

**Supplementary Planning Document**  
**Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

**Adopted March 2024**



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## Supplementary Planning Document: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

### 1. About This Guidance

- 1.1** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that Local Development Documents form the framework for making decisions on applications for planning permission. Decisions have to be taken in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF advises that a local planning authority may prepare Supplementary Planning Documents to provide greater detail on the policies in its Local Plan. Supplementary Planning Documents are a 'material' consideration when planning applications are decided.
- 1.2** As required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 we have prepared a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which sets out how we will involve the community in preparing our Local Plan and consulting on planning applications. In accordance with the SCI we have involved people who may be interested in this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and asked them for their comments. We have produced a consultation statement which summarises all the comments people made to us and our response. This is available on our website.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1** This SPD sets out the council's approach to planning decisions in respect of biodiversity and geodiversity and is designed to be used by those considering and applying for planning permission in the borough, to ensure biodiversity and geodiversity is adequately protected through the planning process. This document provides practical advice and guidance on how to deliver proposals that comply with the NPPF and the Local Plan, adopted in 2019. Information and links to technical guidance is also included. We believe that biodiversity and geodiversity should not be seen as a hindrance to development, rather as a way of adding value to well-conceived design proposals. When considered at early design stage, biodiversity enhancements can be achieved, providing net gains, alongside additional benefits such as increasing habitat availability for species, natural flood management, carbon sequestration and broader benefits for people provided by access to natural green spaces, including increased mental health which was observed widely during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.2** This SPD also provides developers with a list of useful links and contacts where further information can be found. The Council is not responsible for the accuracy of and updates to any of the information provided in the external links, they are provided as supporting technical material.
- 2.3** This SPD provides additional details on how local policies will be implemented while also building on relevant legislation, national policy, central government advice, and the British Standard BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. Available information regarding the Environment Act 2021 has also been referenced; the Act includes provisions to strengthen and improve the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including mandating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through the planning system and the requirement for the preparation and publication of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

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### 3. Local Priorities

- 3.1** The conservation of Biodiversity is imperative, we are seeing extinction events on local, regional, national and international scales. Habitat loss and species decline is a real threat, with habitats and species once considered common in the borough now facing increasing pressures from development, climate change and many other factors. To address this the council declared a climate emergency in 2019 with the aim of reducing carbon emissions; increasing biodiversity within the borough can help achieve this through the planting of trees and the creation of sustainable landscapes that provide multiple benefits to help address the climate crisis and conserve the boroughs biodiversity.
- 3.2** Our Council Plan highlights the key points that are required for Barnsley to become a more sustainable place and to achieve our Net Zero Targets by 2045, these include:
- People live in great places, are recycling more and wasting less, feel connected and valued in their community;
  - Our heritage and green spaces are promoted for all people to enjoy; and
  - Fossil fuels are being replaced by affordable and sustainable energy and people are able to enjoy more cycling and walking.
- 3.3** For developments to result in the best outcome for biodiversity, planning has a role to play, with a key objective being the protection and enhancement of biodiversity throughout the development management process.

### 4. Biodiversity and Geodiversity in Barnsley

- 4.1** Biodiversity coined “biological diversity” is the variety of life on earth, from individual plants, animals, fungi and bacteria etc. to large ecosystems; the concept is broad and complex. Biodiversity is important for its own sake, and human survival depends upon it.
- 4.2** The most recent State of Nature Report published in 2019, reported that in the UK more species have seen their populations decrease than increase; the report details a 41% decrease in species abundance since 1970, with the main issues being:
- Agricultural intensification;
  - An increase in average UK temperatures;
  - Negative impacts from pollution; and
  - Loss of habitats to meet the increasing needs of our population.
- 4.3** Geodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of ancient rock, fossils, minerals, earth structures, sediments, soils and more recent landforms (depositional and erosional features) that create the foundations of physical landscapes and habitats. The recognition, management, and conservation of significant geological sites is important as it contributes towards the understanding and maintaining of the natural environment, to scientific research and to teaching an understanding of the earth, as well as to leisure activities and the enhancement of green spaces. The industrial heritage of the borough and building construction are closely linked to the geological resources of the area, particularly coal, clay, ironstone, sandstone and roofing flags. It is essential that geological conservation factors are taken into account in the planning process; the opportunities for educational,

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scientific and recreational advance are appreciated and realised and that significant features of geological interest are conserved.

- 4.4** The richness of Barnsley's biodiversity owes its existence to the borough's varied geology giving rise to a range of landscapes – from the open moors in the west, to the lowlands of the Dearne in the east; each landscape, be it moorland, woodland, grassland, wetlands, parks and gardens or neglected former industrial sites, supports its own habitats and species which contribute to local distinctiveness and character. Some of these habitats are recognised as being of national and international importance, while other areas are recognised as important at a local level. They support countless numbers of protected and notable<sup>1</sup> species, many of which are rare or threatened in the UK.
- 4.5** Barnsley borough has, at the time of writing, two Internationally-designated statutory nature conservation sites ('Natura 2000' sites) which are to the west, in the Peak District National Park Local Planning Authority (LPA) area. The Barnsley LPA area contains the following nationally-important statutory designated nature conservation sites: all or part of seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), all or part of eight Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and one Nature Improvement Area (NIA). The SSSIs list includes sites designated for their biodiversity or (separately) geodiversity value. Non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and Local Geology Sites/Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (LGSs/RIGS) have been designated in the borough for their local ecological or geological value respectively. At the time of writing there are 54 LWS and 31 RIGS within the borough. Up to date lists/plans of statutory and non-statutory sites can be found at:
- <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>;
  - <http://www.barnsleybiodiversity.org.uk/>
  - <https://www.sagt.org.uk/>; and
  - on Barnsley's Local Plan interactive mapping tool <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/planning-and-buildings/local-planning-and-development/our-local-plan/barnsleys-local-plan/>
- 4.6** Of significant note within the Borough is the recently designated (February 2022) Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. The site comprises 22 compartments scattered throughout the east of the borough. The SSSI is an area of post-industrial urban fringe comprising large areas of wetland, woodland, scrub and other notable habitats located within the Dearne catchment. Its notifiable features include the following;
- Several species of breeding bird including gadwall, shoveler garganey, pochard, bittern, black-headed gull and willow tit;
  - Non-breeding gadwall and shoveler; and
  - A diverse assemblage of breeding birds of lowland damp grasslands and scrub and a mixed assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins including lowland fen.

