

GENERAL LANDSCAPE ADVICE NOTE



*A guide for
developers*

Introduction

Our environment is generally made up of both man made/natural features and the spaces around them. You cannot design one aspect alone, as the siting and scale of buildings affects the character and use of the spaces. Equally the requirement to retain landscape features, such as trees, on site will determine where buildings can be sited.

In order to design a new development successfully many issues will need to be considered at the outset. This advice note will take you through the process and direct you to other guidance notes that provide more detailed information.



'Landscape character is created by built structure, vegetation and the spaces around them.'

The information listed below should be identified prior to any work being carried out on site. Removing and or damaging trees and other site features should not be carried out before the following information is gathered, as this work may result in acts that are against the law. It may even have a detrimental effect on your planning application if this means that developments no longer tie into their surroundings.

Designations

Before going any further you should check for any designations that could affect what you are allowed to do. The Planning Department will be able to tell you if your proposals are in line with the policies of the Local Plan and if any of the following designations apply:

Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Areas - you should consider whether trees on or adjacent to the site are protected. You may need permission to carry out work to adjacent trees with overhanging branches or roots that encroach on your land (see Tree Advice Note for further information on this and other forms of tree protection). Whether trees are protected or not a tree survey from a qualified arboriculturalist will be required this will identify any works which are needed to the trees, and should be sent in with the planning application.

It is important to know what work is required to make the trees safe prior to designing any development as this may affect the layout of your development proposal (see Planning for Trees Advice Note).

Protected trees will be taken into consideration when the planning application is determined. If you propose to carry out any work to protected trees prior to the planning application being made this work should be applied for/notified to us along with a copy of the tree survey. For example, if the trees are identified by the arboriculturalist as requiring urgent work that cannot wait until the planning application is decided (Refer to our Tree Advice Note for further information).



'Trees and hedgerows may be protected'

Important Hedgerows - certain hedgerows are protected under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, and you are required to give 6 weeks notice of your intention to remove them. Hedgerow Retention Notices may be placed on important hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. If it is intended to remove any hedgerows prior to planning permission being granted, you should notify us in writing giving us 6 weeks

notice. If hedgerows are found to be 'important' under the regulations this will be considered when the planning application is determined. For further information please contact DEFRA.

Planning conditions - planning conditions may have already been imposed on areas within or adjacent to the site. These may require the retention of certain features, such as trees.

Protected Species - under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - Wychavon District Local Plan states that developers will be required to prepare an ecological assessment on all proposals likely to effect important ecological sites. Many species including nesting birds are protected under the Act and as an authority we have a responsibility to ensure that they are not adversely affected by development proposals. In this case we will require evidence that an ecological survey has been carried out and that your proposals are in line with the survey's recommendations. You may contact DEFRA for further advice. Whether trees and hedgerows are present or not, the site may contain an important wildlife habitat. Therefore before any of the area is disturbed, you should discuss with us if an ecological assessment is required from a qualified professional. If trees or any other parts of the site are found to be important to wildlife or contain protected species advice should be sought from English Nature on how to proceed.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest - where development may affect areas covered by these designations you should write to English Nature with your proposals. There is no point in making a planning application if the principle is not agreed with English Nature.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas - buildings and related features can be protected under these designations, including garden walls. For further information refer to our Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Advice Notes.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments - any work affecting these sites will require permission from English Heritage. This may include digging holes for new planting/ fence foundations, or removing tree roots.

Historic Parks and Gardens - Local Planning Authorities are statutorily required to consult English Heritage on applications affecting Grade I

and II* sites, and the Garden History Society on all applications affecting registered sites, regardless of grade.

In addition to registered Parks and Gardens the ones on the local list are protected under policies in the Local Plan. For further information refer to our Historic Parks & Gardens Supplementary Planning Document available on our website.



'Historic landscapes may be protected by a number of designations'

Ancient Woodland - the labelling of land as Ancient Woodland does not in itself provide any statutory protection. However the land is valued for its history, habitat and ecosystem. To fell any part of the woodland would require a Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission, and it is most unlikely that this would be granted. (All planning applications that may affect ancient woodland as recorded in English Nature's Provisional Inventory of Ancient Woodlands, must be notified to the Forestry Commission). The Forestry Commission will be consulted on any planning application sites that contain or are within 500m of an area of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. The Forestry Commission's comments will then be considered in determining the planning application.

