unadopted or public space, or those proposed in particularly sensitive locations, such as historic parks and gardens or areas of wildlife importance.

1.8 Good planning is crucial for the protection of the natural and historic character of the environment we enjoy. It will influence what is passed down to future generations as part of their own historic environment.

1.9 In the Summary to its 2002 State of the Historic Environment report, English Heritage comments that:

“Maintaining and protecting the historic environment is necessary to ensure that future generations are able to continue to enjoy the quality and variety of life we have today. Change is inevitable, but needs to be managed constructively.” and goes on to note that:

“In many places, poor decisions and unregulated development – and the need to cope with increased traffic – are degrading the quality of the historic environment and eroding its significance... Insensitive new design blights the historic environment and diminishes its character and distinctiveness.”

1.9 The potential for the planning system to be used to encourage and ensure the preservation, conservation and enhancement of the District’s cultural heritage will be a major consideration for the Council in determining planning applications. This is especially true in areas of culturally important landscape types found within the District such as Historic Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and the settings of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
2 Key principles

2.1 As part of the submitted development proposal, it must be demonstrated that the design has addressed all of the following issues which relate to the landscape and wildlife associated with the site itself and its immediate setting:

- Early and appropriate surveys of the assets associated with the site and its immediate environs
- The implications of the site’s intended use(s) and the intensity of such use(s) for the landscape and wildlife
- The scale, massing and design detail of the proposed scheme
- The use of practical and innovative design which reflects both local distinctiveness, landscape quality and sustainability
- The integration of the proposals and enhancements into the existing landscape setting
- Linking between sites to achieve an ecological green network/chain/wildlife corridors wherever possible
- The potential for sustainable enhancements to the landscape and wildlife of the site and its surroundings in both local and regional contexts
- The provision of necessary facilities for public amenity
- The use of appropriate boundary treatments
- The long-term management and maintenance of the site’s landscape and wildlife

Fig 2.1 Historically, man has drawn on the produce of his environs to provide shelter and sustenance
Fig 2.2 Over the centuries, man has continually reshaped Wealden’s landscape to best suit changing agricultural needs
Fig 2.3 In more recent times, social aspirations have also impacted on the way we interact with the landscape
Fig 3.1 The historic garden at Sheffield Park
3 Historic Parks and Gardens

3.1 In the past, the quality and historic importance of many parks and gardens have often gone unrecognised. As a result, uninformed development has often been allowed to take place which has compromised their integrity. To help address this problem the Council, working in partnership with the Sussex Gardens Trust and English Heritage, undertook the Wealden Historic Parks and Gardens Survey (WHiGS) which was completed in 2005.

3.2 Parks and gardens not currently included on the National Register were surveyed and assessed according to English Heritage’s criteria. Some were recognised as being of probable national importance (and are being considered for inclusion in the Register) whilst others were found to be of local significance. A list of these is included in Wealden’s Non-Statutory Local Plan and can be accessed on the Wealden website.

3.3 It was recognised, however, that all of these sites make an important contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the District and are also an important resource for education, informal recreation or more formal events.

3.4 Those parks and gardens included within the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest are considered to be of national importance.

Where development is proposed which would have an impact on such designated areas, attention to detail is essential in preparing the layout and design. This includes works that relate to the landscape outside the defining boundaries where they are considered to affect important views in or out of such areas.

3.5 Similarly, development proposals in, or affecting views from, parks and gardens that are not yet registered but which have been shown to be of potentially national or even local interest will be the subject of more intense scrutiny, consultation and design critique than other parks and gardens in the District.

3.6 As a general point, the Council will resist the subdivision of nationally or locally important parks and gardens of historic interest.

3.7 The submission of a conservation/restoration management plan will be expected in cases where major development is in or affects such sites. This approach is seen as the key to ensuring appropriate protection, conservation and enhancement of these nationally important parks and gardens.

The Register is viewable under ‘Research & Conservation’ on English Heritage’s website: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/

Frant Court

As part of an approval for the subdivision of the listed building and the construction of new residential units within the grounds, the garden, which was extensively overgrown, was to be restored. A number of features from the original early C20 design by Gertrude Jekyll were found during the course of the work and these have been restored or repaired as appropriate.

The garden remains in private hands and is now included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.
4 Allotments and gardens

4.1 Parks, gardens and allotments are amongst the more obvious ‘manufactured’ instances of human intervention in the landscape. In providing cultivatable green space open to a range of uses, allotments are becoming of increasing importance, not only for local people, but also for a variety of wildlife.