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<sup>1</sup> Priority Species are those included within the list prepared under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, Schedule; those listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and all European Protected Species.

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- 4.7** The rocks underlying Barnsley borough are Upper Carboniferous in age, and comprise mudstones, siltstones and sandstones with coal seams, some of which are/were of major importance. There are also beds of ironstone and roofing flags. In the west of the borough, by Dunford Bridge, "Millstone Grit" sandstone outcrops of the Pennines are present. These rocks support expanses of peat and heathland habitats. The more resistant sandstones form hills and edges, which run roughly northeast – southwest and influence the shape of river catchments as well as the flow of groundwaters and geochemistry of the river ecosystems.
- 4.8** Many of Barnsley's older settlements are located on the slightly higher ground of the "Coal Measures" sandstones, above the less-well drained areas underlain by mudstone. Extractive industries still provide some employment in quarrying stone and pot clay, and many of the older buildings in Barnsley include local sandstones. Some of these sites have become a significant source of raw materials, including stone for appropriate building conservation within the region, enabling a distinctive sense of place and authenticity to be maintained.

### 5. Legislation, Policy and Strategies

- 5.1** There is a variety of legislation and policy provisions to ensure protection of the natural environment, these range from international to local level. This document supplements the following Local Plan policies:

#### Policy BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features of the borough by:

- Protecting and improving habitats, species, sites of ecological value and sites of geological value with particular regard to designated wildlife and geological sites of international, national and local significance, ancient woodland and species and habitats of principal importance identified via Section 41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 (for list of the species and habitats of principal importance) and in the Barnsley *Biodiversity Action Plan*;
- Maximising biodiversity and geodiversity opportunities in and around new developments;
- Conserving and enhancing the form, local character and distinctiveness of the boroughs natural assets such as the river corridors of the Don, the Dearne and Dove as natural floodplains and important strategic wildlife corridors;
- Proposals will be expected to have followed the national mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate) which is used to evaluate the impacts of a development on biodiversity interest;
- Protecting ancient and veteran trees where identified;
- Encouraging provision of biodiversity enhancements.



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Development which may harm a biodiversity or geological feature or habitat, including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, will not be permitted unless effective mitigation and/or compensatory measures can be ensured;

Development which adversely affects a European Site will not be permitted unless there is no alternative option and imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI).

### Policy GI1 Green Infrastructure

We will protect, maintain, enhance and create an integrated network of connected and multi-functional Green Infrastructure assets that:

- Provides attractive environments where people want to live, work, learn, play, visit and invest;
- Meets the environmental, social and economic needs of communities across the borough and the wider City Regions;
- Enhances the quality of life for present and future residents and visitors;
- Helps to meet the challenge of climate change;
- Enhances biodiversity and landscape character;
- Improves opportunities for recreation and tourism;
- Respects local distinctiveness and historical and cultural;
- Maximises potential economic and social benefits;
- Secures and improves linkages between green and blue spaces.

At a strategic level Barnsley's Green Infrastructure network includes the following corridors which are shown on the Green Infrastructure Diagram (see below):

