

Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning

Incorporating the natural, built and historic environment,
and rural issues in plans and strategies

Supplementary Files

Guidance to help in the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies
and Local Development Frameworks



Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning – guidance

Supplementary Files

These 'Supplementary Files' support the guidance by discussing the key messages, explaining the action points and providing more information.

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Background to the guidance

This guidance is produced by the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency (the agencies), to help planning authorities and regional planning bodies. It will also be used by our own staff. It is intended to supplement the following guidance issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM):

- Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- (Draft) Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Planning Policy Statement 11 Regional Spatial Strategies
- Planning Policy Statement 12 Local Development Frameworks
- Community Involvement in Planning The Government's Objectives
- Creating Local Development Frameworks A companion Guide to PPS12
- (Consultation Draft) Local Development Frameworks Guide to Procedure and Code of Practice
- Local Development Framework Monitoring: A Good Practice Guide
- Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (Consultation Paper)
- A (Draft) Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities
- The Planning Response to Climate Change - Advice on Better Practice
- Other Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements relevant to our interests

The guidance also takes account of the (Consultation Draft) Planning Officer's Society publication Policies for Spatial Plans.

It is intended to be consistent with, and add value to, all of the above documents by setting out in more detail the approaches, vision, objectives, policies and commended practice that the agencies encourage the authors of plans and strategies to adopt. It is not intended to impose any new requirements on planning authorities.

Our issues are of fundamental importance to communities and to sustainable development. The agencies have joined together to produce this guide for a number of reasons, including to:

- demonstrate an integrated approach to sustainable development, enabling rural issues and the natural, built and historic environment to be fully incorporated into strategies and plans;
- reduce the volume of guidance material that plan and strategy authors have to take into account;
- enable us to make an efficient, effective, consistent and coordinated input to plans and strategies;
- show that whilst each of the agencies focuses on particular aspects and issues, they share a common vision and a common understanding of what the planning system can do to help achieve their objectives;
- help planners to meet the challenges of drafting a new generation of plans and strategies and securing their adoption; and
- demonstrate our commitment to helping make the new planning system work as effectively as possible, by making an immediate contribution to it.

The agencies are, therefore, seizing the opportunity to influence new plans and strategies at the earliest stages. That is why this guidance is in a different form to our previous publications. The main guidance is available in published form and on the website of each of the agencies. The Supplementary Files are only available via the websites. The guidance will be reviewed and adapted as necessary, to reflect evolving practice, and it will be added to so that we can disseminate good practice as it emerges. Parts may be replaced and new Supplementary Files added. The web version is likely to be the most up-to-date.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduces fundamental changes to the planning system. The agencies strongly support the following elements of the new system:

- the duty to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development;
- greater involvement of communities, including rural communities, wherever this is possible;
- 'front loading' of our involvement in the process, as well as that of the public and other stakeholders;
- the wider spatial planning approach identifying other delivery mechanisms, some of which we may be involved in;
- the continuous and more flexible process with which we can regularly engage;
- embedding strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal processes into the plan and strategy making processes, so improving the integration of environmental and rural issues in the plans and strategies;
- requiring a comprehensive evidence base, which we are anxious to contribute towards, so that our interests are more fully understood and more deeply embedded in policy; and
- emphasising programme management, which will improve our planning and allocation of resources for engagement in the plan-making processes at the right time so that it is effective, timely and helpful.

However, we also recognise that there is likely to be some variation over how new plans and strategies will develop, what they may look like, the way that they will vary to meet different circumstances and how quickly they will emerge. We anticipate a period of innovation, trial and adaptation and the development of new techniques and methods. These will need to be tested as the new legislation and government guidance are put into practice. We want to contribute to that innovation and experimentation, and to the evolution of new ideas. Some of our ideas are at the cutting edge of planning policy and practice, they are intended to be inspirational and aspirational, as such they will need developing and testing in practice. The guidance sets out examples of good practice that are drawn from plans prepared under the old planning system but could easily be adapted to fit the new system. Good practice is evolving and we will be pleased to hear from any plan-making bodies that are pursuing initiatives to develop good practice under the new planning system.

We want to help planners deliver the new planning system, so we are refreshing our approach to how we produce guidance and influence the planning process. The guidance sets out our aspirations and principles for the new system. In particular, we are encouraging a move away from a 'topic' based to an objectives-led approach for plans and strategies. We are promoting the environment and rural issues in a new and better integrated policy framework, addressing wider sustainability issues whilst meeting local needs within a national, regional and district wide context. Not all of the information in the guidance will be relevant to every local development document and planning authorities should use the guidance as they see fit. Under each section of the guidance, we set out *recommended actions* that we would encourage planning authorities to take on board. In [Supplementary Files 13](#) and [14](#) we produce scoping or 'proofing' checklists to assist planning authorities in preparing RSS and LDF. These set out the issues the agencies would like to see included in plans and strategies.

In this guide we refer to all plan-making bodies as 'planning authorities' for convenience.

We see RSS and LDF exhibiting dynamic links and interactions with plans that the agencies produce and promote, including River Basin Management Plans, Shoreline and Catchment Flood Management Plans, Biodiversity Action Plans and AONB Management Plans. Incorporating the land use aspects of these other plans into RSS and LDF will help to meet the Government's aims and help them to meet the test of 'soundness'. We explain these characteristics in more detail in the pages that follow.

Resources and evidence

Ensuring the process is properly resourced

The delivery of the new suite of plans and strategies will be challenging for planning authorities and regional planning bodies. Together with the requirements of the sustainability appraisal, it will mean that planning authorities will need sufficient and adequately trained staff, appropriate information and other resources. It will also demand a considerable resource input from the agencies.

The agencies believe that our input to RSS, and LDF is a priority, because of the importance of planning to the delivery of our objectives. However, planning authorities should ensure that they are able to develop the skills and expertise in-house to ensure that environmental and quality of life issues are fully integrated into all spatial plans and strategies.

We urge planning authorities to contact us at the earliest stages of plan preparation so we can discuss how best to contribute to the process. Each of the four agencies may input in different ways but we will aim to add value to the planning process, not merely respond to consultations. We explain further what we can do in [Supplementary File 12](#).

To help plan our involvement and use of resources we would welcome planning authorities sending their Local Development Scheme to each of the agencies' local contact points listed in [Supplementary File 15](#).

Recommended Action

Planning authorities to contact the agencies as early as possible in the plan / strategy process. Although not a statutory requirement, it would be helpful if planning authorities could send a copy of their Local Development Scheme to each of the relevant contact points listed in [Supplementary File 15](#).

Improving and scoping the evidence base

Plans and strategies need to be founded on a thorough understanding of the state of the natural, built and historic environment and, where appropriate, the needs of rural areas.

The evidence base needs to concentrate on gathering and analysing the information necessary to produce a synopsis of each area's state of the environment, and its social, economic, housing and transport needs. This will be needed to inform the vision, policies and proposals and in the production of the Environmental Report or Sustainability Appraisal.

This is the first and one of the most fundamental stages of plan making. It should be focused on what is or may be changing, the key pressures for change and what is needed to encourage beneficial change and prevent that which is harmful.

English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency can assist in this stage by:

- providing information that we hold;
- scoping the information that is likely to be needed in the context of the particular plan or strategy;
- identifying other sources of information and, where appropriate, advising on its reliability and potential value in the planning process;
- advising on the feasibility and timescales for obtaining information not readily available.

The information needs to be adequate and fit for purpose but manageable. More detailed data and survey work may need to be added over time; evidence gathering should be seen as an iterative and continuing process.

The sources of information that can be accessed by plan makers relevant to our interests are listed below.

Planning authorities could discuss ways in which data may be stored, transferred, analysed and updated in the most cost-effective and useful ways, including the sharing of resources such as geographical information systems.

Recommended Action

Contact us at an early stage (see [Supplementary File 15](#)) to help to scope the environmental and rural issues in the plan and the evidence base needed to address them.

Recommended Action

Discuss with English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency the use and handling of data.

Start to identify areas that are distinct, because of their ability to accommodate change, or their sensitivity to change depending on their characteristics, identify the changes these areas are experiencing or may be vulnerable to, or the nature and scale of their development needs and opportunities.

Sources of information

Planning authorities are referred to the following key references, all of which provide detailed information or further links to sources of information:

Annex 2 Sources of baseline information in Consultation Paper, Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, ODPM, September 2004

Countryside Agency

www.countryside.gov.uk

Countryside Agency, State of the Countryside Report at

www.countryside.gov.uk/stateofthecountryside

Countryside Agency, Rural Services Survey at

www.countryside.gov.uk/ruralservices

Countryside Agency, Countryside Quality Counts at

www.countryside.gov.uk/qualitycounts

For rural and urban definitions

www.rural-urban.org.uk

English Heritage

www.english-heritage.org.uk

English Nature

www.english-nature.org.uk

For international nature conservation sites and species

www.jncc.gov.uk

The National Biodiversity Network for information on biodiversity and species

www.nbn.org.uk

Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Flooding

www.pipernetworking.com and www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/?lang=_e

Climate change

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yourenv/639312

Sustainable building

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/780414?lang=_e&theme=®ion=&subject=&researchfor=Sustainable+Buildings+task+force

Navigation

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/navigation/?lang=_e

Recreation

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/recreation/?lang=_e

Water resources

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waterres/?lang=_e

Soil protection

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/landquality/776051/775200/?version=1&lang=_e

Planning authorities are referred to the **Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)**, which is the combination of spatial information from us in mapped form at:

www.magic.gov.uk

For geographic information

www.gigateway.org.uk

Vision and ambition

Visionary plans and strategies

We would like to see plans and strategies that are genuinely visionary. Visions should be meaningful, not vague aspirations. The vision should be at the forefront of the plan or strategy so that it shapes all aspects of it. Objectives, policies and proposals should flow from the vision and contribute to it.

The vision should embrace the objectives of the Community Strategy and should be a locally relevant, identifiable and attainable expression of what the community wants to achieve, set in the context of national and regional policies.

This is likely to require a long-term vision together with shorter and medium term aspirations, possibly with interim targets to measure progress. The vision should be long enough to embrace the aspirations of all sectors of the community. More locally specific spatial visions may be needed for parts of the area.

Not all aspects of the vision will have a spatial dimension but the complete 'future picture' is needed to provide a context for what a spatial plan or strategy can do. To date, some Community Strategies have not adequately expressed the environmental aspects of spatial planning that are central to our concerns.

Examples of the locally distinctive and more explicit kind of vision we support are found in the Lincolnshire Structure Plan (Deposit Draft, April 2004) (see [Good Practice Box 1](#)) and the Replacement Bolsover District Local Plan (First Deposit Draft, May 2004) (see [Good Practice Box 2](#)).

Good Practice Box 1

Lincolnshire Structure Plan

A vision for Lincolnshire

A more sustainable Lincolnshire would include the following characteristics:

- An expanded and prosperous City of Lincoln, increasingly recognised as a major employment, leisure and cultural centre within the region;
- A network of thriving small and medium sized towns, capable of acting as key service centres for surrounding rural areas, and driving local economic development;
- Village communities which can provide a range of affordable housing options and community services;
- A more productive and broadly based economy, less reliant on primary production;
- A viable and diverse agricultural sector, which meets the requirements of consumers, provides local jobs, protects and improves the environment and is less dependent on public subsidy;
- An attractive countryside with greater biodiversity, to be valued both as an asset in its own right, and for the quiet enjoyment of visitors and local people alike.

And be a place where:

- Those who already suffer some form of social exclusion are not further disadvantaged by their rural location;
- There are greater opportunities for people to improve their skills and advance their careers without having to move out of the county;
- Geographic isolation or lack of access to the private car does not unduly restrict the ability to travel or to access key services and markets;
- New development is of a high standard of design, makes efficient use of resources, and minimises greenhouse gas emissions so impacts of climate change are addressed.

Good Practice Box 2

Bolsover Replacement Local Plan

A vision for Bolsover District

A group of vital, self-sustaining and attractive settlements, which are dynamic economic drivers capable of sustaining the prosperity of the district through periods of economic change and providing the whole community with a robust and equitable future.

The settlements will take pride in the historic and natural heritage of the district and develop in a way that makes the best use of natural resources and the environment for the benefit of future generations. Villages will be retained as viable communities linked through improved public transport networks.

As the countryside changes, the best and most versatile agricultural land will be protected from irreversible development where appropriate. Landscape character and quality will be conserved and enhanced where appropriate. Biodiversity will be fostered, and afforestation with native broad-leaved species will be encouraged where this is appropriate to the landscape character of the surrounding area. Public access to the countryside will be extended and strategic cycling, trails and horse riding routes developed.

However, the distinctiveness and ambition, even of these examples, could be expanded to make them more specific to their locations, more challenging in their goals and more closely linked to delivery.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with a planning authority to further good practice in setting out the 'future picture' in a vision that more fully describes the kind of environment and quality of life to which we would jointly aspire.

Vision statements should be ambitious and demanding but realistic and achievable.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should develop their visions for the 'future picture' so that the kind of environment and quality of life that they aspire to achieve in the future is clearly understood and sufficiently described to provide a steer for the planning system as a whole.

The vision should clearly reflect the statutory duty to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Ambitious plans and strategies

Plans and strategies should be more ambitious about what can be done to enhance and manage the environment, plan for future change (including that brought about by climate change) and bring positive change to rural areas.

Having identified alternative policy approaches and strategic development options for achieving the objectives, the plan or strategy should clearly set out how the selected option can deliver beneficial changes. A list of practical and achievable proposals could be drawn up and incorporated into RSS and LDFs, with quantified targets and delivery timescales and mechanisms where possible. These proposals should include improvements to the environmental resource or 'infrastructure' on which all development relies. All significant development proposals should contribute to environmental resources. For example, better functioning ecosystems help to save money and should not be seen as 'conservation costs', for example, functioning floodplains store flood waters, help increase biodiversity, improve the distinctiveness of local landscape character and cleanse rivers. Attractive, well-managed, distinctive landscapes, towns and villages stimulate and sustain economic development and regeneration. Investments in major environmental initiatives are likely to reduce costs to society and improve quality of life in many ways.

The RSS should contain strategic initiatives, appropriate at the regional or sub-regional scale. The LDF should contain more local initiatives, or the local contribution to the wider initiatives in RSS and sub-regional strategies. For example, the approved Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan (February 2001) includes a policy that promotes a target for new heathland creation in the County, in the plan period (see [Good Practice Box 3](#)).

Good Practice Box 3

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan

Environment Policy E

The biodiversity of Dorset will be maintained and enhanced, particularly through:

- The re-establishment of 500 hectares of lowland heath, adjacent, or in close proximity, to existing heathlands; and
- The replacement of appropriate habitats in situations where damage or loss occurs as a result of development.

