



Sussex Wildlife Trust



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How to include wildlife in Neighbourhood Plans

This information is to help you create a Neighbourhood Plan that makes the most of your local environment for the benefit of everyone, both now and in the future.

We believe strongly in the concept of a living landscape - it's not enough to have a few isolated but well managed nature reserves, for wildlife to thrive it needs to be connected. The environmental impact of a development on a site can't only be judged on the ecology of that site, we also need to consider how it links to other sites. A strip of green may not have a high biodiversity value in itself, but it could be the only link between two very valuable wildlife sites. Hedgerows, for example, are vital for wildlife. They provide foraging lines for bats, shelter for small mammals and amphibians that are moving through the landscape and are a great food source for insects, birds and many other animals.

Why are Neighbourhood Plans important for wildlife?

Neighbourhood Plans are a great opportunity to improve the local environment, including protecting and

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enhancing existing assets, such as local parks, nature reserves and other green spaces. Your plan could look at all the existing greenspace in your area and identify where green corridors for people and wildlife could be created to link up open spaces. These may include planting, improving or linking up hedgerows or enhancing the habitats that border a Public Right of Way. When it comes to new development, the Plan can make sure they reflect and compliment the wider countryside and provide space for people and nature.

Making biodiversity an integral part of neighbourhood planning can also help to manage environmental risk and improve resilience to climate change. For example, local land use policies could help to manage the risk of flooding by promoting the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes (SUDs). By planting trees you can help create green space, which can store water and provide shade for people, as well as supporting nature.

## Where to start

Good planning decisions should always be based on sound evidence, so the priority is to gather as much information as possible about your local natural environment. The [Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre \(SxBRC\)](#) should be your first stop for information on local habitats, species and geology in your area. Much of this information is available to the general public free of charge. Just visit their website and fill in a request form.

The information held by SxBRC can only give you a snapshot of what is currently recorded in an area. Some places will be far better surveyed than others, possibly due to land ownership and access constraints. It is also worth remembering that most of this information has been gathered by volunteers. You may decide that there is not sufficient baseline information or that what is available needs ground truthing or updating.

Limited data may encourage you to mobilise a group of volunteers to find out more about the biodiversity in your area. Some parishes have produced a wildlife map identifying where key features like hedgerows, ponds, meadows and woodland are and also the presence of certain species.

**Find out more about how to map the biodiversity where you live**

The small copper is a fast flying butterfly, seen on grassland. Photo by Tom Lee [#WildlifeWedne... pic.twitter.com/...](#)  
6 Jul 16 11:36 am



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**Inspiring the New Generation Appeal**

**Michelle Aloof:**  
**23 Nov 2015**

'Take them outdoors' was the motto of my childhood – it's every child's right

to have regular access to natural places and the freedom to play outdoors. Please support SWT in their campaign.

## Policy Pointers

Neighbourhood Plans can include policies providing they don't contravene those in the local planning authority's Local Plan. Please help conserve wildlife by considering the environment when developing policies:

- A habitat map to highlight 'biodiversity assets' and areas where improvements could be made to link habitats can be used in Neighbourhood Plans to inform policy and planning decisions. The [Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan](#) for example, has a map showing where the biodiversity assets are in the parish and a policy on biodiversity to go with it.
- Look to ensure SUDs use appropriate planting and avoid invasive non native plants.
- All new development should produce a green infrastructure plan to show how the development can improve greenspaces and corridors for people and nature, in the context of the surrounding landscape.
- A tree planted to replace a tree removed due to development will take decades to achieve the biodiversity and amenity value of what has been lost. Consider having a specific requirement that trees are replaced on a two/three to one ratio - this wouldn't be suitable for ancient woodland or veteran trees as these are irreplaceable.
- Ask that conditions to protect and enhance wildlife are included with development proposals. This means developer will have to agree to make provision for nature within the development before they are granted full planning permission. Even small scale developments could contribute significantly to creating and enhancing local wildlife habitat.
- Look at how future developments can offer gains for existing green space through management, survey and monitoring.
- Ensure the protection of designated sites by implementing 'buffer zones' around sites to

minimise the impacts of nearby developments.

- Resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.

## Further advice on creating Neighbourhood Plans:

- [The Neighbourhood Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [How to shape where you live: a guide to neighbourhood planning](#)
- [Forum for Neighbourhood Planning](#)
- [The Planning Advisory Service](#)

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