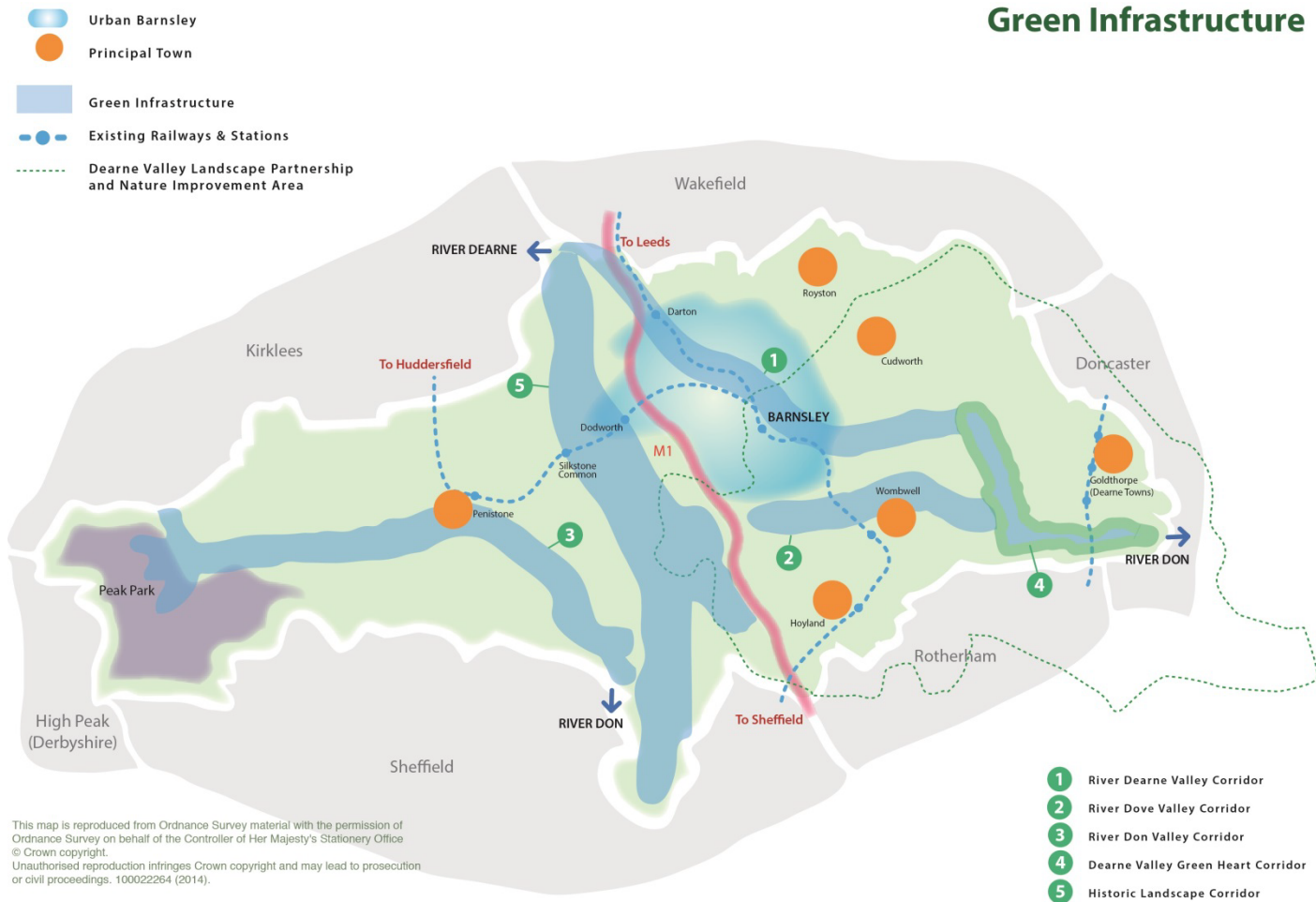
- River Dearne Valley Corridor;
- River Dove Valley Corridor;
- River Don Valley Corridor;
- Dearne Valley Green Heart Corridor;
- Historic Landscape Corridor .

The network of Green Infrastructure will be secured by protecting open space, creating new open spaces as part of new development, and by using developer contributions to create and improve Green Infrastructure

We have produced a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Barnsley which is informed by the Leeds City Region and South Yorkshire Green Infrastructure Strategies.

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## Green Infrastructure





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### Policy GS1 Green Space

We will work with partners to improve existing green space to meet the standards in our Green Space Strategy.

Green Spaces are green open areas which are valuable for amenity, recreation, wildlife or biodiversity and include types such as village greens, local open spaces, country parks, formal gardens, cemeteries, allotments, woodlands, recreation grounds, sports pitches and parks.

Proposals that result in the loss of green space, or land that was last used as green space, will not normally be allowed unless:

- An assessment shows that there is too much of that particular type of green space in the area which it serves and its loss would not affect the existing and potential green space needs of the borough; or
- The proposal is for small scale facilities needed to support or improve the proper function of the green space; or
- An appropriate replacement green space of equivalent or improved quality, quantity and accessibility is provided which would outweigh the loss.

In order to improve the quantity, quality and value of green space provision we will require qualifying new residential developments to provide or contribute towards green space in line with the standards set out in the Green Space Strategy and in accordance with the requirements of the Infrastructure and Planning Obligations Policy. The Supplementary Planning Document 'Open Space Provision on New Housing Developments' offers guidance to developers on what will be expected in terms of open space provision in order to achieve those standards.

Where there is a requirement to provide new green space an assessment will be carried out to determine the most appropriate provision, taking into account site characteristics and constraints. In cases where it is deemed unsuitable to make provision for open space within or adjacent to a development site, suitable off-site open space facilities may be acceptable either as new facilities or improvements to those existing. Where appropriate new green space should secure access to adjacent areas of countryside.

### Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.2** Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development and/or land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. The Environment Act 2021 mandated a minimum measurable BNG for all developments covered by the Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA), which requires the biodiversity value of a development to exceed the predevelopment biodiversity value of a site by a minimum of 10%.
- 5.3** BNG does not replace or undermine the mitigation hierarchy as the primary principle for the consideration of biodiversity within a development. BNG is additional to the mitigation hierarchy and only applies once impacts to biodiversity have been avoided, mitigated and

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compensated for. Where there are no anticipated impacts, developments should still secure a minimum 10% BNG.

- 5.4** Biodiversity value is measured using a metric produced by Defra and the baseline value is calculated from the condition of the site before any intervention has occurred. The statutory metric should be completed by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist; the rivers section of the metric must also be completed by a qualified MoRPh surveyor. Submission of biodiversity gain information (in the form of a BNG Statement) should be provided with relevant applications alongside a copy of the most recent version of the statutory metric. A Biodiversity Gain Plan will be required for submission and approval prior to the commencement of development. A template in which to include biodiversity gain information and the biodiversity gain plan is expected to be provided alongside secondary legislation; reference should also be made to the associated biodiversity metric guidance produced by Natural England when completing the Defra metric and associated documents. When submitting documents for planning all sections of the metric must be completed, where applicable, including the start page.
- 5.5** Development that is exempt from mandatory net gain will still be required to provide biodiversity enhancements to meet planning policy BIO1. Developments that are exempt comprise the following;
- Development impacting habitat of an area below a 'de minimis' threshold of 25 square metres (5m x 5m), or 5 metres for linear habitats such as hedgerows and watercourses.
  - Householder applications;
  - Biodiversity gain sites (where habitats are being enhanced for wildlife); and
  - Small scale self-build and custom housebuilding.
- 5.6** Where the baseline value of a site is zero, the site is legally exempt from mandatory BNG. In this instance mitigation delivered as part of development proposals should be agreed with the council's planning ecologists and will be determined on a site-by-site basis. However, we would expect to see, as a minimum, features such as rain gardens, SuDs and other wildlife friendly features that will maximise the biodiversity value of a site.
- 5.7** As per Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, where degradation and/or destruction of habitats is undertaken prior to a baseline survey being completed, the pre-development biodiversity value of a site should be taken to be its baseline biodiversity value immediately prior to the destruction/degradation of habitats; this is applicable to any works undertaken on or after the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
- 5.8** BNG should be provided on-site in the first instance to create functional habitats that increase connectivity for wildlife. Where BNG cannot be achieved on site, off-site options can be sought. However, off-site locations must take regard of the emerging LNRS and should be located in strategic areas, where possible; the created/enhanced habitats must be secured for at least 30 years via planning obligations or conservation covenants. Where a minimum 10% BNG cannot be secured via on or off-site options, developers can secure the required biodiversity losses through the emerging statutory biodiversity credit scheme. Prior to the release of the statutory credit scheme, anticipated January 2024, developers can pay the council a BNG Contribution per Biodiversity Unit.