Plans and strategies should be deliverable and show how objectives should be achieved. An example is the use of planning obligations to implement the spatial policies. Individual development proposals could be required to make a practical contribution, in cases where it is located in or close to the relevant area or it could include proposals of a type that could contribute to the target. Other developments may make indirect contributions, such as by assisting with the funding of projects. Planning authorities should set out clear priorities for the use of planning obligations in their areas.

The new provisions for planning contributions in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 are a major opportunity for planning authorities to help set and deliver an agenda for improvement in the environment and quality of life. (See [Supplementary File 10](#))

There is the opportunity for RSS and LDF to identify more ambitious environmental initiatives and set more targets. Examples of proposals that could be considered are listed below:

- Enhancement of Conservation Areas or other areas of valued townscape in need of improvement
- A project to improve the repair and maintenance of a series of identified Listed Buildings or other historic features suffering neglect or inappropriate use or maintenance
- Townscape improvement projects for urban renaissance priority areas
- Projects to improve public access to the countryside and to improve understanding of the environment through interpretation and information
- The restoration and improved management of one or more Historic Parks or Gardens
- Themed historical projects improving access to and linking and explaining the significance of scheduled monuments, historic landscapes, local historic events and battlefields
- Restoration of the landscape character in areas identified as in need of restoration in a Landscape Character Assessment or Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Woodland management and new woodland planting projects consistent with the recommendations in a Landscape Character Assessment or Community Forest Plan
- Major habitat creation projects consistent with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, for example recreating and linking fragments of heathlands, semi-natural grasslands, woodlands and wetlands
- Integrated projects to restore natural river processes and systems and to enhance the landscape, ecology and recreational value of river valleys
- Proposals to reduce flood risk, creating more sustainable drainage systems and rehabilitation of floodplains
- Themed projects promoting improved access to and understanding and management of geological conservation sites and landform features
- The improved delivery of Community Forest Plans
- Coastal Zone initiatives embracing natural processes and leading to the conservation and improvement of the natural, built and historic environment
- Proposals that facilitate and promote waste minimisation, more sustainable construction methods and the wiser use of natural resources
- The creation of major new or improved 'green infrastructure' projects such as regional parks, green grids and large-scale urban open space networks.

All of these kinds of initiatives and projects will need co-ordination and inputs from a variety of stakeholders, usually including one or more of the agencies. The planning system will not be able to deliver them on its own, but it can set the policy and spatial framework for delivering those aspects that are capable of implementation through the planning system and which have a spatial dimension. The new plans and strategies need not be confined to implementation only through development control, or even through the planning system as a whole. Other delivery mechanisms, and other stakeholders who can contribute, can and should be identified, together with how they would integrate with delivery through the planning system.

Good Practice Box 4

Forest of Marston Vale, Bedfordshire **A delivery mechanism for green infrastructure**

The Forest of Marston Vale is a Community Forest and Charitable Trust covering 61 square miles of land between Milton Keynes and Bedford, a major potential growth area with plans for up to 19,000 dwellings for the next 20 years. The Trust is an example of an innovative delivery mechanism for green infrastructure as an integral part of the future development of the Vale. This is achieved through partnership working with planners, developers, builders, and the local community to ensure the sustainable development of the Vale.

The community is extensively involved throughout the consultation process and is involved in tree planting. The Trust is respected and understood by the community, which has tended to give it access to land that would not normally come on the market. The green infrastructure is being put in place ahead of the development. The success of Marston Vale stems from its ability to operate on a scale and vision that can deliver the Government's objectives for development, whilst using its status and position in the local community to ensure that a green infrastructure is the first thing to appear on the ground, ahead of development.

The new provisions for planning contributions in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 are a major opportunity for planning authorities to help set and deliver an agenda for improvement in the environment and quality of life.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should consider more ambitious initiatives for the conservation, enhancement and better management of the environment and rural areas. Plans and strategies should indicate how these can be built into and delivered through the planning system and other delivery mechanisms.

More inclusive plans and strategies

A key objective of the new planning system is to strengthen community involvement in planning. PPS1 stresses that planning must work as a partnership and local people should be involved in developing the vision for their area. We see this as a fundamental role of the Community Strategy; but the involvement of particular stakeholders and the wider public should percolate through the whole planning process. We have helped to develop and test ways of involving local people and specific stakeholders in influencing the future of their area and their communities. We want to share that experience. We acknowledge the value of 'front-loading' community involvement as a way of generating better informed plans and of reducing potential conflict in later stages.

For example, the Countryside Agency has promoted and worked with community based 'Development Trusts' that can make a significant contribution to delivering benefits to the community through involvement in the planning system¹. The Agency also has a long track record of community involvement through such initiatives as Parish Plans², Village Design Statements³, Town Design Statements⁴, and Market Town Health Checks and Action Plans⁵.

Good Practice Box 5

Maldon's Future: a community review

This is the Town Design Statement for Maldon in Essex. It was prepared by the residents of Maldon, from 2001 to 2002, with financial support from the Countryside Agency.

"It makes people stop and take stock of where the town is going and how it could be better – you focus on it and think about it."

(Margaret Day, member of Maldon Town Design Statement Steering Group).

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Design Statement

This was adopted by the District Council, as Supplementary Planning Guidance, in September 2002. It was a community-led project. The Countryside Agency, Warwickshire County Council, Stratford District Council, the Town Council and the Stratford Society considered ways of involving as wide a selection of the community as possible in the preparation of the Statement. Following a public meeting attended by over 50 societies, groups and people who live and work in the town, with an interest in planning and the built environment, a committee of townspeople and a Community Management Group were established to deliver the Design Statement. Public engagement included surveys of townspeople's expectations, workshops, newspaper coverage (including a questionnaire), a website, and a week long public exhibition.

- 1 See for example *The Development Trusts Association, How communities can be involved in negotiating and managing benefits secured from development via planning obligations, A report for the Countryside Agency, July 2002.*
- 2 See www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages
- 3 See www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/landscape/village/index.asp
- 4 See *Town Design Statements- Why and how to produce them. Good Practice Advice Countryside Agency publication CA134 March 2003*
- 5 See www.countryside.gov.uk/NewEnterprise/MarketTowns
- 6 *Parish plans and the planning system: Guidance and advice for planning authorities. Countryside Agency publication CA123, March 2003; Market Town health checks and the planning system: Guidance and advice for planning authorities 2003, available at www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/PositivePlanning/Themes/involvingcommunities*

The Countryside Agency has produced guidance illustrating how initiatives such as Parish Plans and Market Town Health Checks can be used in the planning process. We have considerable experience of working with and often financially supporting the work of voluntary bodies. Local Civic Trusts, Building Preservation Trusts and Gardens and other Historical Societies, the RSPB, County Wildlife Trusts, Groundwork and other local environmental action groups, local ornithological, botanical and other natural history societies and bat and badger groups, can all have a role in providing information and comment on the LDF. Whilst their involvement will tend to focus on the local level, the role of some voluntary organisations should not be underestimated at the regional level. Bodies such as RSPB and CPRE have made a significant contribution to regional planning.

Planning authorities should be realistic about what can be achieved, and the extent to which people will become involved, but we should aim to engage and enable everyone. Our experience shows that a strong steer and professional help can be beneficial to obtain people's views and to engage them meaningfully in planning for their area. Engagement is often most effective when communities and other stakeholders are asked to complete particular tasks and to make choices, rather than merely comment on proposals. It can be difficult to ensure all sectors of the community are heard, particularly in more isolated rural areas. However, it is possible to build up the capacity of communities to participate in meaningful and influential ways to the planning process. The use of post offices, shops, schools and pubs, for example, can provide a focus for participation (and further justification for retaining these services in rural areas). Increasing use of interactive web sites and e. mail, and (for those with no computer access) hotline information services, together with the establishment of more self-help groups will help hard-to-reach communities.

A checklist of statutory and non-governmental bodies, which we believe should be invited to be positively engaged in the planning process is provided below.

Recommended Action

Check that all of the appropriate bodies listed below have been consulted and invited to engage in the planning process at the earliest possible stage.

Planning authorities should consider how local community-led initiatives such as parish plans and market town action plans can best be used to inform or be part of the plan preparation process.

Checklist for stakeholder involvement

A checklist of statutory and non-governmental organisations that we believe should be invited to be involved in the planning process, not all bodies will be relevant to all plan / strategy areas or functions. The list is intended to be consistent with but more specific than that included in Annex E of Planning Policy Statement 12.

Rural issues

- Countryside Agency (Landscape, Access and Recreation Division and Commission for Rural Communities)
- Parish Councils and Parish Meetings
- Community Councils
- Village Residents Associations
- The Council for National Parks
- AONB Management Structures and National Association for AONBs
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- National Farmers Union
- Country Land and Business Association

Heritage

- English Heritage
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
- Ancient Monuments Society
- Council for British Archaeology
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
- The Georgian Group
- The Victorian Society
- The Twentieth Century Society
- Garden History Society
- The National Trust
- Local Civic Trust / Civic Amenity Society
- Local Building Preservation Trust
- Local Archaeological and Antiquarian Societies
- Local History Societies

Nature conservation

- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- Local Biological and Geological Record Centres
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- County Wildlife Trusts
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Urban Wildlife Groups
- Local Natural History Societies
- Local Ornithological and Botanical Societies
- Local Bat and Badger Groups
- The Marine Conservation Society
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- British Geological Society

Other environment interests

- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- British Waterways
- Internal Drainage Boards
- Water utility companies
- CABESpace

Better connected and integrated plans and strategies

Plans and strategies that are better connected externally

We see the wider scope of spatial planning as a major opportunity to strengthen links between RSS and LDF, Community Strategies, and a range of other plans and strategies in which we have an interest. These include Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks, Regional Economic Strategies, Biodiversity Actions Plans, River Basin Management Plans, Shoreline and Catchment Flood Management Plans, AONB Management Plans, Integrated Coastal Zone Management and other plans and strategies some of which are shown in Figure 1 of the main guidance.

We are keen to contribute to a wide range of plans and, as far as possible and appropriate, to make a positive contribution that influences them, not merely to urge more weight to be given to environmental considerations.

The agencies are committed to:

- addressing economic, social and environmental issues together;
- ensuring that necessary development is sustainable, of high quality, in the right place and benefits local communities;
- ensuring that the economic and social value of environmental assets is recognised;
- enhancing the environment and promoting local distinctiveness;
- maintaining and where necessary restoring healthily-functioning natural systems and processes; and
- ensuring the potential contribution to the regional and local economy is unlocked in ways that protect and enhance the environment and stimulate regeneration and renewal.

There is scope for mutual support between plans and strategies in the policy cascade from national through regional to local plans and strategies and horizontally between different sectors, including economic, social and environmental plans and strategies. These may not always have been consistent but there is scope for better policy integration. RSS and LDF could help to implement planning and wider spatial elements of other plans and strategies, whilst other plans may be able to deliver the non-planning aspects of RSS and LDF.

There is also scope for elements of LDFs to apply to topics or areas on a cross-boundary basis. We welcome opportunities for joint working and can bring considerable experience to managing cross-boundary projects, for example, from our work with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coasts, World Heritage Sites, Regional Parks, Biodiversity Action Plans, coastal and river corridor management projects.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should ensure that all their policies and proposals are consistent with other plans and strategies and the links between RSS and LDF and other plans and strategies are clearly identified, with their respective roles for delivering change well defined.

Figure 1 in the guidance illustrates examples of links in the web of plans and strategies.

Integrated plans and strategies

Policy integration

Sustainable development requires economic, social and environmental objectives to be met together at the same time. Policy integration is essentially about achieving these win-win-win solutions. We believe that integrated solutions, which meet all three of social, economic and environmental objectives at the same time without significant harm to any of them, should always be the goal. They are achievable and should be the basis of plans and strategies.

Attempting to balance, or trade-off, environmental issues against local economic or social benefits is unlikely to deliver the best solution for communities in the long-term; it is not compatible with sustainable development principles.

Policy integration is not simply about ensuring all the environmental and rural issues are mentioned and policies are put in place to address them alongside wider social and economic considerations. It is also about more carefully assessing the longer-term implications for the environment and rural areas and being watchful for indirect, cumulative and synergistic effects that could undermine sustainable development. It is also about appreciating that allowing short-term socio-economic gains, which may lead to the depletion of important aspects of the environment, in the longer-term, may adversely affect the quality of life.

Policy integration is more than merely checking to see if there are any policy conflicts in a plan. It includes understanding the dynamics and tensions between policy objectives and, through a structured approach described below, avoiding, minimising and if necessary off-setting the effects of conflicting policy objectives so they are considered from the outset. No matter how attractive the economic gains from some development proposals may be, if the development is unsustainable, or has significant adverse environmental effects it should not go ahead in that way, or in that place.

Any extra time and effort spent in securing integrated solutions is well spent.

The Countryside Agency's *Planning Tomorrow's Countryside 2000* argues that in the past many land use plans have treated social, economic and environmental issues separately, creating 'win-lose' tensions rather than 'win-win' solutions. Policy integration⁷ includes an assortment of ideas, including:

- win-win-win solutions, which meet all three of social, economic and environmental objectives without significant harm to any of them;
- policy convergence or compatibility, where policies do not work against each other;
- conflict minimisation, reducing rather than removing conflict between policies;
- policy co-ordination, where different sectoral policies for the same area support each other.

Examples of win-win-win solutions

Examples of win-win-win solutions include:

- the sympathetic conversion of a redundant historic building to create work space that helps retain local people and diversify the rural economy whilst continuing to provide a habitat for roosting bats;
- a previously developed site in the countryside used for provision of affordable housing for local people that leads to the remediation of contaminated land and the provision of accessible, multi-functional greenspace, that in turn provides new wildlife habitats and facilitates a sustainable drainage scheme.

7 See *Policy Integration - The integration of social, economic and environmental issues in development plans*. CRN26, Countryside Agency 2001

Good Practice Box 6

Northwick Road Site, Canvey Island

East of England Development Agency (EEDA) purchased the 27.5 hectare Northwick Road site in Canvey Island from Safeway in 2002. It was identified by regional and local partner agencies as an important strategic site that could be regenerated to provide hundreds of new jobs and much needed space for training and businesses in the area.

However, the site was found to be of national importance for the wildlife it supports including a variety of rare insects – particularly bees, wasps and beetles – reflecting the national importance of the East Thames corridor for wildlife. English Nature and EEDA worked closely together to find a solution.