Site Survey

Once you have established the principle of the development you will be able to start the design process. Firstly you will require an accurate site survey plan, to scale, that you may wish to employ a surveying company to do for you. This should include the following information:

- Existing levels with contours and or spot heights, areas around trees are particularly important (refer to our Planning for Trees Advice Note).
- Positions of buildings, features, hard surfacing, paths, drives, steps and access ramps.
- The site boundary, buildings and important features adjacent to the site.
- The direction of due north.
- The locations of underground and overhead cables/ services as well as man holes, light poles and pylons.
- Habitats such as ponds, watercourses and woodland.
- Where developments are likely to affect existing trees, woodland and or hedgerows, the Council will normally require the submission of a Tree Survey, drawn up in conjunction with the Site Survey. Tree Surveys should relate to the accurately plotted positions of existing trees, significant shrubs and hedges, including those on adjacent land that may be affected by the development (refer to our Planning for Trees Advice Note).

Site Appraisal

Next, you should carry out a site appraisal that will enable you to design a development that is appropriate to its location. This will involve you identifying particular aspects of your proposed development site, which will affect its design. You should cover the following points as necessary:

- Statutory designations within or adjacent to the site (as above)
- Scale, character and position of adjacent development and the area generally.
- Worcestershire County Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Landscape Character Assessment should be referred to and used as a guide to development proposals.
- Views from the site, to be retained or screened in the future.
- Views into the site, particularly from neighbouring properties.

- Views through the site, for example to a local landmark.
- Footpaths, cycle ways and public transport within and adjacent to the site.
- The microclimate of the site, for example, sun traps, wind tunnels and shady areas.



'Views through the site to landmarks are important for people to orientate themselves'

Site Design

Having carried out the site appraisal a development scheme can be designed using your site survey plan as a base. This plan is known as the Site Layout Plan and should be submitted as part of your planning application to show the proposed layout of the new development, (refer to our advice notes on design statements and drawings to support planning applications in Wychavon).

We have various publications and policies that you should use to aid the design process. Below is a list of site specific features that you should consider as well as an introduction to the landscape policies and documents that you should refer to as appropriate.

Site Features

- Highlight the features on the plan that cannot be moved either as a result of protection under law or expense (for instance, underground services).
- Consider which features are characteristic of the area and seek to retain these.



'Orchards are characteristic of many parts of the Vale of Evesham'

- Make the most of the features on site such as views, watercourses and special man-made structures. If these are not respected in the design they could be lost forever. This is particularly the case with trees, hedgerows and large shrubs. The retention of existing vegetation adds 'maturity' to a development and may reduce the need for extensive new planting. It will be important for you to think about how the existing vegetation can be incorporated into a new development (see Planning for Trees Advice Note)



'Existing characteristic vegetation helps to integrate a new development into its surroundings'

- Consider incorporating existing features into the design for example retaining areas that provide habitat for wildlife, and the features that could be restored, or think about re-using materials for other purposes.
- Think about retaining good views and minimising poor views within and through the site.

Landscape policies

Wychavon District Council's Local Plan states that "Proposals must demonstrate that they are informed by and sympathetic to landscape character". This should be taken into account in the design of new road layouts, orientation, type, and scale of new buildings, types of open spaces and planting areas. Worcestershire's Landscape Character Assessment available from Worcestershire County Council should be referred to, to define the character of each site location. Generally:

- Consider the types of **access** that will be required, and make sure access for the disabled is provided where appropriate. New access routes may need to be created.
- **Respect adjacent trees and buildings** by allowing space for trees to grow and minimising loss of light and overlooking to adjacent buildings.



'Trees given space to grow provide screening and shelter'

- Consider layout in terms of **reducing energy use**, for example: positioning buildings to face the sun and sheltering development from the south west wind. Also consider powering the development with renewable energy sources, and keeping long term maintenance requirements to a minimum.
- There may be opportunities to **link habitats, such as Hedgerows and Woodlands** through the site to increase wildlife movement, therefore helping to retain the wildlife population within the district. **Some developers will be encouraged to use sustainable urban drainage systems.** In these cases there will be good opportunities to provide a range of new wildlife habitats.



'Native hedgerows provide wildlife corridors important for many species'

- Development of **5 or more dwellings** should provide new areas of Public Open Space. The design of Public Open Space should consider use, safety and security.

Landscape proposals

Landscape proposals should be submitted as part of a Planning Application. This should demonstrate that all of the areas above have been considered in the design of the development. The Landscape Proposals Advice Note provides details of what should be included in the Planning Application.

Help and Advice

For more detailed guidance and advice contact:

**The Heritage Section
Planning Services**
Wychavon District Council,
Civic Centre,
Queen Elizabeth Drive,
Pershore,
Worcs. WR10 1PT

Planning Customer Service Officers
Tel: 01386 565565
e-mail: planning@wychavon.gov.uk
website: www.wychavon.gov.uk

 **WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
good services, good value