4.2 Many allotments have cultural value, both in terms of their own long social history and also because of the ‘fossilised’ landscapes they contain. Some present-day allotment hedges date back to the medieval period and many contain trees which were there when the land was open countryside.

4.3 Wildlife also benefits, especially where allotment associations promote organic gardening and the retention of valuable habitats such as ditches, hedges and trees as part of the green infrastructure of the site.

4.4 High density modern development has resulted in relatively small gardens with limited space for new residents to grow their own vegetables in the traditional manner. Existing allotments are therefore becoming sought after, with long waiting-lists. Their retention is therefore increasingly important for existing, and future, communities.

4.5 Allotments are being incorporated into newer, eco-friendly housing schemes as it is recognised that they can help to reduce the carbon footprint of those households which grow their own produce. This process not only helps to reduce ‘food miles’ but also impacts on waste generation by providing space for composting. Additionally, the District’s rarer, protected reptiles, such as the grass snake and slow-worm, can take advantage of such facilities for their nests.

4.6 Allotments also provide good focal points for communities, putting people in direct contact with the processes whereby life is sustained. This is especially important for city-dwellers moving to a country town or village.

4.7 Although there have been many recorded instances of conflict between the site requirements for proposed housing development and established allotments, this Council seeks to retain allotments in sustainable locations where there is a local need. This is because it is considered that allotments, and the associations that run them, provide a valuable service to the District, offering wide-ranging opportunities for education, recreation, exercise and community building.

Fig 4.1 In today’s ‘sustainable’ world, the demand for allotments is high

Fig 4.2 Private gardens provide significant opportunities for biodiversity where natural habitat is under increasing threat

Fig 4.3 Increasing agricultural diversification can have physical, and visual implications for the wider landscape

Fig 4.4 Intensive forms of animal rearing can have a distinct impact on the landscape
5 Wetlands

5.1 Existing and new wetlands in a variety of forms can contribute to a sense of place and are also good for wildlife.

5.2 Rivers and streams: Development proposals should integrate existing natural networks of ditches, ponds and streams in the landscape by ensuring that:
- Where permitted, development within the floodplain of rivers and streams should incorporate flood risk measures.
- Avoiding the disruption of bodies of water and their ecosystems where possible, restoring and encouraging natural flow rather than introducing ‘engineered’ solutions such as culverting and canalisation.
- Drainage to watercourses does not adversely affect their functioning or ecosystems, with volumes kept low and water quality high.
- The vegetation is conserved and enhanced through appropriate bank profiling, planting and management.
- All wetlands of wildlife value are conserved and enhanced.
- Imaginative, managed solutions are used to ensure appropriate access for river maintenance, retention of existing landscape and wildlife features.

5.3 Ponds and lakes: Wealden has one of the highest concentrations of ponds in the South-East. Most are associated with the District’s industrial past and are the result of stone quarrying, dams, hammer ponds or livestock ponds.

5.4 Whilst many of these are now redundant, they are key features of the landscape, forming valuable wildlife habitats and having cultural and recreational value. The Council will seek their retention and enhancement in development schemes. Ponds are threatened by:
- Neglect, natural succession and infilling with excessive leaf litter.
- Water pollution from pesticides or run-off.
- Inappropriate management, over-zealous dredging or excessive tree clearance.
- Abstraction or drainage affecting the water supply.
- Active infilling because of safety concerns.

5.5 The Council will encourage the introduction of new ponds where these can be integrated into the landscape, particularly where early survey work can demonstrate that they will enhance the value of the sites for wildlife.

5.6 Development in the region will increase the need for new reservoirs. The Council will seek to maximise benefits for wildlife and the peaceful enjoyment of the landscape in such developments.

5.7 Other wetlands: Such areas as coastal floodplains, grazing marsh, lakes, ponds, open water and the inter-tidal zone feature as regional biodiversity target habitats in the current South-East Plan. They are often of high scenic and recreational value in addition to providing a diverse range of habitats for rare and protected wildlife. Development on or adjacent to such sites will need to ensure certain measures are in place, including:
- Appropriate surveys carried out at an early stage to assess the landscape, trees and wildlife on and immediately adjoining the site.
- Careful protection of these areas during any construction.
- Sensitive integration of such areas into the new landscape framework.
- Maintenance of the delicate hydrology and ecology of the site and surroundings.
- Careful incorporation and control of access for wildlife and people.

The integration of new ponds and pond aggregations for Great Crested Newts will be required as on-site or off-site mitigation and enhancement where this European protected Species is present on, or adjacent to, development sites.

