About this guidance

This guide provides an assessment tool to ensure that nature and biodiversity considerations are included in the Local Plans at any stage of the policy planning or review. A series of principles to evaluate this have been developed using the NPPF and NPPG that support the priorities and outcomes devised by The Tees Valley Nature Partnership (TVNP).

Completing the assessment

The plan can be scored against each TVNP desired outcome. Brief evidence must be shown for what choice is made. At the end, generate a score and assess what action, if any is needed. Please then submit the assessment to TVNP Planning and Nature Working Group who will review, comment and ultimately 'sign off' the final assessments. Please note this is a qualitative assessment to guide better practice not a quantitative evaluation that is scored.

For advice on completing this assessment please contact the TVNP Officer Rachel Murtagh: rmurtagh@teeswildlife.org 01287 636382

To ensure an open and inclusive process the submissions from each Local Authority when signed off will be published on the Tees Valley Nature Partnership website.

THEME 1: NATURAL ASSETS – Protecting & improving the natural environment **Our ambition:** To create a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and people by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife-rich spaces.	
Priority 1: Continue to work to protect and enhance the *geodiversity and biodiversity* of the Tees Valley ensuring the conservation, restoration and creation of key landscapes and habitats, including mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.	
NPPF para.	**Outcome 1: The areas of highest wildlife value including designated & non-designated sites are *protected and well managed*. Habitat and species numbers are increasing.**
109, 113, 118-119	• There are clear criteria agreed with TVNP within the Local Plan against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife, geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged against. • Suitable indicators agreed with TVNP for monitoring biodiversity are included in the plan to ensure net gains (no net loss) in biodiversity where possible. • The Local Plan supports changes to land use designation through the Tees Valley system of local site designation administered by the TVNP.
	Score: 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 3)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 2: Opportunities for *new habitat creation* including buffer zones around key features and sites *and restoration* of existing key habitats which have been lost or significantly reduced in the Tees Valley are realised.
109, 114, 157	• The Local Plan clearly identifies and maps land where development would be inappropriate because of its environmental significance, shows buffer zones around key features and sites and has areas identified by TVNP for habitat restoration and creation. • There is a clear commitment to any biodiversity enhancement in and around development and this is led (guided) by a local understanding of ecological networks • New areas for habitat creation and restoration are identified and mapped. Where appropriate Nature Improvement Areas are considered. • Where present, there are clear policies that maintain the character of the undeveloped coast. • There is a commitment that any plans or policies regarding the Tees estuary are agreed with the Tees Estuary Partnership.
	Score: 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 5)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 3: There is a greater understanding and appreciation of the range of services and benefits that the natural environment brings to communities and the local economy (ecosystem services) in the Tees Valley which informs decision making.
109, 158, 165, 166, 192	• The Local Plan is based on good, up-to-date and relevant evidence about environmental characteristics and prospects of the area and is linked across all the Tees Valley Local Authorities using the same evidence base and conducted over similar timescales. • There are clear policies (and ideally local guidance) to ensure developers plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. • There is a commitment that future planning decisions make use of the most up to date and accurate ecological data and, where needed, additional data is ascertained from renowned sources.
	Score: 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 3)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 4: Existing core habitat areas are well managed to ensure species can adapt and are *resilient to* pressures such as *climate change.*
18, 93, 94, 99, 103, 105-108, 156, 168	• Policies within the Local Plan support a Tees Valley commitment to appropriate mechanisms for the positive management and monitoring of habitats and species. • Sustainable management and maintenance arrangements for green infrastructure are clearly laid out, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change. • The Local Plan takes account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. • There is a clear commitment in the Local Plan to the application of the Tees Valley Authorities' Local standards for sustainable drainage.

	• In authority areas with a coast line there is a [Shoreline Management Plan](#) which takes account of climate change.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 5)
EVIDENCE:	

THEME 1; Priority 2: Work at a landscape scale to restore and deliver robust *ecological networks* that demonstrate a wide range of environmental, social and economic outcomes.	
NPPF para.	**Outcome 5: Habitats are better connected, either physically or functionally and coherent *ecological networks* are established (so that wildlife can move easily between habitat patches)**
109, 117	• The Local Plan clearly identifies and maps the components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them. • The Local Plan clearly plans for biodiversity at a landscape scale across borough boundaries and linked to the whole of the Tees Valley and beyond. • The Local Plan makes provision for opportunities to link up green spaces and priority habitats. • Policies in the Local Plan promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets specifically referencing restoration plans and priorities where these are known. • There are suitable indicators agreed with the TVNP for monitoring biodiversity in the plan. • The Local Plan specifically references the [Water Framework Directive](#), the need to prevent deterioration of our waterbodies, and actions to achieve 'good' ecological status by 2021 or 2027.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 6)
EVIDENCE:	
NPPF para.	**Outcome 6: The countryside, urban green infrastructure and previously developed (Brownfield land) are *more permeable to wildlife* through a mosaic of different habitats across the landscape ensuring that the range of habitats needed by some widespread species is present.**
109, 111, 120	• The Local Plan identifies PDL/brownfield land (of low environmental value) and areas of poorer quality land suitable for future development and acknowledges the desire to utilise these in line with developing national policy. • The Local Plan gives regard to borough wide and [Tees Valley Green Infrastructure strategy](#). The Local Plan takes a strategic, cross boundary approach with a commitment to a continual working arrangement with the TVNP.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 2)