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### Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 5.9** The council is working with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), the other South Yorkshire Local Planning Authorities and partners to develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Nature Recovery Network (NRN). SYMCA were officially appointed as the Responsible Authority for the LNRS in July 2023. Barnsley Council, alongside City of Doncaster Council, Sheffield City Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Peak District National Park Authority and Natural England were listed as Supporting Authorities. The need for a LNRS is a statutory requirement of the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS will map areas where there is an opportunity to improve habitat connectivity and functionality and the local environment to guide BNG and other policies to ensure the best outcomes for biodiversity.
- 5.10** In collaboration with the four South Yorkshire Local Authorities and three additional partners, SYMCA commissioned a detailed mapping evidence base of the region's natural environment. The report details the benefits that the natural environment provides and opportunities to enhance them. The evidence within the report will be used to inform the LNRS. The maps are derived from multiple datasets and are modelled estimates of natural environment characteristics. As such, the data are not intended to provide an exact or full account of natural environment characteristics for each land parcel, but instead to guide policy and project development decisions. The Natural Capital Report can be found at [https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/Explore\\_Green-Campaign](https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/Explore_Green-Campaign)

### Nature Improvement Area

- 5.11** The Local Plan refers to the Dearne Valley Green Heart 'Nature Improvement Area' (NIA), which covers parts of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. NIAs are large, discrete areas that will deliver a step change in nature conservation, where a local partnership has a shared vision for the natural environment. NIAs were established to help address ecological restoration as part of series of actions at a landscape-scale to improve biodiversity, ecosystems and our connections with the natural environment identified by the Natural Environment White Paper (2011) and take forward recommendations identified in the Lawton Review *Making Space for Nature* (2010). The Dearne Valley Green Heart has been designated as a NIA; its extent within Barnsley can be seen in the plan in Appendix A.
- 5.12** The Dearne Valley supports nationally important assemblages of breeding birds of lowland damp grassland, lowland open water and their margins and scrub plus nationally important numbers of some individual species of breeding water birds. The Dearne Valley has the ambition to become an urban area for living, working and relaxing, in which environmental quality, biodiversity and contact with nature underpin the choices people make to move to and invest in the area and create a sustainable future. The River Dearne is a key asset in the valley and surrounding communities, with its wetlands, washlands and marshlands providing a haven for wildlife. The valley has many publicly-accessible woodlands with networks of footpaths, cycle and bridle trails. Over recent years reclaimed colliery sites have been restored to create community green spaces and the valley is a model for large-scale environmental regeneration. Economic regeneration and prosperity are key to addressing social deprivation arising from the area's industrial past.

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- 5.13** The vision of the NIA partnership is to restore and enhance the ecological networks in the valley. At its core will be areas of reedbeds, fen, wet grassland, wet woodland and woodland buffered by areas of farmland, amenity grasslands, parklands and reclaimed industrial areas whose biodiversity value will be enhanced. 'Stepping stone' sites exist along the river corridor where habitat should be enhanced and specific measures put in place for key species, such as eels, otters and water voles. The NIA area will support an even richer diversity of wildlife, including nationally-important numbers of wintering waterbirds and breeding farmland birds.

### Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan

- 5.14** The Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is produced by Barnsley Biodiversity Trust and is reviewed periodically (<http://www.barnsleybiodiversity.org.uk/introduction.html>). The BAP lists key species and habitats targeted for specific conservation action in the borough. The list draws from nationally-approved BAP targets but also includes species and habitats which the Trusts' partners consider to be locally important. The BAP details conservation actions which should be implemented to help protect key species and habitats and/or allow them to recover. Barnsley Council has adopted the BAP as part of the evidence-base supporting Local Plan decisions.

- 5.15** The presence of local priority habitats and species identified in the BAP is a material consideration in planning decisions.

- 5.16** Barnsley does not currently have a Geodiversity Action Plan (GAP), however, Sheffield Area Geology Trust have been commissioned to produce one for Barnsley. Until a GAP is published relevant guidance is available in the West Yorkshire Geodiversity Action Plan: A consultative Document, March 2008  
<http://www.wyorksgeologytrust.org/misc/Draft%20WYGAP.pdf>

A Geodiversity action plan for Doncaster was adopted in June 2008 and can be found at <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/planning/the-geodiversity-action-plan>

### Green Infrastructure

- 5.17** Green Infrastructure is a combination of natural environmental assets, the functionality of which shapes the places we live, work, play and enjoy. Those assets include:
- Green or open spaces that can link together to create an informal but planned network across the Borough and beyond;
  - Parks, gardens, woodland, wildlife sites, watercourses, street trees and the open countryside; and
  - Spaces that can perform a number of different functions, such as formal and informal recreation, nature conservation, food production, enhanced settings for development, routes for cycleways/walkways, areas for flood risk management and education resources.
- 5.18** Together, these assets form an environmental system, the performance of which will increasingly determine how successful our cities, towns and villages will be in the future.

