

Environmental theme group work programme

Introduction

1. The role of the Environmental Theme Group is to identify the potential for environmental protections to be built into the Neighbourhood Plan.
2. They can include specific designations as well as general policies and require a combination of evidence gathering from YourLocale from existing historical and environmental records and input from local people in identifying the areas to be protected and describing why the designation is required.
3. There is no specific order in which these activities are to be tackled, however it is recommended that the work involved in identifying and justifying the Local Green Spaces and non-designated heritage assets are considered first as they involve contact with owners, alongside the work around identifying and describing the important views and considering additional sites of environmental and historic significance which can involve site surveys across the Parish.
4. The range of designations and policy areas, and the input needed by each party is as follows:

Local Green Space.

Description

5. A Local Green Space designation is the most powerful environmental protection that neighbourhood plans offer. The policy will resist development that harms the space in line with the protection afforded through policies protecting the Green Belt.
6. It needs to reflect an area that is 'demonstrably special' to the local community as measured against such factors as beauty, tranquillity, historical significance, richness of wildlife, recreational value, and is in close proximity to the community and not an extensive area of land.
7. To be appropriate for Local Green Space designation, it must be demonstrated that the space in question is 'special' because of both where it is and what it is, with the two being linked so that a replacement of the area is not appropriate.

Roles

8. The local community need to identify potential Local Green Space designations, provide a precise boundary within which the policy will apply, describe why they are 'special' based on the criteria listed above (not all need to apply), take photographs of the space and plot it on a map. The landowner of the site needs to be informed of the proposed designation, but their agreement is not a requirement of designation. Any disagreement will be decided by the Examiner.
9. YourLocale will write an appropriate policy based on the information provided and provide digital mapping to accompany the policy.

Important Open Spaces

Description

10. An important open space is an area set aside for sporting or recreational purposes. The policy will protect the function of the open space but not its location, so development on an area designated as an important open space may be allowed if alternative provision is made available, or if the function of the open space is no longer wanted by the community.

Roles

11. YourLocale will identify existing areas of Important Open Space that are designated through Local Plans. The community can add appropriate sites to this list, notifying the landowner of this intent and photographing, describing and marking the site on a map with a clear boundary. The landowners agreement is not a requirement of designation. YourLocale will then provide digital versions of the maps and produce a policy to provide the protection desired.

Non-designated Heritage Assets.

Description

12. A non-designated heritage asset is an important building or structure which is not statutorily protected through being listed. This can be because of aesthetic, architectural or historical purposes. The policy will take the special features into account when any planning application is submitted that affects the building or structure, and its setting.

Roles

13. The local community must identify the buildings or structures to be protected and take a photograph of it, describe it and why it is special and plot it on a map, with precise boundaries as appropriate. Property owners need to be contacted to advise them of the proposed inclusion in a policy, but their agreement is not a requirement.
14. YourLocale will provide digital versions of the material supplied and will formulate an appropriate policy and narrative in support of the buildings and structures identified.

Important Views

Description

15. The identification of important views, which can be into or away from the built-up area, can help add a layer of protection against inappropriate development. Ideally, the views will have a specific focus (a listed building or church or environmental feature), must be from a publicly accessible area and not extend beyond the Parish boundary.

Roles

16. The community are required to identify the views, describe them, take a view from the vantage point in the direction of the view and plot it on a map.
17. YourLocale will produce the policy and supportive narrative based on this information.

Sites of environmental and historic significance

Description

18. This is an opportunity to identify and record important environmental and historic sites within the Parish that can be taken into account in the planning system. They can include notable trees, ancient hedgerows, buried artifacts etc. Whilst the policy is unlikely to prevent otherwise appropriate development, it can take the identified features into account and require the planning system to protect them within any development proposal.

Roles

19. YourLocale will provide details of all existing designations that are recorded in historical or other records. The local community is invited to add to this list from local knowledge and will provide details of additional features and their location. YourLocale will then produce a policy and narrative to highlight these features for protection, based on the principle that development proposals where the harm is greater than the public benefit will be refused.

Ridge and Furrow

Description

20. This policy seeks to protect the surviving areas of ridge and furrow from destruction through planning proposals. The policy will resist development where the harm it generates is greater than the public benefit.

Roles

21. YourLocale will produce maps showing the decline in the extent of ridge and furrow over time. The community is asked to confirm those ridge and furrow sites that remain, for YourLocale to plot digitally and produce a policy and supporting narrative.

Wildlife corridors

Description

22. Wildlife corridors connect wildlife habitats and help to prevent the fragmentation of populations of species of conservation concern.

Roles

23. YourLocale will produce a map and policy based on the identified features within the neighbourhood area. These features can be added to by local knowledge.

Renewable energy infrastructure generation

Description

24. This is an opportunity for the local community to add specific detail to the strategic policies of the local planning authority, by specifying tip heights for wind turbines and the scale of solar arrays. The neighbourhood plan can also identify appropriate locations for infrastructure to be constructed and highlight those locations that are inappropriate.

Roles

25. YourLocale will set out the options based on the strategic policies of the local planning authority and will draft a policy based on local preferences.

Biodiversity

Description

26. The policy will require development proposals to protect biodiversity in general (including trees, woodland, landscapes and hedges of environmental value) and to provide a minimum 10% net gain.

Roles

27. YourLocale will put the policy together, to be added to by the community with any areas of specific interest.

Footpaths

Description

28. The policy can help to protect and improve existing public footpaths and encourage the development of new footpaths to help connectivity with key village facilities and to support sustainable transport options.

Roles

29. YourLocale will draft a policy based on existing footpaths. The community can help describe the importance of footpaths locally and identify areas where connectivity can be improved.

Flooding risk

Description

30. The policy can add local detail to broad strategic policies and cover development requirements that impact on flood risk including surface water flooding.

Roles

31. YourLocale will draft a policy and seek input from the community in relation to evidence of local flooding episodes.

Conclusion

32. This list covers the most frequently used environmental policies. Not all may be required locally and non are mandatory.
33. YourLocale will set the structure of the environmental chapter in the neighbourhood plan. The strength of the resultant policies will be determined by the extent of local evidence provided by the community in support of those policies.