Detailed ecological surveys helped to identify areas of the site that should be conserved because they contain the richest wildlife habitats.

Extensive dialogue with the local residents and businesses explored how parts of the site could be developed as community open space and a nature reserve, with a visitor centre giving people opportunities to view and understand the wildlife that inhabits the site.

The planned development includes sustainable construction principles and EEDA aims to have an exemplar development showing how nature conservation can work with economic development for the benefit of the community.

The outcome was good for the local community, for wildlife and for the local economy. Through a constructive approach EEDA had set an example for the development community in the Thames Gateway, showing how economic objectives could be met alongside environmental ones without compromising either. The wildlife that the area supported would help to enhance the development, showing that creating and enhancing areas for nature could be one of the keys to the successful regeneration of the Thames Gateway.

Recently, English Nature's Council confirmed that part of the site is to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which will help safeguard the special features of the site.

Good Practice Box 7

Aldermaston Gravel Pits

English Nature has purchased the mineral rights at Aldermaston Gravel Pits which had been threatened by continuing quarrying operations and mineral processing of sand and chalk under the terms of a valid planning permission granted before the special scientific value of the site had been recognised. The purchase was made possible by a grant from the Nature for People project - an English Nature scheme that the Treasury's Capital Modernisation Fund (CMF) has supported. The purchase means costly and time-consuming litigation has been avoided.

Aldermaston Gravel Pits is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its breeding and over-wintering birds. The 24 hectare site consists of a mosaic of flooded gravel workings surrounded by trees and scrub.

Gravel and silt were stored on site and resulted in loss of wetland habitats. There was a risk that the operators could activate the extraction permission that would have destroyed the special interest of the site. Both English Nature and the operators tried to devise a solution that would reduce the impact of the operations, but running the site as a viable business was incompatible with maintaining favourable condition as a SSSI. As such no resolution could be found, the site would have remained in unfavourable condition indefinitely.

English Nature has been able to purchase the site while ensuring no loss of local jobs. The operators have secured a new working site that does not affect wildlife habitats. Local residents have benefited from reduced lorry movements and less noise and dust. The site will be leased to the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve with public access.

Such triple benefits are not possible in every case. Sometimes a win-win solution will be the best that can be achieved. In other cases, one aspect may necessarily be a loser, for example by economic or social benefits having to be forgone, or an aspect of the environment being depleted. These should be last resort solutions that are fully justified and whose impacts are fully understood. Nevertheless, they need to be planned for. Even where there is a reduction in socio-economic or environmental resources, can the plan still deliver some benefits for the losing interest, as a way of further mitigating or compensating for the loss?

The agencies are particularly keen that plans and strategies should aim for a net environmental gain with no significant loss to any interest. Sustainability Appraisal may be able to make use of Quality of Life Assessment⁸ to help to improve understanding about ways in which development can minimise environmental damage and deliver most benefits for sustainability. Planning obligations can be used to deliver the identified benefits.

Approach to policy formulation

Some of the 'crunch issues' that RSS and LDF documents will need to face up to, such as accommodating new housing in sensitive areas, will mean that aspects of the environment may be depleted, for example by unavoidable greenfield development or cumulative effects on water quality or the landscape. But all development is capable of delivering benefits as well as fully mitigating and compensating for environmental harm. We believe that the best way of planning for these scenarios is to adopt the sequential approach to decisions illustrated in Figure 2 of the main Guidance.

There will be times when greater priority will need to be given to the protection of the nationally and internationally important natural, built and historic environment, on which we depend physically, biologically and culturally, even at the cost of forgoing some immediate socio-economic benefits.

Strategies and plans should identify opportunities for gain more pro-actively, which may have been missed in the past. They should help to, squeeze more benefit and less loss out of decisions. Planning authorities should think hard about how the location and design of necessary new development can avoid harmful effects on the environment and rural areas whilst bringing new benefits that would not otherwise occur. The implications of future climate change should also be taken into account.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should proactively look for win-win-win solutions first and, where these are not possible, integrate social, economic and environmental objectives by using the flowchart in Figure 2 of the main guidance, so that more benefits and fewer losses flow from development.

8 Further information on Quality of Life Assessment is available at www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/qualityoflife/index.asp

Respecting the ability of the environment to accommodate change

Development can bring significant benefits to the environment and rural areas. It also has the potential to cause significant negative effects, including cumulative effects that may erode the character, biodiversity or historic resource of an area. Developing techniques such as landscape capacity and sensitivity assessment can help to analyse the effects of change, identify ways of mitigating negative effects and, in certain circumstances, even increase the ability of an area to accommodate change. For example, in many landscape types where woodland is a characteristic feature, large scale woodland planting, well in advance of planned development, can significantly increase the ability of the landscape to absorb new built development without any overall loss of character in the wider setting.

Whilst many wildlife habitats are not re-creatable, and once lost can never be replaced or would never acquire the same wildlife value, some habitats are capable of being created. For example, certain semi-natural grasslands, woodlands, water, mudflats, saltmarsh and other wetland habitats, heaths and moorlands can be created to enhance biodiversity or to provide mitigation or compensatory measures to off-set some of the environmental loss and other effects that result from development.

A careful examination of the setting of historical sites and features, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefields and Historic Parks and Gardens can improve the understanding of how development may affect the significance of the feature or area and thus, whether development or other land use change could be accommodated.

Capacity assessment is not a new idea, planning authorities have been undertaking urban capacity studies for a number of years, but there is scope to widen the range of studies and to further develop techniques. Broader concepts about how to increase ability to accommodate change could be explored, for example, how development might be located and designed in ways that achieve a good environmental fit now, address past losses and, where appropriate, build in new capacity to help meet future development needs and environmental change.

Assessing the ability of the environment to accommodate development is also relevant to the process of Sustainability Appraisal. It should be used to inform the selection of indicators, targets or thresholds for monitoring.

Examples of environmental resources that may benefit from these assessments are:

- river floodplains
- coastal zones
- ground and surface water resources
- waste infrastructure
- air quality
- landscape character areas⁹
- the setting of historic towns, monuments, or other historic features
- Conservation Areas
- areas that contain habitat networks, such as lowland heathlands and wetlands that are highly sensitive to development.

9 See for example, “*Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity*”, Landscape Capacity LCA Topic Paper 6, 2004, available at:

www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/landscape/LCATopicPaper.asp

Climate change

Development also needs to take full account of how the capacity of an area, such as coastal zones and river valleys, may change with rising sea levels, increased rainfall, increased storminess and other potential changes in weather patterns. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has recognised an urgent need to put in place regional and local planning policies dealing with climate change and to strengthen policies that will mitigate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions¹⁰. The ODPM advice provides a wide range of information on the planning response to climate change some of which requires putting in train long-term incremental changes. The five key points on how to implement the urgent action needed to address climate change are:

- **Act now:** The impacts of climate change are not remote risks for sometime in the future. They are already with us and we need to respond now.
- **Make the links:** Many of the actions required in response to climate change can be justified for other reasons, for example, conserving water is an immediate environmental and economic necessity.
- **Spread the word:** Everyone needs to be aware of the impacts of climate change and how to adapt to it and avert future climate change.
- **Make the best use of existing tools:** Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) can be effective tools for ensuring climate change is addressed in planning policy.
- **Make effective use of existing instruments:** Planners can use conditions, agreements, obligations and informatives to respond to climate change.

Current thinking on the consequences of climate change on the landscape is summarised in "*Climate change and natural forces - the consequences for landscape character*"¹¹.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should consider whether:

- there are areas that are particularly suitable or unsuitable for development, including areas that may be affected by climate change;
- the ability of other areas to accommodate development may be increased and if so, how;
- it is possible to identify targets or thresholds or other indicators of development opportunity that would help to maximise environmental benefits;
- parameters could be defined that might feed into policy criteria and monitoring;
- specific actions need to be taken in the plan or strategy to take account of climate change;
- English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency may be able to provide specific advice and assistance.

10 The Planning Response to Climate Change - Advice on Better Practice, ODPM, September 2004 The ODPM's advice can be read at:

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_032088.pdf.

11 Landscape Character Assessment Topic Paper 9 also available at

www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/landscape/LCATopicPaper.asp

Plans and strategies that are objectives-led

Objectives should lead the drafting of policies and proposals. They should flow from the vision and scoping of the plan or strategy (and from higher tier plans and policies) and should form the framework within which policies and proposals will fit.

They should be explicitly stated. There should be clear linkages flowing between the vision and the objectives, and between them and the policies and proposals that will deliver them (see Figure 3 of the main guidance).

They should be flexible and may need to be adjusted if subsequent assessments, for example, of options and strategies show that the original objectives would be unsustainable.

Objectives should also be used to steer the Sustainability Appraisal process. While there is likely to be an overlap between plan objectives and appraisal objectives, they will not always be the same.

Objectives should not be a vague wish list but a clear statement of what needs to be done to deliver sustainable development; what needs to be conserved; and what should be replaced, improved or restored. Of particular importance in establishing conservation needs is 'critical natural capital' and historic areas and features that, if lost or spoiled, can never be replaced. Examples are ancient semi-natural woodland, genetically unique populations of species, old field systems, historic parks or gardens and natural river or coastal systems.

It is essential to know how long it is likely to take to achieve these objectives. Timescales are relevant not only for meeting necessary affordable housing targets or employment provision, but also for understanding how long it might take to reverse decline in an area important for its industrial heritage, or to reverse the effects of the inappropriate management of Local Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

Objectives will vary between and within different plan areas so the system needs to be spatially variable as discussed in [Supplementary File 8](#). Different objectives for differing areas will form the basis for identifying key spatial variations in the plan or strategy and for Area Action Plans in the LDF.

For example, work for the Countryside Agency¹² promotes an objectives-led approach to economic development in rural areas, identifying a range of community, environment and economic factors that need to be addressed to ensure development brings local social, economic and environmental benefits.

12 The Countryside Agency 2004, Planning for Sustainable Rural Economic Development, CA168 2004

Plans and strategies that are spatially varied, prioritised, firm and flexible

Spatial variation

Some issues and policies will apply to the whole of a plan or strategy area; others will be area specific.

Policies will need to vary across a plan area to reflect differing local needs, circumstances and objectives. For example, affordable housing, economic development and provision of services are likely to vary in their spatial characteristics; this will need to be reflected in evidence-based policies and the proposals map or strategy diagrams.

Work for the Countryside Agency¹³ looked at the functioning of rural settlements in case study areas. It concluded that simplistic assumptions about settlement hierarchy fall far short of the reality of the behaviour of rural residents. It recommends a step-change in rural settlement planning with planning policies based on detailed local evidence as to how places function.

Some areas may see little change, others will be the focus for managing pressures for change or encouraging change to take place. Planning authorities should consider whether development can be directed to places where it could not only avoid, but also solve, problems and create wider socio-economic and environmental benefits. It is unlikely that all emerging Area Action Plans will be implemented together so the system needs to be clearly prioritised as discussed below.

Whilst some aspects of the environment and rural areas are non-spatial and cannot be mapped, other aspects can be.

Policies should include an approach that reflects the character of particular areas. **Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Landscape Characterisation and River Basin and Catchment Flood Management Planning** are important tools that should under-pin policy. They are likely to indicate where different approaches may be required that need to be reflected in policies and proposal maps¹⁴.

The Countryside Agency promotes an integrated and holistic approach to the rural urban fringe. In association with Groundwork UK, the Agency has published its vision for the countryside in and around towns as an attractive, accessible, diverse and multi-functional resource¹⁵. This sets out 10 key functions for the rural urban fringe and identifies the important role of the planning system in assisting with delivery of the vision.

Designations of various kinds have helped to express important spatial variations in development plans. Designations relating to environmental resources will have an effect on spatial variation in plans. For example, the Government attaches greatest weight to the protection of internationally designated nature conservation sites, such as Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites in compliance with international Directives and Conventions. Elsewhere, national designations carry weight in planning decisions, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coasts and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Local designations such as Conservation Areas have important legal implications for planning decisions and local landscape designations and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation are material considerations in making local development documents and determining planning applications. The Environment Agency has recently published an updated 'Flood Map' that identifies those areas at greatest risk of flooding, which are likely to be unsuitable for some forms of development.

The extent to which different areas are designated and the weight attached to, and implications of, the various designations will be very important to the spatial expression of policies in the plans and strategies and to the location, scale and types of development. A summary of the designations that are of particular interest to us is given in **Table 1** below.

Inevitably designations change over time. Some areas may be added and some removed or the interests for which a designation is made, and / or the descriptions of them, may need to be changed. In future planning authorities should look to replace local landscape designations with criteria based policies (in line with PPS7).

13 Land Use Consultants / SERRL / Delow, 2004, The role of rural settlements as service centres available at www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/PositivePlanning/Themes/sustainablecommunities/rural_settlements_final_report.asp

14 See for example, www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/landscape

15 The Countryside in and around towns. A vision for connecting town and country in the pursuit of sustainable development. Countryside Agency and Groundwork. 2005

Table 1 Summary of main designations relevant to plans and strategies		
Title	Designation	Implications
Historic Environment		
World Heritage Site	Identified under the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972) Non-statutory international designation.	International recognition is a key material consideration in development plans and planning decisions (PPG15 para 2.22).
Scheduled Ancient Monument	Schedule of monuments compiled by the Secretary of State under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 Statutory national designation.	Monuments are statutorily protected. Plans and strategies should provide for their protection and effects of development on a monument are a material consideration in any planning decision.
Area of Archaeological Importance	Areas of Archaeological Importance designated by the Secretary of State or a planning authority under Part II Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, national or local statutory designation.	Plans and strategies should provide for their protection and effects of development on an Area of Archaeological Importance are a material consideration in any planning decision.
Listed Building*	Buildings entered on a list compiled by the Secretary of State under the provisions of Section 1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national, statutory designation.	Buildings are statutorily protected from demolition and most forms of alteration. Plans and strategies should provide for their protection and duties of planning authorities in respect of any planning decision likely to affect a listed building or its setting are set out in Section 16 of the 1990 Act.
Conservation Area*	Areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by planning authorities under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, statutory local designation.	Additional controls apply to building operations and tree works within Conservation Areas. Planning authorities have a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas (Section 71 of the 1990 Act). Plans and strategies should provide for their protection and duties of planning authorities in respect of any planning decision likely to affect a Conservation Area or its setting, are set out in Section 72 of the 1990 Act.
Historic Park or Garden*	English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, non-statutory national designation.	Should be protected in development plans and are a material consideration in planning decisions (PPG15 para 2.24).
Historic battlefield*	EH Register of Historic Battlefields, non-statutory national designation.	Should be protected in plans and strategies and are a material consideration in planning decisions (PPG15 para 2.25).
Site in the Historic Environment Records	Local Authority records of historic environment, non-statutory locally compiled record of areas sensitive to the effects of development (but may include nationally designated and statutory sites as well).	Plans should be well informed and protect the most important components of the historic environment (PPG15 para 2.26). Capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions.