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**5.19** At a strategic level Barnsley's Green Infrastructure network includes the following corridors:

- River Dearne Valley Corridor;
- River Dove Valley Corridor;
- River Don Valley Corridor;
- Dearne Valley Green Heart Corridor; and
- Historic Landscape Corridor.

**5.20** The recently released Green Infrastructure Framework by Natural England has been created with the aim of increasing the amount of green cover in urban areas, up to 40%. Good quality Green Infrastructure has an important role to play in urban and rural environments for improving health and wellbeing, air quality, nature recovery and resilience to and mitigation of climate change, along with addressing issues of social inequality and environmental decline.

**5.21** The Green Infrastructure Framework is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It supports the greening of towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape as part of the NRN. Networks of green and blue spaces and other natural features can bring significant benefits for nature, climate, health and prosperity.

Policy GI1 of the Local Plan states that we will protect, maintain, enhance and create an integrated network of connected and multi-functional Green Infrastructure in Barnsley.

### Nature Based Solutions

**5.22** Development should incorporate nature-based solutions, including an increase in the amount and connectivity of green and blue infrastructure. Nature-based solutions can provide natural carbon sinks, help deliver improvements to water quality and resilience against climate impacts, including flooding and overheating, as well as preventing further nature loss and protecting built assets.

**5.23** Policy BIO1 of the Local Plan encourages maximising biodiversity and geodiversity opportunities in and around new developments and, as set out above, policy GI1 states that we will protect, maintain, enhance and create an integrated network of connected and multi-functional Green Infrastructure in Barnsley.

## 6. Integrating Biodiversity into Developments in Barnsley

**6.1** BMBC has successfully implemented BNG as part of our planning requirement following adoption of the Local Plan in 2019; of which one of the objectives is to protect and enhance Barnsley's natural assets and achieve net gains in biodiversity. Prior to BNG becoming a statutory requirement, planning applications have had to demonstrate how proposals will result in no net loss of biodiversity, where applicable, and in the case of masterplan framework sites, a requirement of minimum 10% BNG is required. Examples of applications where permission has been granted on masterplan framework sites includes planning reference 2020/0647 within the Hoyland West Masterplan area and 2019/1573 within the Hoyland North Masterplan area. Both sites demonstrated that a 10% net gain for

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biodiversity can be achieved through a combination of on and off-site habitat creation and enhancement measures appropriate to habitats on site prior to development.

- 6.2** All sites whether large or small have the potential to include opportunities for biodiversity through careful and well-designed schemes. The following provides advice and minimum requirements that are expected within development sites in Barnsley.
- 6.3** Landscaping proposals within development schemes should seek to retain, enhance and create habitats of value to biodiversity whilst adhering to the mitigation hierarchy, *avoid, mitigate, compensate and offset*. The creation of front and rear gardens in householder development is encouraged as they can provide multiple environmental benefits, where this cannot be guaranteed then developers should, when completing the Defra statutory metric include “un-vegetated garden” as the post development habitat type within the statutory metric to ensure additional Biodiversity Units are not gained.
- 6.4** Landscape elements can be built into the scheme design to increase the biodiversity value of a site; this can include the creation or enhancement of boundary hedgerows, planting of street trees, the provision of wildflower grasslands, SuDS and other above ground water storage features. Where habitats are already present on a site they can provide the framework for the setting of the scheme layout. Landscaping features can help to achieve a minimum 10% BNG, as well as provide habitat connectivity in the landscape to aid the movement of species. Where possible developments should seek to provide a mosaic of habitats within landscaping designs to provide the greatest benefit for species.
- 6.5** Additionally, the use of native species of local provenance is encouraged as they generally offer more benefits to local wildlife than non-native species, as well as enhanced biosecurity and additional net gains.

Applicants are expected to provide landscape features in keeping and proportionate to the size of the development and appropriate with the local context.

- 6.6** Details regarding the mitigation requirements for developments in Barnsley are detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Mitigation/enhancement requirements**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Requirement in developments</b>	<b>National/Local Policy references</b>
Habitats (area/linear/river)	<p>Development proposals will have due regard to the baseline biodiversity value of a development site and landscaping plans should identify opportunities to retain and maximise the provision for biodiversity within the new development.</p> <p>Minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain based on baseline ecological assessment should be achieved.</p>	NPPF 2023 (see Appendix B), GS1, GI1, BIO1



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Feature	Requirement in developments	National/Local Policy references
Watercourses	Development proposals should include a 10m buffer from the bank tops of main watercourses (Rivers Dove, Don and Dearne), excluding footpaths, cycleways, roads etc... taking into account the riparian zone. Developers should apply caution when working within 10m of all other watercourses and scheme design should follow good ecological practice and the mitigation hierarchy.	BIO1, CC5, GI1
SuDS	The provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) within development sites to manage rainfall is the preferred approach.	CC4, CC1
Green roofs/living walls	<p>Living roofs of a suitable type and design should be considered on all new roofs of more than 25m<sup>2</sup>, which are flat or have a pitch of less than 25 degrees. Where there is a conflict between provision of photovoltaics and living roofs, the council would prioritise photovoltaics.</p> <p>Living walls should be considered as a possible option on buildings, though especially if needed to help mitigate visual impact on otherwise unacceptably blank and/or architecturally unrelieved façades.</p>	BIO1, Sustainable Construction and Climate Change Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document
Bat and bird boxes	<p>100% of all new dwellings to include integrated bat and bird boxes, alongside the provision of bird boxes in retained/newly created habitat on site to provide nesting habitat for a variety of species. In respect of birds, integrated swift boxes are advised as these are also used by other common nesting species. On constrained sites, practical consideration should be given to prioritising boxes within optimum areas of the site and be based on best practice.</p> <p>All other suitable application types will include integrated bat and bird boxes in keeping with the scale of development, i.e. minimum of 10 boxes for the first 1000 sqm footprint and one additional box for every 1000 sqm. Developments should ensure the installation of bird nesting and bat roosting boxes is proportionate to the level of impacts on the development site; where there are queries</p>	BIO1