EVIDENCE:
TOTAL SCORE FOR NATURAL ASSETS (max 24)

THEME 2 NATURAL GROWTH - Growing a sustainable economy **Our ambition:** To create a quality resilient natural environment that supports sustainable economic growth & investment in the Tees Valley. **Priority 3:** Influence local decision making and contribute to the preparation, review and implementation of local plans and strategies.	

NPPF para.	Outcome 7: **Industrial &** *commercial areas* **of the Tees Valley are** *set within high quality environments***, encouraging further investment that enhances the local economy & provides employment opportunities.**
6-9 15, 17, 21	• Planning policies recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment. • The Local Plan clearly identifies and maps priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement. • Policies within the Local Plan make a commitment to the need for green infrastructure/natural landscaping in commercial developments. • The Local Plan promotes mixed use developments, and encourages multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production).
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 4)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 8: *Natural environments are created and enhanced* **through creative use of planning mechanisms (conditions and obligations) e.g. Section 106**, Environmental Impact Assessments**, and** biodiversity offsetting.
109, 118, 152, 176, 192 203 - 206	• There are clear policies to avoid, mitigate or compensate for significant harm to biodiversity and a process of applying the 'mitigation hierarchy' is defined and laid out. • The plan has a biodiversity offsetting policy, adopted from the Defra Biodiversity Offsetting framework and potential sites within the plan area are identified. It commits to continued development in line with the latest expertise. This is to ensure no net loss and preferably a net gain in biodiversity arising from developments after mitigation measures have been taken. • There is a commitment that development will not be approved if the measures required to safe guard biodiversity cannot be secured through appropriate conditions or agreements.

	• The Local Plan allocates land for development with the least environmental or amenity value first. • There is a defined policy and process for applying Flood Risk Assessment, demonstrating full knowledge of the likely significant effects of development to inform the decision-making process.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 5)
EVIDENCE:	

THEME 2; Priority 4: Raise the profile of the Tees Valley as an attractive place to live, work or visit by championing the value and contribution of the natural environment through strong leadership, advice and support.

NPPF para.	Outcome 9: The *image of the Tees Valley* as a place to establish or relocate a business is enhanced.
57, 58, 61 118	• Planning policies and decisions ensure that developments optimise the potential of sites to accommodate development through the incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments. • Planning policies and decisions recognise the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. • Policies are clear that when determining planning applications, the local planning authority has measures to ensure there is no net loss in biodiversity and opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged (and supported through supplementary guidance where needed).
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 3)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 10: The *tourism sector* experiences growth as more green and attractive.
28	• The Local Plan encourages sustainable (rural & urban) tourism and leisure developments that are environmentally sensitive and which respect the character of the countryside. • Policies within the Local Plan encourage the development and enhancement of nature based visitor attractions.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 2)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	**Outcome 11: More *volunteering opportunities* are available through ongoing habitat creation, restoration and maintenance, which act as a stepping stone into employment.**
69	• Policies within the Local Plan 'aim to achieve places which promote: high quality public space', including core habitats and public open space. They recognise that community and 'friend's groups' play an active role in caring for these sites and have a say in their use and development.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 1)
EVIDENCE:	

Theme 2; Priority 5: Seek positive outcomes for nature & the local economy by working closely with the economic sector, providing objective knowledge, expertise & advice.	
NPPF para.	**Outcome 12: The environmental sector is stronger providing greater *employment opportunities.***
18, 95	• Policies in the Local Plan, and planning mechanisms, assist the development of industries and sectors who take measures to grow the low carbon economy. • The Local Plan sets out areas for new development in locations and in ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 2)
EVIDENCE:	
NPPF para.	**Outcome 13: *Business* across the Tees Valley are *environmentally sustainable* and able to adapt to the changing climate.**
95	• Policies in the Local Plan favour development proposals in new and existing buildings that demonstrate measures that help business to become more environmentally sustainable (including energy efficiency, renewable energy etc.) and resilient to the effects of climate change. • The Local Plan acknowledges any emerging local criteria for buildings' sustainability standards consistent with new national standards as they arise.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 2)
EVIDENCE:	
	TOTAL SCORE FOR NATURAL GROWTH (max 19)