Table 1 (continued) Summary of main designations relevant to plans and strategies		
Title	Designation	Implications
Building of local interest	Local Authority designation for buildings of local interest, non-statutory local designation.	Should be protected in plans and strategies and are a material consideration in planning decisions.
Other historic park or garden	Some Local Authorities have compiled a local list to supplement that of the Register, non-statutory local designation.	Should be protected in plans and strategies and are a material consideration in planning decisions.
Landscape Designations		
National Park	Designated by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as amended. National statutory designation.	Statutory duties of public authorities in respect of National Parks and their purposes prescribed by Section 62 Environment Act 1995. Along with AONBs, National Parks have the highest status of protection and should be given great weight in planning policies (PPS7, para 21).
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Designated by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as amended. National statutory designation. CROW Act 2000 strengthens provisions relating to them.	AONB interests should be protected in plans and strategies and are a material consideration in planning decisions, Along with National Parks, AONBs have the highest status of protection and should be given great weight in planning policies (PPS7, para 21).
Heritage Coast	Designated by planning authorities in consultation with the Countryside Agency, national non-statutory designation.	Should be protected in plans and strategies and are a material consideration in planning decisions (PPG20, paras 1.16-1.17, 4.15-4.16).
Area of Great Landscape Value/ Local Landscape Designation	Non-statutory local / county-wide designations adopted by planning authorities.	Material consideration in preparing plans and strategies and in planning decisions where there is justification for retaining the designations in light of landscape character policies (PPS7, para 25).
Nature Conservation Designations		
Special Protection Area	Designated by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the EC Birds Directive 1979, international statutory designation.	Decision making processes of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994 apply see PPS9 Circular part I, it will normally be unnecessary to include policies about internationally designated sites in LDDs (PPS9 Draft para 6).
(Candidate) Special Area of Conservation	Designated by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the EC Habitats Directive 1992 and the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994, international statutory designation.	

Table 1 (continued) Summary of main designations relevant to plans and strategies		
Title	Designation	Implications
Ramsar Site	Designated by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention (Wetlands of International Importance) and notified to planning Authorities under Section 75 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; international non- statutory designation.	The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994 should be applied to development proposals that may affect Ramsar sites as a matter of policy (PPS9 para 6 and Circular Part 1).
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Notified by English Nature under the provisions of Section 28 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, nationally important sites for wildlife and geology, statutory designation.	Duty of planning authorities under Section 28(G) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 apply and procedural requirements of S.28(I) apply, also a material consideration in planning decisions.
National Nature Reserves	Areas of at least national importance owned or leased by English Nature or bodies approved by English Nature, designated under the provisions of the national Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, national statutory designation.	The special value of a NNR for research, education or access is capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions in addition to any other designation the site may have, such as SSSI.
Local Nature Reserve	Established by local authorities under provisions of section 21 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, local, statutory designation.	The wildlife, geological and community value of LNRs is capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions in addition to any other designation the site may have.
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation / County Wildlife Site	Non-statutory local / county-wide designations adopted by planning authorities.	Material consideration in preparing LDDs and in planning decisions, (PPS9 para 9).
Regionally Important Geological Site	Non-statutory local / regional designations adopted by planning authorities.	Material consideration in preparing LDDs and in planning decisions, (PPS9 para 9).
Area of Ancient (Semi-Natural) Woodland	Areas that are not otherwise designated are recognised as locally important, non-statutory environmental assets.	Material consideration in preparing LDDs and in planning decisions (PPS9 para 10).
Veteran Trees	Forestry Commission National Tree Register and English Nature's Veteran Tree initiative, non-statutory environmental assets.	Conservation of veteran trees should be promoted in plans and strategies (PPS9 para 10).

Table 1 (continued) Summary of main designations relevant to plans and strategies		
Title	Designation	Implications
Other Environmental Areas		
Groundwater Source Protection Zone	Non-statutory local/regional designations adopted by EA under Groundwater Regulations.	May restrict types of development permissible on any site.
Flood Maps	Non-statutory flood maps prepared by Environment Agency.	Material consideration (PPG25) in preparing plans and strategies and in planning decisions.

* NB This table does not take account of the Government's intention to bring all heritage designations into a single list and regulatory system.

Designations in the marine environment are not included as planning jurisdiction normally ends at Mean Low Water Mark

Priorities

Plans should clearly indicate what is urgent, and what needs to be done first, in light of the vision and the objectives. This might require starting on the long-term changes as soon as possible, in order to see an effect in the plan period, as well as delivering short-term priorities.

Determining priorities can involve difficult choices. Prioritisation should be transparent and should involve communities and stakeholders in making decisions. They should be able to understand why specific priorities have been identified and resourced. Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Quality of Life Assessment can help planning authorities to identify and justify priorities.

Whilst the community should be involved in setting priorities, it will not always be appropriate to follow the community preference. Similarly it will not always be appropriate to adopt the preferences of stakeholders. For example, it is Government policy to prioritise the protection of internationally important nature conservation sites; however, sometimes, local communities may not appreciate the value of, or gain any immediate benefit from, the international nature conservation interest. In such cases, care may be needed to explain why the wider Government commitment to international obligations may mean that local objectives have to be met in particular ways to avoid a conflict of interest.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should ensure that their information base on environmental designations and other spatially variable evidence is up-to-date and consult us if necessary.

Planning authorities should ensure that their plans and strategies clearly indicate the relative importance of designations, giving greater weight to international and then national and local designations and the implications of the designations in policy terms.

Policies should be tailored to meet local needs and reflect local circumstances. Planning authorities should ensure they have robust local information and evidence to underpin locally based spatial policies.

Planning authorities should undertake detailed landscape character and historic landscape characterisation assessments and set out appropriate policies and proposals for different character areas.

Planning authorities should undertake strategic flood risk assessments to identify development locations at least risk from flooding.

Plans should clearly indicate what is urgent, and what needs to be done first, in light of the vision and the objectives.

Firm but flexible plans and strategies

Plans and strategies should allocate and facilitate development and other changes that are needed, and face up to the difficult decisions. There are some developments that are necessary but unpopular, such as waste management facilities and mineral working. Policy frameworks need to be particularly robust to enable these developments to proceed in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Plans and strategies should positively steer and control development but should also be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen, innovative and inspirational proposals. They should positively encourage higher quality development and good design (see Supplementary File 9 below). Thus, depending on what is appropriate, plans could involve both generic, criteria-based policies and policies referring to specific sites allocated on the proposals map.

Policies can help to deliver sustainable development by facilitating the innovation, inspiration and vision of developers, designers and constructors. For example, there are innumerable examples of rural diversification schemes and environmental improvement projects of the conventional kinds. What is needed now is more new and original ideas; by definition these cannot be explicitly planned for, so we are encouraging a flexible policy basis that sets out overall criteria for sustainable development and integrates adequate protection for the environment and rural areas with the positive encouragement of the innovative and new.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should ensure that plans and strategies encourage and accommodate unforeseen, innovative and inspirational developments that could add value to the area whilst ensuring that such developments are not inconsistent with other policies in the plan or strategy.

Facilitating locally distinctive, valued and more sustainable development

Facilitating locally distinctive and valued development

English Nature and the Environment Agency have pioneered many initiatives intended to contribute to more sustainable forms of development, including sustainable drainage systems and the management of natural processes on rivers and the coast, that remedy or at least minimise the effects of human intervention. The Countryside Agency and English Heritage have led important initiatives to improve the character and appearance of new development, especially to make it more appropriate to its location and landscape setting. We have encouraged local communities to be involved in identifying what it is that makes their place special and distinctive. We have shared this information and disseminated guidance.

We believe that it is fundamental to sustainable development and the quality of life that local needs are met locally and all new development is well designed and fits and enhances its context; it should be locally distinctive, it should be environmentally efficient in its use of resources, and it should be valued by the community as a beneficial addition to the environment.

Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Landscape Characterisation and River Basin Management Plans are important tools for informing policy frameworks about what is locally distinctive and important. They should therefore be reflected in a plan or strategy's vision and in its objectives; and they should explicitly underpin policies for the location, nature and scale of development and policies that set the criteria for design, especially linking to design guidance in Supplementary Planning Documents.

Good Practice Box 8

Rutland County Council

Countryside Design Guide

In 2003 the Rutland County Council commissioned a detailed landscape character assessment that was used as a basis for reviewing policies and proposals in the Local Plan Review and to provide, for the first time, a Countryside Design Guide, which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in June 2004, following wide public consultation. These documents embraced existing Village Design Statements and the Countryside Character Map, but added value by providing detailed guidance on the location and design of a wide range of developments and other changes likely to occur in the countryside and around villages. The assessment and the guide clearly identify the characteristics of the landscape and villages that make the differing parts of Rutland distinctive, so that new development can maintain or add to that character and heritage where its presence is strong and enhance or help to restore it where the character has been lost or diminished.

We list below the key initiatives and tools that they have developed, in partnership with many others, which they are convinced should be an integral part of every planning authority's policy and practice framework. Wherever relevant, they should be referred to in policies in RSS and LDF and may lead to the production locally of Supplementary Planning Documents.

Countryside Agency:

Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland, CAX 84(2002)

Series of Landscape Character Assessment Topic Papers available at

www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/landscape/LCA_TopicPaper.asp

See also the Countryside Character Network at www.ccnetwork.org.uk

Village Design Statements at

www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/countryside_character/landscape/village/index.asp

Parish Plans at www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages

Town Design Statements

Town Design Statements Why and how to produce them Good practice advice CA134 2003

Concept Statements: Countryside Agency 2003, *Concept statements and Local Development Documents, Practical guidance for local planning authorities*

Market town healthchecks and action plans at
www.countryside.gov.uk/NewEnterprise/marketTowns

Towards a New Vernacular, report to The Countryside Agency, Architype 2004 available at
www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/PositivePlanning

English Heritage:

Publications:

Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (2004)

Building in Context (2001)

Moving Towards Excellence in Urban Design and Conservation (2003)

Guidance on Tall Buildings (2001)

Sustaining the Historic Environment: New Perspectives on the Future

Streets for All: A guide to the management of London's streets

Conservation Area Appraisals

Enabling development and the conservation of heritage assets: Policy statement and practical guide to assessment

Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets some guiding principles for decision-makers

See www.english-heritage.org.uk go to 'conserving historic places'

English Nature

Initiatives:

Natural Areas

Local Biodiversity Action Plans

Local Habitats and Species Action Plans

Accessible Natural Greenspace Targets

See www.english-nature.org.uk

Biodiversity by Design: a guide for sustainable communities (TCPA)

Environment Agency:

Initiatives:

Flooding:

Flood Risk Standing Advice to planning authorities www.pipernetworking.com

Flood Maps www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments

Catchment Flood Management Plans

Shoreline Management Plans

Flood Risk Management www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/?lang=_e

Climate change:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yourenv/639312

Navigation plans:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/navigation/?lang=_e

National and Regional Recreation Strategies:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/recreation/?lang=_e

Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies

Restoring Sustainable Abstraction Strategies

National Water Resources Strategy

Regional Water Resources Strategy

Water resources:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waterres/?lang=_e

Soil Protection Strategy:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/landquality/776051/775200/?version=1&lang=_e

Fisheries Action Plans:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/fish/?lang=_e

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should ensure that policies and proposals are included in plans and strategies to ensure that local needs are met locally by development that is locally distinctive and is valued by the community.

Facilitating more sustainable development

A key factor in the achievement of truly sustainable development involves the identification of sustainable locations to ensure that development avoids or enhances areas subject to environmental and heritage designations, is not subject to flooding or other natural hazards, and that water and waste facilities are available.

We welcome the lead that has been provided by other organisations in improving building construction and engineering techniques that will deliver more sustainable buildings and infrastructure. We commend measures such as using recycled building materials, avoiding or reducing pollution, reducing waste, remedying the effects of derelict and contaminated land, reducing water and energy consumption, using renewable energy, reducing the need to travel, increasing density and using less land. We look to planning authorities to promote these principles in plans and strategies as an important contribution to sustainable development. We also urge planning authorities to ensure that plans and strategies are consistent with and promote the Government's waste hierarchy.

We are keen to ensure that modern methods of construction, including prefabrication and other technologies, minimise waste and the use of natural resources and respect and enhance local character and distinctiveness.

Sources of information and advice on sustainable construction include the following websites:

The Sustainable Buildings Task Force, 2004, Making Today's Buildings Fit for Tomorrow

See www.environment-

agency.gov.uk/news/780414?lang=_e&theme=®ion=&subject=&researchfor=Sustainable+Buildings+task+force

and the Government's response to it

www.dti.gov.uk/construction/sustain/sbtg.htm

Action Energy from the Carbon Trust at:

www.actionenergy.org.uk

Association of Environmentally Conscious Building at:

www.aecb.net

BRE (Building Research Establishment)

www.bre.co.uk

www.sustainability-checklist.co.uk

Centre for Alternative Technology at:

www.cat.org.uk

Construction Industry Research and Information Association at:

www.ciria.org.uk/bookshopentrance.htm

The Environment Agency

Risk Assessment for Flood and Coast Defence Systems for Strategic Planning; Sustainable Water Management Planning for New Developments; Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs) Policy Guidance; Climate Change and SUDS Planning Guidance

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

The Green Building website, of ECRA Publishing and Queens University, Belfast, School of Architecture at:

www.qub.ac.uk/arc/research/GreenBuilding/index.htm

The Sustainable Construction website, of Somerset Trust for Sustainable Development and Somerset Sustainable Housing at:

www.sustainablehousing.org.uk

We look to add value to those initiatives by producing complementary guidance on design for biodiversity, sustainable drainage systems, countryside recreation and access to the countryside, managing the historic environment, improving rural transport and services, reducing pollution, dealing with waste and climate change.

We will continue to engage in the planning system to ensure it promotes and adopts:

- The precautionary principle;
- The principle that the developer should avoid, or where not possible, mitigate and compensate for the adverse effects of development, minimise and then deal with its waste in the most sustainable way (including where necessary the polluter pays principle);
- The protection of environmental resources necessary for life;
- The provision of essential infrastructure including water resources, waste facilities, flood defences and green infrastructure;
- The re-use of buildings before considering demolition;
- Design of development that minimises its impact on the environment and rural areas both during and after construction;
- Development that generates and utilises renewable energy in appropriate ways; and
- Working with, not against, nature and natural processes.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities are urged to develop policies and to refer in plans and strategies to the need to:

- use construction and design techniques that encourage more sustainable forms of development and that favour the retention of existing buildings with their historic associations and the energy already expended and embodied in their construction;
- ensure that the proposed location is the most sustainable for development.

