Notes from the Meeting of 16 May 2025

Attendees: Ella Wood, Neighbourhood Planning Assistant, BCC

Rachael Riach, Neighbourhood Planning Coordinator, BCC

Caroline Cousin

David Saunders

Liz Metheringham

- **Housing Density**
  - o Currently there is no guidance on how to calculate housing targets for a neighbourhood plan. Initially BCC intended to follow the NPPF, however, have reconsidered as Parish's have met VALP figures. P70 of the NPPF talks about providing a indicative figure. For Great Horwood, they are proposing a 10% figure (over the 20 years of the Buckinghamshire Plan) which equates to 2.5 households annually. This methodology has not been tested on appeal. The 10% figure has been proposed by the authority based on Parish Home Figures of March 2024. (Citation Buckinghamshire Parish Clerks ' Forum Minutes of 23rd April 2025) At this stage, BCC propose we utilise this figure, but we should be prepared to adapt if guidelines change.
- **Social Housing**
  - o Nationally any sites above 9 houses require social housing. At least 10% of homes in major residential developments must be provided as affordable home ownership (note locally there may be a different requirement – the previous Neighbourhood Plan set out higher figures than VALP.
  - o Affordable Housing Requirements – Aylesbury Vale (Policy H1)
    - ▪ Developments of 11 or more dwellings (or over 1,000 m² of residential floorspace) are required to provide affordable housing on-site.
    - ▪ The target percentage is:

- 25% affordable housing in Aylesbury and larger settlements
- 30% affordable housing in rural areas and smaller settlements
  - o Anecdotally CC shared that the Nash Road development sold the Bungalows immediately followed by the 3 bedroom homes with the 4 bedroom homes the last to go.
  - o GHNP to gain more insight into the type of homes that would be preferred in the village. – please refer to **Appendix B**
- **Settlement Boundary**
  - o BCC advised GHNP committee that whilst they could amend the existing settlement boundary to accommodate new housing policies they should be wary of including any unqualified suggestion that further development might be permitted outside of the settlement boundary.
  - o CC proposed that the GHNP include a **"no coalescence of settlement boundaries" policy** (a planning policy used by local authorities and communities to **prevent the merging of distinct towns, villages, or hamlets**. The goal is to **maintain the separate identity, character, and setting** of each settlement.). This led to a discussion around creating a "Green Gap" policy – please refer to **Appendix A.**
  - o BCC advised that it is important to state the **"why"** and not the "where" in such a policy and that we should focus on what creates **"feeling of separateness".   Community led policies are more compelling** than consultancy led approaches.
- **Call for Local Sites**
  - o The recent call for local sites is unlikely to be published until Autumn 2025 at the earliest.
  - o HEELA Housing Employment Land Availability Assessment
- **What can GHNP do now?**
  - o **Site Selection Process –** think about criteria, what the allocation policy might include, linkage
  - o **SEA – agree a headline list of policies to send to** BCC so that they can screen it and send a statement of support pack to support any funding applications (Locality) we may make.

- o **Develop a Landscape Character Assessment / Green Gap –** talk about feeling of openness. The Setting of Listed Buildings matters as much as the architectural features. Consider the impact to the village if the landscape is eroded. **(Appendix A)**
- o **Design Statement for Housing –** Best if community develop this – consider type of housing, architectural features and materials. **(Appendix B)**

Appendix A – Landscape Character Assessment / Green Gap

CPRE's "What's Special to You" Guide

This guide by the **Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)** includes real examples of neighbourhood plans that:

- Designate **Local Green Spaces** and **Green Gaps**.

- Use **community-led LCAs** to protect local character.

- Include policies to conserve hedgerows, dark skies, and views.

🔗 Read the full guide (PDF)

Landscape Character Assessment Database (UK & Ireland)

This is a searchable database of over 5 0 0 LCAs, including many created at the community or parish level. It's a great resource to find examples relevant to your area or similar landscapes.

🔗 Explore the database

The most recent official version of *"An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment"* **by Natural England remains the October 2014 edition, with minor revisions made in March 2018. There is no fully updated replacement yet published.**

🔗 **Download the 2018 revised version (PDF)**

Natural England has launched a Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment Hub to:

- **Review and update the 2014 LCA guidance.**

- **Integrate it with Seascape Character Assessment (SCA) guidance.**

- **Reflect new challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and Net Zero goals.**

🔗 **Visit the LCA & SCA Hub**

This hub includes:

- **Scene-setting papers on future landscapes.**

- **Opportunities for public and professional input.**

- **A collaborative platform for shaping the next version of the guidance.**

The upcoming update to Natural England's "An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment" is being shaped by several key themes and future-facing priorities, as outlined on the [Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment Hub](#)

Here's a preview of the main themes being considered:

1. Responding to Major Environmental Drivers

The update is being shaped by:

- Climate change

- Biodiversity crisis

- Post-Brexit agricultural and environmental policy

- Net Zero commitments

- Population growth and development pressures

These drivers are prompting a shift from using LCAs as tools to prevent change toward tools that guide positive, strategic change.

2. Future Landscapes and Seascapes

The update emphasizes:

- Multifunctional landscapes that deliver for nature, people, and the economy.

- A vision-led approach to managing change, rather than just documenting character.

- Integration of ecosystem services, natural capital, and landscape resilience.

3. Integration of Landscape and Seascape Guidance

There is a move to:

- Unify the 2014 LCA and 2012 Seascape Character Assessment (SCA) guidance.

