

Landscape

1.1 Landscape

Policy context

PPG 17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport, and Recreation

This guidance comprises the planning guidance to support outdoor and recreational activities which contribute to the delivery of broader sustainable development objectives such as the support of urban renaissance and rural renewal, the promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

The recreational quality of open spaces can be eroded by insensitive development or incremental loss. In considering planning applications - either within or adjoining open space - local authorities should weigh any benefits being offered to the community against the loss of open space that will occur. Accessibility should be promoted by sustainable modes of transport (including disabled facilities).

PPG 21 – Tourism

This PPG outlines the economic significance of tourism and its environmental impact, and therefore its importance in land-use planning. It explains how the needs of tourism should be dealt with in development plans and in development control.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Ensure land use is distributed and managed in such a way that it supports the qualities that underpin the tourism industry.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

CROW extends the public's ability to enjoy the countryside whilst also providing safeguards for landowners and occupiers. It creates a new statutory right of access to open country and registered common land, modernise the rights of way system, give greater protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), provide better management arrangements for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and strengthen wildlife enforcement legislation.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Emphasises the public's right of access to open country and common land, and gives additional protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Act imposes a duty on public bodies, including WCC to have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the AONBs in the County.

Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)

Bedfordshire and Luton have recently moved from the South East and become part of the East of England Region, but RSS14 is still a draft document and will not be published until late 2006. Bedfordshire and Luton now neighbour the South east, therefore, it is useful to understand their policies and plans to prevent cumulative impacts across the region from occurring.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Sensitive landscaping and maintaining areas of woodland during extraction workings to contribute to the restoration of worked minerals sites.

Luton Local Plan (Second Deposit Draft)

The Local Plan is to guide development and the use of land. It contains policies and proposals for land use and transportation.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

Only proposals that will preserve or enhance the area will be permitted in an AGLV or within the Hart Hill area of landscape importance.
For development proposals to include adequate provision for landscaping, appropriate to the setting.

Mid Beds Local Plan (First Review Deposit Draft)

The Plan guides development and the use of land over the next 10 years. The policies and proposals for land use and transportation are used to give planning advice and form the basis for determining planning applications.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

- To maintain the open character of the South Bedfordshire Green.
- To ensure that new development is sympathetic to its surroundings, appropriate in its location, layout, scale and character and meet the needs of its future occupiers.
- Protect important existing landscape features including woodland, trees, hedgerows, watercourses, lakes and ponds and encourage their appropriate management.
- Encourage the appropriate restoration of damaged and degraded landscapes.
- Development within or close to the Chilterns AONB which would harm the natural beauty of the AONB will not be permitted. Major projects in the national interest may be permitted subject to an assessment of need and availability of alternatives.
- Unless the need outweighs the landscape value, development likely to have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of an Area of Great Landscape Value will not be permitted.
- Control development in the Greenbelt.

South Bedfordshire Local Plan (Review Deposit)

The Local Plan was adopted in 2004 and provides comprehensive planning guidance for development in the area up to the year 2011. It develops the policies and general proposals of the Structure Plan and relates them to precise areas of land in the area. It sets out policies for environmental planning and management, in particular relating to conservation and improvement of the environment, efficient use of land and resources and the management of traffic.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

- Protect and enhance the natural and physical environment.
- Control development in the Green Belt by not giving planning permission for development within the Green Belt except in very special circumstances.
- Encourage careful consideration of landscape character.
- Protect important features in the landscape.
- Ensure the compatibility of design of development with forms and patterns of settlement in the area.

Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan - Bedford Borough Council

The Core Strategy will set out the long term vision and overarching policies for the Borough. Consultation is taking place in connection with preparing the 'Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan'. The 'Options Paper' will be out to consultation until 14 October 2005.

In order to ensure that the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan contributes to the aims of sustainable development, the Council is required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of its policies and proposals. This document underwent consultation in parallel with the Policies Options paper.

Objectives, Targets and Indicators

- Protect and enhance the Borough's built and historic assets and promote design excellence, distinctiveness, safety and accessibility in the built environment.
- Protect and enhance the natural environment, including its landscape character and give priority to the enhancement of the Marston Vale.
- To maintain and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character.
- To create and enhance spaces, places and buildings that wear, look and work well.

Baseline Review

- 1.1.1 Bedfordshire is a small county with distinct and complex landscapes which are densely populated. As part of a national landscape character assessment The Countryside Agency has identified 159 distinct Countryside Characters in England. Bedfordshire & Luton's geographical area comprises of 5 distinct areas of Countryside Character as defined by the Countryside Agency.