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Feature	Requirement in developments	National/Local Policy references
	with regards the number or siting of boxes this can be discussed with the council's planning ecologist.	
Bats	Sensitive lighting schemes to be developed where additional lighting from the development will impact habitats such woodland edges, hedgerows, river corridors and wetlands, or any other habitats considered suitable for foraging, commuting and roosting bats. Developers should refer to the most up to date bats and lighting guidance <sup>2</sup> to ensure impacts to bats are kept to minimal levels.	BIO1
Hedgehog	Hedgehog Highway gaps to be located in boundary fences in residential schemes ensuring connectivity between gardens for hedgehogs and other wildlife, increasing the extent of habitat availability.	BIO1
Invertebrates	Landscaping features within development sites should include flowering lawns/wildflower grasslands, pollen and nectar rich plants, shrubs and trees.  Invertebrate boxes to be installed on suitable trees within development sites, alongside the provision of bee banks and brash piles.	BIO1

**6.7** BNG does not alter the protection afforded to protected/notable species and habitats within a development site. As such, statutory obligations need to be satisfied with regards to protected and/or notable species and habitats; where applicable, bespoke mitigation schemes relevant to the key ecological features of the site should be provided within an application.

## 7. Information Required to Support an Application

**7.1** Considering biodiversity and geodiversity at project inception stage and ensuring proposals are supported with appropriate evidence, where relevant, is necessary and will help enable efficient and effective decision-making and help to achieve a minimum 10% BNG. The LPA will not support applications that would damage the NRN, or developments that do not provide a minimum 10% BNG.

**7.2** The council offers a paid pre-application advice service. This can help to ensure that policy requirements are fully understood at an early stage, and that any biodiversity and

<sup>2</sup> Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night, Guidance Note 08/23

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geodiversity features are identified. Discussions with the council's Planning Ecologists can be held at an early stage, in order to seek advice and avoid impacts. Pre-application advice assists in streamlining the decision making process, and it enables the council to provide more comprehensive guidance to improve the quality of an application.

- 7.3** Suitable qualified ecologists are required to undertake ecological surveys and reporting to meet the council's requirements for providing adequate information to support an application. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) provide a list of consultants on their Registered Practice Directory on the CIEEM website. The CIEEM website provides further information on ecological surveys and their purpose, and also describes the different types of report that may be required to support an application. Details regarding the types of survey required and when to undertake them can be found within the Local Validation Checklist  
<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/jnapkupt/local-validation-requirements.pdf>

### Desk Study

- 7.4** Existing ecological data should always be gained from Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC) and from neighbouring authorities' Biological Records Centres (BRC) where close to the borough boundary. Data should also be gained from other specialist data sources such as the South Yorkshire Bat Group, South Yorkshire Badger Group, and the RSPB, etc. if it is appropriate to the site and proposal. There may be exceptions to this requirement and the omission of a desk study from ecology reports should be fully justified within the report, as is detailed within the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary for Ecological Appraisal (2017).
- 7.5** Information on internationally and nationally designated sites can be found at the 'MAGIC' website. Most locally designated sites can be seen on the Barnsley Local Plan maps and are referred to as 'Biodiversity or Geological Interest Sites'. Applicants are required to use the SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) online tool to demonstrate a rapid initial assessment of potential impacts on statutory designated sites as part of the application. If the IRZ information indicates that the development type could adversely impact a SSSI, Natural England will be consulted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Natural England may request that further information is required to support the planning application, covering how impacts upon the SSSI will be addressed.

### Ecological Survey and Assessment

- 7.6** Applications requiring consideration of biodiversity should be supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal/Ecological Impact Assessment/Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (where appropriate)/Preliminary Roost Assessment and such other secondary reports i.e., detailed botanical assessment, protected species surveys, etc. where necessary, which evaluate the ecological quality of the proposal site and recommend appropriate/proportionate mitigation, enhancement measures or off-site compensation proposals.
- 7.7** Surveys should be undertaken by competent persons with suitable qualifications and experience and carried out at an appropriate time within the year, or justifications provided if undertaken during sub-optimal timing and a robust assessment can still be made.

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Surveys should be undertaken using nationally recognised survey guidelines/methods, where available.

**7.8** Reference should be made to CIEEMs Guidelines to assess when submission of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal/Preliminary Roost Assessment is sufficient or where an Ecological Impact Assessment would be required. Ecology reports should include detail on how development proposals have taken into consideration the mitigation hierarchy in order to avoid, mitigate, compensate and offset any negative ecological impacts. Ecological surveys should follow the:

- Guidelines for Accessing and Using Biodiversity Data (March 2020);
- Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (December 2017);
- Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland published by CIEEM (September 2018);
- BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development; and
- BS8683:2021 Process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain. Specification.