Plans and strategies that are rigorously tested and well delivered with high quality outcomes

Plans and strategies that are rigorously tested

We are committed to playing as full a part in the process of Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). All of the agencies are specific consultation bodies in the process. We should normally be consulted at the stages listed below, whether or not it is a statutory requirement, but the Countryside Agency may concentrate on screening, scoping and assessment of effects for reasons explained in [Supplementary File 12](#):

- Screening (where appropriate);
- Information gathering;
- Scoping the plan or strategy for its potentially significant effects on the environment and rural areas;
- Development of sustainability appraisal framework;
- Assessing and selecting strategic options;
- Assessing the effects of the plan or strategy policies and proposals on the environment and rural areas;
- Mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects;
- Public consultation on the appraisal reports at draft plan stage;
- Revising the plan and re-assessing its potential effects;
- Adoption procedures; and
- Monitoring and review.

The agencies have adopted joint service standards that set out how we intend to respond to consultations on strategic environmental assessment and in what timescales see

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/105385/sea_service_standards_838433.pdf

The Environment Agency has prepared web-based guidelines to help plan and programme makers improve the efficiency of the SEA process. (www.environment-agency.gov.uk/seaguidelines)

The guidelines aim to:

- explain the Agency's roles and services in SEA;
- promote good practice in SEA (using case studies);
- complement other SEA guidance particularly from the ODPM;
- promote links with other Environment Agency strategic environmental planning, for example flood risk management and river basin management planning;
- promote integration with the Agency's risk-based approach to environmental protection; and
- reflect the policy and procedures that will be followed by Agency's staff in complying with the SEA Directive.

In addition, the Environment Agency, English Nature, RSPB and the Countryside Council for Wales have produced joint guidance that aims to ensure that biodiversity considerations are appropriately addressed in SEA¹⁶.

16 Environment Agency, English Nature, RSPB and CCW 'Strategic Environmental Assessment and Biodiversity: Guidance for Practitioners'.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/105385/sea_biodiversity_839620.pdf.

We support the emphasis on the iterative nature of the Sustainability Appraisal process in the guidance issued by the ODPM¹⁷. We particularly commend the following points from that guidance that influence the effectiveness of the sustainability appraisal process. Sustainability Appraisal should be:

- An on-going, iterative process that results in changes to the plan as a result of feedback;
- Objectives-led, whereby the direction of desired change is made explicit and can be subsequently quantified by targets;
- Based on sound evidence;
- Inclusive, subject to consultation with inputs from the community and other stakeholders;
- Timely, programmed in to the whole plan-making process from the outset;
- Transparent and understandable;
- Independent, objective and impartial with some scrutiny from outside the plan-making team; and
- Useful and influential in changing the plan.

However, we are equally keen to see plans and strategies tested in other ways for their soundness and for the way in which they have dealt with environmental and rural issues. Of principal importance will be the testing of the plan as it passes through the stages of public consultation, involving communities and stakeholders, especially in the early stages where key issues and the most difficult choices can be tested by a variety of means, further explained in the ODPM guidance.

We have developed checklists that set out the environmental and rural issues that we consider plans and strategies should address. The checklist for RSS is in [Supplementary File 13](#); the checklist for LDF documents is in [Supplementary File 14](#).

We believe that these checklists will be a valuable tool for planning authorities to use.

We will also use the checklists ourselves to consider how well plans and strategies address our interests and to help structure our responses in a comprehensive and consistent way.

As planning authorities and the agencies gain experience in using the checklists we may adapt them. Revised versions may be posted on our websites from time to time and planning authorities should check to see that they have the latest version before using the checklists.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should check that they have the latest version of our guidance and checklists by visiting our web sites.

Planning authorities should use the checklists to help scope the content of their plans or strategies or to assist in sustainability appraisals.

¹⁷ ODPM, July 2004, *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks*

Plans and strategies that are well delivered with high quality outcomes

We are optimistic that the new RSS and LDF documents, including Supplementary Planning Documents and Area Action Plans, have the potential to improve development standards. This is especially so in combination with other measures and plans that could influence the quality of development such as urban fringe action plans, biodiversity action plans, town and village design statements, concept statements¹⁸ or master plans.

Good Practice Box 9

South Hams District Council Concept Statements

Concept Statements are a simple, clear expression of the kind of place that new development should create. They explain how the Local Plan/LDF policies should apply to specific sites. Concept Statements have been used in South Hams District Council, where they were prepared for every site proposed in the draft Local Plan and were well-received by elected members, the public and the development industry.

Planning obligations

When drafting plans and strategies we encourage planning authorities to explicitly set out how planning obligations or other mechanisms will be used to make development more sustainable and beneficial to local communities. We believe there is considerable scope for the use of planning obligations to deliver benefits for the environment and rural areas. Plans can strategically identify what benefits can be secured in relation to particular developments. They should indicate the scale, location and type of environmental and community benefits that they expect to be delivered through planning obligations or other future similar mechanisms.

Good Practice Box 10¹⁹

Ashford Borough Local Plan

The Ashford Borough Council Local Plan (adopted 2000) lists the infrastructure requirements for allocated development sites as well as including general policies on developer contributions which apply to all sites above a certain size. In addition, Supplementary Planning Guidance on developer contributions and planning obligations has been prepared.

¹⁸ Countryside Agency 2003, *Concept statements and Local Development Documents, Practical guidance for local planning authorities*

¹⁹ See Countryside Agency: *An investigation into the changes needed to planning obligations to increase their effectiveness*, Entec UK, 2002; *How communities can be involved in negotiating and managing the benefits secured from development via planning obligations*, Development Trusts Association, 2002 and *Planning for Delivery of Quality of Life Benefits*, CAX 114, June 2002.

Good enough to approve?

Rather than merely testing whether a development is 'bad enough to refuse', the Countryside Agency promotes the idea that planning authorities should consider whether it is 'good enough to approve'. Policies should set out the criteria that a proposal should meet in the locality to be acceptable. Planning authorities are urged to incorporate this concept into development plans and development control in order to facilitate more sustainable, locally distinctive and high quality developments. Pre-application discussions to support more sustainable outcomes may be particularly helpful.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities could enhance the quality of development in plans and strategies by promoting development that is 'good enough to approve'.

Plans and strategies should identify benefits that can be secured through particular developments and indicate the scale, location and type of environmental and community benefits that planning authorities expect to be delivered through planning obligations or other similar future mechanisms.

Plans and strategies that are adequately monitored and regularly reviewed

We have contributed significantly to the development of indicators for measuring environmental change. We have participated in drawing up the national and local Quality of Life performance indicators managed by the Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency. We commend planning authorities to refer to these when selecting indicators for monitoring. The indicators can be found at:

Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency, Library of Local Performance Indicators
www.local-pi-library.gov.uk

Further guidance has also been published in the following documents:

English Heritage: Heritage Counts (2003) at
www.heritagecounts.org.uk

Environment Agency: Environment 2000 and Beyond
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yourenv/eff

Environment Agency: 2002, The Urban Environment in England and Wales – a detailed assessment
Environment Agency: Spotlight on business - environmental performance in 2003
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/444255/833726

Countryside Agency: Countryside Quality Counts at
www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, 1999, Quality of Life Counts: Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development in the UK – a baseline assessment, DETR, London
www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/quality99

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, 2000, Local quality of life counts: a handbook for a menu of local indicators of sustainable development, DETR, London
www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/indicators/local/localind/index.htm

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Sustainable Development Unit, 2002, *Regional Quality of Life Counts*
www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/indicators/regional/2002

Sustainable Development Plans Group, 2001, *Development Plans and Sustainable Development: Making the Links and Measuring the Impacts*. Local Government Association
www.lga.gov.uk/content.asp?1Section=0&id= SX793A-A77F7DF8

In addition, we encourage planning authorities to develop their own indicators, with local relevance, for monitoring the effectiveness of plans and strategies. In light of this, we set out below some thoughts as to the selection of indicators and targets to meet local circumstances.

Recommended Action

Planning authorities should refer to Quality of Life performance indicators in developing their own indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of plans and strategies, especially those that are capable of measuring changes that are particularly relevant to local circumstances and to meet local planning objectives.

The purposes of monitoring

These are:

- to assess the performance of the plan's policies: have the policies been adhered to and the outcomes achieved, are the goals of the policies being fulfilled and is the scope of the plan's policies still relevant and adequate?
- to assess the performance of the plan's proposals: are the effects of the Plan's proposals and programmes as predicted in the Sustainability Appraisal?
- to keep track of change: of the environment and other aspects of rural areas and of human responses to changes in the resource.
- to provide better information: to reduce the degree of uncertainty and to increase the accuracy and objectivity of professional judgements in future plan appraisals and policy development.

To be most effective, monitoring should be based explicitly on specific indicators and targets.

Ideally, the effectiveness of the plan's policies and proposals should be monitored in combination with other environmental, social and economic monitoring, in an integrated way. It is the cumulative effects of change in the area that should be the principal object of monitoring. This may need to include environmental change that is outside the direct control of the planning system and the direct influence of the RSS or LDF, for example, in respect of agriculture and forestry.

Defining priorities for monitoring

Whilst almost all aspects of the plan could be monitored in some way, this is unlikely to be either feasible (from a resource point of view) or necessary (there would be little advantage in monitoring issues which would not be likely to lead to significant changes in the plan review). Environmental and rural monitoring should be focused on:

- Reducing uncertainty;
- Measuring the success of policies in helping to meet rural needs;
- Eliminating unsustainable forms of development; and
- Sustaining irreplaceable environmental assets that if lost can never be replaced or recreated.

The best aspects to monitor are those where the Sustainability Appraisal indicated either adverse or uncertain effects on the environment or rural areas. The plan could cross reference relevant policies with possible indicators and targets, where applicable. Monitoring of these indicators would show where specific targets are being met or missed and provide a guide as to how well the plan is performing in terms of its objectives. PPS7 encourages the use of audits to measure the economic and social needs of rural areas.

Identifying indicators

Indicators may be measures of:

- the state of the environment or rural areas; or
- pressures on the environment or rural areas; or
- change in the environment or rural areas in response to pressures.

Indicators need not be absolute measures of these conditions but should reflect directions of desirable or undesirable change. Targets, limits or thresholds should be set in relation to each indicator, which would act as "warning lights" indicating whether decisions or changes are moving towards or away from sustainable development. Indicators should directly reflect the environmental, social and economic tests used in the Sustainability Appraisal.

We suggest that indicators selected to measure progress towards achieving specific objectives, or to test specific parts or aspects of a plan or strategy, should meet the following criteria:

- The indicator should be about something measurable, and the information it is calculated from should be readily available at reasonable cost.
- An indicator should be meaningful, it should measure or represent something believed to be important or significant in its own right.
- The indicator should be understandable to the public.

- There should only be a short time-lag between change occurring and the indicator identifying the change.
- The indicator should be based on information which can be used to compare different geographical areas both inside and outside the plan area.
- The availability of the indicator information should be reliable over the whole plan period, the information should be manageable with analysis capable of drawing conclusions about the significance of changes, and although judgements are inevitable, they should be as objective as possible.
- The indicator should be relevant and appropriate to the scale and purpose of the plan.
- Indicators should concentrate monitoring on objectives, policies or proposals the effects of which are uncertain, and on the inter-relationships between objectives, policies and proposals which may potentially conflict.
- Indicators should be consistent with Quality of Life Assessment and Countryside Quality Counts wherever possible.
- Indicators should draw on existing best practice and high level indicators where relevant. They should not be chosen for ease of measurement, but rather because of the scale of benefit and potential improvements.

Targets

Targets may be set so that monitoring can check to see whether they have been met or missed, and why. Targets should be demanding and worthwhile, clearly beneficial and meaningful, but they should also be feasible and realistic. Nothing is gained by setting targets that can never be achieved, because they are out of reach, or that are too easily reached. However, not every indicator needs to have a specific target. Sometimes they are important indicators of trends and directions, which do not necessarily have specific stages or measurements, but nevertheless clearly point out the direction of change.

Finally, we believe that indicators and any related targets should always reflect the values, aspirations and attitudes of all sections of the community. As many people as possible, representing as many views as possible, should have an opportunity to contribute to the selection of indicators and the setting of targets.

What the agencies can do to help

The Countryside Agency

From April 2005, the Countryside Agency will operate as two divisions: Landscape, Access and Recreation whose function is helping everyone to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside, and the Commission for Rural Communities whose function is rural watchdog, expert and adviser.

The Countryside Agency (Landscape, Access and Recreation Division) is the statutory body helping everyone to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside.

We will ensure that an increasingly attractive and sustainable countryside is well understood, highly valued and widely enjoyed.

Our objectives:

- conserving and protecting our natural landscapes and all their characteristics;
- encouraging awareness of access to and enjoyment of the countryside and green spaces; and
- achieving the sustainable management and use of the countryside.

The Countryside Agency (Landscape, Access and Recreation Division) is a strategic organisation. We will focus our efforts on preparing policy advice for the national, regional and sub-regional levels of spatial planning. We will input into all stages of Regional Spatial Strategies and get involved in most sub-regional strategies. Our involvement in individual Local Development Documents will necessarily be more selective. We will aim to get involved mostly in core strategy Local Development Documents, concentrating effort on the early stages of plan preparation where input is likely to be most useful. Countryside Agency (Landscape, Access and Recreation Division) involvement is likely to decline as each plan passes through its later stages. Where we choose not to comment in detail, or at all, on individual Local Development Documents, local planning authorities can draw upon our generic guidance. We may get involved in area action plans or supplementary planning documents where these significantly affect our landscape, recreation and access interests. We will fulfill our statutory duties in respect of Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Commission for Rural Communities, whose function is rural watchdog, expert and adviser, may engage in planning at a national level where it affects its interests.

English Heritage

English Heritage is the Government's statutory advisor with responsibility for protecting and promoting all aspects of the historic environment in England. We do this by:

- identifying buildings, monuments and landscapes for protection;
- providing technical conservation advice to Government, local planning authorities, and the public;
- undertaking research to increase understanding of the historic environment;
- giving conservation grants;
- providing advisory and education services;
- managing over 400 historic properties for the public to enjoy.