Fig 5.1

Careful management of water meadows not only provides potential flood relief, but also encourages biodiversity.
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6 Trees, hedgerows and wooded areas

6.1 Trees, hedgerows and wooded areas form an important natural network across the District. They are visually significant and of high wildlife and recreational value, providing habitat for over 50% of the District’s protected species. Insofar as they define the Wealden landscape, the Council will seek their retention and enhancement as part of any development proposals.

6.2 Appropriate consideration of trees, hedgerows and woodland is essential to good design and should be reflected in planning applications. Proposals should clearly demonstrate both how the development takes account of existing woodland, trees and hedgerows on and adjacent to the site and how appropriate protection, mitigation and enhancement measures will be achieved.

6.3 Where appropriate consideration has not been given to such issues any felling, clearance or work prejudicial to their safe and viable retention and/or the ecology, will be resisted.

6.4 The retention of trees of particular interest, such as ancient or veteran trees or native elms and black poplars, is considered to be essential (except where, for example, this might conflict with disease control).

6.5 The Council will encourage the contribution made by existing trees, hedgerows and woodland to be enhanced through good design, by imposing conditions and securing planning agreements. These could encompass the restoration and management of existing landscape features or new planting.

6.6 The most up to date British Standards [BS 5837 (2005) at the time of writing] will always be the minimum standard that should be applied when considering trees and woodland. These principles are also relevant to hedgerows.

6.7 In applying British Standards to design proposals, the aim should be to ensure a sustainable relationship between the existing/proposed built form and existing/proposed trees, hedgerows and woodland, on and adjacent to any property or site. Amenity and safety should similarly be addressed.

6.8 Space should always be allowed for the management of hedgerows, growth of trees to maturity, new planting to diversify planting age structures and to avoid overshadowing, and over-dominance.

6.9 The criteria in the relevant British Standards should be applied from the earliest stages of the design process and should include:

- A Land/Topographical Survey – to show all relevant site features
- A Tree Survey and Constraints Plan - to plot and assess trees, hedges and woodland and indicate all above and below-ground constraints in order to inform the proposal
- An Arboricultural Impact Assessment – to assess the likely implications of the evolving design proposals, in terms of the interrelationships between people, buildings, trees and hedgerows, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the final scheme
- An Arboricultural Method Statement – this will be informed by all of the above and will be expected to ensure that all appropriate tree protection measures, including monitoring/supervision during and after any development, are provided

Potentially damaging operations for trees and hedges include excavation of service runs, proximity of construction working areas, materials storage, logistics, site huts, tree pruning/felling landscape operations.

6.10 Biodiversity issues relating to trees, hedgerows and woodland must be appropriately addressed throughout the development process. This is particularly important where protected species and habitats or designated sites are involved. A suitably qualified and experienced ecologist will be needed to provide appropriate advice. Measures to reduce impacts and enhance biodiversity in the long-term will be expected, to include wide buffer zones protecting Veteran trees and woodland.

6.11 Such a sustainable approach should be incorporated into all planning applications where trees, hedgerows and woodland are involved. Their retention helps to ensure that the essential quality and character of the landscape is not further eroded. The potential design benefits include:

- A mature landscape setting for the development
- Enhancements to enclosure, privacy, shelter and the streetscape
- Visual interest through contrast, colour and seasonal variation
- Increased shade
- Established wildlife habitats
7 Ancient and veteran trees

7.1 Ancient and Veteran Trees have great landscape value in their own right, quite apart from their high value for wildlife. The old gnarled trunks and twisted branches create natural sculptural forms in the countryside and they are particularly important features where they have persisted in towns and villages. Such trees act as landmarks, adding an air of antiquity to urban landscape and can create a valuable ecological habitat.

7.2 Ancient trees often serve as markers in the landscape, sometimes on the line of parish boundaries which date back to Saxon times. They may also have an archaeological importance in marking the routes of former streets to medieval villages long since abandoned. Ancient and Veteran trees are also a feature of the boundary banks and ditches which often surround ancient woodland. Such trees are especially vulnerable because of their isolation, which means there are no buffers between them and development or insensitive agricultural management.

7.3 As our towns and villages expand, where ancient trees are retained, they become subsumed in the urban landscape. As isolated specimens and street trees in what has effectively become a hostile environment, their ecological value is undermined although their cultural significance may remain.

7.4 Wildlife Conservation Bodies have therefore focused their efforts on Ancient and Veteran Trees in rural areas, leaving the conservation of isolated single trees or street trees to other bodies.