These are:

- 87: East Anglian Chalk
- 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
- 90: Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge
- 91: Yardley - Whittlewood Ridge
- 110 Chilterns

- 1.1.2 Recently Bedfordshire County Council has been undertaking a county scale assessment of landscape character. Two draft volumes have been produced.

- Volume 1: Countywide Study; and
- Volume 2: Priority Area Study

The Countywide Study identifies 12 distinct types of landscape which are assessed for strength of landscape character, landscape condition and the overall strategy for managing the landscape. The Priority Area Study provides a more in-depth assessment of 9 of these landscape types in the growth priority area.

- 1.1.3 There are Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) defined by Bedfordshire County Council in the Chilterns, Upper Ouse Valley, Greensand Ridge and the Hyde area to the south of Luton. The landscape quality of these areas will be safeguarded by:-
- refusing development which would adversely affect the character of these areas; this includes prominent development near to the AGLV;
 - the preparation and promotion of conservation, enhancement and management measures. (Source: Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011 – Policies)

This means that proposals for mineral workings in these areas will have to meet stricter landscape character criteria.

- 1.1.4 There are three separate areas of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) in Bedfordshire. These are located along the prehistoric track way of the Icknield Way with the towns of Luton & Dunstable located between the two larger areas. These areas are parts of the much larger Chiltern ANOB.
- 1.1.5 Mineral workings over the centuries for minerals such as clay, fuller’s earth, and sand have helped to shape the current landscape in Bedfordshire and have provided the basis for a number of parks and nature reserves in the County. Former mineral workings represent an opportunity to develop or preserve wildlife and plant habitats or to develop social facilities relating to leisure amenity or education.
- 1.1.6 Some abandoned chalk and gravel pits are currently not well managed in the county and could represent an opportunity to enhance county landscape.

Sources of data

- www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/ (GIS mapping data for Bedford)
- www.english-nature.org.uk/special/ssi/report.cfm?category=C,CF SSSI database
- www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/RandE/state_of_the_countryside_reports/regionalSOCRdownloads.asp State of the Countryside Website.
- Draft Landscape Character Assessment of Bedfordshire Volumes 1 & 2 2003/2004 Bedfordshire County Council.

Trends

- 1.1.7 These areas of countryside character have been assessed by the Countryside Agency for changes in character between 1990-98. These are shown in the table below.

Character type	Overall Assessment	Comments from Countryside Agency
East Anglian Chalk	Limited or Small changes Consistent with Character	“Although boundaries and settlement show inconsistent changes, those for woodland and agriculture are consistent. Most changes are not marked”.
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	Marked changes inconsistent with	“Both woodlands and settlement show marked changes that tend to be inconsistent with

Claylands	character	character, although those for woodland are more mixed. Changes in agriculture are less marked, and alongside those for semi-natural, historical and river tend to be consistent with character”.
Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge	Marked changes inconsistent with character	“Both agriculture and development show marked changes that are inconsistent with character, while those for woodlands, boundary, semi-natural, riverine are less marked and consistent with current descriptions”.
Yardley – Whittlewood Ridge	Some changes inconsistent with character	“There are marked changes in CCA in agriculture and some pressure from development. Woodland shows little change”.
Chilterns	Some changes inconsistent with character	“Some changes inconsistent with character.”

1.1.8 From the Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment Volume One: Countywide Study the following trends have been identified. A map with the document identifies landscape type locations.

County Landscape Type	Strength of Landscape Character	Landscape Condition	Overall Landscape Strategy
Arable Clay Plateau with tributaries	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
Wooded Wolds	Strong	Moderate	Conserve and Restore
Limestone River Valley with Open Water	Strong	Moderate	Conserve and Restore
Clay River Valleys	Moderate	N/a?	N/a?
Settled and Farmed Clay Vales	Moderate	Poor	Restore and Improve
Wooded Greensand Ridge	Strong	Moderate	Conserve and Restore
Greensand River Valley	Moderate	Poor	Restore and Improve
Settled and Farmed Clay Hills	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve
Chalk Escarpments	Strong	Moderate	Conserve and Restore
Rolling Chalk Farmland	Moderate	Poor	Restore and Improve
Wooded Arable Chalk Plateau with Valleys	Strong	Moderate	Conserve and Restore
Arterial Chalk River Valleys	Moderate	Moderate	Conserve and Improve

1.1.9 Data taken from Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment Draft Volume: 2 Priority Area Study examines in more detail 9 of the 12 landscape types. The table below identifies local trends.