English Heritage has a limited number of regional planners and is therefore not able to deal in detail with every plan consultation or request for comments. Our first priority is to ensure that historic environment issues are properly embedded in national policy and in regional and sub-regional strategies. We will respond to consultations in respect of Strategic Environmental Assessment. We will look at all local development documents, but will be more selective in the degree to which we comment in detail on their wording. The aim will be to get involved, principally, in core strategy Local Development Documents, concentrating effort on the early stages of plan preparation where input is likely to be most useful. Involvement is likely to decline as each plan passes through its later stages.

English Nature

English Nature is the statutory body that champions the conservation and enhancement of the wildlife and natural features of England. In fulfilling statutory duties we:

- establish and manage National Nature Reserves;
- notify and safeguard Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);
- advise Government departments and a wide range of other public and non-statutory bodies on effective policies for nature conservation;
- disseminate guidance and advice about nature conservation;
- promote research relevant to nature conservation.

We do this by:

- advising Government, other agencies, local authorities, interest groups, business, communities, individuals;
- regulating activities affecting the special nature conservation sites in England;
- enabling others to manage land for nature conservation, through grants, projects and information;
- advocating nature conservation for all and biodiversity as a key test of sustainable development.

Through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, we work with sister organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to advise Government on UK and international conservation issues.

The note relating to English Nature and the Environment Agency below indicates our intended contribution to the processes.

The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is the public body leading on the protection and improvement of the environment in England and Wales. It is our job to make sure that air, land and water are looked after by everyone in today's society, so that tomorrow's generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world.

To this end we:

- seek to reduce the effects of flooding and pollution;
- make sure industry keeps its environmental impacts to a minimum;
- ensure that rivers, coastal waters and contaminated land are cleaned up;
- seek to reduce the impacts of climate change;
- maintain and enhance fisheries and wildlife habitats;
- try to ensure that there is enough water to meet the needs of the environment and users;
- manage and improve river navigations (and some estuaries), and promote the use of waters and associated land for recreation.

The Environment Agency and Local Government Association jointly agreed a Technical Protocol on 'Working Together in Town and Country Planning' in June 2003. This protocol supports the joint EA/LGA memorandum of understanding 'Working Better Together' 2003, and sets out generic service levels for the Agency and local planning authorities regarding the planning process.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/103599/planning_protocol_526372.doc

English Nature and the Environment Agency will normally be able to contribute to the following stages in the plan-making process. It is more efficient if planning authorities reduce the number of times we are contacted, consistent with delivering all that we can for the process. We suggest below the key points when we may be contacted by planning authorities and indicate what we would aim to achieve at these points. We list action points in a form that can be used as a checklist. We welcome contact from planning authorities at any time in the process and the suggested points should not be seen as precluding other contacts, but rather as a framework for co-ordination and ensuring our timely input at all key stages. We will do all we can to meet the aspirations set out in the checklists below, but there may be times when resources are particularly stretched, or we are trying to deal with several plans and heavy planning case loads locally at the same time, so we may not always be able to meet our intended contributions.

A The pre-production and survey stage

1. Programming and screening

Planning authorities:

- send the agencies a copy of their LDS so we can programme our input accordingly.

We will aim to:

- acknowledge receipt; and
- provide details of a contact person in each agency who will co-ordinate its input to the plan.

If asked for our opinion, we will aim to:

- provide our opinion on whether a plan or strategy, or review or amendment of a plan or strategy, should be subject to the SA process.

2. Scoping the plan or strategy

We will aim to:

- advise the planning authority on what we think are the key issues for the environment that the plan could address;
- indicate what information we think the planning authority will need in order to tackle environmental adequately;
- provide information that we hold for use in the plan and the Sustainability Appraisal processes;
- advise on information that may be held by others;
- advise on the feasibility and likely timescales of obtaining further information, for example, by way of surveys;
- advise on what we think should be the scope of the Environmental / Sustainability Report;
- explore the prospects for undertaking assessments to help to assess the ability of areas or resources to accommodate development; and
- discuss the use of the checklists in Supplementary Files 13 and 14 and agree which elements should be addressed by the plan and any that need not be.

B The production stage

3. Contributing to the vision and objectives

Planning authorities:

- consult us on a draft of their vision and objectives.

We will aim to:

- provide our comments on the vision and objectives;
- alert the planning authority to any particular constraints to achieving the vision and objectives; and
- discuss with the planning authority any potential strategic, large-scale, ambitious projects or other opportunities for conserving or enhancing the environment.

4. Assessing and selecting options

Planning authorities:

- continuous consultation on the range of options and the preferred strategy of the plan.

We will aim to:

- advise the planning authority on the implications of the options for the environment; and
- indicate our preferred option if there is a preference in terms of our interests.

5. The draft plan and Environmental/Sustainability Report

Planning authorities:

- consult on the draft plan and environmental/sustainability report.

We will aim to:

- comment on the environmental issues in the plan, and on the policies and proposals;
- object, if necessary, to policies or proposals that could have significant adverse effects on environmental interests, or where there are gaps in policy coverage, or an absence of proposals that we consider to be important;
- support policies and proposals that have beneficial implications for our interests;
- comment on the Environmental / Sustainability Report identifying strengths and weaknesses and the adequacy of its coverage of environmental issues; and
- advise on the likely effectiveness of monitoring methods, indicators and targets in respect of the environment.

C Examination of the plan

6. Amendments to the plan

Planning authorities:

- consult on amendments to the plan.

We will aim to:

- comment on the environmental implications of the amendments to the plan;
- object, if necessary, to amendments that could have significant adverse effects on environmental interests; and
- support amendments that have beneficial implications for our interests.

7. Examination of the plan

For the examination of the plan we will aim to:

- provide further material required to support our position;
- appear at the examination to the extent necessary to support and explain our position, but may choose to adopt written procedures in preference to appearing; and
- assist the Inspector or Panel if we are requested to do so, whether or not we are appearing.

D Adoption of the plan

8. Adoption procedures

Planning authorities:

- provide a statement about the Sustainability Appraisal and future monitoring details.

The agencies will aim to:

- assist in monitoring and review processes where our interests are most affected; and
- advise on the need for amendment of plans in light of the results of monitoring.

Contact points for the four agencies are listed in [Supplementary File 15](#).

Regional planning bodies may find the following checklist helpful in scoping the Regional Spatial Strategy and considering how to address environmental and rural issues.

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
General principles			
Visionary strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out a meaningful and achievable spatial vision for the region, which has ambitious targets for the improvement of the environment, heritage and rural areas? • Set out clear objectives with policies and proposals clearly linked to those objectives? 		
Evidence base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear synopsis and understanding of the state of the environment and heritage and about rural housing, transport, social and economic needs based on evidence? • Set out key pressures for change and promote policies to encourage beneficial change and restrain harmful change? 		
Planning for what is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify from clear evidence the amount and type of development required and/or objectives development should meet? • Identify areas of search or broad locations for strategically important proposals likely to affect the environment, heritage or rural areas? • Manage demand so as to conserve valued environmental heritage assets? 		
Better connected strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect the objectives of and set out a spatial vision for other regional strategies? • Demonstrate strong links to other plans and strategies.e.g. River Basin Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans and Water Resources Plans, Regional Biodiversity Action Plans. 		
Policy integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for integrated social, economic and environmental benefits (win-win-win solutions) to flow from all proposals? • Minimise policy conflict between policies and proposals, all of which should be consistent with the objectives? 		
Aiming for net benefit/no significant losses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly aim for net benefit for social, environmental and economic interests with no significant loss to any of them? • Set out a logical approach to sequence of 'avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures' to steer LDF policy? • Identify areas that require strategic asset management e.g. coastal areas, flood plains or areas of degraded landscape character? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
General principles (continued)			
Respecting the capacity of the environment and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas where there may be a need to assess capacity of the environment or heritage to accommodate development and steer it to less sensitive areas? • Encourage action to increase in appropriate ways the capacity of areas to accommodate development? • Take into account the impacts of climate change? 		
Rural proofing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positively address the issues, needs and opportunities specific to rural areas? • Eliminate urban policies that could directly or indirectly serve to disadvantage the pursuit of sustainable rural development or have negative impacts on rural areas? • Identify the inter-relationships between urban and rural areas? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Overall strategy			
Protecting regional assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and protect regionally important environmental and heritage assets e.g. National Parks, AONB, Heritage Coasts, European sites, coastal zones, major recreation resources, uplands, wetlands, historic settlements, primary natural resources (better agricultural land, minerals, water)? 		
Sub-regional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodate rural areas appropriately in the boundaries of sub-regional strategy? Avoid sub-regional areas that divide coherent environmental or heritage areas? Explicitly consider implications for remoter rural areas in definition of sub-regional strategies? 		
Establishing a clear settlement hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a clear settlement hierarchy to guide development which is responsive to the nature and scale of local needs generated at each tier of settlement? Steer LDFs to develop local evidence-based settlement hierarchies to reflect local needs? Serve to enhance the role of market towns identified as rural service centres? Identify positive roles for smaller settlements and clusters thereof in providing for locally arising needs? Protect and where appropriate enhance, for its intrinsic, economic and recreational value the open countryside in which the settlement hierarchy sits? 		
Maximising the potential of the rural-urban fringe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out strategic environmental initiatives e.g. regional parks, community forests? Encourage LDF to take an integrated, holistic approach to the rural-urban fringe? 		
Firm but flexible strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage LDF to set policy context for unforeseen, innovative and inspirational development? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Accessibility			
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel by meeting local needs where they arise? • Encourage behavioural change in travel patterns and reduce dependency on the car? • Provide for accessibility of the countryside to visitors by modes other than the car? • Maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and riding within development areas? 		
Public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - integration of strategic new development with public transport improvement / accessibility? - provision of new public transport infrastructure within development? - safeguarding redundant transport infrastructure e.g. rail track-beds and canals / navigable waters for re-establishment as transport corridors? - innovative solutions that are reactive to local problems and characteristics (e.g. Community Rail Companies)? - development of integrated networks of public transport services? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Regionally distinctive and valued environment			
Environmental capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the intrinsic value of the environment recognising that some of its best aspects are irreplaceable and promoting a no net loss approach? 		
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote landscape character assessment as the underpinning element of landscape policy? • Encourage LDF to carry out detailed landscape character assessments? 		
Encouraging distinctive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify regionally distinctive areas and characteristics that provide a context for regionally distinctive development? • Encourage development to contribute to a sense of place? • Encourage LDF to promote high quality development "good enough to approve"? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Encouraging more sustainable development			
Sustainable location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the proposed location is the most sustainable for development? 		
Sustainable design and construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote sustainable design and construction methods and drainage systems (including energy efficiency)? Promote sustainable forms of development that reflect and enhance local distinctiveness and use local materials where possible? 		
The sustainable use of water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make provision for strategic development in areas where water can be made available, in ways, that will make efficient use of water resources, avoid harm to the water environment and avoid development that may exacerbate water shortage? Help to reduce the demand for water? 		
Climate change			
Plan for climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take into account the possible impacts of climate change in all policy areas? Use existing tools such as Sustainability Appraisal to ensure climate change is addressed in planning policy 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Promoting renewable energy			
Encouraging the appropriate location of renewable energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote renewable energy generation within the capacity of the environment and heritage and compatible with landscape character? Identify broad areas of search where wind energy projects may be located? Encourage effective use of land including previously developed rural land? Maximise benefits to local communities from renewable energy projects? Protect internationally and nationally designated areas from adverse effects of renewable energy? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Designated areas			
Landscape designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide National Parks and AONBs the highest level of policy protection (including acknowledgement of wider purposes – landscape, natural beauty and cultural heritage) and make appropriate provision for their economic and social well-being? Reflect NP and AONB Management Plan objectives? 		
Nature conservation designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate the general location of international nature conservation designations and areas of high biodiversity value? Provide an appropriate policy framework giving greatest weight to international then national nature conservation designations and providing for regionally and locally designated sites in LDF? 		
Heritage designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate the general location of major heritage designations and areas of high historic and cultural value especially those that are distinctive to the region? Provide an appropriate policy framework giving greatest weight to national designations and providing for regionally and locally designated heritage resources in LDF? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Enhancement of the environment and heritage resource			
Enhancing the historic and cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the enhancement of the built environment and historic and cultural heritage by providing for proposals of strategic scale? 		
Landscape enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify parts of the region appropriate for strategic landscape enhancement or restoration? 		
Biodiversity Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the creation, extension and better management of priority habitats identified in national and / or regional Biodiversity Action Plans? Set a target for new habitat creation in the plan period? Indicate how delivery of the target will be met? 		
Strategic wildlife habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and seek to protect and enhance the importance of strategic wildlife corridors, river valleys, major open spaces, major habitat networks and regionally distinctive habitats? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Environment protection			
Protecting and improving air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policies that protect and where possible improve air quality? 		
Protecting and improving water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policies to protect and where possible improve ground, surface and coastal waters from pollution and other effects of development? • Ensure that provision of adequate infrastructure for the collection, treatment and disposal of foul and surface water from development before developments are brought into use? • Promote sustainable drainage systems and require all new development to incorporate the principles of SUDS? 		
Reducing the risk of flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate areas at risk from fluvial or coastal flooding? • Provide an appropriate policy framework directing development to areas at least risk of flooding? • Protect floodplains and prevent development that would create an unacceptable increase in flood risk? • Resist developments that would rely on additional flood defence works that could adversely affect the environment or which would prejudice the ability of coastal features and processes to form natural sea defences? • Protect flood defences and related infrastructure that is necessary to protect life, significant areas of built development and essential infrastructure long-term? 		
Water resources plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas where water resource problems exist? 		
Remediation of contaminated land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the reclamation and re-use of contaminated land? 		
Protection and enhancement of river corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the protection, restoration and enhancement of river corridors so as to conserve and enhance their natural and historic heritage, their amenity and their value for fisheries, recreation and tourism? 		
Protection and enhancement of the coastal zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the protection, restoration and enhancement of the coastal zone (including defined Heritage Coasts) so as to conserve and enhance its natural and historic heritage, amenity, economic value for fisheries, recreation and tourism? • Seek to sustain natural systems and processes, minimising human intervention and removing unsustainable impediments to the evolution of coastal processes? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Planning for Waste			
Helping to deliver the National Waste Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the reduction of waste generated by development and land use change? • Encourage development to use re-cycled materials and make provision for recycling in all new development? • Ensure strategic provision of schemes for waste management that are environmentally acceptable and do not adversely affect the heritage or countryside? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Vibrant rural communities			
Environmental economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the importance of the environmental economy to the well-being of the wider economy of the region contributing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attractiveness to inward investment - tourism income leisure and recreation generation? • Recognise the continuing importance of farming, forestry, minerals, fishing to the environment? 		
Local Food Initiatives ('Eat the View')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the integration of environmentally sensitive/organic/locally distinctive food production, processing, marketing and retailing, serving to reduce food miles, establishing niche markets and strengthening the local economic base whilst encouraging less harmful agricultural practice? 		
Rural economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the extent to which the Region's rural economy is diverse, and the relative importance of rural economic activities such as manufacturing, services, retail, welfare and local government? • Facilitate continued diversification and strengthening of the economic base where appropriate? • Strengthen the robustness of the existing rural businesses sector? • Facilitate entrepreneurial activity and new business start-ups in rural areas? • Facilitate accessibility of the business support sector within rural areas and market towns? • Combine economic enterprise with countryside management /conservation objectives, such as reuse of traditional buildings in the countryside, farm diversification? • Set an appropriate policy context for the re-use of rural buildings for employment generating uses? • Promote home working and live-work units? • Encourage provision in LDF of sites for business start-ups, expansions especially in market towns and larger settlements, or serving clusters of smaller settlements? 		
Rural broadband/ ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage provision of high tech ICT infrastructure in rural areas? • Facilitate rural business uptake of ICT and facilitate training in rural areas and market towns? 		
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas with potential to exploit tourism as a beneficial economic and environmental asset? • Seek to create symbiotic relationships between tourism facility provision and environmental / cultural assets which stimulate the tourism? • Seek maximum spread of benefits in rural areas? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Inclusive rural communities			
Rural deprivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the problem of hidden but often deep rural deprivation, resulting from low incomes, lack of affordable housing, poor accessibility to services? • Set a strategy for the rural economy, transport, housing and welfare which tackle the causes of rural deprivation? • Commit to monitor for indicators of rural deprivation? 		
Local services and community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an appropriate development strategy which seeks to direct / allow for and maintain rural service provision proportionate to local need? • Direct local services to accessible rural settlements, particularly higher tier services to market towns? • Promote dual use / innovative / flexibility of operation and management of community facilities / services? • Support provision of mobile / peripatetic rural welfare service provision? • Support provision of demand responsive and community transport services? 		
Affordable rural housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise an issue of affordability within rural parts of the region? • Promote rural housing needs surveys as key tools in determining extent of the issue and spatial variations? • Identify reasons for worsening affordability crisis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low income - Second home ownership - Commuting - Retirement concentrations - Stock of smaller homes being diminished through extension? • Address underlying problems through development, economic and transport strategies, as well as Housing Strategy? • Promote the use of rural exception sites (both allocated and windfall) for affordable housing in LDFs? • Allow locally flexible (generally higher) affordable housing quotas in market housing sites? • Recognise that in some areas, low housing demand is an indicator of the need for wider rural regeneration? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Inclusive rural communities (continued)			
Rural accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate improvement in sustainable movement within rural areas reflecting and complementing the Regional Transport Strategy? Recognise car travel may be the only realistic option for many people in many rural areas? Reduce impacts of rural peripherality? Ensure as far as practicable that rural services and the countryside as a recreational resource are accessible to all in terms of personal safety and mobility? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Sustainable recreation			
Informal countryside recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage provision of informal outdoor recreation opportunities within the capacity of the environment and heritage? 		
National Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the protection and sustainable management of National Trails 		
Community forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate that Community Forest Plan objectives can be delivered through the planning system? 		
Enhancing the sustainable use of the water environment for recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a policy protecting the existing or potential recreational and amenity value of inland waters and coastal areas? Promote the enhancement of access to and sustainable recreational use of inland waters and coastal areas? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Monitoring			
Monitoring rural targets/ indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to monitoring and review of strategy performance? In doing so, does the strategy identify an adequate range of indicators with appropriate targets to cover key areas of uncertainty in the environment, heritage and countryside? 		