7.5 Accordingly, the Council will require developers to provide for the conservation and sensitive management of Ancient and Veteran street trees on their sites, ensuring that suitable buffer zones will be employed to protect them and other trees near to them. It will also pursue appropriate action under the relevant legislation against those who damage any such protected trees.
8 Hedgerows

8.1 Hedgerows form an integral part of the landscape character across the District, providing valuable visual, physical and historic links. The 1997 Hedgerow Regulations protect many rural hedgerows and there is also a Habitat Action Plan for Sussex hedgerows. With these factors in mind, the Council will seek to ensure that:

- The existing pattern of hedgerows and field boundaries is retained, conserved and enhanced
- Existing breaks in hedgerows are used as a priority for access to, and movement within any site
- Where hedgerow removal is unavoidable, translocation or replanting is undertaken

8.2 The management of hedgerows is important to the successful retention of hedges in the landscape. The Council will seek to encourage provision for traditional, sustainable, long-term management of existing hedgerows and the planting of new hedgerows and hedges (clipped garden hedgerows) especially on development sites.

Fig 8.1 Typical, trimmed domestic garden hedge with associated planting - such hedges can provide valuable wildlife habitats

Fig 8.2 Regular clipping helps to encourage tight, dense growth of a formal character which can enhance property boundaries

Fig 8.3 Through human intervention, hedges can take many forms, some of which are perhaps more ‘specialised’

Fig 8.5 The historic pattern of small fields, hedgerows and woodland is readily visible from the air

Fig 8.6 A ‘relict’ hedgerow where failure to continue its management has allowed it to grow out, whilst still showing its origins

Fig 8.7 The traditional countryside craft of hedgelaying is still used to create dense, stock-proof, natural boundaries
9 Ancient woodland

9.1 The Weald is one of the most wooded areas of Britain with around 70% of its woodland being classed as 'ancient'. This means that it has been continually wooded since at least 1600 AD and is of international importance for wildlife.

9.2 Ancient semi-natural woodland, as defined by English Nature, is the closest approximation to natural broad-leaved forest in Britain. These woodlands are identified in the Wealden Ancient Woodland Survey of 2006. It may however be that where a particular woodland is not included, it is still of value to wildlife. It is possible that ancient woodland(s) survive which have yet to be identified or assessed as such. The opinion of a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist should always therefore be sought to verify the status of woodland which would be affected by proposed development.

9.3 The Council will resist development which proposes the removal, or otherwise prejudices the ecology of ancient semi-natural woodland, or plantations on ancient woodland sites. It will actively seek the sensitive conservation, enhancement and management of ancient woodland on or adjacent to development sites.
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10 Mixed broadleaf woodland

10.1 Known as ‘secondary’ woodland, this has developed on sites which were previously extensively cleared and used for agricultural or industrial purposes for a considerable period before naturally regenerating.

10.2 Secondary woodland may provide important habitat in its own right. It may even be of some antiquity and thus of cultural significance.

10.3 It should be noted however, that appearances can be deceptive. Some ancient woodland may have the superficial characteristics of secondary woodland whilst some relatively new woodlands may look ancient because they incorporate fully mature, large trees of a considerable age. The opinion of a suitably skilled ecologist should therefore be sought to assess woodlands to minimise potential error.

10.4 As secondary woodland suffers from many of the same development pressures as ancient woodland, the Council will seek appropriate conservation, enhancement and management where it occurs on or adjacent to development sites.

11 Woodland restoration

11.1 Where woodland has been damaged or neglected it is possible to restore and enhance it through sensitive management by:
- Removal of inappropriate or unauthorised development
- Restoration of coppice management
- Restoration of conifer woodlands to broadleaved woodland through felling, natural regeneration or replanting
- New planting on previously un-wooded land
- Providing wildlife corridors and increasing the overall size of woods to provide a more viable habitat

11.2 It should be noted that, paradoxically, some species such as the rarer woodland bats are more common in ‘neglected’ woodlands, which may also conceal the remains of important structures or industries. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that any proposals do not detrimentally affect existing areas of ecological, archæological or cultural interest.

Fig 10.1 A regenerated woodland linking two historically important settlements

Fig 11.1 Coppiced woodland demonstrates how man has helped to shape and manage the landscape within Wealden

Fig 11.2 Disease and freak weather events have a direct effect on woodland ecology and biodiversity
12 Heathland

12.1 The United Kingdom’s heaths are more ‘Oceanic’ in character than those of eastern continental Europe, supporting some species (such as bell heather and the Dartford Warbler).