Priority Area Landscape	Strength of Area Character	Area Landscape Condition	Area Character Sensitivity	Area Visual Sensitivity	Overall Area Strategy
1A Cranfield	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate to High	Enhance and Renew
5A Eaton Bray	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
5B Barton-Le Clay	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
5C Salford	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
5D Marston Vale	N/a?	N/a?	N/a?	N/a?	N/a?
5E Wilstead	Moderate to Weak	Poor	Low	Moderate	Renew and Create
6A Woburn	Strong	Moderate	High	Moderate	Conserve and Enhance
6B Maulden	N/a?	N/a?	N/a?	N/a?	N/a?
7A Flit	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
7B Ouzel	Strong	Poor	High	Moderate	Enhance
8A Toddington	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	Enhance
8B Billington	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance
8C Pulloxhill	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	Enhance
9A Dunstable Downs	Strong	Moderate	High	High	Conserve and Enhance
9B Totternhoe	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Enhance
9C Sundon - Barton	Strong	Moderate	High	High	Conserve and Enhance
9D Warden Hill – Stopsley Common	Strong	Moderate	High	High	Conserve and Enhance
9E South Dunstable	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
10A Totternhoe – Dunstable Downs	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Enhance
10B Horton Regis – North Luton	Weak	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance & Reinforce
10C Barton Hill – Butterfield Green	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	Enhance
11A Whipsnade	Strong	Moderate	High	Very Varied?	Conserve and Enhance
11B Caddington – Slip End	Moderate to Weak	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Renew - Reinstatement and strengthen
11C Luton Hoo	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Enhance
11D Luton Airport – Chiltern Green	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance
12A Gade	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
12B Ver	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew
12C Slip End	Weak to	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance and Renew

	Moderate				
12D LEA	Moderate	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Enhance

- 1.1.10 Pressure on the landscape from urban development is likely to increase due to:
- The movement of people in the UK from the North to the South.
 - To the changes in living patterns leading to lower occupancy of housing.
 - The requirement of additional sources of local aggregates to support future developments.
- 1.1.11 If the Local Authorities were to “do the minimum” it would be expected on current trends that there would be an even greater loss of landscape character. Evidence of this could be identified by the Countryside Agency.

Data Gaps

- 1.1.12 Some missing data in the Bedfordshire Landscape character assessment draft documents as identified in the trend tables.

Implications for minerals planning and SA in Bedfordshire

Key issues from the policy context:

How the minerals local plan should address landscape

- 1.1.13 The plan should take into account PPG 17 and PPG 21 in preserving the quality of open space and hence avoiding the adverse impacts on areas like the Chilterns AONB. Proposed new mineral sites must take account of the CRoW Act and should not, where possible, hinder accessibility to open country and common land. The plan should aim to reduce the impacts on agricultural land of mineral developments and take into account the objectives of the Chilterns AONB.

Relevant objectives for the SA

- Provision of adequate (or more) landscaping included in a development proposal.
- Ensure that plan policies avoid incremental and cumulative impact on sensitive landscape areas.
- Look for opportunities to enhance the existing landscape value of the area through sensitive restoration programs.

Key issues arising from the baseline review:

- Most of the mineral deposits in South Bedfordshire lie in areas of high landscape quality or immediately adjoining them. The plan should pay close attention to ensuring that developments respect landscape designations.

- The plan should play close attention to ensuring that developments are in keeping with the character of the landscape and landscape management strategy as identified by the County Landscape Character Assessments.
- Proposed end-uses for the sites and restoration programmes need to be sensitive to the landscape character and designations and look for opportunities to enhance the landscape character.

Key issues arising from the scoping consultation:

Are these the key sustainability issues under this topic area? or are there others?

- Can restoration be sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in surrounding landscape character?
- Cumulative impact of all operations on landscape needs to be considered.
- Potential to create new landscapes of value needs to have regard to what has gone before.

What are the main implications of these issues for minerals and waste planning?

- major impact on site allocation.
- impact on operations before, during and after extraction.

What sustainability objectives do you think should be set for each of these topic areas?

- Avoid damage to valued features of landscape.
- Avoid introduction of alien features to landscape or incorporate sufficient mitigation measures where this is unavoidable, both during and after extraction.
- Enhance landscape through restoration.
- All schemes should seek to enhance the local landscape value, with retaining of existing value to be the lowest acceptable option – i.e. for no scheme to ever have a net detrimental impact.