THEME 3 NATURAL HEALTH & WELLBEING - Reconnecting people and nature
Our ambition: To contribute to health, well-being and quality of life by providing greater opportunities to enjoy, understand, benefit from and act for the natural environment.
Priority 6: *Engage with local communities* to ensure that their views are reflected in the activities and priorities of the Partnership, and that they understand the opportunities offered by the natural environment on their doorstep.

NPPF para.	**Outcome 14: People are *better informed* regarding the links between the natural environment and healthier lives.**
70, 73,	• As part of the development of the Local Plan, evidence that place-making policies that address the connection between the environment and people's health has been considered via the duty to cooperate with the relevant clinical commissioning group(s)
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 1)

EVIDENCE:

NPPF para.	**Outcome 15: *Connections* between *people and nature* are *strengthened*, to the benefit of both.**
52, 53	• The Local Plan has policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens where development would cause harm to the local area.
	• The Local Plan has policies that get the most out of new developments by improving the natural environment (biodiversity as well as landscape) in and adjacent to the development. (e.g. nature development on greenfield sites)
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 2)

EVIDENCE:

Theme 3 Priority 7: Make positive contributions towards the health and wellbeing of local people by *demonstrating the opportunities* that better access to and use of the natural environment can provide.

NPPF para	**Outcome 16: Communities have *improved access* to the natural environment & local green spaces.**
52, 73, 75, 76, 77, 114	• The Local Plan commits to promoting and supporting communities to use the power to protect green spaces where appropriate with the use of 'Local Green Space' designation. An application process and guidance to aid groups is available & promoted.
	• Policies within the Local Plan enable opportunities to improve public access to and enjoyment of the Heritage Coast and adjacent coast.
	• Explicit policies exist to protect open countryside, including buffer zones, Green Infrastructure (e.g. green wedges, green corridors) and give regard to GI network laid out in borough wide GI strategies and the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy
	• The Local plan policies seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users of Public Rights of Way (PROW) & cycle networks.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 4)

EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 17: **People have** *increasingly healthy lifestyles* **improving their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.**
73	• The Local Plan acknowledges that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. • Planning policies within the Local Plan, based on up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 2)
EVIDENCE:	

NPPF para.	Outcome 18: *High quality green environments* **exist in** *towns & villages* **with clean air & water, contributing to public safety & well-being.**
69, 73, 80, 83, 110, 114, 120 - 125	• Policies within the Local Plan safeguard the long-term sustainability of public open space by ensuring they are of high quality (including biodiversity) through investment and management, which leads to active and continual use. • Policies within the Local Plan seek to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local natural environment. • The Local Plan allocates land for housing and commercial development with the least environmental or amenity value. • With the absence of Green Belt designations to prevent urban sprawl, the plan has alternative policies and mapped areas of open countryside outside urban areas that support the 5 purposes that Green Belts serve. These areas have clear and specified protection capable of enduring beyond the plan period. • Policies within the Local Plan consider the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to the adverse effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health and the natural environment.
	Score 1 point for each positive contribution; 0.5 for partial contribution. (max 5)
EVIDENCE:	

	TOTAL SCORE NATURAL HEALTH & WELLBEING (max 14)

SCORE THE LOCAL PLAN

OUTCOMES SCORE	NATURAL ASSETS #	NATURAL GROWTH #	NATURAL HEALTH #	TOTAL
Maximum possible score	24	19	14	57
Self-assessed score				
TVNP score				
Final score				

SCORE	ASSESSMENT	ACTION NEEDED
0 – 18	POOR	Seek specialist advice on improving areas of weakness. Commit to improvements in an organised time bound programme. Identify if assessments, indicators, targets, guidance, maps etc. are needed.
19 – 36	FAIR	Identify if assessments, indicators, targets, guidance, maps etc. are needed, seek advice and support to make improvements.
37 – 55	GOOD	Could do better. Identify where there are gaps and seek measures to improve these.
55 – 57	EXCELLENT	Maximum score.

Tees Valley Local Planning Authority	
Head of Planning	
Officer(s) completing the self-assessment	
Date submitted to TVNP	
Date reviewed by Planning & Nature Working Group	
Comments/feedback by working group	
Further action YES Please specify	
Date of re-submission	
Further action NO Date 'approved' by TVNP	
Any further comments	

Version 2: Published 27/10/16