12.2 East Sussex still supports significant areas of lowland heath, although this is now about 50% of that which previously existed. Most of the 2,000 ha or so remaining occurs within the specially protected area of Ashdown Forest, with relatively little found elsewhere in the District apart from around 190 ha of heathland and heathy woodland at Broadwater Forest and The Warren near Tunbridge Wells.

12.3 On the South Downs of both East and West Sussex there also remain a few small fragments of ‘chalk heath’ occurring where acidic soils overlie the chalk. This gives rise to interesting plant communities comprised of a mixture of characteristic chalk and heathland species. Lullington Heath National Nature Reserve is the largest example of this habitat but extends to only 25 ha.

12.4 Sussex heathlands are largely used as amenity land for informal recreational uses, such as dog-walking and horse-riding. Many people value heathlands as quiet refuges for fresh air and exercise. They are increasingly important as a nature conservation, archaeological and recreational resource.

12.5 Larger heathland blocks, especially, are the nearest thing to ‘wilderness’ that can be found in the crowded, intensively-farmed countryside of SE England. Sites such as the Ashdown Forest, where people can wander at will across open countryside, are therefore well used by residents and visitors alike, often to the benefit of nearby towns and villages.

12.6 Although walking, riding and birdwatching in the open heathland landscapes are all popular activities, there is a degree of conflict arising from increasing public use, coupled with more overt vandalism, which results in worn out paths and damaged fences. These issues, together with the need for tree and scrub clearance, place a considerable burden on organisations which manage our heathland.

12.7 A considerable effort is therefore required to educate and inform both local people and visitors about the importance and nature of the countryside management and maintenance regimes necessary to ensure that their future enjoyment of this landscape can be assured.

12.8 Increasing development in the District will inevitably put more pressure on those areas of heathland where there is public access for recreation. Accordingly, the Council may seek contributions from developers to compensate for this through the purchase and restoration of areas of heathland.

Fig 12.1 The open heathland with its sparse tree cover

Fig 12.2 The heathland’s colour changes markedly with the seasons

Fig 12.3 Heathland is subject to gradual encroachment by woodland over time
13 Chalk downland

13.1 Chalk grassland has developed on shallow, lime-rich soils generally overlying the chalk of the South Downs. It is one of the richest habitats in the United Kingdom and provides a home for a wide diversity of plants and animals.

13.2 Although calcareous soils overlying rocks such as limestone occur all over the world, chalk only occurs in northwestern Europe. The surviving chalk grassland of Wealden District is therefore exceptionally rare in international terms.

13.3 Despite the international importance of this landscape, agricultural ‘improvements’ and pressure from development over time have destroyed much of Wealden’s chalk grassland. Loss of this landscape is of local and international concern.

13.4 Large-scale losses of chalk grassland occurred after the Second World War, with the push for increased food production. Modern intensive farming, devoted to arable crops and grass leys, largely replaced the extensive grazing management. About a fifth of the country’s chalk grassland was lost in only fourteen years between 1966 and 1980. Today, on the South Downs, it covers only 3% of the area. The remaining resource is largely confined to slopes too steep to plough, such as north-facing escarpments. Hence the rarity of species on the few remaining south-facing slopes. Other losses have been through commercial tree plantations, notably Friston, Charlton and Singleton Forests.

13.5 Now, chalk grassland and its rich wildlife benefit the wider community by serving as a valuable informal recreational resource, especially where there is good access and panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. The special qualities of this habitat, with its wildlife, historic and landscape value, is also an important educational resource.

13.6 The Council may seek agreements to enhance the setting of developments near to chalk grassland and to reduce visitor pressure on the rare remaining chalk grassland sites.

13.7 As developments in the Low Weald may benefit from close proximity to the amenity space offered in the future by the South Downs National Park, the Council would seek off-site enhancements of downland wherever possible. The key aims will be to conserve and enhance chalk downland and to encourage restoration of the chalk grassland landscape through development funding.
14 Designated wildlife sites

14.1 Development on designated wildlife sites will not normally be supported. This applies to local as well as higher-level designations. Advice on designations may be sought from Natural England.