Local planning authorities may find the following checklist helpful in scoping the local development framework and considering how to address environmental and rural issues.

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
General principles			
Visionary plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out a meaningful and achievable vision for the plan area, over the plan period, which has realistically ambitious targets for the improvement of the environment, heritage and countryside? • Reflect Community Strategy objectives? • Set out clear objectives with policies and proposals clearly linked to those objectives? • Set out a definition of sustainable development? 		
Evidence based plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear synopsis of the state of the environment and heritage and about rural housing, transport, social and economic needs that is based on evidence acquired for the purposes of the plan, including an understanding of key pressures for change and what is needed to encourage beneficial and restrain harmful change in the plan area? • Identify spatial variations in local circumstances? 		
Planning for what is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify from clear evidence the amount and type and/or objectives for development that will serve to achieve a more sustainable environment and quality of life for communities and visitors alike? • Clearly prioritise development opportunities and what needs to be done? 		
Better connected plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate strong links with higher tier plans, including RSS, RES, RSDF, RTP, RHS, RBAPs etc and make clear the role of the plan in the regional context? • Demonstrate strong links with same-tier plans such as LTP, LBAPs, Community Strategies, AONB Management Plans, Rural Strategies etc and make clear the role of the plan in the local context? • Demonstrate strong links to other plans and strategies e.g River Basin Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans and Water Resources Plans 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
General principles (continued)			
Policy integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for integrated social, economic and environmental benefits (win-win-win solutions) to flow from all proposals? • Minimise policy conflict between policies and proposals, all of which should be consistent with the objectives? 		
Looking for net benefit / no significant losses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly aim for net benefit for social, environmental and economic interests with no significant loss to any of them? • Set out a logical approach to sequence of 'avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures' to steer LDF policy? • Identify areas that require strategic asset management e.g. coastal areas and flood plains or areas of degraded landscape character? 		
Respecting the capacity of the environment and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the ability of the environment or heritage to accommodate development and steer it to less sensitive areas? • Encourage action to increase in appropriate ways the capacity of areas to accommodate development? • Take into account the impacts of climate change? 		
Rural proofing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a rural area? If so: does the plan • Acknowledge the inter-relationships between urban and rural parts of the plan area? • Positively address the issues / problems / opportunities that are specific to the rural areas? • Eliminate urban policies that could directly or indirectly serve to disadvantage the pursuit of sustainable development in the rural areas or have negative impacts on rural areas? 		
Is it good enough to approve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policy statements that set high standards for all development which should be of an 'overall quality' which is good enough to approve and will be a distinctive and valued addition to the area? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Overall strategy			
Establishing a clear settlement hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear settlement hierarchy based on local evidence to guide development, which stems from the vision and objectives, whilst responsive to the nature and scale of local needs generated at each tier of settlement? • Identify and serve to enhance the role of those market towns that function as rural service centres through the maintenance and increase in higher order leisure, employment, welfare and educational services and opportunities? • Identify positive roles for smaller settlements and clusters thereof in providing for locally arising needs? • Protect and where appropriate enhance, for its intrinsic, economic and recreational value the open countryside in which the settlement hierarchy sits? 		
Respecting settlement form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for appropriate new development to be within, or on edge of settlements? • Draw appropriate development boundaries, reflecting the character of the settlement and needs for development? • Recognise that open space within settlements can be as important as spaces around their periphery in terms of character and community value? • Ensure new development is well related to the landform, natural systems and processes, landscape setting and characteristic scale, form, materials and detailing of the settlement? 		
Maximising the potential of the rural-urban fringe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out an integrated approach to the rural-urban fringe including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximising benefits to be gained through any new peripheral urban development vis-à-vis interface with rural surrounds, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sensitive design, scale, form and materials of extension, utilising landscape character assessment approach; - enhancing access between rural and urban areas by foot, and bicycle; - establishing strategic green links/networks between urban 'greenspace' and peripheral countryside; - securing management arrangements to enhance and maintain the most accessible countryside from urban areas for educational, recreation, relaxation purposes, habitat enhancement and landscape benefits? - policies relating to and considering new opportunities for rural-urban fringe initiatives e.g. community forests, greenspace networks, etc.? • Set out how development will be expected to contribute to Community Forest objectives including SPDs? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Overall strategy (continued)			
Firm but flexible plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out how it will deal with unforeseen, innovative and inspirational development? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Accessibility			
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for access to essential services for local people? • Provide accessibility of the countryside for visitors by modes other than the car? • Maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and riding within rural areas? 		
Public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New development dovetails with public transport accessibility? - Provision of new public transport infrastructure within development? • Safeguard redundant transport infrastructure e.g. rail track-beds and canals / navigable waters for re-establishment as transport corridors? • Encourage innovative solutions that are reactive to local problems and characteristics (e.g. Community Rail Companies)? 		
Recreational routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - safeguard existing recreational routes from obstructive development and non-compatible neighbouring uses? - integrate access from / to new development? - integrate with public transport nodes? - recognise the potential importance of recreational routes for educational and economic spin-offs? - identify potential for new and improved multi-access recreational routes in the countryside? 		
Quiet lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the potential to down-grade the status of some minor roads for recreational benefit and control development to achieve this objective? • Minimise the impact of traffic and transport infrastructure on rural character? 		
Rights of way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard the existing network of public rights of way? • Identify areas of under-provision? • Allow for / encourage expansion of the network? • Seek expansion / maintenance through development proposals? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Locally distinctive and valued development			
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use landscape character assessment and historic landscape characterisation as the underpinning element of landscape policy? • Review local landscape designations and move towards a character based approach? • Adopt or propose SPD so as to provide character analysis at an appropriate level of detail to inform planning policies and decisions? • Provide clear policy objectives for landscape character types within the plan area, e.g., conserve, enhance, restore, replace? • Have criteria based policies setting out the conditions for conservation and change in different character areas? 		
Encouraging distinctive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the use of Town Design Statements, Village Design Statements, Parish Plans, Conservation Area Appraisal? • Encourage development to enhance local distinctiveness and contribute to a sense of place? • Identify areas that have a strong sense of place to be conserved? • Consider how development can help restore and strengthen areas where a sense of place and local distinctiveness has been eroded? • Recognise the importance of historical and cultural, artistic associations, traditions etc? • Facilitate the use of Concept Statements, Master Plans and Area Action Plans to raise the standard of design in new development? 		
Design guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include or provide links to published design guidance as Supplementary Planning Documents or otherwise? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Encouraging more sustainable development			
Sustainable location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the location is the most sustainable for development? 		
Sustainable design and construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainable design and construction methods? - sustainable drainage systems? - using locally produced and / or sourced materials? - maintaining traditional construction techniques? - maintaining traditional building skills and hence supporting local construction companies / craftsmen? - re-using existing buildings and structures? • Promote the use of innovative techniques and materials where appropriate? 		
Energy efficient development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - energy efficient orientation, materials, grey water recycling, shelter belts, passive solar heating etc? - energy efficient building whilst maintaining local distinctiveness. • Address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - potential conflict between two objectives e.g. solar panels within important roofscapes? - supply of dimensional building materials, (eg stone slate for traditional roofing.)? For example, does the minerals LDF allow for re-opening or continued winning of local material in order to maintain the supply of vernacular building materials? 		
The sustainable use of water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make provision for development in areas where water can be made available, in ways, that will make efficient use of water resources, avoid harm to the water environment and avoid development that may exacerbate water shortage? • Help to reduce the demand for water? 		
Climate change			
Plan for climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take into account the possible impacts of climate change in all policy areas? • Use existing tools such as Sustainability Appraisal to ensure climate change is addressed in planning policy? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Promoting renewable energy			
Encouraging the appropriate location of renewable energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a permissive context for allowing renewable energy generation whilst seeking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to work within the capacity of landscape / natural habitats / cultural capacity of the site and its zone of influence, guided by Landscape Character Assessment? - to take account of cumulative impacts on the environment, including ancillary development / power lines? - to assess traffic implications for fuel dependent plants e.g anaerobic digestion / wood-chip fired generators – Overall sustainability of proposal if high level of fuel miles required? - direct proposals where practicable to rural 'brownfield' locations and sites accessible to local business, grid connections and workforce? 		
Renewable energy benefiting communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise benefit to rural community in which a proposed site is located in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct economic advantage: - Community owned businesses? - Direct access to renewable supply? - Employment opportunities? And <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational benefits? - Regeneration of under-used / derelict sites? • For wind energy, have regard to design, scale, visual impact, inter-visibility, tranquillity issues, and impact upon designated landscapes? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Designated areas			
National Landscape Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide National Parks and AONBs the highest level of policy protection (including acknowledgement of wider purposes – landscape, natural beauty and cultural heritage) and make appropriate provision for their economic and social well-being? • Reflect National Parks and AONB Management Plan objectives? 		
International nature conservation designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to internationally designated sites (SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites and indicate that development affecting them will be subject to special legal procedures in the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations? 		
National nature conservation designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate that development likely to adversely affect the interest features of Sites of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted, without including caveats or exceptions 		
Regional and local nature conservation designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate that development likely to have a significant adverse effect on regionally or locally designated sites including County Wildlife Sites, SINCs and Regionally important geological sites will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances? 		
Local Nature Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for the designation and management of more Local Nature Reserves by the Council? 		
Protecting rare and vulnerable species (wherever they may occur)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a policy to protect species especially protected by law, distinguishing European protected species from others and explaining the need to protect badgers? • Explain that permission will not be given until adequate surveys have been undertaken to establish the potential effects on the species and determine the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures? 		
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate that proposals for the demolition or significant alteration of Listed Buildings, or development that would adversely affect their historical or architectural interest or setting will not be permitted? 		
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate that proposals likely to adversely affect a Scheduled Monument or its setting will not be permitted? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Designated areas (continued)			
Conservation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate that only proposals that preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a Conservation Area and its setting will be permitted? Indicate that development that would prejudice the implementation of a Conservation Area Plan will not be permitted? 		
Historic Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate that development that would adversely affect the character, appearance or historical interest or the setting or important views of or from a registered Historic Park or Garden will not be permitted? 		
Historic Battlefields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate that development that would adversely affect the historical interest or the setting of a registered battlefield will not be permitted? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Enhancement of the environment and heritage resource			
Planning obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly set out the benefits that will be expected from different types and scale of development via planning obligations? 		
Enhancing the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the enhancement of the built environment by specific schemes such as environmental improvements, townscape schemes or themed enhancement projects? 		
Enhancing the archaeological resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the enhancement of the archaeological resource by specific schemes such as interpretation and access improvements, themed enhancement projects? 		
Enhancing and managing other aspects of the heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the enhancement of other aspects of heritage, such as parks and open spaces, areas with particular historic, cultural or artistic associations? 		
Landscape enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Landscape Character Areas appropriate for enhancement or restoration? 		
Biodiversity Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the creation, extension and better management of priority habitats identified in national and / or local Biodiversity Action Plans? Set a target for new habitat creation in the plan period? Indicate how delivery of the target will be met? 		
Mitigation and compensatory measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicate that where development may adversely affect environmental interests, harm should be minimised and compensatory measures to offset the harm should be provided as far as practicable? 		
Managing features of the landscape of major importance to wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a policy encouraging the management of features of the landscape of major importance to wild flora and fauna which, because of their linear or continuous nature or their function as stepping stones, are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species? Indicate how the management of the features will be improved, for example by way of planning conditions or obligations? 		
Wildlife corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and seek to protect and enhance the importance for wildlife of green corridors, river valleys open space networks and other linking features in urban and rural areas? 		
Interpretation and access to nature conservation sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the provision of better access to and interpretation of nature conservation sites and features in the area? 		
Geological conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make explicit reference to geological conservation and to the need to conserve, interpret and manage geological sites and features in development areas? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Environment protection			
Protecting and improving air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policies that resist development that would adversely affect air quality, especially by exacerbating existing air quality problems? • Include policies to enhance air quality where new development may deliver a means of doing so? • Deliver consistency with the National Air Quality Strategy? 		
Protecting and improving water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policies to protect ground, surface and coastal waters from pollution and other effects of development? • Include policies to enhance water quality in ground, surface and coastal waters where new development may deliver a means of doing so? • Ensure that provision of adequate infrastructure for the collection, treatment and disposal of foul and surface water from development before developments are brought into use? • Promote sustainable drainage systems and require all new development to incorporate the principles of SUDS? • Discourage the proliferation of private sewage disposal facilities? 		
Water resources plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas where water resource problems exist? 		
Reducing the risk of flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate areas at risk from fluvial or coastal flooding? • Provide an appropriate policy framework directing development to areas at least risk of flooding • Resist developments that would be subject to unacceptable risks of fluvial or coastal flooding? • Protect floodplains and prevent development that would create an unacceptable increase in flood risk • Resist developments that would rely on additional flood defence works that could adversely affect the environment or which would prejudice the ability of coastal features and processes to form natural sea defences? • Protect flood defences and related infrastructure that is necessary to protect life, significant areas of built development and essential infrastructure long-term • Include a policy to minimise the use of culverting and to prevent building over watercourses? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Environment protection (continued)			
Remediation of contaminated land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a policy encouraging the reclamation and re-use of contaminated land? • Include a policy that requires appropriate site investigations and risk assessments to be carried out on land suspected of being contaminated? • Include a policy requiring appropriate remediation measures to be carried out prior to development of contaminated land including the safe disposal of its contamination? 		
Protection and enhancement of river corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the protection, restoration and enhancement of river corridors so as to conserve and enhance their natural and historic heritage, their amenity and their value for fisheries, recreation and tourism? 		
Protection and enhancement of the coastal zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the protection, restoration and enhancement of the coastal zone (including defined Heritage Coasts) so as to conserve and enhance its natural and historic heritage, amenity, economic value for fisheries, recreation and tourism? • Seek to sustain natural systems and processes, minimising human intervention and removing unsustainable impediments to the evolution of coastal processes? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/ Reference	Comments
Planning for waste			
Helping to deliver the National Waste Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly set out to reduce the amount of waste generated by development and land use change? • Explicitly encourage development to use re-cycled materials and make provision for recycling in all new development? • Ensure that schemes for waste management are environmentally acceptable and do not adversely affect the environment, heritage or countryside? • Define criteria against which waste management proposals will be assessed? • Encourage the collection and use of landfill gas for renewable energy? • If appropriate to the plan, make positive provision for and allocate appropriate sites for waste management facilities? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/ Reference	Comments
Vibrant rural communities			
Environmental economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the importance of the environmental economy to the well-being of the wider economy of the plan area, i.e., a quality / enhanced 'natural' and built environment contributing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attractiveness to inward investment? - tourism income? - leisure and recreation generation? • Recognise the continuing importance of the primary industry contribution – farming, forestry, minerals, fishing to the environment? 		
'Eat the view' / Land Management Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the integration of environmentally sensitive / organic / locally distinctive food production, processing, marketing and retailing, serving to reduce food miles, establishing niche markets and strengthening the local economic base whilst encouraging less harmful agricultural practice? • Therefore allow for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - slaughter / processing / packaging facilities on farms, serving small clusters / co-operatives of farm/food producers? - retailing from farm shops? - business networks in rural areas to support such economies? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/ Reference	Comments
Vibrant rural communities (continued)			
Rural economic development and diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that to a considerable extent the English rural economy is diverse, and farming, forestry and minerals are less important economically than they are in land use terms? • Allow for continued diversification where appropriate and strengthening of the economic base? • Allow for appropriate expansion of existing rural businesses? • Facilitate entrepreneurial activity and new business start up in rural areas? • Allow for home working? • Seek appropriate accessibility of business support sector within rural areas / market towns? 		
Reuse of rural buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out objectives and criteria for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside taking account of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specific local needs and opportunities? - impacts on landscape, wildlife and historic buildings? - travel patterns, including customer visits? - impacts on nearby settlements? - requirements of the disabled? • Seek to achieve through the reuse of non-traditional rural buildings (e.g. portal framed agricultural sheds) net gain in landscaping / external appearance to reduce landscape impact? • Are additional agricultural buildings adequately controlled / restricted if change of use out of agriculture does occur? 		
Rural broadband/ ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage provision of high tech ICT infrastructure in rural areas? 		
Home working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote business use within residential areas where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visitor/traffic generation is acceptable? - use does not challenge vitality or viability and role of settlement commercial areas (having regard to cumulative effects)? - neighbour amenity can be adequately protected? 		
Business premises/ employment use allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate sites and set out criteria based policies for business start-ups, expansions especially in market towns and larger settlements, or serving clusters of smaller settlements? 		
Employment space accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise employment space allocations and ease workforce accessibility for all sectors of the rural job market? 		
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise sustainable tourism opportunities? • And if so does it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seek to create symbiotic relationships between tourism facility provision and environmental / cultural assets which stimulate the tourism? - maximise the quality of the visitor experience (add value)? - seek maximum spread of benefits to wider rural community? - contain provision within the environmental and community capacity to absorb visitor pressure? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Inclusive rural communities			
Local services and community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate policies which seek to direct/allow for local service provision proportionate to local need, within or on the edge of settlements? • Avoid narrow/prescriptive definitions of what is appropriate as local service provision? • Direct local services to defined local service centres? • Promote dual use, innovative, flexible operation and management of community facilities / services? • Protect community orientated services and facilities against change of use unless adequate duplication / new provision or proven non-viability is evident? 		
Affordable rural housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise an issue of affordability within rural parts of the plan area and whether this is different from affordability issues in urban areas? • Include an adequate evidence base: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are housing needs surveys promoted / identified as key factors in determining extent of issue and spatial variation? - is second home ownership contributing to the problem? - is the stock of smaller homes being diminished through extensions? • Identify rural exception sites (both allocated and windfall) for affordable housing ? • Supplement allocations with development briefs/design SPD? 		
Rural accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate improvement in sustainable movement within the rural area reflecting and complementing the Local Transport Plan/Rural Strategies/initiatives? • Acknowledge that cars will remain a key element of transport within rural areas, and local service viability will depend on car access for years to come? • Maintain car parking provision / pricing policy which will not unduly disadvantage viability of rural business and community vitality? • Ensure as far as practicable that rural services and the countryside as a recreational resource are accessible to all in terms of personal safety and mobility? 		
Community involvement in planning decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly set out how communities will be involved in planning decisions e.g. prioritisation and selection of benefits from planning obligations? • Explain how communities will be involved in managing and improving environmental and heritage assets? • Clearly set out how communities will be involved in delivering better development e.g. through Parish Plans? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/ Reference	Comments
Sustainable recreation			
Informal countryside recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate informal outdoor recreation opportunities • Promote the management of recreation opportunities within the capacity of the landscape / natural environment to accommodate visitor uses / impact? • Direct more intensive recreational development (campsites with amenities, activity centres, information / interpretation facilities) to sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessible by public transport? - that can complement/improve viability of existing rural services? - that are environmentally less sensitive or screened and self contained? - that can ensure a net benefit to landscape character through appropriate landscape screening? 		
National Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect National Trails from insensitive or non-compatible neighbouring uses? • Facilitate footpath / bridleway links to and from the Trails, accessing public transport nodes and local services? • Enable local business to maximise National Trail market opportunities e.g. accommodation, pubs, specialist equipment, food and convenience shops? 		
Open access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the management of access points to minimise adverse effects such as sporadic on-lane parking or congestion? • Maximise opportunities to get to open access land by public transport? • Resist development which would adversely affect any open access land or which might prejudice the openness and integrity of large areas of non-cultivated land where there is potential for open access agreements to be secured? 		
Managing formalised / noisy rural recreation activities (e.g. shooting, motor sports)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the need for such uses, particularly when dependent on important national/regional/local countryside features (e.g. rock climbing at limestone gorge, sailing / power-boating on water bodies of sufficient expanse) • Provide for uses to meet need where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they can be accommodated within environmental capacity - they are accessible by public transport wherever possible - the provision of quality facilities could divert pressure from more sensitive environments - opportunities for wider community benefit in terms of job creation, dual use, additional market for local outlets / services are maximised? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Sustainable recreation (continued)			
Enhancing the sustainable use of the water environment for recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a policy protecting existing or potential recreational and amenity value of inland waters and coastal areas? • Promote the enhancement of access to and sustainable recreational use of inland waters and coastal areas? • Recognise the benefits of maximising the recreational use of inland waters and the coast without detriment to their environment and heritage? • Protect existing rights of navigation on inland and coastal waters? • Ensure that proposals for new navigation provisions are sustainable and compatible with the interests of local communities and the environment and heritage? 		