**7.9** Relevant applications should also be supported by a Defra Statutory Metric and an associated BNG report. The associated report should include detail on how the Good Practice Principles for Development have been followed, baseline and post-development habitat maps (on and off-site) and condition assessments for baseline habitats, where applicable (on and off-site). Condition assessments should include details of the condition assessment criteria passed/failed, justification/evidence provided for this, and the anticipated condition assessments of proposed habitats post-development (on and off-site). Condition assessment sheets are offered in support of more recently published Defra Statutory Metrics and should be completed to support the associated statutory metric. When referring to the Biodiversity Metric User Guide it is advised that habitat surveys can be undertaken year-round, though it is important to note that the optimal survey season is April – September inclusive (for most habitat types). In the absence of seasonally appropriate survey data/evidence, the assessor must use a precautionary approach to assessing condition criteria which are not measured at a time of year when the survey is undertaken.

### **Avoidance, Mitigation, Compensation and Offsetting**

**7.10** Biodiversity and/or geodiversity mitigation plans should be designed-in from the outset, with suitably qualified and experienced professionals being part of the design team to ensure the best outcomes for biodiversity and geodiversity.

**7.11** Mitigation and enhancement proposals that contribute to creating bigger, better and more connected wildlife sites are welcomed. Creating new sites and providing joined up and resilient ecological networks throughout the borough that contribute to the LNRS and the enhancement of biodiversity is crucial. This includes conserving and enhancing the form, local character and distinctiveness of the borough's natural assets, such as the river corridors of the Don, Dearne and Dove as natural floodplains and important strategic wildlife corridors.

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- 7.12** Ecology and/or geodiversity reports submitted in support of planning applications should not only evaluate the site's importance, but also detail the mitigation and enhancement proposals. Report recommendations such as 'the applicant should install.....' are insufficient: consultant ecologists should work with applicants to offer clear measures that can be conditioned at planning decision stage. Local Validation Requirements for planning applications have been adopted by the LPA which include biodiversity and geodiversity elements that state when relevant reports are required and outline what, broadly, is needed within them, these should also be referred to when completing reports to support an application.
- 7.13** A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be secured by a legal agreement/planning condition to secure on/offsite gains and will need to be approved prior to commencement of development works. Information required within the HMMP will include;
- A recent landscape plan detailing the location of mitigation works and the size of each habitat/linear feature to be enhanced and/or created;
  - Management aims and prescriptions detailing the methods required to create and/or enhance each habitat/linear feature at the required quality for a period of 30 years;
  - A timetable of delivery for each habitat/linear feature created and/or enhanced;
  - A schedule of ecological monitoring for a minimum 30 year period, identifying when key indicators of habitat/linear feature maturity should be achieved;
  - Details on the monitoring of habitats and linear features and the provision of a report, which shall be provided to the LPA on the 1<sup>st</sup> November of each year of monitoring (years one, three, five, ten and every five years thereafter), which will assess the condition of all habitats and linear features created and/or enhanced and any necessary management or replacement/remediation measures required to deliver the Net Gain values set out in the HMMP; and
  - A schedule of actions to be undertaken in case signs of failing are identified; the schedules must include details of technique(s) to be used, equipment to be used, roles and relevant expertise of personnel and organisations involved and timing of actions including submission of monitoring report to the Council.
- 7.14** When secondary legislation and guidance for BNG is made available, this SPD will be updated accordingly.
- 7.15** Precautionary measures to be adopted on site during construction works should also be detailed at the application stage (i.e. protection of retained vegetation, adjacent water course, etc.) and relevant guidance referred to. Again, further detail of this can be provided within a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) required at the reserved matters/discharge of conditions stage.
- 7.16** The covering of trees, hedgerows or other habitats suitable for nesting birds with netting etc, prior to construction in order to exclude birds from nesting, will not be permitted.
- 7.17** Barnsley's history of quarrying, mining and the building of regional transport infrastructure created a variety of old and valuable geological surface exposures but many of these are now becoming lost to infilling, neglect and development in both urban and rural situations. This dwindling of exposures takes on added significance since the cessation of coal

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mining has prevented underground study of faults and strata in three dimensions, thereby leaving surface exposures as the only source of primary evidence. Some compensation for loss of the sub-surface data can be achieved by applying new technologies and techniques to surviving surface exposures, resulting in a wealth of valuable information on the geodiversity/geomorphological feature and its local/regional structure, for these reasons, geoconservation is important. Some developments can create new geoconservation/geomorphological sites and opportunities, either temporarily, or possibly permanent. Where an application proposes that geoconservation/geomorphological assets will be lost or diminished, the applicant and their geoconservationists should consult the LPA and its geological advisors, Sheffield Area Geology Trust (SAGT) in drawing up proposals to mitigate any impacts.

**7.18** Prior to submission of a planning application, all relevant geodiversity datasets should be gained, particularly those held by SAGT if a Regionally Important Geodiversity Site is located within 0.25km of any given development. Geological sites should be recorded by suitably qualified and experienced geoconservationists/geomorphologists using the best means available, including photography and sampling, before the loss of/damage to the feature occurs. Information obtained in this way, by the cooperation of the developer, will be shared freely with the local records centre and other publicly-owned stakeholders, for the benefit of the wider community with geological/geomorphological interests.

**7.19** The geoconservation and biodiversity needs at any one site are considered on a case by case basis but geoconservation aims to achieve the following goals:

- To preserve the geological/geomorphological integrity of the site;
- To preserve its visibility and availability for scientific and educational use;
- To ensure workable, ongoing access arrangements after completion, and;
- To work to protect the value from any subsequent risks from the new landowners, tenants, or residents.