Fig 14.2 Sword-leaved Helleborine

Fig 14.3 Wildflowers ranging from the commonplace, such as bluebells, to the rare native orchids enjoy protection

Fig 14.4 Detail of a Bee Orchid

Fig 14.5 A Butterfly Orchid

Fig 14.6 Human intervention, ranging from littering to the introduction of invasive species (such as Japanese Knotweed) can easily harm such sites

Fig 14.7 More recently, the increase in fly-tipping has led to physical, and visual harm to the landscape in general
15 Wildlife conservation and enhancements

15.1 The wealth of wildlife in Wealden is reflected in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan which defines the species and habitats of particular value and concern in the county context. Of particular interest in Wealden are:
- Woodlands
- Heathland
- Wetlands
- Hedgerows
- Unimproved pastures
- Ponds
- Brownfield sites
- Neglected arable land
- Rivers and streams

Even some road verges in the district have wildlife value and, indeed, these represent neglected opportunities for innovative habitat creation.

15.2 Guidance on planning to halt the loss of biodiversity is available from the British Standards Institute. In addition, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9 ‘Biodiversity and Geological Conservation’ states that; “Plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain and enhance, restore or add to, biodiversity and geological conservation interests.” In determining applications, the Council will therefore seek to ensure that there will be no net loss of biodiversity.

15.3 Wildlife enhancements “as part of good design” are encouraged under PPS 9. Such enhancements should reflect the character and quality of wildlife found on, or adjacent to the site when the ecological survey was carried out.

15.4 It is essential that appropriately skilled and experienced ecologists are brought into the design team at the very start of the development process (preferably prior to site acquisition) so that the ecological opportunities and constraints of the site can be assessed at the earliest stage.

15.5 Sound ecological advice combined with legal requirements, planning guidance and the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan will determine the quantity and type of species and habitat enhancements that are appropriate for each particular site.

15.6 Such enhancements might include:
- Habitat restoration, creation and management
- Enhancement of natural networks
- Restoration of water-courses
- Creation of niche features
- Adequate provision for the long-term management of wildlife conservation areas and buffer zones

15.7 Early ecological assessment should comprise an extended Phase 1 Survey, including a records search (commissioned from the appropriate Biodiversity Record Centre) and discussion with neighbours who often have the advantage of local knowledge.

15.8 It should be noted that the absence of a species from the area’s Biodiversity Records may not be a true reflection of the situation on the ground. Developers must be aware of, and take responsibility for, their own compliance (and that of all contractors and sub-contractors) with wildlife protection law.

15.9 It is very important that protected species are considered as early as possible in the development process to ensure that any necessary surveys can be carried out at the correct times of year for each group. Appropriate changes to the design and mitigation, enhancement and management measures can then be integrated into the proposals.

15.10 Early survey of, and attention to, protected species will also ensure that any requirements for Natural England licences are addressed in a timely manner. The need for a licence is in addition to planning permission. For some species, habitats or situations, their presence will affect development even after planning permission has been granted.

15.11 Development proposals adjoining or affecting designated sites of nature conservation importance, or on some other sites of nature conservation importance, will need to be accompanied by a Wildlife Conservation Management Plan. Details of the Council’s preferred format are available as a guidance note.
15.12 For smaller developments, such as single unit housing, it may be appropriate to adopt a lower key approach to the requirements of habitat conservation and enhancement. In such instances the Council’s guidance notes can provide appropriate advice.

15.13 It must be noted, however, that protected species may be affected by the smallest developments in even the most urban of settings. Great care must therefore be taken to ensure compliance with wildlife protection law at all times. Protected species that are commonly affected by small-scale urban developments include:
- Badgers
- Bats (various species)
- Hazel dormice
- Great crested newts.

These species are also commonly encountered on urban brownfield sites where additional care over the issue of wildlife must be taken.

Fig 15.4 Long-eared bats in a roof void

Fig 15.5 Louvred bat-roost access panels to roof void incorporated into rebuilt gable end of converted barn

Fig 15.6 Where access to roof voids already exists, individual bat-boxes can be fitted with minimal impact on historic fabric

Fig 15.3 Protected Great Crested Newts are not solely confined to ponds but make use of wider, woodland habitat

Fig 15.7 Where threatened by development, mitigation may require that protected species are caught and relocated within - or off - site in an appropriate habitat

Fig 15.8 Barns Owls, also protected, can be encouraged through inclusion of nesting boxes in new developments

Fig 15.9 Tree-mounted barn-owl nesting box
16 Boundaries

16.1 ‘Natural’ boundaries, especially garden hedges and hedgerows, are also important as habitats and networks for wildlife dispersal. Therefore, the treatment of boundaries to and within a site is of particular importance in defining and ‘protecting’ spaces. They may also be used to integrate development into the wider landscape.