- Create a cohesive framework for land and marine character assessment.

- Support coastal and estuarine planning where land and sea interact.

4. Practical Application and Tools

The update will focus on:

- How LCA can inform planning, design, and land management.

- Better integration with tools like Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

- Making LCA more accessible and usable for communities, planners, and developers.

5. Collaboration and Inclusivity

The process is designed to be:

- Collaborative, involving local authorities, consultants, charities, and community groups.

- Inclusive, recognizing the value of local knowledge and community-led assessments.

- Open to feedback through surveys, workshops, and scene-setting papers.

Cranborne Chase AONB – Good Practice Note 9

This document provides:

- Examples of how parishes in the **Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** have used LCAs.

- Guidance on identifying **distinctive landscape features** and **valued views**.

- Tips for integrating this into planning policies, including **Green Gaps** to prevent coalescence of settlements.

🔗 View the guide (PDF)

Bath and North East Somerset – Landscape and Ecology in Neighbourhood Planning

This presentation includes:

- Case studies of community-led LCAs.

- How to map and assess **green infrastructure**, **biodiversity**, and **landscape sensitivity**.

- Examples of how these assessments inform **Green Gap** designations.

🔗 [Access the presentation (PDF)](#)

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan (South Oxfordshire)

- **Parish Landscape Character Assessment (PLCA)**: This detailed study divides the parish into **seven distinct landscape character areas**, each with its own features, views, and development considerations.

- **Green Gaps and Local Green Spaces**: The plan includes maps and evidence for protecting **Local Green Spaces (LGS)** and maintaining **visual separation between settlements**.

- The assessment builds on the **South Oxfordshire District LCA** and includes **community input**, fieldwork, and visual mapping.

🔗 [Read the full LCA document (PDF)](#)

Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

- While not a neighbourhood plan itself, **OWLS** is the county-wide LCA that many parishes use as a foundation for their own assessments.

- It identifies **landscape types and character areas** across Oxfordshire and is often referenced in Neighbourhood Plans to justify **Green Gap policies** and **landscape protection**.

🔗 [Explore OWLS](#)

South Downs Landscape Character Assessment (2020)

This updated LCA:

- Provides a **typology of landscape character types and areas** across the National Park.

- Describes **key characteristics**, **forces for change**, and **sensitivities**.

- Integrates themes like **climate resilience**, **ecosystem services**, and **landscape-led planning**.

🔗 [View the LCA 2020](#)

Interactive Landscape Character Map

This map supports the LCA by allowing users to explore:

- **Character areas and types**

- **Landscape sensitivities**

- **Planning evidence** for development and conservation

🔗 [Explore the map](#)

NHL04 Landscape Character Assessment for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (September 2024)

This assessment was prepared to support the **emerging Joint Local Plan 2041** and provides a comprehensive analysis of:

- **Landscape types and character areas**

- **Key characteristics and sensitivities**

- **Forces for change**, including climate, development, and land use

- **Guidance for managing landscape change** and informing planning decisions

🔗 [Access the Landscape Character Assessment Overview](#)

Additional Resources:

- The LCA is part of the **Joint Local Plan 2041 Evidence Base**, which also includes:

  - **Tranquillity Assessment**

- **Renewables Landscape Sensitivity Assessment**

- **Local Landscape Designation Review**

🔗 Joint Local Plan Consultations and Evidence Base

Appendix B – Design Statement for Housing

National Guidance – "Design in Neighbourhood Planning" (Locality)

📄 **Document**: [Design in Neighbourhood Planning (PDF)](#)

Highlights:

- Offers a **step-by-step guide** for communities to:
  - Assess local character
  - Develop design codes and policies
  - Engage with developers and planners
- Encourages use of **design workshops**, **photographic surveys**, and **character assessments**.

Fairfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan – Design Statement (2016–2026)

📍 **Location**: Central Bedfordshire
📄 **Document**: [Fairfield Design Statement PDF](#)

Highlights:

- Developed in response to a community survey where **95% of residents** wanted to retain the existing character.
- Includes **detailed design guidance** on:
  - Building form and layout
  - Rooflines, materials, and fenestration
  - Boundary treatments and landscaping
- Emphasizes **continuity with the historic character** of the former Fairfield Hospital site.
- Provides **illustrated examples** of acceptable and unacceptable design features.

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2. Stratford-on-Avon District – Village Design Statements (VDS)

📍 **Location**: Warwickshire
📄 **Overview**: [VDS vs Neighbourhood Plans Comparison](#)

Highlights:

- VDS documents are often adopted as **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**.

- Focus on **design quality** rather than land use.

- Encourage developers to reflect **local vernacular architecture**, materials, and settlement patterns.

- Often used alongside Neighbourhood Plans to **guide housing design**.

Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017–2033)

📄 **Full Document (PDF)**: [Watlington Neighbourhood Plan – Made Version](#)
📍 **Hosted by**: South Oxfordshire District Council

Design Statement Highlights

- **Policy H2**: Requires new housing to reflect the **scale, layout, and character** of Watlington.

- **Policy D1**: Sets out **design principles** for all new development, including:

  - Respect for **local vernacular architecture**

  - Use of **natural materials**

  - Integration with **green infrastructure**

- **Character Areas**: The plan includes a **Character Assessment** that informs design expectations for different parts of the parish.

- **Sustainability**: Encourages **energy-efficient design**, **low-carbon construction**, and **climate-sensitive landscaping**.