## 8. Further information

- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69> The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573> The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents> The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted> Environment Act 2021
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1160/contents/made> The Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

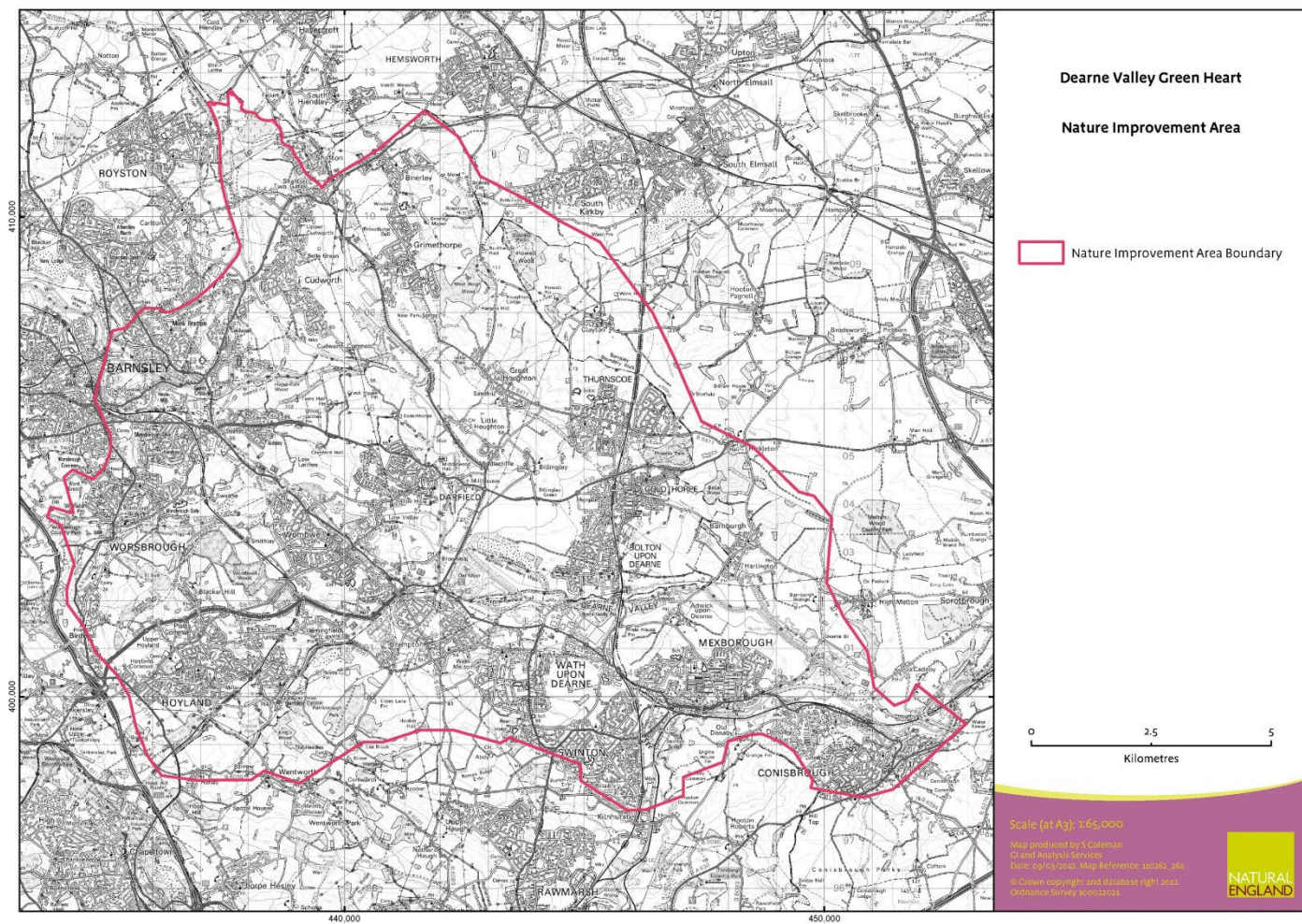


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- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/605/contents/made> The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7692/147570.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf) Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System
- [www.barnsleybiodiversity.org.uk](http://www.barnsleybiodiversity.org.uk) Barnsley Biodiversity Trust
- <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/17249/local-plan-adopted.pdf> Barnsley Local Plan
- <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> MAGIC interactive mapping portal
- <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/parks-and-open-spaces/wildlife-conservation-and-biodiversity/> Barnsley Parks and Greenspaces
- <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-accessing-and-using-biodiversity-data/> Guidelines for Accessing and Using Biodiversity Data in the UK
- <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/> Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)
- <https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030258704> BS42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development
- <https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/process-for-designing-and-implementing-biodiversity-net-gain-specification/standard> BS8683: 2021 Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain. Specification
- <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Biodiversity-Net-Gain-Principles.pdf> Biodiversity Net Gain Good practice principles for development
- <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/15707/barn-conversions-spd.pdf> Barnsley Supplementary Planning Document – Barn Conversions
- <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/reports/> State of Nature Reports
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-biodiversity-net-gain-regulations-and-implementation/outcome/government-response-and-summary-of-responses> BNG Consultation responses - Government response and summary of responses

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**Appendix A - Detailed map of Dearne Valley Green Heart 'Nature Improvement Area'**



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### Appendix B. National Planning Policy Framework 2023 Sections of relevance to biodiversity and geodiversity

180. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
  - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
  - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
  - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
  - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
181. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework<sup>62</sup>; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
182. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads<sup>63</sup> and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
183. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development<sup>64</sup> other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:
- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

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- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

185. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity<sup>65</sup>; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation<sup>66</sup>; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

186. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons<sup>67</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

187. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites<sup>68</sup>; and
- c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.



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188. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

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<sup>62</sup> Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The availability of agricultural land used for food production should be considered, alongside the other policies in this Framework, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development.

<sup>63</sup> English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 provides further guidance and information about their statutory purposes, management and other matters.

<sup>64</sup> For the purposes of paragraphs 182 and 183, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.

<sup>65</sup> Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

<sup>66</sup> Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them.

<sup>67</sup> For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat.

<sup>68</sup> Potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation and proposed Ramsar sites are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a Special Protection Area, candidate Special Area of Conservation or Ramsar site.