

will not be permitted unless there are no reasonable alternative means of meeting the development need and the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation and geological value of the national network of such sites.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

- 4.81 In addition to internationally important and statutory wildlife sites there are many other sites of county wide or local nature conservation significance that are worthy of protection. The most important sites have been identified in a field by field (Phase 1) habitat survey, undertaken by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and completed in 1988. This survey information is held by the District Council in a 'directory of Nature Conservation Sites', which will be available for public inspection.
- 4.82 Sites are graded from 1 to 5; Grade 5 representing the very best sites harbouring rare species and Grade 4 supporting particularly fine examples of habitat type and/or uncommon species. Most replanted ancient woodlands and sites which represent the only remaining local examples of a habitat type were classified Grade 3. Grade 1 and 2 include lesser areas of conservation interest, primarily of local interest or sites with wildlife potential or areas which could be improved given better management. Sites classified as Grade 4 or 5 which constituted the most valuable 25% of identified sites (including SSSIs), together with Grade 3 ancient semi-natural woodland and ancient replanted woodland, were considered worthy of protection by previous planning policy in the adopted Rural Areas Local Plan. Information is becoming available regarding Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), which will be incorporated in future reviews.
- 4.83 Because of the continuing concerns over the loss and damage to wildlife habitats, the District Council commissioned a complete resurvey of Grade 3 sites. The study was undertaken in 1993/94 by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and funded jointly by the Trust, the District Council, English Nature and the World Wildlife Fund. The survey has helped establish whether sites still exist, and provides more up-to-date information in order to enable regradings to be made where appropriate. In particular, it demonstrates the continuing deterioration, especially of Grade 3 sites, which relate mainly to areas of ancient woodland and sites representing the only remaining local examples of habitat types.
- 4.84 The District Council remains committed to the protection of locally significant nature conservation sites. On the basis of more up-to-date information it is considered appropriate to extend protection to all Grade 3 sites. A total of 144 currently identified sites of importance for nature conservation are defined on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 7. The views of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust will be taken into account in connection with proposals affecting such sites.
- 4.85 The Council will encourage further survey and monitoring of the wildlife resources of the District having regard to the budgetary implications of this work.

4.86 One of the ways in which Local Authorities may contribute toward the maintenance and enhancement of locally important habitats is through the designation and management of Local Nature Reserves. There are currently two Statutory Local Nature Reserves in the Plan area, namely Fairburn Ings and Barlow Common. Fairburn Ings comprises a series of lakes and surrounding low-lying wetland which has resulted from mining subsidence. This is managed by a consortium of Local Authorities and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

4.87 The District Council also owns and manages the site of a former quarry and railway sidings at Barlow Common, for both nature conservation and countryside recreation purposes. With regard to this site, the area designated as a statutory Local Nature Reserve incorporates a series of lakes, woodland and remnants of the original common. A number of other sites are managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

4.88 The District Council will investigate the potential for establishing additional reserves in consultation with English Nature, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Agency and other agencies.

ENV9 Proposals for development which would harm a local nature reserve, a site of local importance for nature conservation or a regionally important geological/geomorphological site, will not be permitted unless there are no reasonable alternative means of meeting the development need and it can be demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic local nature conservation value of the site or feature.

General Nature Conservation Considerations

4.89 The District Council is concerned that all development proposals should minimise the effect on nature conservation interests. On the rare occasions when the need for development overrides the nature conservation interests on designated sites, the District Council will, through the use of planning obligations, ensure that appropriate measures are undertaken to minimise disturbance or to create new habitats elsewhere.

4.90 In addition to acknowledged sites of nature conservation importance, the Plan area contains a rich variety of habitats, including sites with recreational and amenity potential. Whenever any potentially damaging development is allowed, care must be taken to minimise the harm caused and it may be appropriate to incorporate arrangements for managing the remaining nature conservation interest. The following policy is intended to apply across the whole of the Plan area not just to designated sites.

ENV10 Where development proposals, which affect a site of nature conservation interest, are acceptable in principle, any harm to the nature conservation interest should be kept to a minimum. Where appropriate the developer will be expected to incorporate compensatory measures including the implementation of schemes for habitat creation and/or enhancement within the site or locality, and proposals to ensure future management.

will be sought regarding development proposals which may affect an historic park or garden, whether in the national register or of more local interest.

- 4.107 The following policy is intended to safeguard the character, appearance and historic value of both nationally and locally important sites. In its application, greater weight will be attached to sites on the national register than to sites of local importance. The sites are defined on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 8. Whilst sources of funding may be limited, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, currently administered by DEFRA, may assist appropriate works. Proposals for the restoration of historic parks and gardens should be based on thorough historical research.

ENV16 Development proposals affecting historic parks or gardens will only be permitted where the appearance, setting, character or amenity of an historic park or garden would not be harmed.

Historic Battlefields

- 4.108 English Heritage has compiled a Register of Historic Battlefields, based on archaeological remains and other records, in relation to sites associated with significant battles. Towton Battlefield (as defined on Inset Map 63 and the main Proposals Map) was the site of an historic battle which took place on 29 March 1461 in which it has been estimated that around 28,000 men were killed. The Battle represents a decisive point in the War of the Roses, and resulted in a significant victory for the Yorkists over the Lancastrians.
- 4.109 The designation is a material planning consideration which will need to be taken into account in any proposal for development which may affect this site, and any future designations. In assessing proposals for development, the Council will consult English Heritage.

ENV17 Development proposals likely to harm the historical, archaeological or landscape interest of a registered historic battlefield will not be permitted.

Landscape Enhancement

- 4.110 In recognition of the considerable pressures acting on the countryside, the County Council adopted a Conservation Strategy in 1991 identifying priorities for countryside conservation. The Strategy aims to ensure that the most valuable habitats and landscapes are protected. Encouragement is also given to the development of new landscapes and landscape restoration in those areas which have experienced greatest landscape change.
- 4.111 Many woodland features such as hedgerows and trees have been lost through the incremental effects of intensive agricultural practices over a prolonged period of time. More recently the effects of urbanisation and improvement in road infrastructure have had a significant impact. In many areas there is little remaining landscape structure worthy of restoration. Positive action will be needed to create new landscapes and to encourage