16.2 There is a wide variety of boundary types and treatments, many of them very localized in their use. It is therefore essential to ensure that the particular treatment(s) chosen for any specific site have a local relevance. These variants include:

- Natural boundaries with indigenous planting. These can delineate spaces in a way that complements existing rural landscapes.
- Man-made ‘Ha-Has’, earth banks and contouring used in conjunction with planting. Can also serve to protect developments and landscape areas from noise and pollution particularly immediately adjacent to roads.
- Water features, both natural and man-made. Historically, these have been used effectively to define boundaries in addition to creating barriers, controlling access and circulation. These can be as simple as a wide, water-filled ditch or form part of a complex water system. They can also be incorporated as part of a sustainable drainage system.
- ‘Permeable’ treatments such as railings, wooden fences or bespoke artwork also provide natural security and allow surveillance.
- Solid boundaries, such as brick, stone, flint or cobble walls form an important part of the design heritage, particularly within the District’s towns and villages.

16.3 Native hedges are always preferable to close-boarded fencing and can provide secure, impenetrable and ecologically diverse boundaries. Care should be taken to ensure that sufficient space is allowed for hedges and their maintenance in the layout of development proposals.

16.4 Existing hedgerows should be maintained and, where possible, extended to help integrate new development into the landscape. Where planning permission is required, applications that include boundary proposals that have no relevance to the area’s historic/traditional character will be resisted.

16.5 Where boundary security is required, existing hedges should be retained, laid and maintained in the traditional manner. The use of hit-and-miss fencing or reed-matting screening may be considered acceptable as a temporary visual barrier whilst new hedging is established.

16.6 In summary, the use of natural, species-rich, hedges has advantages over man-made barriers as they:
- Provide shelter spaces from the wind as efficiently as solid barriers but without creating draughty eddies.
- Can absorb noise, dust and pollutants, especially where combined with low banking.
- Provide good visual screens and help preserve rural character.
- Provide more security in depth (especially if well-laid thorn hedge is used) than close-boarded fencing.
- Provide potential seasonal interest.
- Provide food and habitat for birds, mammals, insects and wild flowers.
- Are sustainable and more durable than most modern fencing or walls.
- Can be less costly than most fences or walls, especially in the long-term.

Fig 16.1 Traditional buttressed brick boundary wall

Fig 16.2 Cobble walling associated with the Pevensey Levels

Fig 16.3 Rural split-chestnut post-and-rail fencing on new development
16.7 In rural areas and in villages, native hedges are usually preferable to walls. Where the latter are proposed it is important that the walls are constructed using materials and detailing which reflects traditional local vernacular designs.

16.8 In country areas, new entrances gates and gateposts should normally be of a simple rural design, rather than elaborate brick, stone or metal structures. Lighting of entrances should be avoided. Hedges, or split chestnut post and rail, wire or estate fencing is preferable in rural settings. Ornamental and high railings and gates in rural settings are normally inappropriate and their use will be resisted.

16.9 Where man-made barriers are used, they should ideally:
- Be of a low height to front boundaries so as to ensure external surveillance
- Address known issues appropriately and sympathetically. Where an area is prone to graffiti, railings would be more suitable than solid walls
- Be designed and built to ensure that boundary walls attached to buildings do not allow easy access to roofs or gardens
- Ensure that gates, particularly for shared access, allow views through and are lockable and designed for security.
17 Hard and Soft landscape

17.1 Landscape design needs to be properly integrated into the overall design process for the whole development scheme at the earliest stage. This includes hard and soft landscaping.

17.2 The choice of materials to be used on hard surfaces and plant species and varieties for a landscape scheme are an integral part of the landscape design process. Traditionally different surfacing materials are used within an area to reflect and emphasise a change in use, status, function or level. Equally, the choice of plants is normally informed by the landscape, ground conditions and climate (exposure). Native species tend to be sustainable and have a greater chance of survival. Use of native plants is also important when creating wildlife habitats.