Objective/Delivery Mechanism	Does the plan:	Yes/No/Reference	Comments
Monitoring			
Monitoring rural targets/indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to monitoring and review of plan performance? • In doing so, identify an adequate range of indicators with appropriate targets to cover key areas of uncertainty in the environment, heritage and countryside? 		

List of contact points for the four agencies

Countryside Agency (Landscape, Access and Recreation Division)

National Team

Positive Planning Team

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Fax. 020 7340 2911

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Bristol

BS1 6NP

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[Email info.southwest@countryside.gov.uk](mailto:info.southwest@countryside.gov.uk)

Commission for Rural Communities

(An operating Division of the Countryside Agency)

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Environment Agency

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Please note all enquiries should initially be directed to Regional Offices (for RSS enquiries) and Area Teams (for LDDs).

Regional Teams Providing Input to RSS:

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North East Regional Strategic Unit	Rivers House 21 Park Square South Leeds LS1 2QG	08708 506506
North West Regional Strategic Unit	Richard Fairclough House Knutsford Road Latchford Warrington Cheshire WA4 1HG	08708 506506
Southern Regional Strategic Unit	Guildbourne House Chatsworth Road Worthing West Sussex BN11 1LD	08708 506506
South West Regional Strategic Unit	Manley House Kestrel Way Exeter EX2 7LQ	08708 506506
Thames Regional Strategic Unit	Kings Meadow House Kings Meadow Road Reading RG1 8DG	08708 506506
Welsh Regional Strategic Unit	Plas Yr Afon St Mellons Business Park Fortran Road St Mellons Cardiff CF3 0EY	08708 506506

Area Teams providing input to LDFs:

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Anglian	Northern Planning Team	Waterside House Waterside North Lincoln Lincoln LN2 5HA	08708 506506
Wales	Welsh Team	Plas Yr Afon St Mellons Business Park Fortran Road St Mellons Cardiff CF3 0EY	08708 506506
Midlands	Severn Planning Team	Hafren House Welshpool Road Shelton Shrewsbury SY3 8BB	08708 506506
Midlands	Lower Trent Planning Team	Trentside Offices Scarrington Road West Bridgford Nottingham NG2 5FA	08708 506506
Midlands	Upper Trent Planning Team	Sentinel House 9 Wellington Crescent Fradley Park Lichfield Staffs WS13 8RR	08708 506506
North East	Dales/Northumbria Planning Team	Coverdale House Aviator Court Amy Johnson Way Clifton Moor York YO30 4UZ	08708 506506

Area Teams providing input to LDFs (continued):

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Southern	Kent Planning Team	Orchard House Endeavour Park London Road Addington West Malling Kent ME19 5SH	08708 506506
South West	Cornwall/Devon Planning Team	Sir John Moore House Victoria Square Bodmin Cornwall PL31 1EB	08708 506506
South West	Wessex Planning Team	Rivers House East Quay Bridgwater Somerset TA6 4YS	08708 506506

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Thames	West Planning Team	Isis House Howbery Park Crowmarsh Gifford Wallingford Oxon OX10 8BD	08708 506506

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to make the quality of life better for people in the countryside and the quality of the countryside better for everyone.



From April 2005 the Countryside Agency will operate as two divisions: Landscape, Access and Recreation whose function is landscape, access and recreation and the Commission for Rural Communities whose function is rural watchdog, expert and adviser.

English Heritage is the Government's statutory advisor with responsibility for protecting and promoting all aspects of the historic environment in England.



English Nature is the statutory body that champions the conservation and enhancement of the wildlife and natural features (geology) of England.



The Environment Agency is the public body taking the lead in protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales, making sure that air, land and water are looked after by everyone in today's society, so that tomorrow's generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world.



This guidance does not take into account any future changes resulting from the Government's Modernising Rural Delivery programme, which proposes the establishment of two new organisations: *Natural England* bringing together English Nature, the landscape, access and recreation functions of the Countryside Agency and the environment activities of the Rural Development Service; and the Commission for Rural Communities. Any changes will be reflected in future versions of this guidance.

Acknowledgements

This guidance was drafted by David Tyldesley and Associates under the auspices of a Steering Group comprising Joanna Russell (Countryside Agency), Duncan McCallum (English Heritage), Jonathan Price and Carl Simms (English Nature), Ann Skinner and Colin Eastman (Environment Agency). Representatives of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister attended some of the Steering Group meetings. The structure and content of an early draft of the guidance was the subject of a sounding board workshop held in Leeds and attended by representatives of local planning authorities, regional planning bodies, regional Government Offices, non-governmental organisations and the Agencies. The Steering Group expresses its appreciation for the comments received, which have been very influential in shaping the structure and content of the guidance.

The agencies would welcome feedback on the guidance as well as examples of good practice for inclusion in future versions. Please send any comments to: joanna.russell@countryside.gov.uk