

<p>Are Local Plans required to do anything about biodiversity?</p>	<p>National planning policy (in the National Planning Policy Framework) requires that Local Plan policies should enhance the natural and local environment by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value according to their statutory status or identified quality in the Local Plan • minimising impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity • establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks <p><i>“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:</i></p> <p><i>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);</i></p> <p><i>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;” (NPPF 174)</i></p>
<p>What are these ‘sites of biodiversity value’?</p>	<p><i>Sites of biodiversity value</i> (with statutory status) are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – international designation • Special Protection Areas (SPA) - international designation • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - national designation <p>Sites of biodiversity value (with identified quality) are -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Wildlife Sites (CWS) – local designation
<p>What else should Local Plans do for biodiversity?</p>	<p>Local Plans should –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise the different status of international, national and locally designated sites • allocate land with the least environmental value • have a strategy for maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure • plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries <p><i>“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; 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.” (NPPF 175)</i></p>
<p>Will Local Plans show the location of important wildlife habitats and include policies to protect and enhance them?</p>	<p>Local Plans should –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw up maps of local wildlife rich habitats and wider ecological networks, to include – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ designated biodiversity sites (international, national and local) ▪ the habitats that connect the designated sites ▪ areas identified by Local Nature Partnership for habitat restoration

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include policies to safeguard and promote the conservation and enhancement of the above components and the recovery of priority species • pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity <p><i>“To protect and enhance biodiversity.....plans should:</i> <i>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; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;”</i></p> <p><i>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.” (NPPF 179)</i></p> <p>However, there are few examples of Local Plans that have fully complied with the above.</p>
Does DWT make any input to Local Plans?	<p>DWT does submit comments during Local Plan consultations.</p> <p>DWT is presently carrying out research, with others, on the location of wildlife habitats in Devon, with view to producing an ecological network map for the county. It is envisaged that, subject to discussions, local authorities will incorporate this map into subsequent reviews of their Local Plans.</p> <p>An ecological network is a network of ecologically valuable habitats of variable connectivity, allowing movement and interaction of wildlife populations. Devon’s pattern of hedgerows is one of the most visible components of this network. The network also includes woodlands, wildflower grasslands, streams etc.</p> <p>Ecological networks are commonly fragmented and in need of connectivity through habitat restoration and creation. DWT will be involved in the long term task of identifying potential areas.</p>