17.3 The relationship between hard and soft landscaping within new developments needs to be addressed at an early stage by the applicant/developer’s design team or professional advisor/s. Further guidance is provided in Section 8 of this Guide which deals with ‘Designing the Public Realm’. Additional guidance on planting, including ‘Unusual varieties of native trees’ and details of plants and invasive exotic species to avoid is available in the Council’s Technical Guidance Notes.
18 The impact of lighting

18.1 Excessive, poorly designed and poorly sited lighting can have adverse effects on both people and wildlife in rural and urban landscapes. Although Wealden District does not suffer as much from the light pollution that affects more urban neighbouring districts, the past fifty years have seen a widespread growth in the use of external lighting which has a number of implications for the environment and wildlife. This includes:

- Artificial lighting, cumulatively, may be far stronger than moonlight and obliterates views of star-studded night skies.
- Glow from artificial lights also increases feelings of urbanisation.
- In rural areas, extending day length affects the natural rhythms of a wide range of animals and plants. Impacts are greatest among nocturnal mammals and insects, although nesting or roosting birds may also be affected.
- A high level of general illumination may cause night-flying insects to cease flying and settle reducing the numbers and species within towns over the past thirty to forty years.
- Nocturnal animals are likely to be disturbed by the presence of lights and could be deterred from foraging in illuminated areas. Since many mammals are already under threat this represents a further pressure on remaining populations.

18.2 Security lighting or sport floodlighting on premises alongside rivers, woods, in specific foraging areas or generally near open countryside may be seriously detrimental to wildlife for the following reasons:

- Continuous roadside lighting creates light ‘barriers’ which species such as bats will not cross.
- Artificial lighting may adversely affect the timing of natural behaviour such as territorial singing in thrushes (song thrushes being ‘a species of principal importance’).
- Reproduction in birds is controlled by day length. Artificial lighting has been shown to induce hormonal and physiological changes that prematurely initiate breeding in around 60 species of wild birds.
- Bright lights, such as those on telecommunication towers and other tall structures, may also disorientate birds resulting in deaths.
- Some species of flora will not flower if the night is artificially shortened by lighting. Other species will flower early as a result of exposure to the longer ‘daylight’ period.
- Low-pressure sodium lamps have also been shown to disrupt the regulation of plant growth and development.
Landscape, trees and wildlife

18.3 The British Astronomical Association has promoted public awareness of the issue of light pollution, starting the Campaign for Dark Skies. There are no longer professional observatories in many parts of the country and there is concern about the impacts on education and science. The Royal Greenwich Observatory’s headquarters was transferred from Wealden to Cambridge in 1990 because of deteriorating viewing conditions largely caused by light pollution.

18.4 For lighting proposals, the following general principles should be considered:

- The minimum possible lighting should be used, especially in the rural fringe and in the countryside
- Luminaires should contain light spillage and glare control
- The functionality of security and sports lighting should be such that does not pollute or become a nuisance. Lighting of sports pitches in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or where it would adversely affect important wildlife, will not be encouraged
- The impact of lighting on views from and into the surrounding countryside, especially Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Buildings or landscaping should be used to shield lights from distant views

Fig 18.1 Giant lighting column, out of scale with its setting and a significant potential source of light pollution because of its height

Fig 18.2 This map, prepared by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) shows the extent of light pollution in the South-East as of 2000. From this, it can be seen that Wealden District was then one of the few areas where significant ‘dark’ skies remained
19 Summary

19.1 The majority of Wealden’s landscape, tree and wildlife heritage (including our woodlands, downlands, heathlands and wetlands) is important at International, National and regional levels; much of the rest has value at the local level. Developers should, therefore, integrate their proposals into the landscape ensuring the conservation and enhancement of this heritage. The process of integration will include:

- survey
- analysis
- design
- construction, and
- management.

19.2 Survey: Early survey, using appropriate methodologies, at the right times of year, and carried out by trained and experienced staff is an important first step. This work can be iterative and may also need to address off-site features or habitats. Surveys for the following are essential precursors to most development:

- Ecology
- Tree survey and Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA)
- Historic Landscapes
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
- Topography
- Hydrology
- Soil Survey

19.3 Analysis of survey data will help in achieving appropriate layout and design details. Analysis should include assessment of landscape, tree and wildlife assets and opportunities for enhancement through design and maintenance.

19.4 Design proposals should realistically reflect the changes that development will bring and clearly demonstrate the asset protection, mitigation and enhancements proposed. This will help ensure an accurate assessment of the likely impacts of a development. Developers may consider providing for off-site mitigation and enhancement where this is not appropriate on-site.

19.5 Proposals should demonstrate sustainability and address impacts on, and of, climate change, landscapes, trees and wildlife. They should also include details of technical landscape, tree and wildlife solutions, for example, ‘no-dig construction methods and species-specific mitigation. Information on landscape, tree and wildlife protection measures, for works pre-, post-, and during construction will also be required.

19.6 Management: Long-term management of existing and new landscape, tree and wildlife assets will often be required. This may require a management plan and interpretation material for residents, Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders.